

Motherhood Unbound

Editorial Board

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Dr. Debosmita Paul

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Dr. Gunjan Kumari

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SHIVAJI COLLEGE

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University Of Delhi

ABOUT THE BOOK

Women's Development Cell, Shivaji College presents its anthology for the year 2024-25, titled *Motherhood Unbound*. The book explores the multifaceted concept of motherhood. Inspired by Mata Jijabai, the mother of the iconic hero Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, this anthology delves into motherhood's significance in culture, history and modern life. The anthology presents diverse perspectives on maternal strength, sacrifice, and love as it explores varied images of the mother from a goddess to a multitasker. Through essays, personal narratives, and reflections, contributors explore motherhood's evolving role, its cultural implications, and its impact on women today. The anthology also features profiles of the Jijabai Awardees, the five outstanding women achievers, who have been instrumental in bringing about positive changes in the society.

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February 03, 2025

Chairman's Message

Dear Esteemed Faculty, Students, Alumni and Respected Readers,

It is with immense pride and joy that I introduce the Women's Development Cell Anthology for the session 2024-25 Motherhood Unbound, a collection that celebrates the multifaceted journey of womanhood through the profound and universal theme of Motherhood. This anthology is a tribute to the incredible strength, resilience, and nurturing spirit of mothers, who embody the essence of care, sacrifice, and boundless love.

Motherhood is not only a biological experience, but a deeply emotional and transformative journey, one that shapes lives, families, and communities. The pieces within this anthology provide unique perspectives, shedding light on the diverse stories of mothers, both biological and symbolic, exploring the challenges, joys, and profound impact they have on society.

Working on the ideals laid down by Mata Jijabai and her heroic son Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the Women's Development Cell of Shivaji College has worked diligently to bring together the voices on multifarious aspects of motherhood and women, and we are proud of the contributions made by students, faculty, and members of the college community. This anthology is not just a celebration of motherhood, but an invitation to reflect on the myriad of roles women play and the indelible marks they leave on the world.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all contributors and encourage you to read with an open heart and mind. May this anthology inspire, empower, and deepen our appreciation for the incredible mothers who continue to shape our lives in meaningful ways.

With warm regards,

Prof. Bindhy Vasini Pandey
Chairman, Shivaji Collage

प्राचार्य की कलम से




प्रिय विद्यार्थियों, प्राध्यापकगण और सम्मानित पाठकों,

मुझे यह जानकर अपार प्रसन्नता हो रही है कि शिवाजी कॉलेज के 'महिला विकास प्रकोष्ठ' समिति के प्रयासों से हिन्दवी साम्राज्य की स्थापना करने वाले छत्रपति शिवाजी महाराज की पूजनीय माँ जीजाबाई की छवि से प्रेरित 'मातृत्व' विषय पर आमंत्रित लेखों की पुस्तक का प्रकाशन किया जा रहा है। हमारी भारतीय संस्कृति में कहा गया है कि "मातृ देवो भवः"। पौराणिक कथाओं में मातृत्व के अनेक आदर्श प्रत्येक युग की पीढ़ियों के लिए प्रेरणास्रोत हैं। सम्पूर्ण जगत में माँ का रिश्ता सबसे अमूल्य है। माँ दुनिया की एकमात्र ऐसी प्राणी है जो निस्वार्थ प्रेमभाव से बड़े त्याग, संघर्ष और समर्पण के साथ अपने बच्चों का पालन पोषण करती है, शिक्षित करती हैं, संस्कारित करती हैं।

जगत में पहली गुरु माँ होती हैं। माँ शब्द की व्याख्या शब्दों में करना संभव नहीं है क्योंकि वह एक ऐसा संबंध है जो परिवार, समाज और देश की दिशा तय करने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाती हैं। माँ के अनेक रूप हैं। वह जन्मदात्री, गुरु, मार्गदर्शक होती हैं। जीवन के प्रत्येक उतार - चढ़ाव की साथी भी होती हैं। माँ का हृदय मोम की तरह होता है। उसकी डॉट- फटकार में भी प्रेम होता है। इस पुस्तक में संकलित सभी लेख माँ के प्रति हमारे दृष्टिकोण को अभिव्यक्त करते हैं। यह पुस्तक जीवन में माँ की भूमिका के विविध आयामों को उजागर करती हैं।

शिवाजी कॉलेज के प्राचार्य के रूप में, मैं कॉलेज के 'महिला विकास प्रकोष्ठ' समिति के विद्यार्थियों, प्राध्यापकगणों को बधाई देता हूँ कि उन्होंने एक टीम के रूप में इस विषय पर विचार विमर्श किया और सभी विचारों को एक श्रृंखला में बांध कर पुस्तक के रूप में जीवंत किया। मुझे पूर्ण विश्वास है कि 'मातृत्व' विषय पर आधारित यह पुस्तक सभी के लिए प्रेरणादायक सिद्ध होगी। मैं पुस्तक के सफल प्रकाशन की शुभकामनाएं देता हूँ।

धन्यवाद


प्रो. वीरेन्द्र भरद्वाज
प्राचार्य

From the Desk of the Editors

It is a pleasure and privilege to present the 2024-25 edition of the annual anthology of the Women's Development Cell to our readers. The theme of the book this year is 'Motherhood'. Inspired by the figure of Mata Jijabai, the legendary mother of the Maratha ruler Chattrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the book attempts to explore the many facets of motherhood in culture, history, mythology, and everyday life. A word that instinctively invokes the image of the tender relationship between a mother and her child, motherhood is traditionally associated with unconditional love, nourishment, comfort, and the sanctity of the family. Simultaneously, the figure of the mother inspires veneration and awe. The rich Indian Knowledge System defines the image of a mother as the centre of creation. In the Devi-Sukta of Rigveda, the Mother-Goddess appears as “tavati mahina sambhabhuva”, the all-pervasive and all-bearing and unfathomable power who runs the entire creation. In the modern period, god, nation, earth— all take the form of the mother in culture. Self-sacrificing or demanding, yielding or fierce, nurturing or chastising, the cultural imaginaries of the mother impact individual women in diverse ways. Various produced in medical discourse, in marketing campaigns, in arts and literature, motherhood acquires new meanings with changing times.

To celebrate the range of ideas, emotions, and relationships that the word signifies the students and teachers of Shivaji College contributed diverse articles. They explore and describe motherhood in distinct socio-cultural contexts. Some of the articles in this book expound on the extraordinariness of mothers in Indian history and mythology. From Parvati, Sita, Devaki and Yashoda to Mata Jijabai and Mata Ahilyabai Holkar, the timeless exemplars of motherhood speak to us of unparalleled sacrifice, resilience, and strength. Here, motherhood takes the form of a formidable power that not only shapes young children into rulers of empires but changes the course of history to turn a crumbling

and corrupt society towards a new dawn. The authors of these articles explore the fearlessness of mothers who challenge oppressive systems and inspire self-respect and honour in their children. At the same time, they speak of the divinity of mothers who embody compassion, tenderness and unconditional love.

Other authors have explored the myriad meanings of motherhood in the modern day. The mother-goddess evolves into the multi-tasking superwoman who excels at her career while raising a family. Some have written of the vast distance between the ideals of womanhood celebrated in ancient tales and the treatment of women in contemporary society. Yet others have drawn attention to the socio-cultural construction of the notion of motherhood across periods, and its appropriation for moral and material gains. The discursive projection of an ideal motherhood creates unreal and often crippling conditions for ordinary women, that ironically curtail the joy in the adventures and complexity of motherhood. In a context where motherhood is no longer accepted as the defining characteristic of a woman but appears more as one of the many roles she juggles, the legal, medical, material and psychological aspects of motherhood are explored in numerous articles.

Yet other authors have explored motherhood through their personal journeys. The pahadi mother, the refugee mother, the good mother, the woman who 'becomes' a mother, are the many individual voices of motherhood that add richness to this volume.

Like every year, an important part of this anthology is the section on the recipients of the Jijabai Achievers Awards. Among the esteemed awardees this year is Smt. Vijaya Kishore Rahatkar, Chairperson of the National Commission for Women and an avid social worker, leader, and policy maker. Dr Yamini Gautam is a spiritual luminary and a revered teacher of Hindi and Sanskrit literature and philosophy, who has a special place in the hearts of many teachers and students of Shivaji

College. Ms. Sairee Chahal, the founder of Fleximoms, SHEROES and Mahila Money, is an entrepreneur and pioneer of women's internet. Ms. Nidhi Ashok Goyal, the founder of the NGO Rising Flames, is a vociferous gender and disability rights activist. Dr. Tara Devi Sen Thakur, an ethnobotanist and biodiversity conservationist, is a champion of Himalayan wild food plants. The inspirational journeys of these awardees, their exemplary contribution to society, and the immense energy they exude are the mainstay of this book as they are of the WDC of Shivaji College.

With the hope that this anthology will bring joy and inspiration to our readers while raising some searching questions on the theme, we present *Motherhood Unbound*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The journey of creating a book demands perseverance, dedication, and the collective effort of many individuals. It is a process that brings forth a multitude of ideas, logistical challenges, and demanding deadlines. Yet, precisely these challenges serve as the driving force behind our commitment. The team at WDC has received immense support from every corner of the college, enabling us to bring this endeavor to fruition. As the convenor of the Women's Development Cell and one of the editors of this book, it is my privilege to extend gratitude to all those who have contributed to this project. Their efforts are our greatest strength, reinforcing our belief that change is a continuous process, nurtured through awareness.

At the outset, a special note of appreciation goes to our Principal, Prof. Virender Bhardwaj, for his unwavering support at every stage of this book's creation. He warmly welcomed the proposed theme of Motherhood and was forthcoming about the many kinds of sentiments it evokes. Despite his demanding administrative responsibilities, he mentored us at every juncture and graciously extended his suggestions. We sincerely hope to receive his continued guidance in the future.

This book would not have been possible without the valuable contributions of all the writers who lent their voices to the subject of Motherhood. This theme may seem familiar and deeply personal, but it is complex when one attempts to articulate its profound significance. To all the faculty members who enriched the book with their perspectives, thank you for adding depth and grace to this work. To our student authors, your ability to bring fresh, heartfelt narratives around this theme is commendable.

I extend special thanks to my colleague, Dr. Debosmita Paul, who bravely took charge of the book and brought together so many individuals working in various capacities. She patiently mentored

students, coordinated with colleagues and sifted through various drafts with equanimity and grace. Committed and unwavering, she held the fort these past months, granting me the space to fulfill my other duties. I am grateful to her for this and congratulate her for bringing the book to its final form.

I extend my gratitude to Dr. Chakpram Priyanka, Dr. Gunjan Kumari, and Dr. Babli, who edited student articles and guided the students to make improvements. My deepest appreciation extends to the student editors, Rupesh and Vanshika, for writing, editing, re-editing, and meeting deadlines despite their academic commitments. Your passion and enthusiasm have kept this endeavor alive, proving once again that you are the pulse of the WDC. Tanmay from Shutterbugs and Aryan from Vibgyor designed a beautiful cover for the book and supplied the photographs and sketches interspersed with the articles.

The administrative journey of publishing this book required careful navigation through multiple procedures, particularly through GeM, a task that demanded immense diligence. A sincere thank you to the faculty and non-teaching staff who managed this complex process with dedication. Special recognition is due to Mr. Hemant Lamba and his team, who meticulously handled the administrative formalities; Mr. Praveen and his team, who ensured financial compliance; Mr. Bhupinder and his team, for conducting rigorous plagiarism checks; and Mr. Ratan and his team, for tirelessly working through the GeM-related requirements multiple times. I also extend my gratitude to Ms. Mamta and Mr. Mohit, for their invaluable assistance in providing endless printouts, and to Shankar and Bhola, for keeping our spirits high with countless cups of tea and coffee. Each of you is an indispensable part of this journey, and I deeply appreciate your contributions.

A heartfelt thank you to my colleagues who are members of WDC for sharing your invaluable input over the past months. Finally, my

gratitude goes to the publisher who remained committed to this project despite numerous obstacles. Their patience and expertise ensured that this book materialized in its best form.

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**JIJABAI AWARDEES
2024-25**



**Empowering Women and Shaping Policies:
The Leadership Journey of
Smt. Vijaya K. Rahatkar**



Smt. Vijaya K. Rahatkar is the Chairperson of the National Commission for Women, Government of India. She also serves as the National Secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and has previously held the position of National President of BJP Mahila Morcha



(Women Wing of BJP). A visionary leader, Smt. Rahatkar has been deeply committed to the welfare of the common people and has consistently promoted developmental policies that would benefit them. She has dedicated over 30 years to Indian politics and social work and has been a passionate advocate of women-led development. She has assumed various electoral offices and leadership positions at social welfare organizations.



Recipient of the National Law Day Award (2017) by the International Council of Jurists for her unique contribution to the field of women's empowerment, and the Savitribai Phule Award by the Akhil Bharatiya Marathi

Sahitya Parishad for conservation of cultural and literary work, Smt. Rahatkar has also authored several books on female foeticide and on legislative reforms related to women, marriage and sexual harassment.



Smt. Rahatkar hails from Aurangabad, Maharashtra. Without a political background or a mentor, she rose on her own merit from a BJP Booth Karyakarta to a national political leader. Over the last few decades, she has held key responsibilities in electoral politics. From

2000-2010, she was elected as a member to the Aurangabad Municipal Corporation. From 2007-2010, she held the post of Mayor of Aurangabad. From 2010-2014, she was the National General Secretary of the BJP Mahila Morcha for two terms. In 2014 Smt. Rahatkar was elected to the post of National President of BJP Mahila Morcha. As part of her duty as the National President of BJP Mahila Morcha, Smt. Vijaya Rahatkar has traveled widely across the country to connect with people. During this phase, she conducted many campaigns and programmes to provide Prashikshan Varg training. As an outcome of these interactions with the common people, she was able to provide many inputs and recommendations for state policy-making.





During her tenure as the Chairperson of the Maharashtra State Commission for Women (Maharashtra Rajya Mahila Aayog), Smt. Rahatkar undertook significant responsibilities for women's welfare and upliftment. She worked extensively in rehabilitating acid-attack survivors under the Sakshama initiative which provides medical treatment, cosmetic surgeries, and facilitating employment and counseling to these victims. She organized a 'Confidence Walk' for the survivors, initiated programmes involving well-known figures, and promoted the survivors as brand ambassadors for PNG Jewellers.

Smt. Rahatkar has made substantial efforts in spreading awareness and enforcing laws towards the prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace. She has been successful in reaching a number of women, that include labourers, students, and employees in different sectors. She has undertaken an exhaustive amount of work on women trafficking



issues. She conducted an “International Conference on Women Trafficking” that initiated dialogue with foreign delegates on providing resolutions and rehabilitation of victims. Apart from this, she has also participated in many rounds of state policy discussions



with experts and NGOs, and has provided policy recommendations to the Government of India. She has spearheaded campaigns that include the enforcement of POSH via 'Training of Trainers' in hundreds of corporate offices. Her work includes "Nirmal Wari", an awareness campaign on the Commission's authority and accessibility to help women with their various issues, which included filing complaints, hygiene and sanitation. Under "Prajwala", she extended an initiative for financial empowerment and support through self-help groups for rural and urban women, and also provided vocational training. In addition, helplines for women, digital literacy campaigns as well as collaborations with NGOs and international organizations have been undertaken.

Smt. Vijaya Rahatkar's thorough research in public work, her ability to easily connect with people, her affability and humility, and her farsightedness in addressing social issues are what make her an effective leader of the common man today.



डॉ. यामिनी गौतम: भारतीय ज्ञान और अध्यात्म की अविरल धारा





डॉ. यामिनी गौतम भारतीय ज्ञान परम्परा और आध्यात्मिक चिंतन धारा की गुणज्ञ विदुषी हैं। उपनिषदों पर शोध कार्य उनकी विशिष्ट उपलब्धि है। डॉ. यामिनी गौतम हिंदी के साथ-साथ संस्कृत भाषा और साहित्य की विशेषज्ञ हैं। उन्होंने पीएच.डी. की उपाधि दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय से प्राप्त की है। 'छायावादी काव्य में औपनिषदिक चेतना' विषय पर उन्होंने लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय से डिप्लोमा की उपाधि प्राप्त की है। डॉ. यामिनी गौतम मैत्रेयी महाविद्यालय से एसोसिएट प्रोफेसर के पद से २६ फरवरी २०१६ को सेवानिवृत्त हुईं। उन्होंने लगभग ४३ वर्षों तक मैत्रेयी महाविद्यालय के हिंदी विभाग में शिक्षण कार्य करते हुए अध्ययन-अध्यापन के कार्य को विशिष्ट गरिमा प्रदान की। डॉ. यामिनी गौतम ने मैत्रेयी महाविद्यालय में उप-प्राचार्य (वाइस प्रिंसिपल) के रूप में कई वर्षों तक कार्य किया। उनके कुशल निर्देशन में अनेक विद्यार्थियों ने शोध कार्य किया है। विभिन्न पत्र - पत्रिकाओं में उनके अब तक कई आलेख प्रकाशित हो चुके हैं। 'ऋतंभरा', 'साक्षी' जैसी दार्शनिक भाव और संवेदन से ओतप्रोत काव्य ग्रंथों का संपादन कर चुकी डॉ. गौतम साहित्य, समाज और संस्कृति की संवाहक त्रैमासिक पत्रिका 'उदगीत' की संरक्षक भी हैं। उन्होंने यूजीसी शोध परियोजना के अंतर्गत लीला दर्शन और हिंदी का कृष्ण भक्ति काव्य विषय पर महत्वपूर्ण शोध कार्य संपन्न किया है। डॉ. यामिनी गौतम की अब तक अनेक पुस्तकें प्रकाशित हो चुकी हैं जो भारतीय संस्कृति और दर्शन की अविरल भावधारा को समझने की व्यापक वैचारिक पृष्ठभूमि प्रदान करती हैं।





उनकी प्रमुख पुस्तकें हैं -

१. उपनिषद दर्शन और छायावाद
२. सावित्री और कामायनी की चेतना का तुलनात्मक अध्ययन
३. सूर का वेणु दर्शन
४. कृष्ण लीलाओं के प्रतीकात्मक अर्थों की खोज पर शोध कार्य आदि

डॉ. यामिनी गौतम कबीर काव्य की गहन अध्येता हैं। उन्होंने कृष्णलीला में आध्यात्मिक चिंतन, साहित्य एवं सांस्कृतिक मूल्य बोध, ज्ञान गंगा आदि शंकराचार्य के 'भजगोविंदम स्त्रोत' का गहन अध्ययन और विश्लेषण किया है। डॉ. गौतम भारतीय श्रुत और स्मृति परम्परा की साक्षात् प्रतिमूर्ति हैं। जब वे अपना व्याख्यान देती हैं तो लगता है जैसे सरस्वती साक्षात् उनकी जिह्वा पर विराज रही हैं। उनके व्याख्यान मानो ज्ञान- वर्षा की रिमझिम बूदें हैं जिनके अजस्र श्रोत में श्रोता भींगते डूबते चले जाते हैं और एक गहरे स्थाई आनंद को प्राप्त करते हैं। डॉ. यामिनी गौतम के सम्पूर्ण व्याख्यान श्रोताओं में भारतीय दर्शन की समझ विकसित करते हैं। DIWA (Dialogues with women Achievers) द्वारा आयोजित एक ऑनलाइन वक्तव्य में 'कृष्ण लीला का आध्यात्मिक महत्व' विषय पर अपने विस्तृत व्याख्यान में वे बताती हैं कि राधा-कृष्ण केवल पौराणिक व्यक्तित्व न होकर दैवीय अवतार हैं। उनके चरित्र में हिन्दू-धर्म और भारतीय संस्कृति का सार तत्व निहित है। कृष्ण तत्व अपने आप में इतना विशद, गहन, आकर्षक एवं रमणीय है कि उसमें धर्म, दर्शन, सौंदर्य और आनंद के सभी श्रोत अपने समग्र रूप में उपस्थित दिखाई देते हैं। वल्लभाचार्य ने अपनी पुस्तक सुबोधिनी में लिखा है कि जो हठात भक्तों के चित्त को खींचकर अपने में लगा लेता है वह श्रीकृष्ण है। डॉ. यामिनी गौतम कहती हैं कि





हम सभी को इस पर विचार करना चाहिए कि कृष्ण तत्व क्या है? जीवन में सुख के जितने रूप हैं जो हमें अपनी ओर खींचते हैं, सभी अस्थायी हैं। व्यक्ति हो, वस्तु हो या स्थिति हो, सभी नष्ट होने वाली और परिवर्तनशील हैं। लेकिन इस नश्वर और निरंतर परिवर्तनशील जगत में एक बार किसी को कृष्ण तत्व मिल जाए, फिर वह जीवन में किसी और चीज को महत्व नहीं देता। यह कृष्णत्व का आध्यात्मिक पक्ष है।

डॉ. यामिनी गौतम के आध्यात्मिक सन्देश ऑडियो विजुअल माध्यम के रूप में भी उपलब्ध हैं। उनका मानना है कि भारतीय जीवन का पूर्ण विकास तब तक अधूरा ही रहेगा जब तक कि भारतीय समाज का समग्र रूप में आध्यात्मिक एवं सांस्कृतिक अभ्युदय न हो जाए। रामकृष्ण परमहंस, स्वामी विवेकानंद एवं श्री अरविंद के जीवन दर्शन के बारे में उनका मानना है कि भारतीय संस्कृति के प्रति आस्था रखने वाले इन सभी विचारकों एवं मनीषियों ने एक विशेष आंतरिक आनंद का अनुभव किया एवं उससे प्रेरणा प्राप्त कर भारतीय सांस्कृतिक और आध्यात्मिक जगत का पुण्य पथ प्रशस्त किया।

औपनिषदिक ज्ञान के गहन चिंतन और विश्लेषण पर आधारित डॉ. यामिनी गौतम की पुस्तक 'उपनिषद दर्शन और छायावाद' का प्रकाशन 'मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय' की प्रकाशन सहायता योजना के अंतर्गत हुआ। यह पुस्तक उपनिषद की गहन व्याख्या करती है। इस पुस्तक की यह स्थापना है कि 'उपनिषद' शब्द स्वयं ही गुरु के समीप बैठकर प्राप्त की जाने वाली शिक्षा का सूचक है। आत्मज्ञान की चर्चा औपनिषदिक ज्ञान के बिना अधूरी समझी जाती है। उपनिषद विद्या वास्तव में 'ब्रह्म विद्या' ही है। अन्य विद्याएं मानव जीवन के बाह्य अर्थों के ज्ञान से परिचित करवाती हैं। लेकिन परम पुरुषार्थ- जो जीव का अंतिम तात्पर्य है, उस तक पहुंचाने वाली विद्या तो 'उपनिषद' ही है।



उपनिषदों की चेतना एक ऐसी चेतना है जिसके अवगाहन से युग-युग के मानव की अज्ञान जनित द्वैत भाव में पनपने वाली असंख्य भव-भीतियां स्वतः ही निर्मूल हो जाती हैं। उपनिषद ऋषि-चिंतन की प्रौढ़ भूमि है। डॉ. यामिनी गौतम का मानना है कि एक सच्चे जिज्ञासु और अध्येता को निरंतर गुरु के सानिध्य में रहना चाहिए। शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में प्रविष्ट व्यक्ति को शिक्षा से प्रमाद नहीं करना चाहिए इस क्षेत्र से जुड़े व्यक्ति को अध्ययन, चिंतन और विश्लेषण की प्रक्रिया में निरंतर बने रहना चाहिए। न सत्य से प्रमाद करना चाहिए, न धर्म से प्रमाद करना चाहिए। लौकिक उन्नति से भी प्रमाद नहीं करना चाहिए। स्वयं गुरु को ज्ञान और और आचरण के हर पहलू में दक्ष होना चाहिए। आचरण में आए बिना शिक्षा अधूरी है।

वेदमनूच्याचार्योऽन्तेवासिनमनुशास्ति। सत्यं वद। धर्मं चर। स्वाध्यायान्मा प्रमदः। आचार्याय प्रियं धनमाहृत्य प्रजानन्तुं मा व्यवच्छेसीः। सत्यान्न प्रमदितव्यम्। धर्मान्न प्रमदितव्यम्। कुशलान्न प्रमदितव्यम्। भूत्यै न प्रमदितव्यम्। स्वाध्यायप्रवचनाभ्यां न प्रमदितव्यम् ॥

विदुषी डॉ. यामिनी गौतम के जीवन से हमें शिक्षा मिलती है कि हम कैसे उच्च कोटि के शिक्षण कार्यों के साथ भावी पीढ़ी के निर्माण और विकास में अपना रचनात्मक योगदान दे सकते हैं। विपरीत परिस्थितियों में हम आध्यात्मिक उन्नति के द्वारा ही अपने आप को सशक्त बना सकते हैं। आध्यात्मिक हुए बिना हम समाज सेवा के प्रति स्वयं को समर्पित नहीं कर सकते हैं। युवा पीढ़ी को वैदिक श्लोकों की सरल व्याख्या से जीवन के उच्च सिद्धांतों को समझाना हमारे समय की महत्वपूर्ण मांग है। डॉ. यामिनी गौतम अपने ज्ञान मणि मालाओं के द्वारा (ऑडियो और वीडियो) असंख्य जिज्ञासुओं की ज्ञान बुभुक्षा को शमित करते हुए उनका मार्ग प्रशस्त कर, उनके आंतरिक और बाहरी जगत के उत्थान हेतु ज्ञान की अमूल्य और अविरल धारा प्रवाहित कर रही हैं। डॉ. यामिनी गौतम एक पथ प्रदर्शक के रूप में विद्यार्थियों को विचारों से संपोषित कर, उन्हें आत्मिक रूप से सशक्त बनाते हुए मातृत्व की अद्भुत अनुभूति देती रही हैं।





Igniting Paths for Millions: Sairee Chahal, A Harbinger of Women's Empowerment





“Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass.”

-- Anton Chekov

Most of the people walk the paths already created, with a proper itinerary—assiduously calculated steps, ascertained levels, and set destinations. Those who follow these paths with determination are promised success, for the journeys have already been testified. But do we think of those visionaries who are the path makers? They are the ones who embody courage, novelty, and an undaunting will to transform the world. Ms. Sairee Chahal is one of those rare individuals who personify all these qualities. An epitome of versatility, Sairee Chahal is a key name in the Indian startup ecosystem. She is a visionary entrepreneur, academician, investor and one of the earliest internet founders in India dedicated to restructuring the digital landscape for women. As the founder of Fleximoms, SHEROES, and Mahila Money, she has built platforms that connect women to careers, entrepreneurship, and financial independence. Her work has directly and indirectly impacted over 10 million women, creating an ecosystem where women can





thrive, take charge, and unlock new economic opportunities. Ms. Chahal is the creator of the women's internet category. Through technology and community, she is driving a future where women are not just participants but leaders in the economic mainstream.

A sensitive and empathetic being, Ms. Chahal strongly advocates for higher education and independence, especially for women who need to shatter the manacles of patriarchy and age-old beliefs. Her own journey is a testament to her nonconformist and unique perspective towards life. Despite hailing from a small place, Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh and confronting manifold challenges, she moved to Delhi for higher education. Currently, she holds multiple prestigious degrees--M.Phil in International Relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Postgraduate Diploma in Business Management (PGDBM) from the Institute of Management Technology, Ghaziabad and Bachelor's degree in Russian Language from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). Her entrepreneurial journey began in 1999 when she launched Newslink Services, the world's first localised newspaper for mariners. She later co-founded SAITA Consulting, a firm focused on small and medium-sized businesses, before launching Fleximoms, which evolved into SHEROES.





Known for her unique worldview, Ms. Chahal conceptualised and built the Women's Internet in India, creating digital ecosystems that provide women with career opportunities, financial independence, and community support. SHEROES, her flagship venture, is a leading women's platform with over 20 million users, offering back-to-work opportunities and a safe space for women to thrive. Her latest venture, Mahila Money, is a community neobank providing women entrepreneurs with capital solutions, entrepreneurship resources, and financial inclusion support. She founded Appreciate Capital, a venture fund backing women-led businesses and companies creating world-positive solutions. With over two decades of experience in technology, human media, and consulting, she has held key roles at Heidrick & Struggles (HSII) on Nasdaq and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

Ms. Chahal exudes self-confidence and traits of a strong leader. She currently serves on the boards of Unicommerce eSolutions Pvt. Ltd.,





Software Freedom Law Center (SFLC), TRRAIN (The Trust for Retailers and Retail Associates of India), and Milaan Foundation. She has previously served as a Board Director at Paytm Payments Bank Limited. She has also contributed as a vibrant academician, including co-translating a book on poet Rahim's life from Hindi to Russian and assisting Discovery Channel in producing Holy Men of India.

Various prestigious awards have been conferred on her for her continual efforts to transform the society including Business Today's Most Powerful Women in Indian Business, Cartier Women's Initiative Award for Entrepreneurship, Devi Award for Women in Leadership, Femina Achiever's Award for Contributions to Women & Technology and L'Oréal Femina Women's Award – Editor's Choice for Women in Workforce.





Ms. Sairee Chahal's philosophy aligns with Robert Heinlein's belief in versatility, as she believes in adaptability across disciplines, from building businesses to shaping policies that drive large-scale social impact. An Aspen Fellow (2016 batch), Ms. Chahal actively mentors entrepreneurs, teaches, and writes about internet ecosystems, the future of work, gender equity, and economic transitions. With a vision to connect 500 million women to the economic mainstream, Sairee Chahal continues to shape the future of women's internet, entrepreneurship, and financial inclusion in India and beyond.





Raising the Flame for an Inclusive Society: Nidhi Ashok Goyal



Hello Friends! I am Nidhi Goyal and I am blind! So is love! Please get over it!”

These words spelt mellifluously yet assertive have been instrumental in changing perception about disability in India and globally.



Nidhi Ashok Goyal, is an activist, youth leader, public speaker, stand-up comedian, women with disabilities champion and an influential voice for India for disability rights.

The Founder and Executive Director of the renowned NGO 'Rising Flame'; working for leadership and rights of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in India; Ms Goyal has been working on the issues “of disability rights and gender justice for the past 14 years at the national, regional, and global levels-through research, writing, policy influence and art.



She recently led an Asia Pacific process of Beijing + 30 as a steering committee member selected by UN Women Asia Pacific and UN ESCAP, where she ensured a historic participation of women with disabilities in a feminist review process. She



was the youngest and only disabled person appointed on the steering committee of the C20 process in India's G20 presidency. She was instrumental in the creation of the Disability, Equity, Justice Working Group in C20 India and led the group as the Coordinator. In 2023, she was appointed by the state government of Goa as an ambassador to the Purple Fest, India's largest and the first festival on disability and diversity.



Ms Goyal has been serving on the core group of persons with disabilities by National Human Rights Commission of India, since 2016. She sits on the diversity and inclusion task force constituted by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in 2019. She has been an advisor to Voice, a 50 million dollar grant making initiative by the Dutch ministry for 8 years. She has steered a leading global women's rights organisation – AWID- as the youngest and first ever disabled president,



and made huge strides towards the purpose of creating an inclusive society as the Global Advisor to UN Women's Executive Director. Her work has been extensively covered in National and Global media from *Times of India*, *Economic Times* to *Aljazeera*. She has delivered talks, has conducted trainings, and reached disabled and non-disabled persons through her work in 5 continents and in over 35 countries.



Ms Nidhi Goyal has authored the ground breaking and only research around sexual violence and access to justice for women with disabilities in India which was cited by Justice Chandrachud in his progressive disability judgement in 2021. Her research publication on the impact of COVID on women with disabilities remains the only research in India and the first globally, on the issue. It was used as an advocacy and change tool in India as well as globally including in PIL. Her research work has



become the foundation for the NHRC Covid Advisory for Persons with Disabilities and has been quoted by the UN Special Rapporteur. She is the author of India's first online resource on sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls with disabilities. She also conceptualised and led India's first ever National Leadership Program for women with disabilities.





Her work has changed the lives of thousands of women and youth with disabilities and influenced lakhs of stakeholders – all with a vision of building an inclusive society for all.

Adding another feather in her cap, Ms Goyal is also India's first female disabled comedian who is committed to bring change on perceptions of disability and gender through comedy. She has been performing across the country and has triggered a positive change in terms of how persons with disabilities are perceived and depicted in the media.

Her leadership spirit and services to the society have been appreciated and awarded by the Government of India. Under her leadership and commitment, her organisation has received the National Award for the Empowerment of Persons with disabilities 2019 by the Government of India. Her achievements have also been recognised with several awards like the FICCI YFlow award bestowed by Shri Nitin Gadkari, award by Indira University, Super Woman of the Year by ABP News, Neelam Kanga Award by National Association for the Blind to name a few.

Ms Nidhi Goyal's all-round contribution to the cause for persons with disabilities and specially women with disabilities is truly applaudable and an apt reflection of the ideals represented by Mata Jijabai.



**Empowering Women through Ethnobotany:
Dr. Tara Devi Sen Thakur's Journey towards
Community Wellness, Women's Empowerment
and Sustainability**



Dr. Tara Devi Sen Thakur is a distinguished Assistant Professor of Botany at Vallabh Government College, Mandi, and a leading Ethnobotanist with a deep focus on sustainable resource utilisation and biodiversity conservation in the Himalayan region. Her



extensive contributions to the fields of ethnobotany, plant science, and community development have made her a key figure in the conservation and promotion of wild food plants in Himachal Pradesh. Dr. Thakur's expertise is particularly evident in her involvement in the Mid Himalayan Watershed Project. Her passion for wild food plants has led to significant efforts in raising community awareness about the sustainable use of local plant resources. Through field visits to remote areas of Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, she educated women's groups and schoolchildren on the nutritional benefits of wild food plants, fostering a connection to nature and encouraging sustainable harvesting practices. Dr. Thakur has also spearheaded the creation of People's Biodiversity Registers (PBR) in local communities, preserving indigenous knowledge and encouraging local participation in biodiversity conservation. A key highlight of Dr. Thakur's career is her role as the Principal Investigator for a research project titled “Traditional



Processing of Wild Edible Plants of Six Tehsils in Mandi District.” Funded by the Department of Environment and Sciences, Himachal Pradesh, this project aimed at documenting and



analysing the medicinal, nutritional, and economic potential of these plants, while exploring value addition through modern processing techniques. This research is central to her broader work on ethnobotany and its integration



with sustainable livelihoods. Additionally, Dr. Thakur received a project grant from the National Medicinal Plants Board (Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India) on *Withania somnifera* (Ashwagandha), focusing on cultivating and optimising its use to boost health and immunity in Mandi District. Her website,



www.himalayanwildfoodplants.com, is an invaluable resource, offering detailed articles on 245 wild edible plants and attracting over 1.48 million hits. The site provides information on traditional plant processing methods,

indigenous uses, and cultural significance, serving as a global platform for the promotion of the Himalayan plant heritage. Her YouTube channel, Dr. Tara Devi Thakur, which features over 800 videos, further expands her reach, focusing on plant science, sustainable practices, and innovative recipes using wild edible plants. This





channel is not only educational but also inspires a growing community interested in incorporating these plants into everyday life.

Dr. Thakur's academic output includes over 18 research



papers published in both national and international journals, covering a diverse range of topics from the diversity and economic potential of wild edible plants to the medicinal uses of Himalayan flora. Some notable works include publications in renowned journals such as the Journal of Non-Timber Forest Products and the International Journal of Recent Scientific Research. Her research addresses critical issues like sustainable use of forest resources, climate resilience, and biodiversity conservation.

Her work also extends into the development of innovative products, such as Herbal Burans Tea (caffeine-free) and value-added pasta and noodles enriched with medicinal plants like *Tinospora cordifolia* and *Euphorbia hirta*. These inventions not only promote health and wellness but also create new avenues for local economic development. Her





patents further demonstrate her ability to bridge traditional knowledge with modern scientific applications.

Dr. Thakur's contributions to policy and capacity building are noteworthy. She has submitted policy documents to the state government on the promotion of livelihoods through wild herb utilisation and has been involved in guiding numerous NGOs and government bodies on sustainable resource use and biodiversity conservation. As an organising secretary of multiple conferences and workshops, she has provided crucial insights into the role of wild food plants in culinary tourism, health, and sustainable agriculture. Her books and book chapters have enriched the academic landscape, providing essential resources on the wild edible plants of the Western Himalayas. Some of her notable publications include “Some Wild Edible Plants of Western Himalayas” and “An Illustrated Guide to Some Wild Growing Food Plants of the Sub-Himalayan Region.” In addition to her books, Dr. Thakur has contributed chapters to various national and international books on the medicinal uses of wild plants, climate-resilient agriculture, and sustainable development.

Dr. Thakur is also an active speaker and resource person for conferences, seminars, and training programs across the country. Her invited talks cover critical issues like wild food plants' role in combating the global food crisis, medicinal plant cultivation, and the intersection of sustainability and tourism.





She has been an invited keynote speaker at prestigious institutions and events, including the 22nd Agricultural Scientist and Farmers Congress and the National Science Day event at BGSB University.

Her remarkable work has earned her several awards and recognitions, including the Indian Biodiversity Award 2021 and the FSIA Real Super Woman Award 2021. She has been featured among the state's most powerful women and has received honours from the Government of Himachal Pradesh for her exceptional contributions to rural development and women's empowerment.

Beyond academia and research, Dr. Thakur's influence extends to practical implementation, where she has guided over 15 undergraduate and postgraduate projects, focusing on wild food plants, medicinal herbs, and sustainable agriculture. She has also been a reviewer for prominent international journals and offers her expertise to various organisations, contributing to the growth of sustainable practices across the region. She has published 18 articles in reputed national and international journals.

Dr. Tara Devi Sen Thakur's work stands as a testament to the powerful intersection of science, tradition, and community development. Through her diverse initiatives, she continues to contribute meaningfully to the conservation of Himalayan biodiversity and the empowerment of local communities, securing a healthier, more sustainable future for both people and the environment.

MOTHERHOOD UNBOUND

माताएं: समाज और संस्कृति की मजबूत आधारशिलाएं

डॉ. सुनीता सिंह

सहायक प्रोफेसर-जैव रसायन विभाग
शिवाजी कालेज, दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय, नई दिल्ली

यह लेख मेरी माँ की याद में

मां शब्द का उच्चारण ही ममत्व, अपनत्व और सुखद अहसासों का आभास करा देता है। देश के नामचीन शायर डॉ. मंगल नसीम क्या खूब लिखते हैं-

क्या सूरत क्या सीरत थी,
मां ममता की मूरत थी।
पांव छुए और काम हुए,
अम्मा एक मुहुर्त थी।

इस संसार को साकार स्वरूप मां ने ही दिया है। मां जगत का हेतु और सेतु दोनों है। मां से परे संसार की परिकल्पना बेमानी है। मां के महत्व को शब्दों की सीमा में बांधना असंभव है। मां तो मां है। बच्चों के लिए उसके होंठों पर हमेशा दुआ है। फ्रांस के महान सम्राट नेपोलियन बोनापार्ट ने कहा था कि - “तुम मुझे साठ अच्छी माताएं दो, मैं तुम्हें एक अच्छा राष्ट्र दूंगा।”

मातृशक्ति का समाज और संस्कृति के निर्माण में सदा से अतुलनीय योगदान रहा है। मर्यादा पुरुषोत्तम श्रीराम की माता कौशल्या, लव कुश की मां जानकी, श्रीकृष्ण की पालक माता यशोदा को कौन भुला सकता है। शिवाजी को छत्रपति बनाने में माता जीजाबाई और मोहनदास को मोहनदास करमचंद गांधी बनाने में माता पुतलीबाई की भूमिका अग्रणी रही है। अहिल्याबाई होलकर, महारानी दुर्गावती और अहमदनगर की शासिका चांद बीबी का नाम इतिहास के पन्नों में स्वर्णिम अक्षरों में अंकित है। मां पत्रा धाय के त्याग और बलिदान को कौन भुला सकता है। भारत के इतिहास में अनेक पृष्ठ माताओं के त्याग, बलिदान और उनकी शिक्षाओं से भरे हुए हैं। माताओं ने अपने कायर और षड्यंत्रकारी पुत्रों को दंडित करने में भी कोर कसर नहीं छोड़ी है। माताओं की दी गई शिक्षाएं और उनके जनकल्याणकारी विचार सुशासन के आधार बने हैं जब कभी उन्हें लगा कि अब शासन और युद्धभूमि में उनकी जरूरत है, तो वे वहां भी पीछे नहीं रही हैं। अपनी पीठ पर पुत्र को बांधे हुए अंग्रेजी सेना से लड़ने वाली वीरांगना रानी लक्ष्मीबाई को कौन भुला सकता है। कवयित्री सुभद्रा कुमारी चौहान ने झांसी वाली रानी कविता में रानी लक्ष्मीबाई को अमर बना दिया है।



बुन्देले हरबोलो के मुंह हमने सुनी कहानी थी,
खूब लड़ी मरदानी वह तो झांसी वाली रानी थी ।

दक्षिण भारत में तो माताओं का इतना सम्मान था कि पुत्रों के नाम के साथ माता का नाम अनिवार्य रूप से लगाया जाता था। यथा-सातवाहन वंश के राजा-गौतमी पुत्र शातकर्णी और वाशिष्ठी पुत्र पुलुमावी। किन्नूर की रानी चेन्नमा के अद्भुत शौर्य और पराक्रम को हमें जरूर पढ़ना चाहिए। मुगल सम्राट अकबर की मां हमीदा बानू बेगम ने अकबर को अच्छी शिक्षा दी, तभी तो वह महान शासक बन पाया।

समाज और संस्कृति का मूल आधार परिवार को माना जाता है। यूनानी विचारक अरस्तू ने कहा था -मनुष्य एक सामाजिक प्राणी है। परिवार में बच्चों के लालन-पालन की जिम्मेदारी प्रायः मां ही उठाती हैं। घर में अन्य महिलाएं यथा -दादी, ताई, चाची, बुआ आदि भी सहायक की भूमिका में होती हैं। संयुक्त परिवार में बालक समाजीकरण का ककहरा जल्दी सीख जाता है। वह घर के माहौल से भी बहुत कुछ सीखता है। भाषा, संस्कार, खान-पान, पहनावा, बोलचाल का ढंग, पूजा- अर्चना और रीति-रिवाज सबको आत्मसात करते हुए चलता है। परवरिश बच्चों पर अच्छा और बुरा दोनों प्रभाव छोड़ती है। महानगरों में एकल परिवार और उसमें में जब पति-पत्नी दोनों ही वर्किंग हों तो परिस्थिति थोड़ा चुनौतीपूर्ण हो जाती है। एक आदर्श परिवार में पले-बढ़े व्यक्ति का व्यवहार कहीं अधिक संयत, शिष्ट और सुसंस्कृत होता है। बालक के भावी जीवन की दिशा और दशा बनाने में उसकी मां की भूमिका महत्वपूर्ण होती है। मां बालक में जो संस्कार रोपती है, वही आगे चलकर व्यक्तित्व के रूप में पुष्पित-पल्लवित होते हैं। भारतीय समाज में प्राचीन काल में घर की माताएं बच्चों को आदर्श महापुरुषों की कहानियां सुनाया करती थीं। उनकी अपनी परिकल्पना बच्चों को धीर, वीर, महावीर, न्याय प्रिय और दूसरों के दुःख -दर्द से द्रवित होने वाले व्यक्ति के रूप में तैयार करने की होती थी। घर के मूल्य, रीति-रिवाजों और पर्व त्योहारों में बालक की सहज अभिरुचि हो जाती थी। धार्मिक अनुष्ठानों में अपने पूर्ववर्ती स्वजनों के साथ बैठकर यज्ञ, हवन, पूजा, अर्चना आदि के द्वारा संस्कृति को स्वाभाविक रूप से ग्रहण किया जाता था। कालान्तर में यह परम्परा कमजोर होने लगी। वैश्वीकरण के दौर में सांस्कृतिक मूल्यों को रोक पाना एक चुनौती बनी हुई है। भारत के बाहर रहने वाले प्रवासी लोग अपनी संस्कृति की विरासत को थामे रखने के लिए कहीं अधिक संकल्पवान नजर आ रहे हैं। माताओं को अपने इस गुरुत्तर दायित्व को समझना चाहिए और अपनी संतानों को भारतीय संस्कृति के मूल्यों से परिचित भी कराना चाहिए। संस्कृति हमारी पहचान होती है। मां की सीख और हिदायतें बच्चों को आजन्म याद रहती हैं। कदम-कदम पर हमारा मार्गदर्शन



करती हैं। जीवन के कमजोर क्षणों में हमारा संबल और साहस बनती हैं। प्रातः स्मरणीय माता जीजाबाई ने अपने परम प्रतापी पुत्र शिवाजी की नारी – सम्मान का ऐसा पाठ पढ़ाया कि उन्होंने युद्ध के मैदानों में अपने सैनिकों को स्पष्ट आदेश दिया कि कभी भी विरोधी खेमे की कोई स्त्री तुम्हें मिल जाए तो सम्मान सहित उसके परिवार वालों को सौंप दी जाये। यह मां के दिये हुए संस्कार ही थे। जिनका पालन शिवाजी महाराज ने जीवन पर्यन्त किया। देश की प्रथम आई पी एस अधिकारी किरण बेदी का कहना है कि समाज की बेहतरी के लिए बेटों को संस्कारित करने की महती आवश्यकता है। घर में बच्चों के मानसिक और संवेदनात्मक विकास में मां की भूमिका सर्वोच्च होती है। बालक अपनी मां से हर छोटी-बड़ी बात साझा करते हैं। उनको गुस्सा, प्रेम, नफरत, दया, करुणा, संवेदनशीलता आदि को समझने और समझाने का कार्य मां ही करती है। मां की गोद में बालक के मन में उठने वाला बवंडर शांत समुद्र-सा हो जाता है। एक बालक की भावुकता में उसकी मां को देखा और महसूस किया जा सकता है। समस्या – समाधान की कला में मां बच्चों के लिए मार्गदर्शक का कार्य करती है। यहां पर देश की प्रथम शिक्षिका सावित्रीबाई फुले का सहज स्मरण हो आता है। उन्होंने विकट परिस्थितियों में शिक्षा ग्रहण की और सामाजिक अपमान की परवाह न करते हुए बालिकाओं के लिए विद्यालय भी स्थापित किये। महाराष्ट्र में बालिका शिक्षा का सूत्रपात करने में आपकी अग्रणी भूमिका रही है।

आजादी के ७७ साल होने के बावजूद भारतीय समाज में नारी की स्थिति को लेकर आज तक विमर्श और परिचर्चाओं का दौर जारी है। नारी सशक्तिकरण की दिशा में अनेक योजनाएं और कार्यक्रम आते रहते हैं। विगत वर्ष महिलाओं के लिए ३३ प्रतिशत आरक्षण का बिल भी संसद में पास हुआ है। उसका समुचित क्रियान्वयन होना अभी बाकी है। तीन तलाक के अभिशाप से मुक्ति के लिए मुस्लिम समाज की महिलाओं को कानूनी सहायता मिल गई है। मगर अभी भी गांव-देहात और दूर-दराज में महिलाओं की स्थिति काफी चिंता जनक और सोचनीय है। समाज को अपनी सोच बदलनी होगी। यदि परिवार में मां पढ़ी-लिखी और उन्नत सोच वाली होगी तो उसके दूरगामी परिणाम हमें देखने को मिलेंगे। बच्चों की बढ़िया परवरिश में। बच्चों के सामाजिक और सांस्कृतिक विकास में। मां का मार्गदर्शन और उसके द्वारा दिए गए संस्कार बालक जीवन पर्यंत जिंदा रखते हैं।

समाज और संस्कृति के निर्माण में माताओं की उपादेयता किसी से छिपी नहीं है। अस्तु भारत में नारी की स्थिति को लेकर बहुत-सी किंवदंती प्रचलित हैं। एक और जहां उसे देवी, महादेवी और अन्नपूर्णा जैसे विशेषणों से समाहृत किया गया तो वहीं उसे शिक्षा और सम्पत्ति के अधिकार से दूर रखा गया। मध्यम तथा निम्न वर्ग में नारी की स्थिति काफी चिंता जनक रही है। सती प्रथा, पर्दा प्रथा, बाल-विवाह, देवदासी प्रथा और अन्य रूढ़िवादी मान्यताओं और परम्पराओं ने नारी को घर की चारदीवारी में कैद करके बैठा दिया। अठारहवीं शताब्दी के समाज सुधारकों ने इस दिशा में प्रशंसनीय कार्य किया है। राजाराम



मोहन राय, दयानंद सरस्वती, महागोविंद रानाडे, ज्योतिबा फुले, ऐनी बेसेंट, स्वामी विवेकानंद आदि के विचारों से प्रभावित होकर समाज में चेतना आई। बेटियों के महत्व को स्वीकार किया गया। उन्हें पढ़ने-लिखने और जीवन को बेहतर बनाने की आजादी मिल सकी। इस दिशा में अंग्रेजी शासन का भी सक्रिय समर्थन मिला। २० वीं और २१ वीं शताब्दी में भारतीय समाज में नारी सशक्तिकरण के अनेक उदाहरण सामने आये हैं। सुचेता कृपलानी, उषा मेहता, लक्ष्मी सहगल, सरोजिनी नायडू, विजय लक्ष्मी पंडित, श्रीमती इंदिरा गांधी, सुषमा स्वराज, जयललिता, ममता बनर्जी, मायावती, उमा भारती जैसी जुझारू नेत्रियों ने देश की राजनीति की दिशा और दशा को निर्धारित किया। शासन-प्रशासन में, व्यापार-रोजगार, खेल, प्रौद्योगिकी, अंतरिक्ष और सेना में भी महिलाओं ने अपनी प्रतिभा की चमक से सबको चमत्कृत किया है। वास्तव में २१ वीं शताब्दी महिलाओं की शताब्दी है।

समाज में बेटियों को शिक्षित करना बहुत जरूरी है। वे दो-दो घरों को अपने ज्ञान की रोशनी से आलोकित करती हैं। इतिहास साक्षी है कि प्रतिवर्ष दसवीं बारहवीं की परीक्षाओं के परिणाम के समय लड़कियां हमेशा लड़कों से आगे ही रहती हैं। आज जीवन के प्रत्येक क्षेत्र में बेटियां कामयाबी की नई इबारत लिख रही हैं। सरकारी स्तर पर मिले प्रोत्साहन का सुफल दिखाई भी दे रहा है। आज बेटियां घर से लेकर हवाई जहाज तक चला रही हैं। गृहस्थ जीवन में आने के बाद ये शिक्षित-प्रशिक्षित महिलाएं निश्चित अपने बच्चों को ज्ञान-विज्ञान और अपनी संस्कृति से अवश्य परिचित कराएंगी।

थोड़ी चर्चा माताओं के स्वास्थ्य और उनकी माली हालत की भी करना समीचीन होगा। भारत में खासकर ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में महिलाओं को गरीबी और बेकारी के चलते स्वास्थ्य समस्याओं से जूझना पड़ता है। कम उम्र में शादी होना और जल्द गर्भवती होना उनके आन्तरिक स्वास्थ्य पर बुरा असर डालता है। पौष्टिक आहार की न तो जानकारी होती है और न ही उनको मिल पाता है। इसी वजह से आंगनवाड़ी केन्द्रों की स्थापना की गई है। जिनमें गर्भवती महिलाओं का नामांकन किया जाता है। जिनके माध्यम से पौष्टिक आहार और स्वास्थ्य संबंधी सुझाव महिलाओं को नियमित रूप से दिये जा रहे हैं। आयरन और फोलिक एसिड की गोलियां भी दी जाती हैं। बालिका जन्म के अवसर पर कई राज्य सरकारें प्रोत्साहन राशि भी प्रदान करती हैं। इक्कीसवीं शताब्दी की रजत जयंती के अवसर पर सभी देशवासियों को माताओं के उत्तम स्वास्थ्य के लिए जागरूकता कार्यक्रम और आवश्यक चिकित्सा सुविधाएं उपलब्ध कराई जानी चाहिए। तभी हमें देश के लिए सुडौल और मजबूत भावी पीढ़ी मिल सकती है।



शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और रोजगार से जुड़कर महिलाओं ने मील के पत्थर स्थापित किये हैं। समाज को जागरूक और जिम्मेदार बनाकर नई दिशा प्रदान की है। स्वहित समूहों के द्वारा अपने घरों की माली हालत को सुधारा है। सेवा क्षेत्र को विस्तार दिया है और एक उद्यमी के रूप में अलग छाप छोड़ी है। शिक्षा का क्षेत्र तो महिलाओं का सबसे पसंदीदा क्षेत्र बन चुका है। परिवर्तन की लहर शिक्षा से ही संभव हो सकती है। समाज में रूढ़िवादी सोच और व्यर्थ के आडम्बरो से ऊपर उठकर एक लचीलेपन और विकासवादी नजरिए की जरूरत कहीं अधिक है। हमें सबको समान भाव से मान्यता देनी चाहिए। “जियें सब और जिसमें हम” के आदर्श को स्वीकार करना चाहिए। किसी कवि ने क्या खूब कहा है -

सबै भूमि गोपाल की, या में अटक कहां।
जाके मन में अटक है, सो ही अटक रहा।।

जीवन के रंगमंच पर मां का किरदार सबसे अनूठा और विशिष्ट होता है। उर्दू अदब के बड़े शायर मुनव्वर राणा ने क्या खूब लिखा है -

लबों पे उसके कभी बददुआ नहीं होती,
बस एक मां है, जो मुझसे खफ़ा नहीं होती।

घेर लेने को जब भी बलाएं आ गईं,
ढाल बनकर मां की दुआएं आ गईं।

इस तरह मेरे गुनाहों को वो धो देती है,
मां बहुत गुस्से में होती है तो रो देती है।

माताओं की सामाजिक - सांस्कृतिक भूमिकाएं अपने - अपने क्षेत्र और समाज के अनुसार भी निर्धारित होती रही हैं मगर बालक को जन्म देना और उसका लालन-पालन करना प्रत्येक माता का गुरुत्तर दायित्व रहा है। विद्वानों ने मां के अन्दर भगवान के स्वरूप को देखा और माना है। हिन्दी के चर्चित कवि नरेन्द्र सिंह “नीहार” लिखते हैं -

एक अद्भुत वरदान है मां,
एक निश्छल मुस्कान है मां।
बालक को जीवन देती है,
धरती पर भगवान है मां।।



धरती पर भगवान मां जीवन की हर कसौटी पर स्वयं को कसती हुई आगे बढ़ती जाती है। वह घर में अपने बच्चों को और शिक्षिका के रूप में विद्यालय में समाज के बच्चों को सामाजिक और सांस्कृतिक मूल्यों से ओतप्रोत करती है। देश और समाज के निर्माण में माताओं के योगदान को रेखांकित करना समय की बहुत बड़ी अपेक्षा है।

विश्व की समस्त माताओं को नमन करते हुए लेखनी को विराम देती हूं।

जीजाबाई का मातृत्व

साबी कुमारी

बीए (ऑनर्स) बिजनेस इकोनॉमिक्स, द्वितीय वर्ष

इतिहास हमें भूतकाल का यथार्थ ज्ञान कराता है। वह हमें प्रेरणा देता है और हमारा मार्गदर्शन भी कराता है। अपने पूर्वजों के शौर्य और पराक्रम का वह साक्षी होता है। इसलिए जब हम शिवकालीन इतिहास को पढ़ते हैं, तो हमें जीजाबाई एक अष्टावधानी - कर्तृत्वशालिनी मां के रूप में दिखाई देती है। यत्र-तत्र होने वाले मुगलों के अत्याचार से समाज की पीड़ा का दर्शन हमें होता है। ऐसे समय में संपूर्ण समाज को संगठित कर उसके अंदर स्वराज्य की भावना जाग्रत करना आवश्यक था। जीजाबाई ने एक शेरनी की भांति अपने बछड़े को तैयार किया और उसके अंदर समाज के प्रति कर्तव्य का बीजारोपण किया। अपने पुत्र को प्रशिक्षण देकर और उसे स्वयं के कर्तव्यों के प्रति जागरूक करने वाली जीजाबाई ने अपने जीवन में अपने स्वप्न को साकार होते देखा है। जीजाबाई का जीवन सदैव अपने पुत्र एवं अपने पुत्र रूपी समाज को यथार्थ के मार्ग पर ले जाने वाली अदम्य शक्ति का परिचायक है। उन्होंने संपूर्ण भारतवर्ष को प्रेरणा दी और अपने पुत्र शिवाजी के माध्यम से मुगलों को परास्त करके हिंदवी स्वराज्य की स्थापना की। जीजाबाई ने सभी लोगों को यह प्रेरणा दी कि एक स्त्री, एक मां अगर चाहे, प्रण ले तो घर-घर से शिवाजी महाराज जैसे कर्तव्यपरायण पुत्र निर्माण कर सकती है। जीजाबाई का जन्म वर्ष १५६७ ई में सिन्दखेड़ अधिपती जाघवराव के यहाँ हुआ। जीजाबाई बाल्यकाल से ही हिन्दूत्व प्रेमी, धार्मिक तथा साहसी स्वभाव की थी। सहिष्णुता का गुण तो उनमें कूट-कूट कर भरा हुआ था। इनका विवाह मालोजी के पुत्र शाहजी से हुआ। माता जीजाबाई एक कुशल घुड़सवार, रणनीतिकार, कूटनीतिज्ञ और तलवारबाज थी। उनके इन्हीं गुणों ने छत्रपति शिवाजी महाराज के व्यक्तित्व को बहुआयामी बना दिया था। छत्रपति शिवाजी महाराज के व्यक्तित्व के कण-कण में राष्ट्रमाता जीजाबाई का ज्योतिर्म प्रकाश विद्यमान रहा है। छोटी उम्र से ही दुःख देखते हुए बड़ी हुई जीजाबाई ने अपने दुखों और दुश्चारियों को अपने राष्ट्रप्रेम की आंच में भस्म कर दिया।

जीजाबाई को सदैव यह दुःख रहा कि उनके पिता और पति दोनों ही किसी और शासक के अधीन काम करते थे। जीजाबाई की यह अपार इच्छा थी कि मराठों का भी अपना साम्राज्य स्थापित हो। जीजाबाई हमेशा भगवान से यही प्रार्थना करती थी कि उन्हें एक ऐसा बेटा मिले जो मराठा साम्राज्य की नींव रख सके। उनकी प्रार्थनाओं का जवाब शिवाजी के तौर पर मिला।

१० अप्रैल सन् १६२७ को शिवनेर दुर्ग में जीजाबाई ने शिवाजी को जन्म दिया। पति की



उपेक्षा के कारण जीजाबाई ने अनेक असहनीय कष्टों को सहते हुए बालक शिवा का लालन-पालन किया। जीजाबाई ने बालक शिवा के लिए क्षत्रिय वेशानुरूप शास्त्रीय-शिक्षा के साथ शस्त्र-शिक्षा की व्यवस्था की एवं उनके शिक्षा के लिए दादाजी कोंडदेव जैसे व्यक्ति को नियुक्त किया। अक्सर जीजाबाई स्वयं भी रामायण, महाभारत तथा वीर बहादुरों की गौरव गाथाएं शिवाजी को सुनाया करती थी जिससे शिवाजी के मन में हिन्दू एवं वीर भावना



जागृत हो। वह शिवाजी से प्रायः कहा करती थी कि यदि "तुम संसार में आदर्श हिन्दू बनकर रहना चाहते हो तो तुम्हें स्वराज की स्थापना करनी पड़ेगी और देश से यवनों और विधर्मियों को निकालकर हिन्दू धर्म की रक्षा करो।

जीजाबाई के पति शाहजी ने दूसरा विवाह कर लिया था अतः जीजाबाई को कभी भी उनके पति का सहज स्वाभाविक प्रेम प्राप्त नहीं हुआ किंतु फिर भी उन्होंने अपने मान, अपमान को भुलाकर सारा ध्यान अपने पुत्र शिवाजी पर केन्द्रित कर दिया। जब शाहजी की मृत्यु हुई उस समय पति-परायणा जीजाबाई सती होना चाहती थी, किंतु जब शिवाजी ने अपनी माता से कहा की "माता! तुम्हारे पवित्र आदर्शों और प्रेरणा के बिना स्वराज की स्थापना संभव नहीं होगी तथा धर्म पर विधर्मियों का दबाव बढ़ जायेगा।" ऐसी भावना सुनकर माता जीजाबाई ने भविष्य के प्रति जागरूक दृष्टि का परिचय देते हुए सती होने का विचार त्याग दिया। जब शिवाजी संन्यासी के वेश में अपनी मां जीजाबाई के समक्ष भिक्षा लेने पहुँचे तो माँ ने उन्हें पहचान लिया और प्रसन्न होकर कहने लगी-"अब मुझे विश्वास हो गया है कि मेरा पुत्र स्वराज की स्थापना अवश्य करेगा"। अंत में जीजाबाई की साधना सफल हुई। शिवाजी ने महाराष्ट्र के साथ भारत के एक बड़े भाग पर स्वराज की स्वतंत्र पताका फहराई, जिसे देखकर जीजाबाई ने शांतिपूर्वक परलोक प्रस्थान किया। वस्तुतः जीजाबाई स्वराज्य की ही देवी थी।

प्राचीन काल में महाराष्ट्र इतना गुलाम था कि ब्राह्मण अपने विवादों को सुलझाने के लिए सुल्तान के पास जाते थे, जैसे कि 'धार्मिक अनुष्ठान में कौन प्रसाद चढ़ाए? सुल्तान की सेना अक्सर स्थानीय क्षत्रियों की पत्नियों का अपहरण कर लेते थे, और वे अपनी पत्नियों को वापस पाने के लिए विनम्रतापूर्वक रिश्वत देते थे। आक्रमणकारियों द्वारा हिंदूओं के साथ किए जा रहे व्यवहार को देखकर जीजाबाई गुस्से से भर जाती थीं। इस प्रकार, बचपन से ही, उनके मन में आक्रमणकारियों के प्रति गहरी नफरत पैदा हो गई थी, जिन्होंने हिंदूओं को अपमानित करने के लिए हर चाल चली थी। जीजाबाई ने एक बार अपने पिता से कहा था-"मराठा के लोग सिर्फ अहंकार और लालच के कारण आपस में लड़ रहे हैं। अगर उनकी वीरतापूर्ण तलवारें एक हो जाएँ, तो विदेशी आक्रमणकारी कुछ ही समय में परास्त हो जाएँगे। उन्होंने कहा कि अपनी आजीविका के लिए आक्रमणकारियों के अधीन कार्य करना अपमान की बात है, आप लोगों को इसे छोड़ देना चाहिए। जीजाबाई की प्रखर देशभक्ति और धर्म के प्रति प्रेम ने उनके पिता का दिल छू लिया। जीजाबाई की यह मनोकामना थी कि वे तलवार चलाए और शेर पर बैठकर दुश्मनों का वध करें। वे अक्सर धार्मिक युद्ध और रामराज्य की स्थापना करने के सपने देखा करती थी।



एक दिन माता जीजाबाई ने शिवाजी को अपने पास बुलाया और कहा, “बेटा शिवा! तुम्हें किसी भी कीमत पर सिंहगढ़ जीतना है और उन्होंने शिवाजी के भीतर जोश भरते हुए कहा कि बेटा अगर तुमने सिंहगढ़ पर लहराते उस विदेशी झंडे को उतार कर नहीं फेंका तो यह मान लेना कि तुमने अपने जीवन में कुछ भी नहीं किया।” उन्होंने शिवाजी को यह भी कहा कि अगर तुम यह करने में समर्थ रहे तभी मैं तुम्हें अपना पुत्र समझूंगी। किंतु शिवाजी उस समय इतने परिपक्व नहीं थे। उन्होंने जीजाबाई के सामने सिर झुकाते हुए कहा, “हे माता! मगलों की सेना हमारी तुलना में बहुत विशाल है और हमारी मौजूदा स्थिति भी उनकी तुलना में कमजोर है। ऐसे में उनसे युद्ध करना और सिंहगढ़ से उनका झंडा उतारना आसान नहीं होगा। “यह एक कठिन लक्ष्य है। शिवाजी का यह जवाब सुनकर जीजाबाई आवेश में आ गईं और गुस्से में कहने लगी-धिक्कार है तुम्हें बेटा शिवा! तुम्हें खुद मेरा बेटा कहना छोड़ देना चाहिए। तुम चूड़िया पहनकर घर में बैठो। मैं स्वयं फौज के साथ सिंहगढ़ के दुर्ग पर आक्रमण करूंगी और विदेशी झंडे को उस पर उतार कर फेंक दूंगी”। यह सुनते ही शिवाजी लज्जित हो गए और सबसे पहले अपनी माँ से क्षमा मांगी और बोले, “माता, मैं तुम्हारी यह इच्छा जरूर पूरी करूंगा, चाहे जो कुछ हो जाए”। फौरन ही शिवाजी ने तानाजी को बुलवाया और जंग की तैयारी करने का आदेश दिया। शिवाजी का आदेश पाते ही तानाजी ने योजनाबद्ध तरीके से सैनिकों को किले के नीचे इकट्ठे हुए। वहाँ बहुत सी कठिनाईयाँ आईं जिनका सामना सभी सैनिकों के साथ तानाजी ने भी उसे बखूबी सामना किया। आगे बढ़ते-बढ़ते तानाजी सीधे मोर्चे पर वह विरोधी के साथ वीरता से लड़े और सिंहगढ़ पर अधिकार कर लिया पर वे स्वयं नहीं रहें। जैसे ही यह सामाचार शिवाजी को मिला, उनकी आँखें नम हो गईं। अंततः जीत हासिल हुई और शिवाजी के मुँह से बस यही निकला कि ‘गढ़ आला, पन सिंह गेला’ यानी किला तो जीत लिया, लेकिन अपना शेर खो दिया।

जीजाबाई एक प्रभावी और प्रतिबद्ध महिला थीं जिनके लिए आत्मसम्मान और उनके मूल्य सर्वोपरि थे। अपनी दूरदर्शिता के लिए प्रसिद्ध जीजाबाई स्वयं एक योद्धा व प्रशासक थीं। सन् १६६६ ई में शिवाजी आगरा के लिए रवाना हो गए तत्पश्चात जीजाबाई ने अपने ऊपर राज्य का कामकाज देखने की जिम्मेदारी ली जिसके फलस्वरूप उनके जीवन में कई घटनाएं घटी, कुछ अच्छी, कुछ बुरी और कुछ दर्दनाक। जीजाबाई ने इन सारी कठिनाईयों को चुपचाप सहन किया। जीजाबाई के बड़े बेटे संभाजी की हत्या अफजल खान ने की थी जिसका बदला शिवाजी ने अपनी माता के आशीर्वाद से लिया। हालांकि, शिवाजी की कई यादगार जीत रहीं जिनमें तोरणगढ़ किले पर जीत मुगलों की नजरबंदी से निकलकर भाग निकलना, तानाजी, बाजी प्रभु और सूर्याजी जैसे योद्धाओं के साथ मिलकर शिवाजी कई



मोर्चों पर जीत हासिल करते गए।

छत्रपति शिवाजी महाराज ने गोरिल्ला युद्ध की एक नई शैली, शिवसूत्र विकसित की और पश्चिम भारत में मुगलों को सीधी चुनौति देने लगे। १६७४ तक उन्होंने उन सारे प्रदेशों पर पुनः अधिकार कर लिया जो पुरंदर की संधि (१६६५) के साथ उन्हें मुगलों को सौंपने पड़े थे। इसके बाद शिवाजी महाराज ने स्वतंत्र हिन्दवी साम्राज्य की स्थापना की और फिर रायगढ़ में उनका राज्याभिषेक किया गया जिसके बाद वे छत्रपति श्री शिवाजी महाराज कहलाए। शिवाजी मातृत्व की महत्ता का उल्लेख करते हुए कहते हैं कि, 'एक स्त्री के सभी अधिकारों में सबसे महान अधिकार उसका मां बनना है।

'अथ शिक्षा प्रवक्ष्यामः, मातृमान् पितृमानाचार्यवान् पुरुषो वेदः' अर्थात् जब पहला शिक्षकमाता, दूसरा पिता और तीसरा गुरु हो तभी एक व्यक्ति ज्ञानवान होगा।

जीजाबाई ने क्रूर और आतताई आक्रांताओं के खिलाफ लड़ने के लिए मराठाओं को ललकारा और अपने पति शाहजी व बड़े पुत्र संभाजी की मृत्यु के बाद छोटे बेटे शिवाजी को राष्ट्र-रक्षा का संकल्प दिलाया।

जीजाबाई जब शिवाजी के साथ पुणे रहने गईं तब वहाँ उन्होंने कस्बापेठ गणपति मंदिर की स्थापनाकी और ताबंडी जोगेश्वरी और केवरेक्ष्वर मंदिर का जीर्णोद्धार करवाया। मंदिरों की संरक्षक होने के अलावा, जीजाबाई संतों के भजन-कीर्तन सुना करती थी, संस्कृत ग्रंथों का अध्ययन किया करती थी और धार्मिक अनुष्ठानों का पालन किया करती थी। जीजाबाई एक पवित्र पत्नी के साथ-साथ एक कर्तव्यनिष्ठ माँ थीं। राजमाता जीजाबाई का जीवन भारतवर्ष ही नहीं अपितु सम्पूर्ण विश्व के लिए प्रेरणास्पद है। उन्होंने अपने कर्तव्य के माध्यम से सिद्ध कर दिया कि समाज की उन्नति के लिए अपनी संतति को सामने लाकर समाज को जाग्रत किया जाना पूर्ण सम्भव है।

“नास्ति मातृसमा छाया, नास्ति मातृसमा गतिः। नास्ति मातृसमं त्राणं, नास्ति मातृसमा प्रिया।।” अर्थात् इस संसार में माता में माता के समान कोई छाया नहीं है, माता के जैसे कोई सहारा नहीं है। माता के जैसे कोई रक्षक नहीं है और माता से ज्यादा कोई प्रिय नहीं है।

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Lokmata Ahilyabai Holkar: Mother of the Masses

Shreya Dwivedi
BA Program, 3rd Year

“In latter days from the Brahma came,
To rule our land, a noble dome,
Kind was her heart and bright her fame,
Ahilya was her honoured name.”

These lines, written in 1849 by poet Joanna Baillie, honor one of India's greatest visionary female rulers.

Ahilyabai Holkar, popularly known as Rajmata Ahilya Devi Holkar, was born on May 31, 1725, in the small village of Chondi near Aurangabad, in present-day Maharashtra. She came from humble beginnings—her father, Mankoji Shinde, was a Patil (village head) from the Dhangar community, while her mother, Sushila Bai Shinde, was a pious and well-read woman. Despite the lack of formal education for women in her village, Ahilyabai's father ensured she was taught to read and write. Her mother, preparing her for the responsibilities of household management, instilled in her the values of dedication and service.

Ahilyabai's life took a dramatic turn when she married Khanderao Holkar, the prince of the Holkar dynasty. However, her personal journey was marred by tragedy. After her husband's death in the 1754 Battle of Kumbher, she was widowed at the young age of 29. This loss only strengthened her resolve to serve her people. As she took on the leadership of the Holkar kingdom, she transitioned from a grieving widow to a powerful ruler, earning the love and respect of her subjects.

Ahilyabai was not just a courageous warrior; she was a mother in every sense of the word. She had two children—her daughter, Mukta Bai, known for her grace and intelligence, and her son, Malerao, who



struggled with mental health issues. Despite the challenges, Ahilyabai's love for her children never faltered. She offered guidance and wisdom to Malerao, teaching him the values of righteousness and justice.



However, his sudden death left her heartbroken. Yet, even in the face of deep personal grief, Ahilyabai remained resolute in her duties as a ruler.

As a mother to her people, Ahilyabai's rule was marked by her deep empathy and compassion. She moved the Holkar capital to Maheshwar, where she constructed the majestic Ahilya Fort on the banks of the Narmada River, a symbol of her vision and strength. Known for her firm but fair leadership, she set aside time for public hearings, where subjects from all over her kingdom came with their grievances. She viewed her people as her own children, dedicating her life to their welfare.

Ahilyabai's motherly instincts extended beyond her family. In an era when women in India faced immense societal challenges, she worked tirelessly to uplift them. She created legal mechanisms that protected widows from eviction by their families, ensuring their right to inherit property without interference. She also challenged the practice of Sati, demonstrating that a widow could lead a meaningful life without self-sacrifice. Her life served as a powerful critique of the tradition, as she chose to live on after her husband's death and led her kingdom with dignity.

Ahilyabai was a pioneer in education, believing firmly in its transformative power. She established schools and educational centers across her kingdom, ensuring that people from all walks of life had access to learning. Her commitment to the education of girls was groundbreaking, as she recognized that educating women could uplift entire families and communities. In her court, scholars, poets, and artists flourished, making her reign a golden age for culture and the arts.

In addition to her focus on education, Ahilyabai worked to ensure the economic independence of her people. She supported local crafts,



particularly the art of Maheshwari weaving, and invited weavers from Surat and Gujarat to teach the skill to local artisans. She personally contributed to the design of Maheshwari Sarees, which became famous across India. By promoting self-reliance and local industries, Ahilyabai fostered a sense of pride in her people's work and heritage. Agriculture also thrived under Ahilyabai's reign. She implemented measures to improve farming practices, constructed dams and canals for irrigation, and introduced laws to protect farmers from the adverse effects of droughts and floods. She believed that farmers were the backbone of any kingdom, and she ensured that their livelihoods were safeguarded.

Ahilyabai's compassion extended even to the Bhillas, a marginalized group that had been looting and terrorizing travelers. After arresting them, she gave them a second chance, employing them as helpers for pilgrims and tourists. This gesture not only provided them with a livelihood but also helped rehabilitate them.

A devout Hindu, Ahilyabai contributed to India's spiritual legacy by constructing and restoring numerous temples and ghats. Her patronage led to the construction of the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi and the Shri Mallikarjun Temple, among many others. The Ahilya Ghat in Varanasi remains a testament to her devotion. She also sponsored religious structures in places like Dwarka, Badrinath, and Rameshwar, ensuring that her people's spiritual needs were met.

Ahilyabai's selflessness was evident in her dedication to charitable causes. She used her personal finances to fund the construction of temples, ghats, and rest houses, without seeking recognition or glory. Her focus was always on the well-being of her people, and her leadership was guided by a genuine desire to uplift those around her.



Today, Ahilyabai is remembered as a ruler who prioritized the welfare of her people above all else. Her leadership, rooted in compassion, wisdom, and resilience, continues to inspire generations. Ahilyabai Holkar remains an enduring symbol of selfless leadership-much like a mother who nurtures, protects, and guides her children with unwavering love. Her legacy stands as a testament to the transformative power of visionary leadership and the deep bond between a ruler and her people.

From Goddess to Forgotten: Reviving the True Honour of Women in Society

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Forgotten grace, a lost refrain,
Once revered, now bound by pain.
If the past was gold, why not retain?

India has long been celebrated as a cradle of wisdom and spirituality, a land where women were venerated not just as individuals but as divine embodiments of strength and virtue. The epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata stand as timeless examples of this reverence. Lord Rama's journey to rescue Sita symbolises the sanctity of a woman's honour, while the humiliation of Draupadi in the Mahabharata ignites a war to restore justice. These epics underscore an era when women's dignity was non-negotiable, woven deeply into the societal fabric. Yet today, this legacy feels like a distant echo. The notion of women as “Devis” persists in cultural rhetoric, but it rarely finds expression in actions. The paradox is stark: while goddesses are worshipped in temples, the everyday woman faces neglect, oppression, and disrespect. This dichotomy raises a critical question: if women were once held as sacred, why has society drifted so far from treating them with that same reverence?

The Past: When Honour Was a Practice, Not a Pretence

“When honour lived, not just portrayed,
In deeds of gold, its truth displayed.
No hollow words, no empty lore,
Respect for women deeply bore.

In ancient India, respect for women transcended symbolism. It was a lived reality. Women were scholars, warriors, advisors, and anchors of moral and spiritual equilibrium. Figures like Gargi and Maitreyi, renowned philosophers of the Vedic age, illustrate this. Women's roles extended far beyond domestic boundaries; they were pivotal in shaping



intellectual and cultural paradigms. Society's commitment to safeguarding women's dignity was deeply ingrained. Sita's abduction in the Ramayana sparked a monumental campaign to uphold her honour. Draupadi's humiliation in the Mahabharata triggered a war to restore justice. These narratives reveal a society that valued women's respect as essential to its moral framework, where reverence was reflected in concrete action rather than empty words.

Revered in idols, yet scorned in life,
A goddess in prayer, a victim in strife.
The crown of respect, a hollow disguise,
Reality dims where hypocrisy lies.

Today, women are celebrated in symbolic gestures, but these often lack depth and sincerity. Society clings to outdated ideals of the self-sacrificing, all-enduring woman while denying her basic freedoms and respect. Women are expected to excel in all their roles as a daughter, wife, mother, and professional. And, yet they are unfairly judged for any perceived shortcomings. The contradictions are glaring. Festivals like Navratri glorify the divine feminine, and yet gender-based violence, discrimination, and inequality persist in domestic spheres and public spaces. The same society that elevates women to pedestals often undermines their autonomy, individuality, and dreams.

The Struggles of Modern Women
Through trials they march, their spirits concealed,
In battles unspoken, their wounds are revealed.
A dance of resilience, a song of their pain,
Yet they bloom like flowers in the harshest of rain.

Modern women navigate through a labyrinth of expectations, often finding themselves judged no matter the choices they make. A working mother is criticised for prioritising her career and equally condemned if she devotes herself entirely to her family. Her sacrifices are taken for



granted, and her ambitions are dismissed as selfish. This relentless pressure to conform to impossible standards chips away at her mental and emotional well-being. The vibrant, ambitious individual she once was often fades into a shadow, suffocated by societal expectations. Women who challenge these norms by choosing not to marry or have children, or prioritise their careers face harsh scrutiny and judgment. Worse still, women who assert their opinions or demand equality are often labeled arrogant or difficult. Such judgments perpetuate a culture of suppression, denying women the freedom to live authentically.

Her dignity shines, a timeless flame,
A beacon of strength, beyond mere name.
Restore her honour, let respect revive,
For in her grace, the world will thrive.

It is time to reconcile the contradictions between our cultural heritage and modern realities. Reverence for women as “Devis” must move beyond festivals and mythology; it must become an integral part of everyday life.

True respect begins with acknowledging women's humanity. They are not infallible goddesses but individuals with dreams, flaws, and rights. Society must shift its focus from demanding perfection to celebrating individuality. Women should be free to make mistakes, pursue passions, and define their own paths without fear of judgment or criticism. Education is key to reshaping societal attitudes. Children must learn from an early age to respect women as equals, value their contributions, and challenge harmful stereotypes. Schools and families must foster environments where empathy, equality, and mutual respect are not just ideals but everyday practices.



A mother's journey, filled with grace,
Yet judged by others in every space.
She's learning too, with every tear,

Her strength, her worth, should be crystal clear.

A mother's journey, though inherently filled with grace, is too often overshadowed by the weight of societal judgment. New mothers, while learning and adapting to the nuances of nurturing life, are unfairly criticised for not having all the answers. Yet, their path is one of growth and transformation, navigating the uncharted waters of motherhood with resilience. Instead of casting blame or perpetuating unrealistic expectations, we must celebrate their humanity. By offering support, understanding, and compassion, we must allow them the freedom to evolve, flourish and embrace their journey with strength, confidence, and unwavering love.

From ancient tales, a light we glean,
Where women stood as wisdom's queen.
Yet flaws remind, as eras blend,
True honour grows where equals mend.

The reverence women received in ancient India offers valuable lessons for today. The stories of Sita, Draupadi, Gargi, and Maitreyi remind us of a time when women were integral to society's progress. However, history also holds lessons in its flaws. Practices like child marriage and restrictions on widows emerged over time, illustrating the need for constant reflection and reform. By blending the wisdom of the past with modern principles of equality, we can create a society that honours women in both thought and action.

From ancient tales, a light we glean,
Where women stood as wisdom's queen.
Yet flaws remind, as eras blend,
True honour grows where equals mend.

Imagine a world where women are celebrated not for their sacrifices but



for their individuality; a world where they are free to dream, falter and rise again without the weight of societal expectations; a world where respect for women transcends temples and festivals, becoming a lived reality in every home, workplace, and community. Our ancestors recognised women as embodiments of strength, wisdom, and compassion. Honouring this legacy means treating women with the respect, freedom, and dignity they deserve. A society that uplifts its women uplifts itself, creating a brighter, more inclusive future for all. Let us move beyond hollow gestures and embrace the humanity of the women around us. Let us celebrate them not as perfect goddesses but as individuals complex, resilient, and worthy of love, respect, and equality. Only then can we truly claim to honour the rich heritage of our past while forging a progressive path forward.

अद्वितीय माता - देवकी

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“नास्ति मातृ छाया, नास्ति मातृसमा गति,
नास्ति मातृसमं त्राणं नास्ति मातृसमा प्रपा”

माँ के समान कोई छाया नहीं, माँ के समान कोई आश्रय नहीं, माँ के समान कोई रक्षक नहीं, माँ के समान इस संसार में कोई जीवन दाता नहीं ।

पुराणों में अनेकों स्थान पर माँ को ईश्वर का रूप बताया गया उसे जीवन के प्रतीक के रूप में माना गया है । क्योंकि यह सृजन और दिव्यता दोनों का प्रतिनिधित्व करती है । हिंदू धर्म में माँ को दिव्य शक्ति, सक्रिय शक्ति माना है । शक्ति को सर्वोच्च ईश्वर का स्त्री रूप माना है । वह सभी जगह प्रकट होते हुए प्रकृति की दिव्यता के साथ-साथ व्यक्तिगत मानव व्यक्तित्व के बीच मध्यस्थता करती है । वह ब्रह्माण्ड में सृजन और सर्वोच्च की भव्यता के बीच की कड़ी है । माँ गहरे प्रेम और दया की प्रतीक है । लेकिन प्राणी के भौतिक और आध्यात्मिक विकास के लिए अपने उग्र सुरक्षात्मक गुणों का उपयोग भी करती है । माताएँ विशेष महिलाएँ होती थीं जिनके पास अद्वितीय चरित्र और शक्ति होती थी । जो अच्छी तथा खराब दोनों परिस्थितियों में असाधारण साहस प्रेम प्रदर्शित करती थी । हमारे देश में सदैव से ही माँ को ईश्वर के बराबर माना जाता है । और यही सिद्धांत हमारी सभ्यता और संस्कृति दोनों में समाया है । पुराणों में कुछ माताओं को कोमल हृदय वाली जबकि अन्य को दृढ़ इच्छा शक्ति वाली और दृढ़ निश्चय के रूप में भी दिखाया गया है । कुछ माताएँ, जो हमारे दिमाग में आती हैं पार्वती- रचनात्मक माँ, सीता- बहादुर माँ, कौशल्या- पीड़िता माँ, शकुंतला - अकेली माँ, कुंती- दृढ़ इच्छा शक्ति वाली माँ आदि । ये माताएँ अद्वितीय हैं क्योंकि अपने बच्चों के लिए उनका प्यार सर्वोपरि है । आज हम एक ऐसी स्त्री के बारे में लिख रहे हैं । जिसका चरित्र आदर्श माँ का है । जिसने अपने कर्तव्य के लिए अपनी ममता का त्याग कर दिया । वह मथुरा के राजा अग्रसेन के छोटे भाई देवक की बेटी थी । “देवकी”

देवकी का विवाह यादव राजा शूरसेन के पुत्र वासुदेव से हुआ, कहा जाता है कि देवकी अदिति का अवतार थी । अपनी बहन दिति के श्राप के कारण उनको पृथ्वी पर जन्म लेने तथा अपनी सभी संतानों को अपने ही सामने मारे जाते हुए देखना तथा वह कुछ नहीं कर पाएगी जैसे कठोर दंड के रूप में भुगतना पड़ा । देवकी की शादी वासुदेव से हुई किन्तु देवकी के दुष्ट भाई कंस ने देवकी और वासुदेव दोनों को कैद कर दिया, क्योंकि भविष्य वाणी थी कि कंस देवकी के आठवीं संतान द्वारा मारा जाएगा । उनके छह बेटे कीर्तिमान, सुषेण, उदीयन, भद्रसेन,, ऋजुदास और भद्रेधा सभी कंस द्वारा मारे गए और सातवीं



संतान बलराम को दैवीय कृपा से भूषण रोहिणी (वासुदेव की दूसरी पत्नी) के गर्भ में स्थानांतरित हो गया और बलराम का जन्म हुआ। देवकी ने अपने आठवीं संतान को गुप्त रूप से जन्म दिया ताकि वह संतान मानव जाति को ज्ञान दे सके।

देवकी कृष्ण की प्राकृतिक माँ थी, लेकिन उन्हें यशोदा की तुलना में कवियों या संगीतकारों से ज्यादा महत्व नहीं मिला बहुत से धार्मिक ग्रंथ कृष्ण के दत्तक जीवन पर ध्यान केंद्रित करते हैं। कुलशेखर अलवर (६ वी शताब्दी) बाहर अलवर संतों में से सातवें थे। जो भगवान विष्णु के बहुत बड़े भक्त थे बाद में उन्होंने खुद को पूरी तरह से भगवान् विष्णु को समर्पित करके अपने राज्य का शासन तक त्याग दिया।

कुलशेखर अलवर तमिल में पेरुमल थिरुमोझी और संस्कृत में मुकुंद माला के लेखक हैं। वो भगवान कृष्ण की माँ देवकी के साथ अपनी पहचान बनाते हैं। उनकी कई छंद माला बताती हैं कि कैसे देवकी बाल कृष्ण से अलग होने पर विलाप करती हैं। अपनी संतान से अलग होने के दुख को व्यक्त करती हैं। देवकी को “दैव देवकी” यानी दिव्य देवकी के रूप में याद किया गया है। कुलशेखर खुद को देवकी के स्थान पर रखते हैं और लिखते हैं कि उसने कभी कृष्ण के बचपन का आनंद नहीं लिया है। देवकी करती हैं मैंने तुम्हें अपने गर्भ में रखकर जन्म दिया किन्तु मैं यशोदा जितनी भाग्य शाली नहीं हूँ, उसने तुम्हें लोरिया सुनाई है, तुम्हें पालने में खेलते हुए देखने का आनंद लिया है, और न ही मैं तुम्हारी कमल जैसी आंखों को अंजन से सजा पायी।

मैंने तुम्हें खेलते हुए लड़खड़ाते कदम उठाते, धरती से धुल उड़ाते हुए देखने की खुशी को महसूस नहीं कर पायी। जब तुम बहुत देर तक मिट्टी में खेलते थे तब मैं तुम्हें गले नहीं लगा पायी। अपनी पतली उँगलियों से जो तुम आधा खाना खाते और आधा यशोदा को खिलाते मैं सदैव इस स्नेह से वंचित रही हूँ। मेरी माँ ने मुझे जैसी बदकिस्मत माँ को क्यों जन्म दिया?

यशोदा को आपके हाथों को मक्खन की मटकी में डुबोते और उसका आनंद लेते हुए देखने का असीम सौभाग्य प्राप्त हुआ है। यशोदा आपको पकड़ने की कोशिश करती है और रस्सी से बांधने की धमकी देती है तो वह आपके दिखावटी भयभीत भाव को देखती है आप अपना सुंदर मुख खोलकर यशोदा से विनती करते हैं की वह आपको न बाँधे, इन सभी दृश्यों का आनंद भाग्यशाली यशोदा ने लिया है और मैं केवल इन सभी दृश्यों के आनंद की पराकाष्ठा की केवल कल्पना ही कर सकती हूँ।



हिन्दू धर्म में मंदिरों का बहुत महत्व है क्योंकि वे न केवल पूजा स्थल है बल्कि सांस्कृतिक रूप से भी महत्वपूर्ण है मंदिर में मौजूद दिव्य उर्जा का श्रेय देवताओं को दिया जाता रहा है। देवकी को एक ऐसी माँ के रूप में देखा जाता रहा है जो अपनी संतानों की बलि देने और मानव जाति को प्रबुद्ध करने के लिए अपने आठवें संतान को देने का साहस किया है देवकी का चरित्र आदर्श माँ का है। जिसने कर्तव्य के लिए अपनी ममता का त्याग किया है हिन्दू संस्कृति मातृत्व को ईश्वरीय सिद्धांत के रूप में मानती है। प्रकृति को भी माँ के रूप में माना जाता है जो पोषण, संरक्षण, सुरक्षा, और विनाश भी करती है। प्रकृति सभी जीवन रूपों को जन्म देती है जीवन रूपों को पोषण देती है और खुद में वापस अवशोषित करती है। एक माँ के रूप में वह अपने गर्भ में एक भौतिक शरीर बनाती है जो सांसारिक संबंधों और बंधनों को जन्म देती है। विचार यह है कि माँ सभी के लिए दिव्य है, माँ को हमारा पहला गुरु माना जाता है। वह हमारे आध्यात्मिक विकास को पोषित करने और विकसित करने का प्रयास करती है। देवकी एक महान स्त्री व महान माँ थी। उनकी उपस्थिति हर भारतीय माँ में महसूस की जा सकती है।

यशोदा माता का मातृत्व (सूर-काव्य संदर्भ में)

डॉ. बबली

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एक स्त्री स्वयं को भाग्यशाली माँ की भूमिका में महसूस करती है। एक माँ अपने बच्चों को हमेशा सुरक्षा के घेरे में रखती है। बच्चा समय के साथ बड़ा हो जाता है लेकिन माँ के आंचल से कभी बड़ा नहीं हो सकता है। हमारी भारतीय संस्कृति में माता को देवता के समान पूज्य माना गया है यथा- “मातृ देवो भवः” अर्थात् माता को देवता के समान समझना चाहिए। भारतीय पौराणिक कथाओं में मातृत्व के निस्वार्थ स्वभाव की अनेक असाधारण गाथाएं भरी पड़ी हैं। पार्वती, कौशल्या, सीता, यशोदा, कुंती, देवकी आदि पौराणिक कथाओं की माता के चरित्र एवं स्वभाव हर पीढ़ी की महिलाओं के लिए कुशल मातृत्व की एक गाइड बुक है। माता का दर्जा इतना अपरिमित है कि भारत देश को भी भारत माता कहकर पुकारा जाता है। माता भक्ति, शक्ति, करुणा का प्रतीक है। माता शब्द, मात्र शब्द नहीं, एक भाव है जिसे वात्सल्य भाव कहते हैं भारतीय काव्यशास्त्र में रसों के प्रकार में एक मुख्य प्रकार वात्सल्य रस भी माना गया है जिसमें माता-पिता और बच्चों के बीच के प्रेम को महत्व दिया जाता है। हिंदी साहित्य के भक्ति काल की सगुण काव्य धारा के प्रसिद्ध महान कवि सूरदास जिनके बारे में कहा जाता है कि वह जन्मांध थे, बावजूद उसके उनकी कृष्ण भक्ति रचनाओं में मातृभावना कूट-कूट कर भरी हुई है। सूरदास ने सूरसागर में कृष्ण की वात्सल्य लीला के लगभग ५०० पदों की रचना की जिसमें शायद ही वात्सल्य का कोई कोना बचा हो जिसे सूर की बंद आंखें देख न सकी हो। वात्सल्य भाव, एक भक्ति का प्रकार ही है





जो माँ अपने बच्चों से करती है जिस वात्सल्य भाव में किसी भी प्रकार की इच्छा, आकांक्षा एवं स्वार्थ की गंध नहीं होती है, वह भक्ति को पोषित करती है। सूरदास के वात्सल्य के विषय में हजारी प्रसाद द्विवेदी लिखते हैं कि “यशोदा के वात्सल्य में वह सब कुछ है जो माँ शब्द को इतना महत्वशाली बनाए हुए हैं।” मातृत्व तो नारी का गौरवपूर्ण अधिकार है। यशोदा का मातृत्व पौराणिक कथाओं में सर्वाधिक लोकप्रिय है जिसमें जन-जन की मुख ध्वनि से यशोदा के मातृत्व के किस्से सुनाए जाते हैं जो आज के परिवेश में अपनी अर्थवत्ता पहले से भी अधिक बनाए हुए हैं। नंद-यशोदा के घर कृष्ण की नित्य नई चेष्टाएं सब का मन मोहित कर लेती है। मां बच्चे के मनोविज्ञान की झांकियां यशोदा और कृष्ण के सम्बंध में देखी जा सकती हैं। कृष्ण का घुटनों के बल चलना, हाथ में मक्खन लिए घूमना, तोतले बोल बोलना, देहरी का न लांघ पाना, मैया यशोदा की उंगली पकड़कर उन्हें चलना सिखाना आदि ऐसी चेष्टाएं हैं जो मां बच्चे की सुखद एवं आनंदपूर्ण झाँकी प्रस्तुत करती है। जैसे-

सिखवत चलन जसोदा मैया

हो बलि जाऊं छवि छबीले लाल की। १

माता का प्रेम और समर्पण आजीवन बच्चों के लिए रहता है। वह हमेशा बच्चों के साथ अपना जीवन व्यतीत करना चाहती हैं लेकिन कई बार परिस्थितियां माता के विपरीत हो जाती है तो वियोग भी सहना पड़ता है। माता यशोदा के जीवन में बच्चे का संयोग एवं वियोग दोनों आता है।

यशोदा माता के वात्सल्य का संयोग पक्ष:-माता यशोदा बाल कृष्ण को पालने में झुलाते हुए लोरिया सुना रही है। माँ बड़ी तन्मयता से नींद को बुला रही है। माँ स्वयं जागते हुए बच्चों का दिन-रात पालन पोषण करती हैं। माँ का यह त्याग और प्रेमभाव जगत में सर्वोपरि है। इसका बहुत सुंदर उदाहरण सूर काव्य में देखा जा सकता है। यथा-

जसोदा हरि पालनै झुलावै।

हलरावै दुलराइ मल्हाबै जोइ सोइ कछु गावै।

मेरे लाल कौं आउ निंदरिया काहै न आनि सुवावै।

तू काहें नहिं बेगहिं आवै तोकौं कान्ह बुलावै। २

माँ सिर्फ जन्मदात्री नहीं है वह बच्चों का पालन पोषण करती हैं। उसके शारीरिक और मानसिक विकास के लिए क्या जरूरी है वह सब जानती है। या यह कहें कि माँ अपने बच्चों की पहली डॉक्टर हैं जो उसके पोष्टिक आहार का मेन्सू तैयार रखती हैं और बच्चों को



खिलाना जानती है। ऐसा ही एक अन्य उदाहरण है कि बाल कृष्ण दूध नहीं पी रहे हैं। माता यशोदा लालच देती हुई कृष्ण को दूध पिलाने का प्रयत्न कर रही है कि दूध पीने से तुम्हारी चोटी बढ़ जाएगी। इस पर कृष्ण एक हाथ से अपनी चोटी पकड़कर दूसरे हाथ से दूध पीते हुए पूछ रहे हैं कि मैया मेरी चोटी कब बढ़ेगी। यथा-

“मैया कबहिं बढ़ेगी चोटी।

किती बार मोहि दूध पियत भई, यह अजहूँ है छोटी।३

माता यशोदा के मातृत्व के अनेक उदाहरण सूरदास के काव्य में प्रचुर मात्रा में है।

माँ बच्चों के प्रत्येक भाव को बारीकी से जानती है। उसके झूठ-सच का आइना होती हैं। बच्चा शैतानी करें या झूठ भी बोले तो तुरंत पहचान जाती हैं। ऐसा ही एक अन्य उदाहरण जिसमें माता यशोदा को पता है कि माखन कृष्ण ने खाया है। कृष्ण के मुख पर मक्खन लगा हुआ है फिर भी वह माता यशोदा के सम्मुख मधुर सफाई देते हुए कहते हैं कि मां मैंने माखन नहीं खाया। यथा-

मैया मैं नहीं माखन खायो।

यशोदा माता के वात्सल्य का वियोग पक्ष:- वियोग वात्सल्य की झलक सूरदास ने कृष्ण के मथुरा गमन पर प्रस्तुत की है। कृष्ण के मथुरा जाने पर यशोदा माता बहुत दुखी है। वह कहती है कि इस ब्रज में कोई मेरा हित चाहने वाला है तो मेरे गोपाल को कोई मेरे पास ले जाए। मेरे बच्चे के बिना मैं निष्प्राण हूँ। साक्षात् काल के दर्शन मुझे हो रहे हैं। कृष्ण के वापस नहीं लौटने पर माता यशोदा का मन बहुत व्यथा और आकुलता से भर गया। कृष्ण के प्रति यशोदा माता हर पल चिंतित रहती है और पथिक के हाथों संदेश भेजती है। माता अपने बच्चों की आदतों को बखूबी जानती है और बच्चों से दूर होते ही उसकी चिंता में निमग्न हो जाती है। यथा-

संदेशो देवकी से कहियौं।

हाँ तो धाय तुम्हारे सुत की, दया करत ही रहियौं।

प्रातः होत मेरे लाल लडैते, माखन रोटी भावे।

जोई जोई माँगत सोई सोई देती, क्रम क्रम करि कै न्हाते।५

माता के लिए जब उसका बच्चा उससे दूर चला जाता है तो वह हर पल चिंता में डूबी रहती



है। सूरदास के काव्य में माता यशोदा का ममत्व चरमोत्कर्ष पर पहुंच जाता है। गोकुल में बाबा नंद और यशोदा ही नहीं बल्कि समस्त गोकुल के लोग वात्सल्य में डूब जाते हैं। माता यशोदा और कृष्ण का संबंध इतना महान है कि कहा जाता है कि गुरु संदिपनी अपने प्रिय शिष्य कृष्ण के व्यवहार से बड़े प्रसन्न थे। उन्होंने कहा “प्रिय शिष्य, वर मांगो”। कृष्ण ने कहा- ‘आजीवन मातृहस्तेन भोजनम’ का सौभाग्य प्राप्त हो। इसी वरदान के कारण मां के हाथ का भोजन उन्हें दीर्घकाल तक प्राप्त होता रहा। यह कहना अतिशयोक्ति नहीं होगी कि किसी को भी भोजन परोसते समय गृहणी यदि माँ की ममता से भोजन खिलाएगी तो विश्व की आधी बीमारियाँ दूर हटेंगी इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं। माता यशोदा का मातृत्व जीवन के प्रत्येक उतार-चढ़ाव को पार करता हुआ शिखर पर पहुंचता है। कुल मिलाकर निष्कर्ष यह है कि माता के लिए पुत्र हो या पुत्री गोदी की शोभा है। सुख, शांति, समृद्धि सब बच्चे में निहित है। माता यशोदा का कृष्ण हो, कौशल्या का राम हो, पार्वती का गणेश और कार्तिकेय हो, इस संसार में सभी माताओं के लिए उनके बच्चे कृष्ण, राम, लक्ष्मण, बलराम, गणेश, कार्तिकेय और राधा की प्रतिमूर्ति हैं। सुभद्रा कुमारी चौहान ने अपनी कविता “बालिका का परिचय” में मातृत्व के आनंद, उल्लास का चित्रण बहुत सुंदर पंक्तियों के माध्यम से किया है-

यह मेरी गोदी की शोभा, सुख सुहाग की लाली
बीते हुए बालपन की यह, क्रीडा पूर्ण वाटिका है
वही मचलना, वही किलकना हँसती हुई नाटिका है।
कृष्ण चंद्र की क्रीडाओं को, अपने आंगन में देखो
कौशल्या के मातृ मोद को अपने ही मन में देखो।
परिचय पूछ रहे हो मुझसे, कैसे परिचय दूं इसका
वही जान सकता है इसको, माता का दिल है जिसका।६

सहायक ग्रंथ-

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२. ब्रजेश्वर वर्मा, सूरसागर, पद संख्या १०२, पृष्ठ-२७
३. वही, पद संख्या- ४३, पृष्ठ- १३
४. वही, पद संख्या- १५२, पृष्ठ ३८
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६. सुभद्रा कुमारी चौहान, कविता- बालिका का परिचय।

Mothers and Socio-Cultural Roles

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Motherhood shapes the human society in one of the most potent and ubiquitous ways because it pervades every aspect of our lives—from the very intimate relationships to broader cultural norms and social structures. Historically, mothers have always been considered as core to family life, assigning various roles—from being responsible for not just the physical care and nurturing of children, but also their emotional, psychological, and social well-being. But again, the role of mothers is not a static or universally defined concept but rather goes deep into the socio-cultural context of a particular society and is shaped by historical, economic, political, and cultural forces that change over time.

Throughout history, the mothers' role has undergone a huge range of understanding and expectations. In most of societies, mothers have been idolized as the moral support of the family and community—a role which has found its way into the religious, legal, and philosophical texts. At the same time, these roles have more or less been surrounded by the societal norms that domestically define motherhood responsibilities within limited participation of women in public, economic, and political life. These sociocultural expectations around mothers and motherhood not only contribute to how societies come to define gender and the family, but also extend to the policies, practices, and laws governing the roles of women in both the private and public spheres. Presently, the roles of mothers in today's society are much denser and multifaceted as women can successfully fulfill the roles of mothers while never leaving the public arena, work, or school. Thus, mothers face cultural expectations that have changed as new models for parenting emerge, like intensive mothering, which requires an exorbitant investment of time and energy in the parenting process. The ceaseless shifts in these expectations have caused new difficulties and opportunities in the



private and social realms for mothers in their lives with their own personal experiences and well-being.

However, motherhood is not a single entity: it varies with culture within a wide range of classes and communities. What it is to be a mother; how motherhood is glorified or criticized; and how valuable the care she gives her offspring knows no large cast; it is very much subject to local cultural practices, religious beliefs, and socio-economic conditions. In some cultures, motherhood is considered an essential component of life for women: one's "being born," so to speak, is, in itself, endowed with overwhelming social and spiritual meanings. In other contexts,





motherhood may tend to be only one possible role among many that women can take; here it lacks that sacred or central emphasis. The social roles of mothers may vary according to race, ethnicity, class, and gender. In many societies, the ideals on which most expectations are based for mothers, also have some resonances with the larger society's gender roles in the areas of femininity, family, and work. For example, in some contexts, there can be an ideal notion of a perfect mother hanging around an image devoted completely to the children, a self-sacrificing figure for whom children become the most important and whose own needs would be optional. This image would probably marginalize other forms of mothering, such as those of working mothers, single mothers, and mothers who adopt non-normative strategies of parenting.

The intersectionality between race, class, and motherhood is an important figure in the understanding of the socio-cultural roles played by mothers. For instance, in many post-colonial societies, mothers from disempowered racial or ethnic communities are faced with very specific problems in managing their caregiving responsibilities along with the social and economic inequalities experienced in their lives. Furthermore, impoverished mothers in poor neighborhoods are under extra stress because of economic precariousness, which further heightens pressure on their absence from fulfill whole ideals of motherhood. Here, motherhood may serve as both a wellspring of strength and resilience as well as of struggle and hardship in the navigation of family life under challenging socio-economic conditions.

Modern societies are undergoing transformations that are attributed to the changing socio-cultural roles of mothers. Presently, recognition is given to the multifaceted nature of mothering and the need to displace traditional and patriarchal norms that repress autonomy and agency as



far as women are concerned. New discourses have arisen in line with evolving family structures, gender roles, and work-life balance regarding the meaning of motherhood in the 21st century. Different countries have also instituted policies like paid parental leave, flexible work hours, or affordable child care. All these show the increasing acceptance of maternal labor both inside and outside the home. The complexity and contradictions that a role like that of mother entails has never been so impactful on contemporary society. For example, while it is becoming increasingly acknowledged that parenting should be divided, fathers must now also take part in child-rearing, and on the other side, much pressure is also subjected to mothers regarding what children must be nurtured, and what emotional labor should be done, whereby their life sometimes has to be compromised in the process. This changing dichotomy between what it means to be a mother now and in times past regarding social expectations is one of the many recurrent themes in debates about gender and family today.

Media and popular culture also condition motherhood. The types of mothers given in movie portrayals, in television, literature, and advertising are most powerful in shaping a society's perception of motherhood and the ideals that women must strive to attain. The representations usually fulfill or strengthen certain stereotypes such as the "ideal" mother always loving selfless and in control. However, popular media presents motherhood equally in terms of showing the challenges, the imperfections, and the different experiences of mothers of several backgrounds and situations.

While it encourages women to reclaim their mother's identity under their terms; however, it has also posed a problem, the heterogeneity of discourses on how motherhood can and should be. The feminist



discourse on motherhood is a departure from the traditional binary that only biological mothers can lay claim to being a mother. It embraces different family forms and demands acceptance for nonbiological mothering, whether through adoption, same-sex partnership, or step-parenting. Besides, such changes have broadened our definition of motherhood, and authors differ on the claim that associating mothers with biological children alone has led to the marginalization of other kinds of maternal care. In many communities and cultures, there are maternal figures who do not have a biological link with children but are undertakers for them, thus providing similar nurturing and caregiving roles. Such redefinitions allow a more inclusive understanding of motherhood through complexity and acknowledgment that maternal love and care can transcend biology.

Yet, the socio-cultural expectations of motherhood greatly influence the mental health and emotional well-being of mothers. Research has shown that stressed mothers, particularly ones employed outside, face much more mental disturbance in the form of depression and anxiety types. Women constantly engage in an ideal image called "The perfect mother." This idealization leads to feelings of shame, guilt, and inadequacy when a mother fails to fulfill what the external world expects of her. Lack of support is a factor that worsens the situation, irrespective of whether it can be affordable daycare, parental leave, or community networks - especially for low-income mothers.

In other words, the socio-cultural roles of mothers are couched within history, economics, and culture that characterize various societies. Their roles are informed by all-pervasive social, cultural, and economic aspects, spanning the perfected images of motherhood to the lived realities of mothers across all such backgrounds. The classical view of motherhood as a noble central, self-sacrificing role continues to



influence many countries even as demands for a more plural and egalitarian definition of motherhood as a social category begin to gain some traction-those being calls to understand the inexhaustible making of motherhood in as many contexts as there are experiences and realities of mothers and how family lives are evolving. Exploring the socio-cultural roles of mothers at greater depth could allow for a better appreciation of aspects that cut across different cultures in the experience and valuation of motherhood and, hence, carry one step closer towards a world that is more inclusive or at least that much more supportive-of mothers.

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Motherhood and the Ancient Indian Tales

Palkin

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"There are mothers
for everything,
whispering and whispering to us
long after we have stopped listening."
-unknown

The existence of life starts with a mother. But who is a mother? Is there a definition or is it a sort of miracle? The intertwining existence of a child and a mother is the start of something ethereal. I wouldn't be able to define motherhood if I had a thousand words. The forgiver of every sin and the home of every human. A love with no bounds is a mother's love. The question is how much of your mother do you want to inherit in a world like ours?

Motherhood is a time when love has no bounds. Where forgiving is second nature. Where there will be tears, screaming and crying and yet it will still be magical. It begins when a child is in the womb. A womb is where the pouring love starts to seep into a child and where the child is in its safest place possible.

The idea of motherhood in mythology has always been revered and worshipped to the lengths of the world. It isn't just a bond shared by a mother and her child but a force that transcends through worlds. Wearing their hearts on their sleeves and having the best interest of their children is something mothers just seem to possess. A love as deep as the greatest ocean and yet she won't let you drown in it.

The divine mother figure of Parvati is the embodiment of unconditional love and compassion. The creation of her son Ganesh by her own mind truly reflects the testament of her love by granting him life. The values



of devotion and nurturing are often associated with Parvati. But a mother shouldn't be minimized to just the traditional ideas of being loving and nurturing. The Durga and Kali avatar of Parvati represents the fierce protectiveness and feminine rage if provoked all in one. The figure of a mother is layered and complex with nothing but absolute love present alongside the protective strikes of rage. The mothers of the Hindu epic Ramayana surpass the celestial bounds of a mother's love. The figure of Sumitra is often overseen and not given much importance



when she was the one who supported her son Laxman and counseled him to treat Sita as his mother in the forest. Her contribution is often overshadowed by prominent figures of Kaushalya or Kaikeyi but her role is equally important. She doesn't try to stop him or express selfish behaviour for his presence. Instead, she gives her blessing to her son, sacrificing her time with her son to give him what he wants. A mother wouldn't care about herself when her child is in question. Sumitra demonstrates a silent strength of motherhood by standing on her son's side irrespective of the pain it may cause her.

Sita, I think, is the incarnation of sacrifice herself. Despite the challenges and trials she is put through, she is an excellent mother figure with all the love she has for her sons, Luv and Kush. Sita never loses her sense of motherhood, despite the allegations of her being impure, or being sent into exile to raise her children. Sita's journey underlined the sacrifice a mother goes through to give a good life to her children. Her actions reflect the feminine strength and acts of devotion towards her children.

The mother duo of Devaki and Yashoda is remarkable. The biological and foster mother of Lord Krishna share an unwavering love for their child. The tale of suffering, sacrifice, pain and separation almost defines the impossible perfection of motherhood. The separation of Krishna from his biological mother must have been gruelling and overwhelming but she endured it for the safety of her child and the pure love Yashoda had for a child who was not even hers is as close to divinity as it can get.

I'd say motherhood and sacrifice in the ancient tales have always gone hand in hand. Holding hands with the horrors is something mothers don't stray away from for their children. The true act of sacrifice is what motherhood is. You discard your own layers until you're left with just



you and even then she'll be there to love you unconditionally. But how much does a mother have to give, to sacrifice, before it becomes a sin to accept it? Shouldn't we make it a tiny bit easier for mothers to be themselves?

The idea of motherhood is deeply rooted with the ideas of struggle, sacrifice and personal loss. These figures highlight the strengths along with the vulnerability faced by the mothers in the face of adversity. Despite being mythological and God-like females, the mothers often have to prove their worths and go through trials that test their faith and commitments.

It makes us question if all this pain is worth the love you get back from your child and the answer given by a mother would always remain a powerful yes. Regret has no space in the hearts of mothers. A creation, a child always looks for affection and love from the moment it comes to life and a mother never fails to deliver it. The heart of a mother would never cease to amaze me.

The duality of motherhood for instance in the example of Parvati, while she lovingly created Ganesh, she also embodies Durga and Kali who are seen as evil sometimes. This tale also resonates with modern times with mothers taking multiple roles of a caregiver, protector, educator and whatnot. The mothers of the modern world have had many encounters with sacrifices. Single mothers, working mothers or in different situations, mothers often face challenges where they have to keep their personal interest aside for the well-being of their children. The sacrifices may not be as epic as those of the mythological figures, but they are real and important.



But when does a mother stop? When does she stop to think about herself? When does she love herself more than she loves her child? Never. Motherhood is an eternal promise to love a child more than the mother loves herself or anybody else. It is a promise to never stop.

Unconditional Love: Motherhood, the Limitless Power

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Motherhood, sometimes dubbed the most unparalleled love, unconditional, selfless, and transformational, is one that knows no bounds, transcending time, space, and circumstance, and can heal both the mother and the community in some remarkable ways--the genes of a biological mother and the caring spirit of a mother figure. The



importance of motherhood goes beyond the individual; it shapes societies, builds cultures, and gives a future.

Maternity is a journey of deep, abiding love that emanates from mothers. It is not dependent on extrinsic factors such as achievement or behaviour; rather, it forms an innate unbreakable bond that blossoms right after a child is born. It is the motherly love that enables her to endure sleepless nights, dreadful challenges, and hard times. One could say that a mother's love is a great source of security and safety that creates a space in which a child may grow up and gain the confidence to explore the world.



For children who have faced adversities in life, a mother can turn despair into hope through a caring embrace. This support fosters the development of the child and builds for them self-esteem and future resilience and faith in their own capacities. A mother's love is remarkable in the sense that it is capable of creating feelings of forgiveness, nurturing, and enveloping protection amongst her children who will then face the many battles that life presents with a good measure of confidence. The healing power of motherhood can often be observed in that their children happily make significant changes in their lives and the lives of others during their journey.

Beyond individual families, the impact of motherhood ripples up to communities and societies. Mothers are the unsung heroines who sort the basis of culture, education, and social well-being. As caregivers and nurturers to many, they go beyond to serve other relations like relatives and friends, and even others. Mothers always stand strong in times of crises to assist their own children and others who need support. Through their selflessness, either as primary caregivers, Community organizers, or willing advocates for social change, mothers create a scale of care and compassion that cascades outside the borders of the home.

The power of unconditional love is seen in these very sacrifices a mother makes. These sacrifices appear so mute, clandestine, and unacknowledged that they truly make a genuine difference in the world. From dropping a personal dream so as to boost the child's ambitions to providing emotional stability in rough times, mothers always consider the needs of others over their own. Those threads of love, dulling down sometimes, bind families and communities, ensuring there is a better future for generations to come.

Motherhood crosses borders--socio-cultural, political, economic, and even biological boundaries. Motherhood is distributed in nature through all parts of the world, and with each manifestation expresses its love and care. In many cultures, the image of the mother nurtures the earth, protects a nation, and incarnates life itself. Of course, universal motherhood also binds people throughout ages and time, reminding them that thereafter everything



interconnecting love and caring is but the human experience at the core. Motherhood cannot be limited to relations of blood. If we consider examples from life, there are innumerable women, even though not biologically related, have donned the robe of motherhood and have made a significant difference. These women also, as mothers by choice, whether as adoptive mothers, mentors, or maybe leaders of a community, reflect the nurturing and protective aspects of motherhood. Their love shows that being a mother is not about bearing a child but about giving oneself to another, extending a loving hand of compassion and affording them a space to thrive.

In conclusion, the power of unconditional love must be invoked concerning motherhood--it transcends boundaries and heals sightlessly and on another, visible level. It nurtures children, builds communities, and changes the world. The intrinsic selflessness, fortitude, and compassion that arise out of motherhood are forces that imbue families and societies with unity. The beauty and puissance of motherhood, in fact, express the majestic and untold contribution of mothers in building futures and bring love and healing to those they touch. The hands of mothers make the world a better place, one act of caring at a time.

Embracing the Journey : Beauty and Challenges of Motherhood

Pallavi Sahu

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Time dances swiftly, the years softly fade,
Yet the roots of this love, in deep soil are laid.
In the eyes of her child, reflections of grace,
A legacy blooms, time cannot erase.
So here's to the mother's, both weary and wise,
In their love's gentle glow, the whole world lies.
With every heartbeat, every soft sigh,
They nurture the future, and let spirits fly.

-(extract from author's unpublished poem)

I usually ask people who the most important persons in their lives are. The response I often get is 'mother' or 'maa'. And this is correct from multiple aspects. In all religions, mother is often compared to goddesses. Here in India, we worship many goddesses in the form of mothers-Maa Durga, Maa Saraswati, Maa Laxmi, and Maa Vaishnodevi to name a few. And in Islam too, it is said that if there is heaven somewhere on this earth, then it is at our mother's feet. Sometimes we ponder on the following questions.

Why does mother have an important place in one's life?
Why do we feel so emotional the moment we hear the word 'maa'?
Why is a mother-child relation so special?
When we think of our childhood, we get the answer too.

Our mothers love us selflessly and unconditionally. They not only bring us into this world but also make us capable enough to live in this world. They themselves endure everything but never let us suffer. They can remain hungry but never fail to feed us. They nurture us with love and affection. Really a mother is very special.



In fact, without a mother, without a woman, this world will not survive.

The beauty of motherhood is not in reproduction. The beauty of motherhood is in inclusion. A mother sees her child as a part of herself. The willingness to include another life as a part of yourself may not cater to everyone's inclination. This is a feat that only a mother can accomplish.

When it comes to embracing the beauty of motherhood, how can we forget the holy mothers of our Hindu scriptures? In Hindu mythology, there are many iconic mothers who sacrificed, motivated and influenced their children in a way that made them exemplary figures all over the world. Some of them are as mentioned below.

Maa Parvati is one of the most revered and beloved goddesses in Hinduism. She is considered the mother of the universe. Her motherly



love and care for children are central to her mythology and worship. She created Lord Ganesha out of sandalwood and breathed life into him. She nurtured and raised him with great love and affection.

Mata Sita is one of the oldest evidences of single motherhood in Indian mythology. In the Ramayana, Sita had singlehandedly brought up her children – Luv and Kush – in the forest after her exile from Ayodhya. Many attributes are associated with her. She is revered for remaining calm under pressure. She is known for being non-contradictory, but at the same time, she is also well-acclaimed for her resolute convictions. She is the one who could threaten anyone with her independent mind.

Radha was the adoptive mother of Karna in the Mahabharata. Radha and her husband Adhirat gave Karna a life of love. Radha's love for her son is portrayed as nurturing and unconditional. She supported him throughout his struggle and plays a crucial role in shaping his character. Karna's bond with his adoptive mother is characterized by emotional depth and support.

It is said that with a mother's blessings, everything becomes possible. In a section of the Mahabharata, Lord Krishna forbade Kunti, the mother of Pandavas and biological mother of Karna, from bestowing a long life upon Karna. If she had, Karna would have remained indomitable by Arjuna during the great Mahabharata war. How ironic that even gods are wary of a mother's blessings!

Some leaves the warmth of their loved ones behind.
To follow their dreams and see what they find.
I walked away from the ones I held tight,
While she let go of her dreams for love's light.



MOTHERHOOD AND CAREER CHOICES

A very common question, which is often raised by society to every woman after becoming a mother, is –

“How do you balance work and family?”

This question reflects the deeply ingrained societal expectations for mothers to juggle multiple roles – often in both professional and domestic spheres and sometimes implies judgment or concern about how well she is managing her responsibilities.

The often-used phrase to describe women who excel at the workplace as well as at home is 'Supermom'. Society tends to idealize this image of a mother who is not only a successful professional but also a perfect caregiver, who maintains her home well, nurtures her children and sometimes even remains socially active. This creates an inherent expectation that mothers should be able to do it all.

In olden days, it was easy to nurture a child because people lived in joint families who would help one another to raise a child, and mothers at that time were not encouraged to be passionate about a career. But now, due to nuclear family unit, there are mothers who have to maintain a balance between their professional life and child care.

However, regardless of whether a mother devotes her entire time on her children or balances it between her career and family, the definition of motherhood has not changed. A mother will sacrifice anything before her child. They always prioritize their children before anything else, either it be their careers, passions, needs etc. From the moment a woman learns about her pregnancy, her world begins to change.

परिचय

पौराणिक कथाओं में मातृत्व एक महत्वपूर्ण और विविधतापूर्ण विषय है, जो भारतीय संस्कृति की गहरी समझ को प्रकट करता है। मातृत्व केवल शारीरिक, जैविक या सामाजिक जिम्मेदारी नहीं, बल्कि एक दिव्य गुण है, जो माँ के द्वारा अपने बच्चों के लिए प्रदान की जाने वाली सुरक्षा, प्यार, बलिदान और मार्गदर्शन के रूप में प्रकट होता है। भारतीय पौराणिक कथाओं में मातृत्व को न केवल एक भावनात्मक और शारीरिक संबंध के रूप में प्रस्तुत किया गया है, बल्कि इसे एक आध्यात्मिक और आदर्श स्वरूप के रूप में भी देखा गया है।

प्राचीन भारतीय ग्रंथों और मिथकों में माताओं का चित्रण सिर्फ एक सामान्य महिला के रूप में नहीं किया गया, बल्कि उन्हें दिव्य, प्रेरणादायक और संघर्षशील के रूप में प्रस्तुत किया गया है। यहाँ तक कि कई पौराणिक कथाओं में माताओं को देवी के रूप में पूजा गया है और उनके मातृत्व को आदर्श माना गया है। उदाहरण के लिए, देवियों के रूप में देखी जाने वाली माताएँ— जैसे देवी दुर्गा, लक्ष्मी और सरस्वती – जिनके मातृत्व का प्रतीक पूरी दुनिया में सम्मानित किया जाता है, वे न केवल अपने बच्चों के लिए एक प्रेरणा हैं, बल्कि समाज के लिए भी शक्ति और दया का स्रोत हैं।

मातृत्व का आदर्श रूप प्रस्तुत करने वाली प्रमुख कथाएँ हम भारतीय पौराणिक कथाओं में पाते हैं। महाभारत, रामायण, पुराण, वेद, उपनिषद, और अन्य धार्मिक ग्रंथों में माताओं का चित्रण शक्तिशाली, प्रेरणादायक और कभी-कभी कष्टपूर्ण भी है। वे अपने बच्चों के जीवन को आकार देती हैं, उन्हें जीवन के मूल्य सिखाती हैं और समाज में अपनी भूमिका को समझने के लिए उन्हें मार्गदर्शन देती हैं।

रामायण और मातृत्व

रामायण में, भगवान राम की माता कौशल्या का मातृत्व एक आदर्श रूप में प्रस्तुत किया गया है। उन्होंने न केवल राम को जन्म दिया, बल्कि उन्हें आदर्श चरित्र, नीतिशास्त्र, और राज्य संचालन की कला सिखाई। कौशल्या का मातृत्व न केवल भौतिक रूप से, बल्कि मानसिक और भावनात्मक रूप से भी राम के जीवन के लिए महत्वपूर्ण था। राम को रघुकुल की परंपराओं और आदर्शों का पालन करने की प्रेरणा देने वाली कौशल्या ने उनके जीवन को प्रभावित किया और उन्हें जीवन के कठिन रास्तों पर चलने के लिए तैयार किया। यह



दर्शाता है कि एक माँ अपने बच्चों को केवल शारीरिक पोषण नहीं, बल्कि नैतिकता, दयालुता और समाज की जिम्मेदारियों का भी ज्ञान देती है।

सीता का मातृत्व भी अत्यधिक महत्वपूर्ण है। उन्होंने भगवान राम के साथ कठिन संघर्षों का सामना किया और उनका पालन पोषण किया। सीता का जीवन, उनके त्याग और बलिदान की कहानी हमें यह सिखाती है कि मातृत्व केवल बच्चों की देखभाल करने का नाम नहीं है, बल्कि समाज और परिवार के हितों के लिए बलिदान देने की प्रक्रिया भी है। सीता ने अपने पुत्रों, लव और कुश को भी अपने आदर्शों के अनुसार पालन किया और उन्हें रामायण की पूरी कहानी सिखाई। यह मातृत्व का एक अन्य रूप है, जहाँ सीता ने केवल बच्चों को जीवन की कठिनाइयों से जूझने का साहस दिया, बल्कि उन्हें अपनी मातृभूमि और संस्कृति से भी जोड़ा।

महाभारत और मातृत्व

महाभारत में भी मातृत्व की महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका है। कुंत, गांधारी, और दुर्गा जैसे पात्र इस कथानक में महत्वपूर्ण हैं। कुंत ने अपने पुत्रों पांडवों को कड़ी परिस्थितियों में पालन किया और उन्हें युद्ध के लिए तैयार किया। उनका मातृत्व केवल बच्चों के पालन-पोषण तक सीमित नहीं था, बल्कि उसने उन्हें कर्तव्य, सत्य, और नैतिकता के रास्ते पर चलने के लिए प्रेरित किया। कुंत ने अपने बच्चों के लिए जो संघर्ष किया, वह केवल एक माँ के रूप में नहीं, बल्कि एक माता के रूप में उनकी दीक्षा थी।

गांधारी का मातृत्व भी एक अद्वितीय उदाहरण प्रस्तुत करता है। वह अपने पति धृतराष्ट्र और अपने पुत्रों की समस्याओं से जूझते हुए, एक सशक्त स्त्री के रूप में उभरीं। उनका मातृत्व यह दिखाता है कि एक माँ का प्यार न केवल बच्चों के प्रति, बल्कि पूरे परिवार और समाज के प्रति होता है। हालांकि, गांधारी के पुत्र दुर्योधन का मार्गदर्शन करना एक कठिन कार्य था, फिर भी उन्होंने अपने मातृत्व के कर्तव्यों को निभाने का प्रयास किया।

देवी के रूप में मातृत्व

भारतीय पौराणिक कथाओं में मातृत्व को देवी के रूप में भी देखा गया है। देवी दुर्गा, लक्ष्मी, और सरस्वती जैसे देवी-माताएँ न केवल अपने बच्चों की रक्षा करती हैं, बल्कि सम्पूर्ण ब्रह्माण्ड के लिए भी एक आदर्श हैं। दुर्गा माँ का मातृत्व केवल उनकी शक्ति का प्रतीक नहीं है, बल्कि यह भी दर्शाता है कि वह प्रत्येक जीव की रक्षा करने के लिए सदैव तैयार रहती हैं।

देवी लक्ष्मी का मातृत्व धन और समृद्धि का प्रतीक है। वह केवल अपने बच्चों की देखभाल



करती हैं, बल्कि समाज में समृद्धि और समरसता को बनाए रखने के लिए भी अपनी भूमिका निभाती हैं। देवी सरस्वती का मातृत्व ज्ञान और शिक्षा के रूप में देखा जाता है। वे न केवल बच्चों को शिक्षा प्रदान करती हैं, बल्कि उन्हें जीवन के सही मार्ग पर चलने की प्रेरणा भी देती हैं।

मातृत्व का भावनात्मक पहलू

पौराणिक कथाओं में मातृत्व का एक और महत्वपूर्ण पहलू उसका भावनात्मक पक्ष है। एक माँ अपने बच्चे के लिए जो भावनाएँ महसूस करती है, वह केवल एक जैविक प्रक्रिया से कहीं अधिक होती है। यह भावना एक गहरी जुड़ाव की है, जिसमें प्यार, सुरक्षा, बलिदान और चिंता शामिल होती है। इस भावनात्मक पहलू को हम विशेष रूप से उन कथाओं में देखते हैं, जहाँ माताओं को अपने बच्चों से जुदा होना पड़ता है या उन्हें अपने बच्चों के लिए किसी कठिन निर्णय का सामना करना पड़ता है।

निष्कर्ष

पौराणिक कथाओं में मातृत्व का चित्रण केवल एक शारीरिक या जैविक प्रक्रिया के रूप में नहीं किया गया है, बल्कि यह एक दिव्य, आध्यात्मिक, और नैतिक शक्ति के रूप में प्रस्तुत किया गया है। मातृत्व एक माँ का स्वाभाविक और प्राकृतिक गुण है, जो समाज और परिवार की भलाई के लिए काम करता है। पौराणिक कथाएँ हमें यह सिखाती हैं कि मातृत्व न केवल बच्चों को जन्म देने का कार्य है, बल्कि यह एक जीवनभर का कर्तव्य है, जो बच्चों को संस्कारित करने, उन्हें जीवन के मूल्य सिखाने और समाज के प्रति जिम्मेदारी निभाने की दिशा में काम करता है।

मातृत्व का आदर्श रूप भारतीय पौराणिक कथाओं में एक शक्तिशाली और प्रेरणादायक उदाहरण प्रस्तुत करता है, जो आज भी हमें यह सिखाता है कि माता का प्रेम और त्याग कभी व्यर्थ नहीं जाता। भारतीय समाज में मातृत्व का सम्मान एक आवश्यक और अपरिहार्य तत्व है, और यह हमारे सांस्कृतिक, धार्मिक, और सामाजिक मूल्यों को बनाए रखने के लिए आवश्यक है।

Where does the Balance Lie? Motherhood in a Gendered Society

Maanasi

B.A. Programme (English & Sociology), 3rd Year

Motherhood – A word that defines the state of being a mother

Motherhood, a word that at once invokes the memory of the tender relationship between a mother and child, has different meanings from a gendered perspective. In 2024, the definition and outlook of the word have drastically changed because of the intricacies it brings along. Motherhood is not the epitome of womanhood. It comes with its own set of rules, regulations, and customs which are set in the ancient stone of patriarchy and social practices. Motherhood refers to the state of being a mother - from enduring pregnancy, giving birth and bringing up the baby. It boasts of the qualities of women who are caring, kind, present, nurturing, good-natured, tolerant and chastising while, at the same time, also taking care of their households alongside their careers. There is a constant celebration and idealization of mothers for acquiring and displaying 'motherly qualities' shaped by societal expectations and traditional roles.

The question one needs to ask is – does motherhood deprive a woman of her identity? Is motherhood a necessity and an essential part of a woman's life? In a gendered world, the answer is yes. Even in the 21st century, India is deeply rooted in its conventionality defined by its patriarchal culture. Indian society has long placed rigid expectations on both men and women, shaping their roles and responsibilities. Motherhood, in particular, has been deeply influenced by these standards. Evidence of gender disparity is also witnessed in the way mothers are burdened with expectations that fathers never undergo. The traditional role of women has always been confined to dedicating most of their energy toward taking care of the home.



Even in the present age, women with careers are often expected to look up to 'stay-at-home mothers' as role models because society exerts a statement that career-driven women do not make good mothers. Men are not expected to give up their careers after becoming fathers. Post-childbirth, women are also often judged for prioritizing their own selves, as society expects them to rather embody self-sacrifice and dedicate themselves entirely to their children and families. A working mother may face criticism for 'neglecting' her child, while a stay-at-home mother is undervalued for not contributing financially. Men do not face such scrutiny; fathers who focus on their personal growth are celebrated as providers and role models without being burdened with societal judgment. The narrative insists on the hierarchy of gender norms in today's society, where women are 'allowed' and even encouraged to work and have careers. But, at the same time,



motherhood is considered to constitute the ultimate role that women are expected to fulfil.

In India, many women face challenges in balancing work and motherhood due to inadequate maternity benefits, social stigma and a lack of childcare support. The Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 gives women the eligibility to take leave up to 26 weeks but this policy has inadvertently discouraged a few employers from hiring women of childbearing age due to perceived higher costs. Paternity leave in India is governed by the Central Civil Services which mandates that eligible male government employees receive 15 days of paid leave within six months of the birth or adoption of a child and there is no mandatory leave for private sector employees. The dismissal of paternal rearing and the refusal to normalize working women once again define the orthodox mentality of the domesticated wife and the breadwinner husband.

Motherhood also brings forward the dynamic between the government and individual autonomy. Access to abortion is legalized in India with the rights given to all women irrespective of their marital status. Nevertheless, abortion laws vary around the world, with 68 countries prohibiting abortion or only allowing it to save a woman's life. The state and society often exert control over women's reproductive choices by linking them to cultural, religious, or economic narratives.

Society plays a crucial role in alleviating the burden and unreasonable expectations placed on mothers. Traditional norms idealize motherhood as an all-sacrificing role that compels women to shoulder disproportionate responsibilities. This expectation not only perpetuates gender inequality but also imposes physical, emotional, and mental strain on mothers. Fathers, as equal partners, must actively engage in



parenting and household duties, challenging the stereotype of motherhood as a solitary, self-sacrificing endeavour. By doing so, they not only share the load but also model equitable relationships for their children to learn from.

Society must recognize and dismantle structures that reinforce these pressures. This includes promoting workplace policies such as paternity leave, affordable childcare, and flexible work arrangements to support shared parenting. Education and awareness campaigns should challenge cultural narratives that glorify maternal sacrifice at the expense of personal well-being. When fathers and society collectively step up, mothers will be freed from the isolating expectations of perfection, and thus allow them to embrace motherhood as a choice and a shared journey rather than an imposed identity. Thus, motherhood emerges not as an all-encompassing identity, but as a choice and a role. It is neither the totality of existence for women nor a condition to which she should conform. The ideals of sacrifice and boundless nurturing are not innate truths. They are merely cultural constructs of societies that have long sought to tether women to roles of servitude and care. The next time mothers happen to offer up the last part of their favourite dessert in the name of catering to others before themselves, we should remember to break the cycle. A mother remains, first and foremost, a person—complex, autonomous, and whole. As Bethany Webster says in her book *Discovering the Inner Mother* (2021),

We all have sensed the pain that our mothers carry. All of us are suspicious to some degree that we are partly to blame for her pain. Therein lies the guilt.

मातृत्व: सामाजिक आधार का एक आयाम

रूपेश यदुवंशी
इतिहास विभाग, तृतीय वर्ष



वैसे तो मातृत्व शब्द परिभाषा से परे है परन्तु इसके महत्व को समझने हेतु हम कह सकते हैं कि मातृत्व मानवीय अस्तित्व का आधार है। यह वो डोर है जो इंसानों के बीच पारिवारिक संबंध स्थापित करती है। मातृत्व एक ऐसा शब्द है जो बच्चे को समाज का एक सभ्य सदस्य बनाने का हमेशा प्रयास करती है। एक सभ्य समाज में संवेदनशीलता एवं सहनशीलता का होना बेहद जरूरी है। हमारे समाज में संवेदनशीलता परस्पर बनी रही यह मातृत्व की देन है। मातृत्व ही वह एहसास है जिसके द्वारा किसी भी बच्चे के अंदर अपने आस पास के लोगों के प्रति भावनात्मक लगाव विकसित होता है।

किसी भी बच्चे के व्यक्तित्व पर सबसे ज्यादा प्रभाव उसके परिवारिक का होता है, परिवारिक के बहुत सारे कारक हैं उनमें से एक सबसे महत्वपूर्ण कारक मातृत्व की भूमिका है। बच्चे से व्यस्क बनने के सफर में एक बच्चा सामाजिक रूप से सबसे ज्यादा अपनी माँ से प्रभावित होता है। मातृत्व एक बच्चे के मन में सामाजिक चेतना जागृत करने का प्रथम चरण होता है। माँ एक कड़ी होती है बच्चे और समाज के बीच जो की बच्चे को यथासंभव समाज के मानदंड के अनुसार एक मानवीय समुदाय के सदस्य बनाने का प्रयत्न करती है।



एक महिला का माँ बनना केवल शारीरिक बदलाव नहीं है, यह एक मानसिक एवं सामाजिक बदलाव भी है। शायद मातृत्व को महसूस करना एक जिम्मेदारी है और मानसिक रूप से इस जिम्मेदारी को समझने की क्षमता केवल महिलाओं में है।

भारतीय समाज के परंपरागत गृहस्थ एवं पारिवारिक संरचना में हम देखते हैं की एक बच्चे के जीवन के शुरूआती तकरीबन एक दशक तक के जीवनकाल में सबसे अधिक प्रभाव उसकी माँ का होता है लेकिन हमारा समाज विरोधाभास का सामना तब करता है जब एक महिला के सानिध्य में तकरीबन एक दशक जीवन व्यतीत करने के बावजूद आगे चलकर एक लड़का या पुरुष दूसरी महिलाओं के प्रति अलग अलग प्रकार के हिंसा को अंजाम देता है जिसमें धरेलू एवं यौन हिंसा जैसे बेहद गंभीर कृत भी शामिल है। पुरुषों द्वारा किया जाने वाला इस प्रकार का हिंसा ना सिर्फ अपराध है परन्तु उस मातृत्व का अपमान भी है जिसके निस्वार्थ एहसास के आधार पर हम सब का अस्तित्व कायम है।

२१ वीं सदी में शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में सकल नामांकन अनुपात में बढ़ोतरी हुई, जिसके कई सामाजिक परिणाम हमें देखने को मिलता है परंतु इस शिक्षा के विस्तार का एक महत्वपूर्ण परिणाम यह हुआ की आज महिलाएं विभिन्न सरकारी एवं गैर सरकारी क्षेत्र में कार्यरत हैं। वैश्वीकरण का प्रभाव भारतीय समाज में कई बदलाव लेकर आया। इस वैश्वीकरण का असर मातृत्व पर भी देखने को मिलता है। उद्योग एवं कहरपोरेट जगत में श्रम के बढ़ते मांग भारतीय महिलाओं का देश के आर्थिक क्षेत्र में बड़े पैमाने पर योगदान को सुनिश्चित करता है। इस प्रकार आज महिलाओं के पास घर, बच्चे के साथ साथ आर्थिक जगत की भी जिम्मेदारियाँ देखने को मिलती हैं। पिछले कई दशकों में महिलाओं के सामाजिक जीवन में आए बदलाव समाज के मौजूदा संरचना को एक नई साकारात्मक बदलाव की ओर ले जा रही है। इस सामाजिक बदलाव आने के बाद बच्चों के परवरिश का तरीका भी बदला है परन्तु मातृत्व का मूल स्वरूप वहीं है। महिलाओं का घर के सिमित दायरे से बाहर आकर विभिन्न भूमिका में संलिप्त होना एक और बदलाव को दर्शाता है। मेरी व्यक्तिगत राय में जिस कार्यस्थल पर महिलाओं की संख्या ज्यादा होती है, वहाँ की कार्यशैली बाकी कार्यस्थलों की तुलना में अधिक धैर्यपूर्ण, संवेदनशील एवं बेहतर समय प्रबंधन से परिपूर्ण होती है। ये सारी विशेषताएँ एक महिला के व्यक्तित्व के अंदर शायद मातृत्व से ही विकसित होती हैं। माँ होने की भावना एक महिला और सिर्फ उसके अपने बच्चे तक सीमित नहीं होती। मातृत्व एक बेहद व्यापक एवं वृहद विचार है। किसी भी महिला के सामाजिक जीवन से जुड़े हुए हर एक बच्चे के प्रति उनके मन में मातृत्व की भावना प्राकृतिक रूप से विकसित हो जाती है।



बदलते आर्थिक एवं सामाजिक व्यवस्था के साथ लोगों के जीवनशैली में भी नए विचार पनपते हैं। मातृत्व के दृष्टिकोण से एकल माँ (सिंगल मदर) एक ऐसा ही विचार है जो आज के दौर में ज्यादातर, कामकाजी महिलाओं के बीच में देखने को मिलता है, यहाँ पर कामकाजी का अर्थ है महिलाओं द्वारा किया गया पेशेवर कार्य (प्रोफेशनल) जिसके बदले में उन्हें आर्थिक पारिश्रमिक मिलता हो। परंतु कामकाजी का यह तथाकथित परिभाषा को अधूरा माना जाना चाहिए, क्योंकि जो महिलाएँ अपना घरेलू कार्य संभाल रही हैं क्या यह पेशेवर कार्य के अंतर्गत नहीं आना चाहिए ? क्या घरेलू कार्य बिना किसी कुशलता के संभालना संभव है ? कामकाजी होने की परिभाषा कुछ भी हो परंतु एकल माँ होने का विचार महिलाओं के सामाजिक, आर्थिक एवं घरेलू आत्मनिर्भर क्षमता को प्रदर्शित करती है। यह उस दकियानूसी सोच के प्रति आपत्ति दर्ज कर उसे चुनौती देती है जिसके अनुसार एक बच्चे का पालन-पोषण बिना किसी पुरुष के आश्रय के बिना संभव नहीं है। मेरे ख्याल में एकल माँ के द्वारा किसी बच्चे का किया गया परवरिश उसमें पितृसत्ता के अन्यायपूर्ण पक्ष को ना विकसित होने देने का एक बेहतर जरिया है। इसका परिणामस्वरूप मातृसत्ता एवं पितृसत्ता की एक संतुलित संरचना विकसित हो सकता है, जिसका समय के साथ एक सकारात्मक असर पूरे समाज में देखने को मिल सकता है।

आज के दौर में मातृत्व पर आधुनिक तकनीकी का भी व्यापक असर देखने को मिलता है। पिछले कुछ दशक में सरोगेसी के द्वारा माँ बनने का तरीका शहरी क्षेत्रों में देखने को मिल रहा है। यह तकनीक परंपरागत तरीके से माँ बनने के विकल्प के रूप में इस्तेमाल किया जा रहा है, एवं वैसी महिलाएँ जिनका शारीरिक अवस्था प्राकृतिक रूप से प्रजनन के अनुकूल ना हो, उन्हें भी मातृत्व का एहसास दिलाता हुआ यह तकनीक काफी लाभदायक सिद्ध हो रहा है। परन्तु चिंता का विषय इस तकनीकी का वाणिज्यकरण होना है। इस तकनीक के मदद से एक बाजार विकसित करने का प्रयास किया गया जहाँ सरोगेट माँ होना एक आय का माध्यम बन चुका था। इसके रोकथाम के लिए भारत में कुछ अहम प्रयास किए गए। सरोगेसी (विनियम) अधिनियम २०२१, किसी भी प्रकार के मौद्रिक लेन-देन के आधार पर किसी अन्य महिला के गर्भ की मदद से माता और पिता बनना अपराध है, एवं इस अधिनियम के अंतर्गत दोषी पाए जाने पर दंड स्वरूप १० वर्षों की जेल भी सुनिश्चित की गई है। समाज में मौजूदा आर्थिक असमानता के बीच सरोगेसी जैसी तकनीक का वाणिज्यकरण होना उन आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर महिलाओं के लिए अभिशाप साबित हो सकता है, जो प्राकृतिक रूप से माँ बनने में असमर्थ हैं एवं ऐसी तकनीक के होते हुए भी आर्थिक परिस्थितियों के वजह से माँ नहीं बन पाती। भारत में सिर्फ परोपकारी सरोगेसी को ही कानून मान्यता प्राप्त है, जिसमें सरोगेट माँ को किसी भी प्रकार का मौद्रिक लाभ प्राप्त



ना हो। कानून के अंतर्गत सरोगेट माँ बनने के हेतु कुछ शारीरिक मापदंड भी निर्धारित किए गए हैं। पिछले कुछ सालों से वाणिज्यिक सरोगेसी पर प्रतिबंध एक बहस का विषय बना हुआ है। क्या यह प्रतिबंध एक नागरिक के अधिकार का हनन है या फिर मातृत्व के बाजारीकरण को रोकने का प्रयास है? इस सवाल के जवाब के लिए शायद सरोगेसी को सिर्फ आयुर्विज्ञान के नजरिए से देखने की नहीं बल्कि इसके आर्थिक एवं सामाजिक पहलू को तार्किक तरीके से सोचने की भी जरूरत है। मातृत्व सिर्फ एक नवजात को जन्म नहीं देती है, बल्कि मानवता की निरंतरता को बरकरार रखने में भी भूमिका निभाती है।

The Odyssey of Motherhood: A Journey Across Time

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Motherhood, one of humanity's most profound and transformative experiences, is an intricate interplay of love, sacrifice and resilience. It is a role that has been celebrated and idealized across cultures, history and mythology, while also evolving under the pressures of changing societal dynamics. In Indian culture, motherhood is venerated, embodying a divine and almost sacrosanct ideal that influences both personal identities and national narratives. Yet, as society progresses, this multifaceted journey reflects the complexities of modernity, challenging traditional notions and embracing new possibilities.

Motherhood: Tradition and Reverence

Indian culture has long placed motherhood on a pedestal, equating it with godly virtues. The pantheon of Hindu deities, including figures like Durga and Parvati, represents the nurturing, protective and powerful aspects of motherhood. These divine archetypes have shaped societal expectations, fostering an ideal of selfless devotion that mothers are often expected to embody.

Historical figures like Jijabai, the mother of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, highlight the enduring significance of maternal influence. Jijabai's dedication to instilling values of courage, leadership and justice in her son not only shaped his character but also contributed to the formation of a powerful Maratha empire. Such stories underscore the pivotal role of mothers in shaping history, yet they also perpetuate an idealized vision of motherhood that can overshadow the individuality and aspirations of women.

Motherhood extends beyond familial roles to national symbolism, as epitomized by Bharat Mata (Mother India). This metaphor elevates the





nation to the status of a nurturing mother, uniting citizens under the banner of collective identity and patriotism. While powerful, this imagery often reinforces traditional gendered expectations of sacrifice and endurance, placing undue responsibility on women to embody purity and moral strength. Mythological narratives further enrich the portrayal of motherhood, depicting both its empowering and challenging facets. Stories of Yashoda's unconditional love for Krishna, Kunti's sacrifices for her sons in the Mahabharata, and Kaikeyi's controversial decisions in the Ramayana reveal the complex interplay of devotion, duty and societal expectations that characterize maternal roles. These narratives celebrate the strength of mothers but also expose the constraints they face within patriarchal frameworks.

Motherhood in Modern Times: Evolution and Challenges

The journey of motherhood has undergone a significant transformation in the modern era, shaped by advancements in science, shifting social norms and the influence of technology. Innovations such as in-vitro fertilization, surrogacy and contraception have redefined the possibilities of motherhood, granting women greater autonomy in choosing how and when to embrace this role. While these advancements empower women, they also spark ethical debates and challenge traditional perceptions of family and parenthood.

Urban motherhood reflects the complexities of contemporary life, as women navigate the demands of careers, personal aspirations, and family responsibilities. The rise of dual-income households and evolving gender roles has fostered a growing emphasis on shared parenting and equitable domestic responsibilities. Yet, many women continue to grapple with societal pressures to balance these competing demands flawlessly, often at the expense of their mental and emotional well-being.



The media and consumer culture further complicate this narrative by idealizing motherhood through curated portrayals. Advertisements often depict mothers as tireless caregivers who effortlessly juggle work, family and social obligations, reinforcing unrealistic expectations. Social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube showcase idealized snapshots of maternal life, celebrating its joys while often glossing over its challenges. While these portrayals can inspire, they also create a sense of inadequacy for mothers struggling to meet these unattainable standards.

Legal and policy frameworks play a crucial role in supporting mothers and ensuring their rights. Provisions for maternity leave, childcare and reproductive health are essential for enabling women to embrace motherhood without compromising their autonomy or well-being. However, gaps in implementation and access to these resources remain significant challenges, particularly in rural and underprivileged communities. Advocacy and reform are necessary to bridge these disparities and create a more inclusive environment for mothers across all socio-economic strata.

The discourse surrounding motherhood also intersects with broader gender politics, influencing debates on labour equity, reproductive rights and societal expectations. Feminist perspectives critique the glorification of motherhood that undermines women's agency, advocating for a nuanced understanding that values both maternal and individual identities. This shift challenges traditional narratives, promoting a vision of motherhood that celebrates diversity and embraces the complexities of modern life.

Conclusion

Motherhood, in all its forms, is a journey of immense significance that



shapes individuals, families and societies. While deeply rooted in tradition, it continues to evolve, reflecting the dynamic interplay of love, power and resilience. By honouring the legacy of figures like Jijabai and embracing the diverse experiences of contemporary mothers, society can foster a more inclusive and equitable vision of motherhood.

This journey is not merely about nurturing life; it is a testament to the transformative power of love and the indomitable spirit of women. As the world progresses, it is imperative to support and celebrate the multifaceted odyssey of motherhood, ensuring that every mother's voice is heard and her journey valued.

समकालीन समाज में मातृत्व अनुभव

अंजलि सिंह
राजनीति विज्ञान (विशेष) (२०२१-२४)

मातृत्व केवल माँ होने की अवस्था नहीं, बल्कि अपने आप में एक बहुत बड़ा जीवन में बदलाव है। यह बदलाव स्त्री की पहचान में एक नया रूप जोड़ता है। ममता की भावना आमतौर पर स्त्रियों में स्वाभाविक मानी जाती है परंतु, मातृत्व इससे कई अधिक विस्तृत अवधारणा है। चाहे कोई कितनी भी जानकारियाँ इक्कठी कर ले पर, मातृत्व का अनुभव हर स्त्री के लिए अनोखा होता है। गर्भ धारण करने से लेकर शिशु के पैदा होने तक एक स्त्री अनेकों शारीरिक, मानसिक और भावनात्मक बदलावों से गुजरती है। और शिशु के आगमन के बाद स्त्री के दैनिक जीवन से लेकर जीवन के प्रति दृष्टिकोण तक में बदलाव आ जाते हैं।

मानव विकास और ढेरों आविष्कारों ने मातृत्व को भी प्रभावित किया है। वैज्ञानिक खोज, खासकर चिकित्सा प्रौद्योगिकी ने मुख्य रूप से मातृत्व के जैविक पहलुओं के विकास में योगदान किया है और समय के साथ बदली लोगों की सोच ने माताओं और मातृत्व के अनुभवों में नए घटक जोड़े हैं। इसको गहराई से समझ पाना बहुत ही कठिन है क्योंकि, अभी बहुत से ऐसे घटक हैं स्त्री स्वास्थ्य और मातृत्व के जिनके बारे में अध्ययन जाना बाकी है।

समकालीन समाज में मातृत्व के अनुभवों में कई भूमिकाएं और जिम्मेदारियां जुड़ी हैं। जहां पहले मातृत्व से अभिप्राय होता था कि, माता घर पर रह कर हर समय शिशु व परिवार के पालन-पोषण में जीवन बिता दें। वहीं आज के समय में माताएं निजी जीवन और व्यावसायिक जीवन, दोनों में तालमेल बना कर रखना जानती हैं। उनके पास अधिक ज्ञान व संसाधन हैं जिनसे वह अपने जीवन को थोड़ा आसान बना सकती हैं। परिस्थितियों के अनुसार माताओं और उनके मातृत्व अनुभवों में भिन्नताएँ होती हैं। इसे समझने के लिए हम कुछ विभिन्न परिस्थितियों को उदाहरण के रूप में देख सकते हैं -

गृहिणी माताएं: गृहिणी माताओं के लिए जो सबसे बड़ा लाभ माना जाता है वह ये कि, उन्हें घर कि आर्थिक जिम्मेदारी नहीं उठानी होती और उन्हें अपने बच्चों के साथ अधिक समय मिलता है। हालांकि यह सच है कि गृहिणी माताएं बच्चों की परवरिश बेहतर रूप से कर पाती हैं, क्योंकि वे सदैव बच्चों के लिए उपस्थित रहती हैं। पर बच्चे का लालन-पालन अपने आप में एक बहुत बड़ी चुनौती है। परिवार के हर एक सदस्य की पसंद-नापसंद, उनकी दिनचर्या, जरूरतें, स्वास्थ्य, साथ ही बच्चों से जुड़ी हर छोटी-बड़ी बात का ध्यान



और घर के अनगिनत कामों के बीच संतुलन बनाने में एक गृहिणी का पूरा दिन बीत जाता है। और इतना करने के बाद भी अक्सर कुछ न कुछ बाकी रह ही जाता है।

जहां एक ओर पारिवारिक संतुलन के लिए यह सकारात्मक संकेत है कि, पति और पत्नी आपस में कार्यों को विभाजित कर लें। वहीं दूसरी ओर अभी भी गृहणियों के योगदान को उचित महत्व नहीं दिया जाता। अपने बच्चे के विकास को करीब से अनुभव करना बहुत संतोषजनक होता है। पर दिनभर बच्चे की देख-रेख और अकेले घरेलू काम करने से अक्सर उनके जीवन में सामाजिक अलगाव की स्थिति आ जाती है।

कई स्थितियों में यह अकेलेपन और अवसाद (डिप्रेशन) तक का रूप ले लेती है। यह गलतफेमी समाज में आज भी है कि गृहिणी माताओं की कोई उपलब्धियां नहीं होती हैं। अपने कार्य की तुलना में पर्याप्त प्रोत्साहन ना मिलना और आर्थिक आवश्यकताओं के लिए पूर्ण रूप से अपने पति पर निर्भर हो जाना भी उनके आत्म-संदेह में अहम भूमिका निभाता है। ऐसे में पति व परिवार द्वारा उचित समर्थन और माताओं के निरंतर प्रयासों की सराहना करने की आवश्यकता है।

कामकाजी माताएं: अप्रैल २०२३ तक, भारत में १५ वर्ष और उससे अधिक आयु की ३२.८% महिलाएं श्रम शक्ति में भाग ले रही थीं, जबकि पुरुषों की भागीदारी दर ७७.२% थी। जब बात हो

<https://www.brekingcopywriting.com/blog/stay-at-home-moms-battling-loneliness-and-depression#:~:text=They%20say%20you%20can't,to%20prioritize%20myself%20again%2C%20too>
https://dgc.gov.in/dgc/sites/default/files/2023-05/Female_Labour_Utilization_in_India_April_2023_final_1_1-pages-1-2-merged_1_1.pdf



उन महिलाओं की जो माताएं भी हैं, तो यह दर और भी कम है। कामकाजी माताओं को बच्चे, घर और कार्य-क्षेत्र की सभी जिम्मेदारियों के बीच संतुलन बनाना पड़ता है। ऐसे में उनको एक निरंतर ग्लानि का सामना करना पड़ता है जिसे मुख्य धारा में 'कामकाजी माताओं की ग्लानि' के नाम से जाना जाता है। इस ग्लानि का मुख्य कारण है माताओं का अपने बच्चों को पर्याप्त समय ना दे पाना। मातृत्व और करियर दोनों में अपना पूर्ण योगदान देने में वह इतनी व्यस्त हो जाती हैं कि, स्वयं के लिए उन्हें समय ही नहीं मिलता। उनकी जिम्मेदारियाँ दोगुनी हो जाती हैं। ऐसे में वह अपने स्वास्थ्य से समझौता कर बैठती हैं और शारीरिक व मानसिक रूप से बहुत थकी हुई रहने लगती हैं। वह अपनी संपूर्ण पहचान मातृत्व तक सीमित नहीं करना चाहतीं, बल्कि मातृत्व को अपनी पहचान के एक अहम भाग के रूप में देखती हैं। समाज में कामकाजी महिलाओं से बहुत अधिक अपेक्षाएं रखी जाती हैं और उनके काम करने की इच्छा को अक्सर एक स्वार्थी निर्णय माना जाता है।

कई महिलाएं गर्भावस्था तक काम कर रही होती हैं, पर बच्चे के बाद अपने काम पर वापस नहीं लौट पातीं। ऐसा इसलिए क्योंकि कार्य-स्थल में उचित बाल देखभाल सुविधाएं उपलब्ध नहीं होतीं। और जो महिलाएं वापस लौट पाती हैं उनको रूढ़िवादी धारणाओं और पूर्वाग्रहों का सामना करना पड़ता है। अधिकतर स्थिति में उनके वेतन पहले से घटा दिए जाते हैं जबकि बच्चे के बाद आर्थिक आवश्यकताएं बढ़ जाती हैं। मानसिक तनाव, सामाजिक दबाव, घटी आय और बढ़ी जिम्मेदारियों से कामकाजी माताएं एक निरंतर दुविधा में रहती हैं।

इन दो प्रमुख परिस्थितियों के अलावा भी कई अन्य परिस्थितियाँ हैं जो मातृत्व अनुभव को भिन्न करती हैं। उदाहरण के तौर पर हम देख सकते हैं –एकल अभिभावक के रूप में माताओं को स्वयं ही माता और पिता दोनों की ही भूमिका निभानी पड़ती है। ज्यादातर एकल माताएं कामकाजी भी होती हैं। भावनात्मक समर्थन के लिए माता और बच्चे दोनों ही एक दूसरे पर निर्भर होते हैं। दत्तक माता के अनुभव जननी माता से बहुत अलग होते हैं। स्वयं को बच्चों से जोड़ पाना, बच्चों की सोच व उनकी आवश्यकताओं को समझ पाना और उनको विश्वास दिला पाना कि वह सुरक्षित वातावरण में हैं, ऐसी कई चुनौतियों का सामना उन्हें करना पड़ता है। दिव्यांग बच्चों की माताओं का मातृत्व अनुभव संघर्षों से भरा होता है। दिव्यांग बच्चों के पालन-पोषण में सामान्य से ज्यादा ध्यान, धैर्य और ज्ञान की



आवश्यकता होती है। स्वयं को तनाव, हताशा, शर्मिंदगी आदि भावनाओं से निकालकर वास्तविकता को स्वीकारना, अपने बच्चे व स्वयं का ध्यान रखना और आत्मविश्वास जगाना एक आम व्यक्ति की सोच से कई गुना कठिन है।

यह सभी अपने साथ अनन्य प्रकार के अनुभव और चुनौतियाँ लेकर आते हैं। साथ ही सामाजिक दबाव और मानसिक कठिनाइयाँ तो हर मातृत्व अनुभव में अपनी भूमिका निभाते ही हैं।

मानसिक चुनौतियाँ हमेशा से मातृत्व अनुभव में रही हैं, पर मानसिक स्वास्थ्य पर सक्रिय रूप से ध्यान दिया जाना बीते कुछ वर्षों से ही शुरू हुआ है। अपनी टेड एक्स टॉक में लीज कार्लाइल अपनी मातृत्व यात्रा साझा करते हुए बताती हैं कि, कैसे माँ बनने के बाद एक स्वस्थ बच्चे के बावजूद, वह अभिभूत और असंतुष्ट महसूस करने लगी थीं। ऐसा इसलिए हुआ क्योंकि उन्होंने आत्मा-देखभाल पर ध्यान देना लगभग छोड़ दिया था। यह अनुभव हर माता के साथ कभी न कभी होता ही है। बच्चे की जरूरतें और पारिवारिक व सामाजिक अपेक्षाओं पर खरे उतरने के क्रम में वह स्वयं पर ध्यान नहीं पातीं।

२०२१ में किए गए एक अध्ययन के अनुसार, दुनिया की १७.२२% महिलाएं प्रसवोत्तर अवसाद (पोस्टपार्टम डिप्रेशन) का अनुभव करती हैं। विकासशील देशों में, १६.८% महिलाएं प्रसव के बाद पोस्टपार्टम डिप्रेशन का अनुभव करती हैं। भारत में यह दर २२% है। प्रसवोत्तर अवसाद एक चिकित्सा स्थिति है, जो कई महिलाओं को बच्चे को जन्म देने के बाद होती है। यह दुःख, चिंता और थकान की तीव्र भावनाएं हैं जो प्रसव के बाद लंबे समय तक रहती हैं। इसके लक्षणों में अनिद्रा, भूख न लगना, तीव्र चिड़चिड़ापन और बच्चे के साथ संबंध बनाने में कठिनाई जैसी समस्याएं शामिल हैं।

कई महिलां, इन लक्षणों से गुज़र रही होती हैं पर, डर और शर्म के कारण वह अपनी हालत के बारे में किसी से बात नहीं कर पातीं। तकनीकी विकास और इंटरनेट की पहुंच के कारण आज कई जानकारियाँ, अध्ययन, शोध आदि लोगों के लिए, आसानी से उपलब्ध हैं। साथ ही ऑनलाइन प्लेटफॉर्म पर गर्भावास्था सहायक समूह बनने लगे हैं जो दुनिया के अलग-अलग हिस्सों से गर्भवती महिलाओं और माताओं के बीच संचार में सहायता करते हैं। मानसिक स्वास्थ्य के लिए, लोगों की बढ़ती जागरूकता भी आज की माताओं को अपने बच्चों की देखभाल के साथ आत्म-प्रेम और आत्मा-देखभाल की ओर ध्यान देने के लिए, प्रेरित कर रही हैं।



जहां एक ओर प्रौद्योगिकी विकास और खासकर इंटरनेट मातृत्व अनुभवों को सुखद बनाने में इतना सहायक है, वहीं दूसरी ओर इसके दुष्प्रभाव भी हैं। इंटरनेट में कई विरोधाभासी तत्व होते हैं, जैसे कि यह मूल्यवान ज्ञान के साथ ही गलत जानकारी भी प्रदान करता है, लोगों को जोड़ता है जबकि कभी-कभी एकांत को बढ़ावा भी देता है। हाल के शोधों से यह संकेत मिलता है कि, नई और अपेक्षित माताएं डिजिटल प्रौद्योगिकियों, जैसे गर्भावस्था-विशिष्ट मोबाइल ऐप्स और सोशल मीडिया प्लेटफार्म्स जैसे यूट्यूब से जानकारी प्राप्त करने पर विश्वास रखती हैं। समस्या ये है कि, इंटरनेट पर उपलब्ध विशाल जानकारी के समुद्र में से प्रामाणिक जानकारी को पहचानना कठिन है।

इसके अलावा सोशल मीडिया ने “आदर्श माँ की छवि” के ऊपर बहुत दबाव डाला है। इससे माताओं को ऐसा लगता है कि सोशल मीडिया पर दिखने वाली माताओं के जीवन में सब कुछ संतुलित है। वह स्वयं के लिए अवास्तविक मानक स्थापित कर लेती हैं जिनको पूरा ना कर पाने पर वे आत्म-संदेह, तनाव व चिंता से घिरने लगती हैं। ऐसे में माताओं को यह समझना चाहिए कि, सोशल मीडिया पर दिखने वाली छवि अधिकतर छलावा होती हैं। उनकी परिस्थितियाँ भिन्न हैं, उनका बच्चा औरों उसे भिन्न है और वह खुद बाकी माताओं से भिन्न हैं, इसीलिए उनके मातृत्व अनुभव भी भिन्न होंगे। एक अफ्रीकी कहावत है कि, “एक बच्चे को पालने के लिए पूरे समुदाय की आवश्यकता होती है।” यह बहुत सुंदर रूप से समझाती है कि कैसे एक बच्चे की देखभाल और पालन-पोषण में केवल माता-पिता ही नहीं, बल्कि पूरा परिवार, रिश्तेदार व दोस्त भी योगदान करते हैं। मातृत्व अनुभव में पिता व परिवार की भी अहम भूमिका होती है। गर्भावस्था के दौरान और बच्चे के पैदा होने के बाद कुछ महीनों बाद तक माताएं शारीरिक रूप से कमजोर और भावनात्मक रूप से संवेदनशील होती हैं। ऐसे में उन्हें परिवार और विशेष रूप से पति की ओर से एक सक्रिय सहायक प्रणाली की आवश्यकता होती है। कई जगह परिवार बहुत प्रशंसनीय ढंग से माता व बच्चे दोनों का ध्यान रखते हैं, पर ऐसी भी स्थिति होती है जहां माता को परिवार की ओर से पर्याप्त सहायता नहीं मिल पाती।

अतः आधुनिकरण ने मानव जीवन को काफी सरल बनाया है पर, इस बात को भी नजरअंदाज नहीं किया जा सकता कि, बढ़ती महंगाई और व्यस्त जीवन ने लोगों को अकेलेपन व तनाव का शिकार भी बनाया है। ऐसे सामाजिक वातावरण में मातृत्व अनुभवों को सुखद व आरामदायक बनाने के लिए यह समझना आवश्यक है कि, माताएं स्वयं भी एक सामान्य मनुष्य हैं और उनपर अवास्तविक आदर्शों व अपेक्षाओं के तहत दबाव नहीं बनाना चाहिए। सभी माताओं की मातृत्व यात्रा विशेष है और उनके निरंतर योगदान से मानव जीवन संपन्न है।

My Mother's Saree

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I.

This morning as I draped my saree for work, I realized I had chosen to wear yet another saree that has been my mother's. For the fourth day in a row, I stood in front of the mirror marveling at the colours and letting my mind wander to the story of this saree. A rich blue body with a red border, my mother had bought it on an official trip to Pune. I remember her telling me that a sprightly young Policewoman had been her companion on that trip and took her around town. I see still the blue patch on the inside of the saree where my mother snipped off a short strip of the border to paste on the sleeves of her blouse.

My wardrobe stands bursting with sarees and their stories passed down by my mothers-- my aunts, grandmothers, mother-in-law, their friends, and my mother. These women generously open their bed-boxes and suitcases when I visit them or slip me a pile of neatly ironed and starched sarees, each lovingly wrapped in a story.

Tales of trousseaus from another age, vacations taken with friends, official tours and training academies, gifts bought by children, the generosity of older sisters, promotions celebrated, shopping expeditions with colleagues, of rides in chartered buses, the stories are my inheritance. They are the gateway to that other city where these mothers paved the paths for my sisters and me to enter new professions, drive cars, and become researchers, journalists, psychoanalysts, and CEOs.

Motherhood is many things. It is biology, a social construct, a patriarchal imperative, an advertising campaign, an invention of the big pharma, and the myth of the nation. It is my unique relation to my mother and my child. Motherhood is that feeling of security that makes some of us cling to our mothers even as full-grown adults. Motherhood is the strength we give our children to take on the world. Motherhood is



also a fine fabric of tales that binds generations of women into a close community of survivors and rebels.

I have faint memories of my maternal grandmother. I remember that one time when I was alone with her in her house and she made me a *paratha* stuffed with sugar and *ghee*. The caramelly aroma of that unusual treat still sticks to my palette when I think of it. But other than that, she exists in my memory through the one or two photographs I have of her; a large, quiet woman sitting on her bed, draped in a pastel saree, her snowy white hair neatly tied in a plait, her translucent Jhangi skin speckled with freckles, and the plain gold hoops in her long, hanging earlobes. Next to her pillow lay a Hindi magazine and an Urdu newspaper. My mother tells me how her mother would wear only the frayed or much-washed sarees, always saving the new ones for her three daughters who went to work in offices or schools.

I learnt much later that the saree hadn't always been my grandmother's choice of dress. In 1947, when she came to the newly formed India with her husband and three young children, on foot in a ten-day-long *kafila* from her *chak* in Mint Kumry (Montgomery) to East Punjab, she did not wear sarees. It was here, in Delhi, so far from her home, her river Ravi, the camels, and the ancient city of Harappa, that she learnt to wear the saree, just as she learnt to read and speak Hindi. Like the multitude of Punjabi refugees who pared their cultural and regional identities to fit in with the hosts and the new national identity, my grandmother, too, adopted the dress and language of her new country. As a refugee woman from rural Punjab who had to take on many new roles to educate herself and rebuild her life, the saree eased the passage for the fashioning of an urban, modern, yet traditional self. My grandmother's saree, which she would have learnt to wear at the same time as her oldest daughters, is the warp and weft of motherhood. It is a testament of her history and that of her sisters and daughters, who wore the saree to navigate their different worlds and fight their individual battles.





II.

Towards the end of the previous century, three young women in Delhi watched their city go up in flames in the riots of 1984. As they volunteered as relief workers in the camps set up in the university and elsewhere, they came across women who had lost their husbands, children, parents and homes in the violence. To the survivors, the riots of 1984 appeared as a second Partition, and brought to the surface all the horrors of 1947. The three young women, Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, as they listened to the women in the camps, discovered a labyrinth that led them to their own mothers and grandmothers. As they went about looking for more women, from the survivors of 1984 to those of 1947, they found that *listening* to women's stories empowered them. Women's stories, they discovered, though present everywhere, get unheard, overwritten, buried, silenced, or forgotten. Not because they speak softly, or speak less, but because women's speech is culturally constructed as empty speech i.e. lacking in facts, value and logic. They found that women have always raised their voices and spoken their minds, but that we are all socially trained to be deaf to them. The three women collected women's testimonies and crafted a methodology that shifted the paradigm of modern Indian history. They restored the "I" of the woman interlocutor, both the historian and the witness, to a place of privilege. The historian offered her own testimony alongside that of her witness, displacing masculinist traditions of exclusion and objectivity. This meant that the historian could speak of her own mother and grandmother, to the reader and to the witness, on the same page where she recorded her interview. Urvashi Butalia and Ritu Menon founded the landmark feminist press, Kali for Women, in 1984 and continue to work, till this day, to publish women's writing and make their voices heard. Along with Kamla Bhasin, they pioneered the feminist turn in Partition historiography. They spoke to women, ordinary and invisible women, whose histories



had been appropriated to bolster the statist and communal narratives of the post-independence nations. They recorded interviews with these women who as Partition refugees, took up the roles of social workers, teachers, refugee camp workers, and midwives to bring up their children and their families, and played a significant role in rebuilding post-Partition society. Moreover, they found that the genesis of gendered violence during communal conflict can be traced back to the colonial relations of modernity that emerged in north India in the second half of the nineteenth century. Butalia, Menon and Bhasin, then, restored women's voices to history and uncovered a consensus between colonialism, modernity, patriarchy and nationalism that continues to shape gender relations in modern-day India. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin's *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (1998) and Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (1998) commemorated 50 years of India's independence by writing the history of the Partition from women's point of view.

III.

Urvashi Butalia was among the first Jijabai Awardees honoured by Shivaji College in 2010-11. In January 2013, she revisited Shivaji College along with Ritu Menon to speak at the National Seminar organized by the Department of English. The late Kamla Bhasin inaugurated our WDC annual event in February 2017, where she raised slogans with our young boys and girls for a more gender-sensitive society. Over the past decade, teachers of the Partition course have taught their works to students of English Literature.

It was with the writings of these three women and the voices of those other women that they preserved that I learnt to listen to the stories of my mothers. They give me the tools to piece together my own history, as an individual, as daughter, and as mother. They empower me to imagine



alternate cartographies of my city, where men and women inhabit distinct spaces, and walk on parallel paths that rarely meet.

The embrace of this motherhood I write about is vast and nurturing. It is a magical empathy that binds women together. It is an everlasting string of stories threaded by women young and old. Hidden in the folds of the sarees that my mothers gift me, echoed in the voices of the mothers I read and hear, it is the history of our tribe.

Contemporary Urban Motherhood

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Urban motherhood today is a lively, complicated pursuit, deeply coloured by the harried rhythms and particular opportunities in the complex fabric of city life. Women seek to match tradition with pressures of a modern, high-tech, competitive society. Motherhood in contemporary times means more than just rearing of children.

Urban areas can give mothers access to better education, health care and job opportunities, but they also present significant challenges. They face a lot of emotional and mental stress from the dual burden of having to excel in their jobs and meet their society's high standards for ideal motherhood. Social media does not help, perpetually showing mothers others' picture-perfect parenting and creating a sense of failure, even if they know they are doing their best and making the right decisions. Despite different styles of upbringing and all the challenges, there's a common thread - love that knows no bounds, sacrifices made without question and an unbreakable resilience.

In difficult circumstances, urban motherhood is best defined in small, meaningful moments - a child's joyful chuckle, a family's collective warmth at the dinner table, or the shared connection of a late-night heart-to-heart. It's about bringing together the wisdom of tradition and the possibilities of progress, creating spaces where children can thrive in love and security. Motherhood, within the framework of our society, is evolving, as women balance their own lives living and working in the city, while raising the next generation of humans.

Motherhood Reimagined: An Urban Point of View

Mothers have evolved like the values of urban society have. Urban mothers, who were once defined mostly as caretakers, are changing the



script by balancing family responsibilities with personal and work ambitions. And with access to better education, flourishing careers, and changing societal norms. They are shattering stereotypes and building identities that honour both caregiving and self-sufficiency. A key element in this transformation is their ease of traversing different roles. Urban mothers have outgrown the traditional role of caregiving and have become breadwinners, entrepreneurs, innovators and community leaders. In a single day, they might be finalizing high-stakes deals in the morning, advising others around the world, and patiently helping their children through schoolwork by night. However, this careful balancing act often comes laden with emotional complexities, like “mom guilt” - that nagging sensation that, despite all their hard work, they are not doing enough in either limelight. Their journey reflects their resilience, strength and ability to adapt in a fast-paced world.

Technology has woven itself into the very fabric of urban motherhood, offering both solutions and challenges. Digital apps help mothers streamline household chores, keep track of school activities, and even find moments of community in online parenting groups. Virtual parent-teacher meetings have made juggling work and family commitments a little easier, saving time and reducing stress. Yet, technology brings its own struggles-how do you teach a child to balance screen time when the digital world is so enticing? How do you foster meaningful connections in a world increasingly dominated by devices?

Cultural diversity in cities adds richness and complexity to the lives of urban mothers. For many, the journey of motherhood becomes a balancing act between honouring their roots and preparing their children to embrace the vastness of the modern world. These mothers take on the beautiful responsibility of keeping family traditions alive—whether it's through sharing stories passed down by



grandparents, celebrating festivals with joy, or teaching children the melodies of a native language. At the same time, they open the doors to new perspectives, encouraging their children to explore and appreciate the incredible diversity that surrounds them. This balance isn't always easy. It takes thoughtfulness to weave cultural rituals into busy schedules or to make space for traditional values alongside contemporary ideas. Their efforts are deeply personal and filled with love. By teaching their children to cherish their heritage while being



open to the world, these mothers nurture individuals who feel proud of where they come from and are equally curious about where they can go. It's a delicate dance of tradition and modernity, filled with moments of learning, connection, and pride—a dance that only a mother's heart can lead with such grace. Despite these evolving roles, the essence of motherhood remains rooted in love, resilience, and sacrifice. Urban mothers are not only raising children but also shaping future generations by instilling values, independence, and a sense of responsibility. Their ability to adapt, innovate, and thrive amidst the complexities of urban life underscores their pivotal role in society. This redefined motherhood is a testament to their strength and a celebration of their contributions to a rapidly changing world.

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The Evolving Role of Fathers in Urban Life

Fatherhood in urban settings is undergoing a beautiful transformation. No longer confined to the role of earning members, today's fathers are stepping up as active, engaged caregivers. They're not just helping—they're sharing the journey of parenting as equal partners. This shift reflects a world where social norms are evolving, gender roles are becoming more balanced, and fathers are finding deeper joy and meaning in being present for their children.

For many dads, it's about more than fulfilling a duty. It's about building memories, fostering connections, and showing their children that love comes not just through provision but through presence. This change is



redefining what it means to be a father and shaping families in powerful, lasting ways.

The days when urban fathers remained on the sidelines of parenting are long gone. Now they are getting down to the nitty-gritty of raising children- changing diapers, cooking dinners and going to parent-teacher meetings. What is more, this involvement not only takes the burden off mothers but also strengthens family ties.

Culturally, urban fathers are reshaping fatherhood. Parents are nurturing open communication, honouring their children as unique individuals, and taking on modern, progressive styles of parenting. By moving away from the traditional notion of a stern, distant authority figure, they're taking on the role of mentors, friends and role models to their children. This reimagining of fatherhood isn't merely revising the framework of family life - it's contributing to the construction of a more equitable and inclusive society. Whereas parenting was once considered the one-sided responsibility of mothers, it is now understood to be a joint voyage, one with open hearts, hands, and minds, inviting love, collaboration and growth.

Urban Motherhood and Mental Health

Urban motherhood can be an overwhelming experience with a multitude of responsibilities and expectations, but such demands are not without rewards – some of which are explored in my piece below. Navigating work, parenting, relationships, and self-care in a demanding city environment can add to stress, anxiety, and even depression. Shoulders loaded with the pressure to do it all, the weight of motherhood-for many women-translates to poor mental health.



Psychologists believe that one of the most difficult challenges that aspiring urban mothers face today is the pressure to be perfect in society. Social media further compounds this problem, providing tailored glimpses into “ideal” ways to be mom or dad. Such comparison can lead to feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and self-doubt.

Another silent struggle is loneliness. Many mothers feel emotionally isolated even as they live in the urban centres of the world. Busyness and the lack of community make it harder to connect meaningfully and exacerbate loneliness.

To find solace in the face of these challenges, many urban mothers seek therapy, support groups and mindfulness practices. These practices serve as a platform for sharing experiences and learning about coping strategies in a safe environment. Progressive employers also focus on mental health by offering flexible working options, strong maternity benefits, and mental health resources. At the end of the day, mental health is not a luxury in the lives of urban mothers—it is a necessity. They can also accept that it is not easy so they need help, they need encouragement to nurture themselves and also give the peace and love that their children deserve to grow. In the process, they are building healthier, happier families and encouraging others to make space for wellness in their daily lives.

Navigating Challenges and Embracing Opportunities

Urban motherhood is a complex blend of hurdles and possibilities. While the fast-paced city lifestyle, rising living costs, and competitive environments pose challenges, the resources and growth opportunities in urban settings make this journey dynamic and rewarding.

Urban mothers often face one of the biggest challenges juggling



different roles. Between careers, household responsibilities and childcare, there is often little time remaining for self-care. As expectations mount, burnout and imposter syndrome set in as you strive for perfection in every role. Moreover, the inability to find affordable childcare facilities could inhibit mothers from pursuing their career interests.

Economic pressures make things even more complicated. Expensive housing, education, and health care in urban centres further tax family budgets, hitting single mothers or families earning lower to middle incomes especially hard.

In cities bustling with people, many mothers find themselves socially isolated. Your busy schedule and lack of participation in close-knit communities or extended family can lead to loneliness or emotional fatigue.

But urban motherhood also offers unique opportunities. Access to quality education, health care and extracurricular programs means mothers already can provide their children a well-rounded upbringing. Cities also expose children to new cultures and so, to new customs and thoughts. Even if you do not have social connections, urban environments can be launching pads for mothers. From climbing the corporate ladder to pursuing hobbies and joining fitness classes, there is never a shortage of opportunities to better yourself within the city. In addition, urban centers offer the strong support networks — parent groups, counseling services, daycare facilities — that help mothers handle the challenges of parenting. Urban motherhood, you'll find, is breathless. And it's also profoundly rewarding. As mothers, with a good support system and some perseverance, we can convert challenges to opportunities. Through this journey, they not only light the path to successful futures for their children, but also for themselves.



With time, urban motherhood is effect, that is experienced on profound ways of the resilience, love, constant evolution; It covers the difficulties of living a fast, demanding life while trying to have a safe, stable family for youngsters. Urban mothers have a very complex, full-time job balancing their careers, their child care duties, and their own self-care while juggling financial pressures, societal pressures, and emotional pressures. This arduous journey, however, is also peppered with incredible growth, empowerment, and the establishment of lifelong friendships.

Each urban mother is carving her own niche by letting go of the faded roles that had once paralleled them. They care for, but are also role models, mentors, providers, who want their kids to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally in an increasingly fast-moving, continuously evolving world. Such adversity only serves to foster adaptability and inclusivity- two of the most important qualities that enter a new age of parenting that values responsiveness over control and emotion over intellect.

Ultimately, urban motherhood is about the journey punctuated by the ability to transform challenges into opportunities. With determination and creativity, mothers are forging paths not just to their children's success, but also to their own growth and contentment. Through these means, they are forging a path towards a future in which families flourish, and love, strength, and connection replace the isolating dynamics that left so many of us feeling disconnected in the urban centers where we live.

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Personal Journeys of Motherhood

Riddhi

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As said by Rajneesh, “The moment a child is born, the mother is also born. She never existed before. The woman existed, but the mother, never.”

Every Woman becomes a Mother when she holds her child. Being a mother is the toughest job, but it still goes unappreciated.

But does motherhood snatches away a woman's existence and identity?

Society does try to snatch away her identity by constantly gluing labels on them and constantly reminding them that they can't do this or that because they are mothers.

A majority of the husbands, when it comes to show their love through their efforts and help, remain silent and passively try to lock their woman around their child.

For a Woman, it is necessary to realise that merely a label by society doesn't define their capabilities. Society expects a woman to be like a Woman. But owning your choices and acting according to your wishes doesn't make a Woman disrespectful or a less woman. A Woman owns her freedom of choice, she has the choice to choose Instead of being given a choice. Nothing can take away their identity until she chooses to allow it to.

Freedom of choice is as natural to a woman as it is to a man. Women need to stop pushing their selves in the hands of violation, suppression and injustice.

Being a mother or a woman doesn't make you an object, to be used by others as one wishes to.



Women need to stop allowing themselves to pour their everything into others until they get completely drained out. Denying their requests and ignoring their opinions doesn't make a Woman less or worthless. But, constantly ignoring their selves makes a Woman worthless. replace the isolating dynamics that left so many of us feeling disconnected in the urban centers where we live.

Being a Mother doesn't stop you from being who you are or pursuing what you want to. Circumstances does stop you, but they can't walk over you. At last, one has to decide whether to get suppressed or suppress the obstacle.

It's the time for every Woman and Mother to stop asking for help from others. Instead, it is needed for every Woman to help herself. Does a Man stop himself from dreaming or does he ever demands anybody to



create his dream, then why a Woman is still expecting that her family or her husband would make her dreams come true, are women disempowered or handicapped? The society does stop a Woman, but can't a Woman stop them? Every Man is fighting for his comfort or rights, then why does a Woman expects others to speak up for them? But, when a Woman conceives a child in her womb, her struggles demand love by others. Motherhood is both a spring and an autumn.

A mother gets her child and the associated happiness with it, but motherhood also shakes the soul of every mother and suck all of her strength.

When a Woman is suffering both mentally and physically during the process of creating a child, is it not the responsibility of a husband to pour his love and understand her unsaid pain?

Love is tested when the times are difficult. Then, why most of the husbands give up, accept their failure and bend their knees in front of the chaotic time? Instead of winning, by proving their love constantly for their wives.

Most women go through perinatal depression during pregnancy and postpartum depression after childbirth.

The data shows perinatal depression affects atleast 1 among 7 women.

Though, one can heal oneself. But, when the situations demands the most or all of you, one needs warmth of love to be healed.

The family and husband seem to be avoidant of mother. And the worst of all, it expects from the mother to be perfect and careful when she herself is drained out physically, mentally and emotionally. Because they have



witnessed mothers who have given birth to five to eight children all alone, they demand her to demand less and do the same as other mothers.

Women also put pressure on the budding mother instead of empathising with them. They become another enemy for a mother. Instead of accepting the budding mother's struggles and acknowledging it, all they do is make her feel less by saying, "It happens to every mother, have I not been one? I didn't make such fuss as you."

Constant comparison with other mothers of their family and devaluation of their efforts make them question their soul whether they are actually not doing anything or why they are unable to reach to the levels of other mothers.

Both, the husband and the family need to empathise with the mother, love her to make her feel; loved, that she is not alone and that her presence matters for them. Acknowledging the unheard struggles and pain would make the mother not feel as if she is the child-bearing object and that the family needs her for only the child.

But, it would make the struggle for every mother less painful.

If the creator will not be happy, will the world be happy? There is a Sanskrit quote which means that what a woman likes, the society or world likes it. Let's try to fill every woman with love, so that she pours love when she creates a being with herself.

The Emotional Blueprint of Motherhood

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Motherhood is a transformative journey of a woman's life intricately woven with love, sacrifice, perseverance and a fundamental dedication to nurturing life. It is an experience that begins before birth and changes throughout the lifetime, comprising a wide range of emotions and challenges remarkably shaping both mother and child. It is a complex and evolving blueprint of emotions that defines this journey apart from the biological aspects which are often studied. This article explores the multifaceted dimensions of motherhood- the bond between the mother and child, the joys and challenges associated with motherhood and the personal growth of women throughout this journey.

The Transition to Motherhood: Pregnancy

The emotional journey of motherhood begins when a woman finds out being pregnant, her life starts to change, when she realizes about the life growing inside her. She experiences a range of emotions, including joy, excitement, nervousness, anxiety, and fear of the responsibilities that would follow. She starts developing an emotional bond with her child due to the hormonal changes. According to scientific research, during pregnancy the mother's body starts secreting Oxytocin, also known as the love hormone, from the posterior pituitary. The increased levels of oxytocin develop feelings of love and attachment. In many women this bond is formed instantly resulting in protective instincts and an overwhelming desire to nurture their child but for some mother's it may take time to develop this connection which may lead to self-doubt.

This emotional bond of motherhood is also present in adoptive mothers, foster mothers and others who step into the maternal role; this explains that the idea of motherhood is as much an emotional journey as it is a biological one.



The Postpartum Transition: Between Joy and Challenge

The postpartum period is filled with moments of joy, happiness but alongside it often brings emotional challenges as well. While holding a newborn for the first time is a moment of happiness, overwhelming love and affection it is also accompanied by the realization of responsibilities. For new mothers this reality can be horrifying, the vulnerabilities arising from the desire to protect her child to doubting her own abilities. Changes in levels of hormones, sleep deprivation, and the demands of caring for a newborn can overwhelm them. Questions like Am I doing enough? Am I making the right decisions? Creates self-doubt and fear in them.

Postpartum hormones like changes in estrogen, progesterone levels can also affect the mental health of new mothers leading to the "baby blues," experienced by up to 80% of new mothers, characterized by temporary mood swings, irritation, and emotional instability. While these feelings usually resolve within a few weeks, some mothers experience

postpartum depression (PPD)—a more severe condition characterized by persistent sadness, loss of interest in daily activities, and difficulty in bonding with the baby. PPD affects approximately 10-20% of new mothers, emphasizing the need for early detection and support from partner and family. These emotional instabilities during motherhood signify the depth of love and responsibility but also underscores the need for societal support and understanding.

The Evolution of Love

Motherhood comprises unconditional love and affections which evolves with time adapting to the needs of a child as they grow. In the early years it involves physical care, protection and later transforms into



guidance, support, and encouragement. However, this unconditional love does not mean a lack of challenge or conflicts, rather involves setting boundaries, imparting values and allowing the child to make mistakes and learn from them, though they sometimes be met with resilience.

As children grow and become independent, mothers often find themselves navigating complex emotional dynamics, they face the bittersweet task of letting go. The once all-consuming role of caregiving turns into that of guide and supporter, though this is a moment of pride it is often marked by the sense of loss. This stage of motherhood undervalues the strength and selflessness it requires. Letting go provides mothers an opportunity to rediscover themselves, teaching them the importance of self-love and care. With more time, more freedom, they can follow their passion, hobbies and goals that may have been set aside earlier. This journey toward self-love is a powerful aspect of the emotional blueprint of motherhood, as it reinforces the idea that a mother's needs are just as important as her child's.

The Journey of Sacrifices and Challenges

Motherhood is a resemblance of sacrifice, from physical responsibilities of caregiving with sleepless nights, hectic days to investing their emotional energy in caring about the psychological well-being of their children by guiding, teaching and comforting them while postponing or forgetting their own dreams, mothers always find a way to prioritize the wellbeing of her child while often suppressing her own struggles. However, Motherhood sometimes also inspires women to reassess their goals, ambitions, and to find a sense of purpose that brings positive change making them calmer, composed, persistent. it changes their perspective toward life, broadening their world. The first smile, the first



step, the first word by their children gives them a sense of achievement, a moment to celebrate the growth and love. These experiences provide them with an opportunity of self-discovery. Even though motherhood brings a feeling of happiness among women, sometimes societal expectations can make this journey burdensome. The glorification of the "perfect mother" creates unrealistic standards, which creates a self-doubt among many new mothers as they are often judged for their choices whether they decide to stay home or return to work, breastfeed their child or use formula, follow traditional parenting or adopt modern approaches. These expectations lead to feelings of guilt, stress. Postpartum depression is a consequence of the emotional burden of motherhood which is still not being discussed much, leaving many women to suffer in silence.

Many mothers struggling between motherhood and personal or professional responsibilities feel insufficient or guilty also called “mom guilt” when they are not able to spend time with their child or when they prioritize their career while the stay-at-home mothers may feel undervalued or unappreciated.

Thus, it is important to understand the emotional challenges, women's face during motherhood and provide them with necessary support as these emotions directly impact the psychological well-being of child as well as families apart from mothers.

Challenges of Foster Mothers and Adoptive Mothers

The role and efforts of foster mothers or adoptive mothers is often undervalued by society as they are not connected to the child biologically. It is more challenging for them to bond with the child especially those who may have experienced trauma, or negligence from biological parents thus they require more time to build trust and



connection. For foster mothers, knowing that the bond they have with the child is temporary, and they need to balance between offering unconditional love while simultaneously preparing the child emotionally with the possibility of them returning to their biological family can create a bittersweet feeling; while adoptive mothers may find difficulty in bonding with the child because of societal perception or intrusive questions about their family dynamics they may also have to deal with the insecurities of child. They often burden themselves with feeling of self-doubt about caring for the child to compensate for any hardship they may have endured in the past.

The Role of Community and Support

The emotional challenge of motherhood focuses on the importance of community and support. Mothers feel happy and stress-free in an environment where they feel understood, valued, and supported by their partners, family, friends and society. Therefore, creating a supportive culture around motherhood involves acknowledging its emotional complexities providing them with mental health supports, sharing responsibilities, fostering open conversations.

Conclusion

The emotional blueprint of motherhood is a fusion of love, affection, sacrifice, and perseverance. It comprises the different emotions associated with parenting, the emotional bond between mother and child, and the transformational growth that defines motherhood. Thus, understanding and acknowledging the emotions and challenges associated with motherhood allows the partners, families and society to support mothers in their journey.



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मातृत्व और लैंगिक राजनीति का संदर्भ और सामाजिक पूर्वाग्रह

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“पिता रक्षति कौमारे, भर्ता रक्षति यौवने ।
रक्षन्ति स्थविरे पुत्रा, न द्रधि स्वतन्त्र्यमर्हति ।।” - (मनुस्मृति, अध्याय ६ श्लोक ३)^१

रक्षेत कन्या पिता वित्रां पति पित्रास्तु बार्धके ।
अभावे ज्ञातयस्ते षोणं स्वातन्त्र्यं क्वचि स्त्रियः ।। याज्ञवल्क जी (१/८५)^२
अर्थात् बचपन में पिता, युवावस्था में पति और वृद्धावस्था में पुत्र स्त्री की रक्षा करेंगे ।

‘पति प्रतिकूल जनम जह जाई, विधवा होई पाई तरनाई ।’ (रामचरितमानस)

अर्थात् जो पत्नी पति की इच्छा के विरुद्ध जाती है चाहे वह कैसा ही क्यों न हो तो ऐसी स्त्री के दण्ड का विधान अगले जन्म तक है ।

जो स्त्री मातृत्व को अपना आधार बना पुरुष को अपने गर्भ में पालती है वहीं पितृसत्ता की लैंगिक राजनीति में किसी न किसी रूप में पुरुष के अधीन कर दी जाती है । मातृत्व के संबंध में पितृसत्ता एवं मातृसत्ता की बहस का आधार लैंगिक राजनीति की अधिरचना को समझे बिना संभव नहीं । इसलिए जरूरी है कि हम लैंगिक राजनीति को पहले समझें तत्पश्चात् मातृत्व के संदर्भ में लैंगिक राजनीति और सामाजिक पूर्वाग्रह पर बात करें ।

मातृत्व के संबंध में लैंगिक राजनीति को समझने से पहले हमें लिंग और लैंगिकता का अंतर समझना होगा । जिसे अंग्रेजी में सैक्स और जेंडर के रूप में परिभाषित किया जाता है । सैक्स यानी वह पहचान जो हमें हमारे जन्म के साथ मिलती है अर्थात् जो बायोलॉजिकल है यानी हमारी शारीरिक विशेषताओं, गुणसूत्र अर्थात् क्रोमज़ोमस, हार्मोनल स्तर और जननांगों के आधार पर इस पहचान को तय किया जाता है । सामान्यतः सैक्स(लिंग) को मेल और फीमेल अर्थात् पुरुष और महिला के रूप में विभाजित किया जाता है । संक्षेप में

Udry, J. Richard (November 1994). "The Nature of Gender" (PDF). *Demography*. 31 (4): 561–573. doi:10.2307/2061790. JSTOR 2061790. PMID 7890091. Archived (PDF) from the original on December 11, 2016. “Sex generally refers to an organism's biological sex, while gender usually refers to either social roles typically associated with the sex of a person or personal identification of one's own gender based on their own personal sense of it. Most contemporary social scientists, behavioral scientists and biologists, many legal systems and government bodies and intergovernmental agencies such as the WHO make a distinction between gender and sex.”



कहें तो सैक्स का निर्धारण जन्म के समय से ही हो जाता है। यह एक तरह का जन्म से मिलने वाला प्रमाण पत्र है। जबकि दूसरी ओर जेंडर अर्थात लैंगिक पहचान की अवधारणा सामाजिक और सांस्कृतिक रूप से निर्मित होती है। यह समाज द्वारा निर्धारित किया जाता है कि किसी व्यक्ति को वह किस रूप में देखता है। भारतीय समाज में ऐसी बहुत सारी कहावतें, मुहावरे प्रचलित हैं जिसमें समाज द्वारा किसी व्यक्ति के संबंध में लैंगिक टिप्पणियां की जाती हैं, और यह भी देखना दिलचस्प है कि समान लैंगिक पहचान के साथ भी ये टिप्पणियाँ एक गाली के रूप में प्रयोग की जाती हैं। उदाहरण के रूप में देखें तो एक लड़के को अक्सर अपने परिवार और समाज में इस तरह के वाक्य सुनने को मिलते हैं क्या लड़कियों की तरह हँस रहा है, या रो रहा है, तुम्हें तो चूड़ियां पहन लेनी चाहिए आदि। इस तरह के मुहावरे उन लैंगिक टिप्पणियों को दर्शाते हैं जिसे गाली की तरह समाज में प्रयोग किया जाता है और जिसमें समाज इस आग्रह के साथ चलता है कि कमजोरी का लक्षण एक खास लैंगिकता का लक्षण है जिसे समाज में महिला के रूप में पूर्वनिर्धारित में चिह्नित कर दिया गया है। इसलिए भारतीय समाज में जोर से हंसना, तेज आवाज में बात करना, पुरुष के समान कपड़े पहनना आदि को खास तरह के पूर्वाग्रह से देखा जाता है यही आग्रह एक पुरुष के संबंध में भी उद्घाटित होता है यदि कोई पुरुष बहुत भावुक है और किसी बात पर उसके आंसू निकल जाते हैं, उसका शरीर बहुत बलिष्ठ नहीं है वह कमजोर है उसकी आवाज में कड़कपन या भारीपन नहीं है तो समाज उसके प्रति भी एक खास तरह के पूर्वाग्रह के तहत व्यवहार करता है अर्थात की बायोलॉजिकल चाहे कोई व्यक्ति मेल हो या फीमेल। लेकिन एक और पहचान है जो समाज ने उसे दी है जिसे जेंडर कहा गया है अर्थात जैविक रूप से एक पुरुष के अंदर यदि उसकी कार्यशैली एक महिला के सामान्य व्यवहार से मेल खाती है तो समाज उसकी लैंगिकता का निर्धारण अलग तरह से या अलग रूप में करता है या उसे सामाजिक रूप से स्त्रैण घोषित करता है।

अब समझने की बात है की लैंगिक राजनीति कैसे हमारे समाज में इन सामाजिक पूर्वाग्रहों को देखती हैं या सामाजिक पूर्वाग्रह कैसे लैंगिकता को राजनैतिक बना देते हैं। खासकर मातृत्व के विशेष संदर्भ में लैंगिक राजनीति लिंग और लैंगिकता की इस असमानता को उद्घाटित करती है। इस अर्थ में कि मातृत्व को एक खास जेंडर के साथ संबद्ध कर दिया जाता है जबकि मातृत्व केवल एक लिंग की ही जिम्मेदारी नहीं होती। मातृत्व शब्द जब भी आएगा वह माँ अथवा स्त्री के संदर्भ में ही आता है। ऐसा क्यों है मातृत्व के संबंध में लैंगिक राजनीति का ये बुनियादी सवाल है। हमारे आगे की सारी बात इसी प्रश्न के जवाब में आएगी। हमें समझना होगा कि मातृत्व को महिला की पहचान से जोड़ना और उसकी



भूमिका को एक प्राकृतिक भूमिका के रूप में देखना यह सब लैंगिक राजनीति के सवाल हैं हालांकि यह सच है कि मातृत्व एक स्त्री अथवा एक माँ के व्यक्तित्व का अभिन्न हिस्सा है, यह सही है कि मातृत्व का दायित्व पुरुष से अधिक स्त्री या माँ वहन करती है। यह अंतर अगर बहुत अधिक या कुछ भी नहीं तो ६ महीने अधिक तो है ही, जब बच्चा उसके गर्भ में रहता है। किंतु यह भी सच है कि इसमें पिता के दायित्व को भी अंदेखा नहीं किया जा सकता। फिर ऐसा क्यों होता है कि हमारे समाज में नवजात शिशु की पहली जिम्मेदारी एक स्त्री या एक माँ के साथ संबद्ध कर दी जाती है जबकि मातृत्व के दायित्व निर्वहन में पुरुष की भूमिका हमेशा गौण रूप में होती है जब भी बात मातृत्व की होती है तो पुरुषों की भूमिका को अक्सर गौण रूप में समझा जाता है। जबकि लैंगिक राजनीति पुरुष और स्त्री के समान दायित्व की तरफ जोर देती है। लैंगिक राजनीति की समझ में मातृत्व केवल एक स्त्री या माँ का ही दायित्व नहीं अपितु एक पुरुष और एक पिता का दायित्व भी है। दोनों के साझा उत्तरदायित्व और सहभागिता पर लैंगिक राजनीति बल देती है और सवाल उठाती है कि समाज के पूर्वाग्रह के तहत एक महिला अतिरिक्त दबाव में अपने बच्चों का पालन पोषण करती है और यही समाज बच्चे के पालन पोषण में कुछ भी कमी रह जाने पर माँ को जिम्मेदार ठहराता है पुरुष या पिता इस जिम्मेदारी को प्राथमिक रूप से ना तो स्वीकार करता है और ना ही समाज का दबाव ही उस पर होता है। ऐसे बहुतेरे उदाहरण हैं जब बच्चे के बिगड़ने का दोष सीधा माँ पर डाल दिया जाता है। बच्चों के अंदर कोई भी गलत संस्कार आ जाए या बच्चा कुछ गलत बात बोल दे, तो पिता या समाज का सवाल माँ पर होता है कि तुमने बच्चों को बिगाड़ रखा है क्यों ऐसा होता है कि बच्चे के भीतर की उथल-पुथल को समझना केवल माँ का उत्तरदायित्व ही समझा जाता है। यदि हम इस तरह के कथनों का सामान्यीकरण न भी करें तब भी ऐसे बहुत उदाहरण हैं। लैंगिक राजनीति इन सवालियों को जोर देकर उठाती है।

एक माँ जो एक वर्किंग वुमन भी है अर्थात वह कामकाजी जीवन जी रही है और साथ ही ग्रहणी भी है, उसके लिए चुनौती और अधिक बढ़ जाती है क्योंकि जैविक रूप से बच्चे को फीडिंग कराना एक माँ का दायित्व है, साथ ही काम की अपनी जिम्मेदारियाँ उसके ऊपर है। भारतीय समाज में जो की एक पितृसात्मक समाज है महिला चाहे काम करें या ना करें, घर का काम तो उसे करना ही है और पिता या पुरुष चाहे काम करें या ना करें वह घर में रोटी बनाने, झाड़ू पोछा लगाने, बर्तन माँजने जैसे घर के कामों के उत्तरदायित्व से सदैव



मुक्त है। इसमें भी एक तरह का सामाजिक पूर्वाग्रह और टैबू काम करता है कि पुरुष क्या घर का काम करेगा जबकि इसके विपरीत एक कामकाजी महिला के संबंध में सामाजिक पूर्वाग्रह है कि यदि एक औरत घर के काम नहीं करेगी तो भला कौन करेगा। भारतीय समाज एक स्त्री के कामकाजी या वर्किंग होने के बावजूद भी उसे एक ग्रहणी के रूप में देखता है जबकि एक पुरुष यदि काम ना भी करे अर्थात बेरोजगार हो तब भी वह घर के काम में हाथ बटाना अपना दायित्व नहीं समझता। कम से कम प्राथमिक दायित्व तो नहीं ही समझता। दबाव के तहत वह घरेलू काम करें यह और बात है। हम इस कथन का सामान्यीकरण नहीं कर रहे। यह कथन अधिकतर पुरुषों और सामाजिक नज़रिये के संबंध में कहा जा रहा है। एक बच्चे के जन्म देने के पश्चात एक औरत या माँ बच्चों के पालन पोषण की जिम्मेदारी को वहन करती है। उसका अधिकतर समय बच्चे के साथ बीतता है। समाज और सरकार का भी मानना है कि प्राथमिक जिम्मेदारी एक माँ या औरत की है। पुरुष अब भी इसमें गौण भूमिका में है। जबकि बच्चों के पालन पोषण में पुरुष और महिला का साझा उत्तरदायित्व बनता है यह बहुधा कही जाने वाली बात है। सरकार भी एक पिता को बच्चों के पालन पोषण के लिए 95 दिन जबकि एक माँ को लगभग 6 महीने का अवकाश प्रदान करती है। लैंगिक राजनीति के सवाल इस पर भी है कि जब बच्चे के पालन पोषण करने में पुरुष और स्त्री यानि माँ और पिता का साझा दायित्व बनता है तो समाज किसी एक पर अतिरिक्त दबाव डाल बच्चों के प्रति प्रेम से किसी दूसरे को वंचित क्यों करता है। लैंगिक राजनीति इन सामाजिक दबावों एवं इस तरह की सरकारी असमानताओं के खिलाफ है। लैंगिक राजनीति के विचार में क्योंकि मातृत्व एक व्यक्तिगत निर्णय है जो कि हर महिला का अधिकार है तो उसे किसी भी सामाजिक दबाव से मुक्त रहकर इसे चुनने का अधिकार है। इस बात को समझना बहुत जरूरी है कि बच्चे को जन्म देना, किसी बच्चे का मातृत्व ग्रहण करना, यह एक स्त्री का बहुत निजी अधिकार है। जबकि भारत में स्त्री पर यह सामाजिक दबाव रहता है कि वह विवाह के बाद जल्दी अपने सास ससुर को या समाज को एक बच्चा दे दे और जल्दी से बच्चों की जिम्मेदारी वहन करे। ऐसे में एक कामकाजी महिला अतिरिक्त दबाव में मातृत्व ग्रहण करती है। कार्यालय के दबावों के साथ बच्चे का लालन पालन एक चुनौती की तरह उसके शारीरिक और मानसिक स्वास्थ्य को प्रभावित करता है जिसका सीधा प्रभाव उसके परिवार और बच्चे पर भी पड़ता है। समाज इसमें महिलाओं की प्राथमिकता या इच्छा को समझना या पूछना कभी जरूरी नहीं समझता। एक माँ या एक स्त्री या एक कामकाजी स्त्री यदि शादी के दो या चार वर्ष तक बच्चा ना करना चाहे तो एक तरह का सामाजिक दबाव उसपर बनाया जाता है कि यदि उसने अभी बच्चा नहीं किया तो बाद में जैविक और अन्य तरह की दिक्कत आ



जाएंगी और उसका पूरा समय इन दबावों को महसूस करते हुए आगे बढ़ता है। जबकि इस तरह का कोई सवाल, कोई प्रश्न पुरुष से नहीं किए जाते। एक पुरुष सदैव इन सब चीजों से बचता रहा है। यहाँ तक कि समाज स्त्री पर दबाव डालने के लिए पुरुष पर एक परोक्ष आग्रह रूपी दबाव का निर्माण करता है। लोग क्या कहेंगे जैसे वाक्य उनकी नींदें उड़ा देते हैं। पति-पत्नी यदि स्वेच्छा से बच्चा न भी करना चाहें तब भी वह इस समाज के दबाव में बच्चा करते हैं। हम कब समझेंगे कि मातृत्व स्वेच्छा से और स्वतंत्रता में प्राप्त किया गया खूबसूरत अहसास है न कि जबरन थोपा गया कोई निर्णय। जिसे सामाजिक दबाव द्वारा पति पत्नी पर थोपा जाता है। समाज पुरुष एवं स्त्री के प्रति एक खास तरह का असमान नजरिया एवं विभेदकारी दृष्टि लेकर चालता है। लैंगिक राजनीति इस असमानता एवं विभेद के खिलाफ अपनी आवाज को बुलंद करती है। मातृत्व के संदर्भ में लैंगिक राजनीति यह भी देखती है कि मातृत्व का अनुभव अलग-अलग महिलाओं के लिए अलग-अलग तरह का होता है जिसमें जाति, वर्ग या नस्ल का स्तर, कामकाजी होना या गृहणी होना सभी चीज़ें निर्भर करती हैं। एक ओर जहां गरीब महिलाओं के लिए यह अनुभव अलग है वही सक्षम और पैसे वाली महिलाओं के लिए मातृत्व के दायित्व का यह अनुभव अलग। जातीय स्तर पर देखें तो उच्च वर्ण की या सवर्ण महिलाओं के लिए यह अनुभव अलग है जबकि दलित या अनुसूचित जनजाति की महिलाओं के लिए यह अनुभव अलग तरह की चुनौतियों को लेकर आता है। एक के लिए यह एक खूबसूरत अहसास है तो दूसरे के लिए चुनौतीपूर्ण उत्तरदायित्व। लैंगिक राजनीति का मकसद इन भिन्नताओं और चुनौतियों को समझने में भी निहित है। समाज में लैंगिक समानता लाना लैंगिक राजनीति का उद्देश्यों का हिस्सा है। यह सामान्य स्त्री और पुरुष की सामाजिक पहचान से जुड़ा है लैंगिक राजनीति महिलाओं के अधिकारों और उनकी सक्षमता की स्थितियों और चुनौती पर बात करती है और यह भी विचार करती है कि माँ बनना एक सुखद अनुभव होने के बावजूद भी प्रेशर या दबाव का कारण ना बने लगातार यदि वह दबाव का कारण बना तो उसका सीधा असर बच्चों के पालन पोषण पर पड़ेगा इसलिए लैंगिक राजनीति इस बुनियादी सवाल को लेकर चलती है कि बच्चों के मातृत्व की जिम्मेदारी केवल माँ की न होकर पिता की भी होनी चाहिए इसलिए स्त्री को मातृत्व ग्रहण करना है या नहीं, इसका पहला निर्णय करने का अधिकार एक स्त्री का है लैंगिक राजनीति की अवधारणा इसे उस स्त्री का व्यक्तिगत निर्णय बताती है ताकि एक महिला अपने जीवन के अन्य पहलुओं जैसे शिक्षा, भविष्य या व्यक्तित्व एवं मानसिक विकास को देख सके। लैंगिक राजनीति की शब्दावली सामाजिक दबाव की चुनौतियों को समझते हुए ऐसे किसी भी सामाजिक दबाव से मातृत्व ग्रहण करने के विरुद्ध है जिसके द्वारा एक स्त्री अपनी शिक्षा, अपने करियर अपना व्यक्तिगत विकास खो दे या अपनी मूल



सुंदरता खो दे। इस बात को कई लोग अलग-अलग तरह से देख सकते हैं लेकिन यह समझना भी जरूरी है कि जो स्त्री मातृत्व के उत्तरदायित्व को वहन कर रही है उस स्त्री की अपनी निजी जिंदगी कैसी बीत रही है। उसके अपने सुख-दुख, अपनी इच्छाएं क्या हैं यदि वह अपनी इच्छाओं को दबाकर मातृत्व ग्रहण करती है तो एक तरह का फ्रस्ट्रेशन या मानसिक दबाव उसके स्वास्थ्य पर पड़ता है। इस मानसिक दबाव का प्रभाव उसके स्वास्थ्य के साथ-साथ उस बच्चे पर भी आएगा जिस बच्चे का पालन पोषण वह कर रही है। संक्षेप में कहें तो लैंगिक राजनीति का संबंध इस बात से जुड़ा है कि समाज मातृत्व को कैसे देखता है समाज मातृत्व को यदि स्त्री का ही उत्तरदायित्व मानता है तो लैंगिक राजनीति इस असमानता के खिलाफ है हमारी जिम्मेदारी बनती है कि मातृत्व को हम साझा उत्तरदायित्व के रूप में देखें, एकल दायित्व के रूप में नहीं। ऐसी कोशिशों से हमारी दुनिया और सुंदर और सौम्य दिखाई देगी।

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Leading at Work, Guiding at Home: Mothers as Ultimate Multitaskers.

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The clock strikes 5 in the evening, but it doesn't signal the end of workday for a mother who's going back home after another tiring day at office. What's exceptional is that she doesn't consider her work at home as work, but as unconditional love towards her family. There is a motherhood stereotype which emphasizes that women are best suited to serve their household with perfection rather than pursuing a career they choose for themselves. But with the emergence of modernization, it has become increasingly common to find women who are working mothers, managing the dual role of professional and personal life. However, looking at the context of Indian societies, the age-old concept of 'Ghar ki Laxmi' remains the same, because despite many women today are pursuing successful careers, they are still expected to uphold their conventional role as a homemaker.

“A mother is one to whom you hurry when you are troubled.”

-Emily Dickinson

Motherhood is a woven tapestry of emotional support, caregiving, nurturing, often demanding boundless patience and simultaneous handling of personal, familial and social responsibilities. It's like a choice made to put someone else's happiness first, caring for someone more than yourself, taking the term close to divinity. As the above quotes suggests how we always find the first solution to our problems by looking for our mothers, as she is a person who cares less for herself and more for her children. What we often see as luck, might be our mother looking up at the stars making a wish for us. Motherhood symbolizes a tender strength that holds us together with guidance, empathy, resilience



and a smile. However, the patriarchal societal narratives around motherhood have taken the idea in a more negative light than positive. A term that should be considered as a glorious blessing with beautiful experience, is now seen as a responsibility that doesn't offer an escape. We're living in an era where the fast-paced world measures success in terms of productivity, making it appropriate to say that working mothers



are undoubtedly unsung heroes who simultaneously deal with countless responsibilities. There's a point to be noted here is that how normal it has become to use the term 'working mother'. We often come across moments where mothers are praised for work, they perform in household, how well they nourish their children or how well they cook or how well they look after every arrangement in a family function. Are these to be taken as praises or as continuation of belief that these tasks are to be completed by a woman? When was the last time someone regarded a father as 'working father'? The reason here is because it's become common for men to earn for the family, and they are not burdened with the same task that a mother is expected to deal with. The portrayal of motherhood is done usually on the ground that it's the natural duty of mothers to perform the familial duty even if they are working. Adrienne Rich in her book '*Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*' (1976), wrote unflinchingly about women who gave birth to and raised children while decidedly doing their share of the necessary productive labor. But the idea of working mothers is still viewed as strange and out of place, especially by conservatives. Erma Bombeck's *Motherhood: the Second Oldest Profession* (1983) examined motherhood with heart and humor. A supermom who can balance husband and children is finally a good actor.

The concept of work-life balance is particularly elusive for working mothers. Taking for instance the times of covid pandemic, a mother closing a business deal during an online meet while preparing dinner and also helping her children finish their homework. This is the daily reality of many working women for whom multitasking is not an art but a way of life. In 2024, International Labour Organization estimates that 45.6% of women (age 15 or above) are employed, compared to 69.2 percent of men, which is a good number as compared to earlier years.



While maintaining their professional identities at workplace, they also try their best to provide proper attention and emotional support to their teenagers, often feeling guilty when they can't give enough time to their children. The continuous process of exhaustion can drain anyone easily. But motherhood is not an easy process, it requires boundless acts of love, endless wells of patience, and a heart overflowing with compassion. All these requirements are beautifully fulfilled by mothers often without any form of resistance. Despite often being underrated in terms of appreciation, she still acts as the chief caregiver at home.

The way how motherhood is viewed and valued in our society has an impact on the minds of women. In many societies, motherhood is seen as natural development and is associated with women being an ideal wife or ideal mother. Society often views women who are childless by choice as unfulfilled, perceiving them as rejecting their natural role and failing to meet what is traditionally considered their primary responsibility. What people fail to understand is that this natural process of becoming a mother consists of major transitions in life. Bearing the physical struggle before and after childbirth comes along an emotional turmoil of stress and anxiety, that is most of the times, difficult to share or express. Many women are encouraged to give up their job to dedicate their time in nurturing a perfect child. Maintaining the delicate balance of career and motherhood proves difficult in such times, especially for those who are ambitious and driven by dreams expecting much more from life rather than being confined at home raising children, preparing meals and being available for others always. Here the concept of maternal ambivalence comes into picture.

Maternal ambivalence is a condition characterized by contradictory feeling of both love and hate. It is not a constant and unchanging



process; it develops depending on different situations and during the gradual development of a child. In many contexts, motherhood is perceived as national and religious duty and pride of women. When it comes to a childless mother, their femininity, humanity and sanity are questioned. Societal pressure creates high opinions about what mothers should 'rightly' feel, limiting their freedom to self and personal growth. This many times leads to women not wanting any children at all, as the true idea of motherhood being a beautiful process is very well manipulated to look like a burden and restriction to making one's own choices.

The values that we are enshrined with, the decisions that we make or even the dreams that we have, are more or less a result of how we were raised by our parents, especially our mother. 'Parenthood' is equally important in nourishing the child. Motherhood must be accompanied with a supportive and understanding husband as well as family. As no value can be enjoyed in isolation, culture, society and traditions play a significant role, and no person or culture should force motherhood as a responsibility. It's always a choice, a choice to be made with bliss, because that's when a mother experiences motherhood to the core. Being emotionally available for children or giving them proper attention is a job of not just a mother but of a father as well, doesn't matter who returns late from the office.

A healthy family comes from equal efforts in dealing with problems and solving them together rather than blaming someone. What is worth noticing is that even though parenthood requires both parents, mothers are still inclined to work more for the family, not just because the dogma of patriarchal beliefs continue, but because it's their loving heart that worries about children more, whether it's about preparing meals on



time, packing lunch or looking at the time before the school bus arrives, later to realize she's herself late for her office meeting.

Unable to accommodate contradictory expectations, mothers commonly deviate from career paths. The incompatibility between career and family life can lead to a myriad of negative consequences like feeling of guilt, stress, emotional exhaustion, fatigue and anxiety. There is a male centric viewpoint of leadership roles and executive high position commonly to be held by males. But it's crucial to recognize that working mothers as ultimate multitaskers experience more courage, improved will power and emotional intelligence. They exhibit patience, empathy, encouraging demeanor and a fortified resilience. Although these skills do not exhaust the needs and barriers faced by mother in their professional life, the combined efforts of family, individual, as well as government are necessary to tackle some of the discriminative structures that continue to hinder the decisions and choices of working mothers professionally and personally.

The values that we are enshrined with, the decisions that we make or even the dreams that we have, are more or less a result of how we were raised by our parents, especially our mother. 'Parenthood' is equally important in nourishing the child. Motherhood must be accompanied with a supportive and understanding husband as well as family. As no value can be enjoyed in isolation, culture, society and traditions play a significant role, and no person or culture should force motherhood as a responsibility. It's always a choice, a choice to be made with bliss, because that's when a mother experiences motherhood to the core. Being emotionally available for children or giving them proper attention is a job of not just a mother but of a father as well, doesn't matter who returns late from the office. A healthy family comes from equal efforts in dealing with



problems and solving them together rather than blaming someone. What is worth noticing is that even though parenthood requires both parents, mothers are still inclined to work more for the family, not just because the dogma of patriarchal beliefs continue, but because it's their loving heart that worries about children more, whether it's about preparing meals on time, packing lunch or looking at the time before the school bus arrives, later to realize she's herself late for her office meeting.

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“This struggle is real. The juggle is real. That's why everyone should hire working mothers. They are put in crazy situations all the time and are forced to problem-solve. They are some of my most resourceful employees.”

A Pahadi Mother's Journey

Ankita Pant

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In the hills of Nepal, where the morning echoes within the mountains, and the scent of burning incense floats through the air, there begins a tale of sacrifice, tolerance, and unwavering love. It is the story of countless women, who are unseen laborers, the strength of household, and also the unsung heroines of Nepal's history. But today it is the story of my grandma who just lived for her children, sacrifices and faced up and down alone while her husband, a politician dedicated his life to the nation.

Married at the age of just 9, she stepped into a new, completely different life she hadn't imagined. Her husband being a politician roamed around the country, meeting people, standing and supporting them however leaving her own family behind. There begins her journey, anchoring the family and battling the storms on her own just for her children.

Her battle began before the sun rose, fetching the water walking miles away on a slippery path, grinding grains, and lighting the clay stove to prepare meals. Her hands became rough from scrubbing utensils with ashes and mud, and her feet were weary with endless of chores. Yet, suffering every blister and ache, she carried on every day since her children needed her.

As a mother, she became the silent force holding her family together. She was the anchor, teacher, protector, tailor and a nurse for her children. She nursed them through fevers, stitched their clothes by lantern light and ensured they never missed a day of school.

The burden of feeding, educating and raising five children all alone fell solely on her shoulder. She worked on the farm, grew vegetables, and wove baskets to sell in market, all while simultaneously maintaining her



home and raising her children. Sometimes she even had to sell her gold bangles for the fees of children yet she never hesitated.

When society questioned why she educated her daughters instead of preparing them for marriage, When society questioned why she educated



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When society questioned why she educated her daughters instead of preparing them for marriage, she stood firm, allowing her daughter to dream bigger than the so-called “tradition” allowed. Ensuring her daughters received the same opportunities as her sons.

Festivals were the loneliest part of her journey. While the other women celebrated Dashain and Tihar wearing themselves in red sarees and gold jewelry, she dressed in simplicity, lighting the lamps and preparing the feasts all alone which was just solely for the sake of her children.

Her children now, not just survived, they bloomed, fueled by the strength and determination they witnessed in their mother.

Now even though her children have grown and her hair has turned grey, with the sagging skin, her journey as a mother still continues. As a grandmother, she passes on the lessons and tale of compassion, resilience, and hard work to the next generation including “me”. This is the essence of motherhood, that shapes lives, carries burdens and still continues to stand strong, rooted in love and sacrifice.

Her journey reflects the strength of all Pahadi women who stood like mountains, unshaken, rooted in love sacrifice, and an unbreakable spirit.

Rethinking Motherhood: Intersectional Perspectives on Gender, Power and Parenting

Tushmi Dasgupta

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Every time I see my mother watching those singers so passionately expressing themselves on the stage, I see the lost yet hopeful spark in her eyes. And, I keep thinking to myself, maybe in some other universe she is happily singing around in her own place with no worries of the world.

But, how do we define this word 'motherhood'? Biologically, it is associated to the process of childbirth and the subsequent care of offspring. In human society, motherhood is linked to traditional feminine roles such as domesticity, self-sacrifice, and “emotional labour” (Hoshchild) – a process of managing and regulating one's emotions in order to fulfil the emotional requirements of a job. Emotionally, it is the unconditional love and devotion a mother shows for her child. Culturally and symbolically, it is the quintessential aspect of womanhood and femininity. And it is mostly tied to social and cultural identity, thereby influencing how women perceive themselves and their roles within society. Meaning of motherhood varies among individuals. For a child, their mother must be that person who runs after them with their food, or the one singing them a lullaby as they drift off to sleep. Selfless nature of mothers, their protection, resilience and nature of nurturing are the qualities which transcend even the animal kingdom. Many people argue and define motherhood in their own ways. Adrienne Rich, a prominent American poet, essayist and feminist, explores the complexities of motherhood in her seminal work *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. Or, as Maya Angelou, another equally renowned American poet, memoirist and civil rights activist, quotes in her *Mom & Me (2013)*, “A mother's love liberates”.



Gender politics refers to the ways in which power dynamics and inequalities related to gender shape individuals' lives and experiences. In the context of motherhood, gender politics is evident in the ways the responsibilities of parenting are disproportionately assigned to women. While fathers are increasingly participating in child-rearing, women are still often expected to bear the brunt of caregiving, even in societies where they are also part of the workforce. Historically, the role of mother has been central to the social construction of womanhood. Across cultures, women have been primarily associated with childbearing and roles that have been elevated, idealized and often restricted by societal expectations. In many western societies, the 'cult of democracy' which refers to the set of beliefs that glorified women's roles as domestic caretakers, emphasising virtues such as piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity which confined to the private spheres of the home and family.. (Welter).

The 19th and early 20th centuries glorified the mother as the moral guardian of home, tasked with nurturing the next generation. These norms reinforce the idea that a woman's primary identity and value were tied to her ability to bear and care for children. Motherhood has been politicized in societies with patriarchal structures. The roles of women were not just private concerns but became political tools used to uphold male-dominated hierarchies. For example, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), a foundational text in feminist philosophy, examines the historical and cultural forces that have shaped the way women are perceived and treated within patriarchal societies. Women's labour, especially reproductive labour, has often been invisible or undervalued.



As societies have evolved, so too has the politics surrounding motherhood. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, feminist movements began to challenge the traditional narratives of motherhood, advocating for more diverse and flexible understandings of women's roles. As Joan C. Williams, a prominent American legal scholar, feminist and author known for her work on issues related to gender, work and family, explains in her “The Motherhood Manifesto” (2006), these movements brought attention to the acknowledgement that motherhood was not a universal experience but one deeply shaped by race, class, sexuality and ability. For example, Black feminists like Audre Lorde and bell hooks critiqued mainstream feminism's narrow focus on white, middle-class women's experiences. They emphasized on the racial and economic factors that shaped Black women's experiences of motherhood differently. Similarly, working-class women and women from marginalized communities often faced additional pressures and challenges, such as limited access to healthcare, childcare, and economic security. The politics of motherhood are not only influenced by gender but also by the intersectionality of other identities. For instance, women who choose not to have children or who are unable to have children are often subject to criticism, marginalization, or social pressures to conform to expectation of motherhood. This reveals the deep-seated cultural belief that womanhood is inherently linked to the role of mother, which can exclude and stigmatize women who do not fit into this ideal. Moreover, modern gender politics have increasingly interrogated the expectations placed on men as well, particularly in relation to fatherhood. While motherhood has historically been seen as a woman's domain, fatherhood traditionally has been framed as secondary or supplementary. However, contemporary discussions around gender equality and masculinity are pushing for more involved and equal



parenting roles, encouraging men to be more active and emotionally engaged in raising the children. The shift has highlighted how motherhood and fatherhood are politically charged constructs, shaped by societal expectation of gendered roles.

Motherhood, Work and State Policies

The intersection of motherhood and the workplace is one of the most significant sites in gendered politics today. Despite progress in gender equality in education and the workforce, women especially mothers continue to face significant challenges when balancing professional aspirations with caregiving responsibilities. The gendered division of labour in the home, where women are still expected to shoulder a disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic work and childbearing, limits economic opportunities and perpetuates gender inequalities.

One of the most salient ways in which gender politics affect motherhood is through policies related to maternity leave, childcare, and work-life balance. In many countries, women are granted maternity leave but fathers receive little or no paternity leave, reinforcing the idea that caregiving is a women's responsibility. The absence of affordable, high-quality childcare further limits women's ability to balance both professional and familial duties. This division of labour is not just a personal issue; it is a political one. It reflects and perpetuates the broader social tendency to devalue women's contributions in the workplace, while simultaneously placing an undue burden on them at home.

The political dimension of reproductive rights is also central to the discourse surrounding motherhood. In many places, debates about abortion, contraception and reproductive healthcare are framed in terms of women's bodily autonomy. Yet, they are also deeply tied to broader



political and moral ideologies. The regulation of reproduction-whether through laws restricting abortion or policies limiting access to contraceptive services-reflects power dynamics that control women's bodies and, by extension, their ability to make choices about motherhood.

The Intersection of Feminism and Motherhood

Feminism has long grappled with the question of motherhood, recognizing that the institution of motherhood has both liberating and oppressive potential. On the one hand, feminist movements have sought to validate women's autonomy and choices in relation to motherhood, advocating for reproductive rights, access to contraception, and the ability to choose whether or not to have children. These movements have been instrumental in challenging the dominant narrative of motherhood as an inescapable destiny of all women.

On the other hand, feminist scholars and activists have also critiqued the ways in which motherhood, as a social institution, can reinforce patriarchal structures. For instance, the pressure on women to fulfil the idea of the 'perfect mother' can be seen as a way of controlling women's bodies and lives, ensuring they remain bound to traditional gender roles. Feminism, in this sense, has been instrumental in pushing for policies that recognize the need for shared responsibility in child-rearing such as paid parental leave, affordable child-care and workplace protection for parents. In recent decades, a new wave of feminism has focused on redefining motherhood in ways that allow for greater flexibility, autonomy and equality. This includes advocating for better support systems for working mothers, challenging stigmas surrounding non-traditional family structures, and advocating for the recognition of unpaid caregiving labour as valuable. The



feminist movement's evolving approach to motherhood highlights the ways in which gender politics continues to influence not only how mothers are perceived but also how they experience their roles in society.

Motherhood is not just a local or national issue but a global one. Across the world, women's experiences of motherhood are shaped by geopolitical forces, economic systems, and international policies. Globalisation has brought about changes in the ways that mothers, particularly in developing countries, navigate the challenges of work, family and social mobility. Transnational labour markets, for example, have led to the rise of migrant mothers, who leave their children behind in search of better economic opportunities abroad. These mothers often face emotional, physical and social isolation as well as exploitation in the workplace.

The Changing Landscape of Motherhood

In recent decades, the traditional model of motherhood has been increasingly challenged by shifting gender norms, changing family structures, and new feminist paradigms. The rise of non-traditional family forms such as single-parent household, same-sex couples, and blended families, has altered the way society views motherhood. Feminist scholars and activists continue to push for a broader recognition of diverse maternal experiences, one that includes not only biological mothers but also adoptive mothers, foster parents, and non-birthing parents in queer families.

The changing nature of work-and-family life also influences how motherhood is experienced today. With the increase in dual-income household and the normalization of women in the workforce, there is a growing recognition that fathers too must share the responsibility of



caregiving. The increasing presence of men in caregiving roles has reshaped how society understands both motherhood and fatherhood, allowing for a more flexible and equitable approach to parenting.

Conclusion: The Continuing Struggle for Equality

Motherhood remains a deeply political experience, shaped by societal expectations, gendered norms, and institutional structures. While progress has been made in advancing gender equality, much work remains to be done in addressing the systematic inequalities that continue to affect mothers – especially those who are marginalized by race, class or ability. The politics of motherhood, at its core, challenges the way societies conceptualize gender, labour and family, and forces us to question the fundamental structures of power that shape our lives.

To create a more equitable future, it is essential that we continue to examine and challenge the gendered politics surrounding motherhood. This involves advocating for policies that support parents – both mothers and fathers – and working towards dismantling the societal norms that limit women's choices and potential. In doing so, we can begin to build a world where motherhood is not a site of oppression but one of choice, empowerment and equality.

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The Elite Class

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“There are about 160 million women in India who are occupied as homemakers. On average, a woman spends 297 minutes daily engaged in household chores while a man contributes only 31 minutes daily, according to data from the National Sample Survey Organization.”
(Das)

In Indian societies, the role of a mother has been traditionally significant and is still highly valued. The term "homemaker" refers to a person, usually a woman, who takes care of the household and its members. While gender roles are evolving in modern India, it is essential to recognize the historical context in which the aspect of the homemaker has been shaped. The concept of motherhood in India has a deep-rooted history that has its traces from ancient times. In Indian culture, the role of motherhood is traditionally associated with women, who take on the responsibility of managing the household and caring for the family. While the roles and expectations have evolved over time, the importance of women in Indian society remains significant. Historically, Indian society has organized around the concept of the family and community, where the household was considered the cornerstone of social life. Women played a crucial role in nurturing and maintaining the family unit, which was highly valued and respected.

The women have strong shoulders as they take responsibility for taking care of their family needs, including cooking meals, cleaning the house, and managing household chores. They play a vital role in maintaining a comfortable and harmonious living environment, for all family members. In Indian culture, the responsibility of raising children is predominantly attributed to the homemaker, especially in the early years of a child's life. This role involves nurturing, teaching values, and



ensuring the overall well-being of the children. Motherhood often serves as custodians of cultural and traditional values within the family. They pass down customs, rituals, and family traditions to the younger generations. Motherhood offers emotional and moral support to family members, helping them cope with the challenges of daily life, and act as strong pillars in times of distress. In Indian families, the primary bread earners usually handle financial matters and the homemaker often manages the day-to-day household budget and ensures wise spending and saving practices. We can consider women as embankments, who plays the role of a catalyst, hence accumulating the income flow and providing sustainable channelization. Hence, they are efficient in financial management too. Motherhood acts instrumental in building and maintaining social connections within the extended family and community. They often play a pivotal role during family gatherings and



festivals. They take care of the family's health-related matters, ensuring the well-being of all family members. Additionally, they are involved in their children's education and may assist with homework and school-related activities, this in turn improves the bond between a mother and her child and collectively contributes to the development of a child's moral quotient.

If looked at from a different perspective our mothers contribute to the economy whether it's India or any other country. They take care of our health which is the basic criteria for the workforce to work efficiently and their efficient working contributes directly to the nation. It is important to note that the traditional roles of homemakers are evolving in modern Indian society. With increasing educational opportunities and changing gender dynamics, many women are now balancing their responsibilities as homemakers with pursuing careers outside the home. Also, there is a growing recognition of the importance of sharing household responsibilities among all family members, regardless of gender, fostering a more equitable and inclusive society which surely is a result of increasing literacy rates all along the country. If we analyze the role of a homemaker in the modern world, we can see that it has undergone significant changes in many societies, including India. These changes can be attributed to various factors, including social, economic, cultural, and technological developments. With increased access to education, women have gained more knowledge and skills, which have influenced their aspirations and roles. Many women now pursue higher education and professional careers, which has led to a shift in the traditional role of being solely a homemaker.

Over the years, there has been a gradual transformation in societal attitudes towards gender roles. The traditional expectation that women should solely take care of the household and family has been challenged, leading to a more equitable distribution of responsibilities between men and women. Economic realities, such as the rising cost of living, have made it necessary for many families to have both partners (if a couple is present) working outside the



home, to sustain a decent standard of living. As a result, homemakers are increasingly balancing their household duties with part-time or full-time employment. The advent of modern household appliances and technology has significantly eased the burden of household chores. This has freed up time for women to explore other pursuits, including personal hobbies or professional interests.

With the rise of nuclear families, the responsibilities within the household have changed. Mothers in nuclear families often need to adapt to the absence of extended family support and take on more diverse roles to educate their children both morally and practically. Exposure to diverse cultural norms through media and globalization has influenced societal perspectives on gender roles and legal reforms, such as maternity leave policies and anti-discrimination laws, have contributed to enabling women to manage both their professional and family responsibilities more effectively. It is essential to note that while significant progress has been made, gender norms and expectations can still vary widely depending on the region, socio-economic status, and cultural background in India. While some families have embraced more progressive values, others may continue to take upon more traditional roles for homemakers. The ongoing evolution of the role of mother's reflects the complexities of social change and the diverse perspectives present in Indian society.

In recent times, there has been a growing recognition of the dignity and value attached to the role of mother's. Efforts are being made to acknowledge and appreciate their work, both within the family and in the broader society. Moreover, there are ongoing discussions about gender roles, work-life balance, and the need for equitable distribution of responsibilities within households. The question of dignity attached



to a homemaker is a matter of importance and has been a subject of debate in many societies, including India. It revolves around recognizing and valuing the essential contributions of mothers to their families, communities, and society, as a whole. The actions of the mother can be appreciated and recognized in endless ways, mother often perform numerous tasks that are vital for the well-being of their families, but these contributions go unnoticed or undervalued. Activities such as cooking, cleaning, childcare, emotional support, and maintaining social connections are all part of their responsibilities. Acknowledging and appreciating these efforts is crucial for preserving their dignity, which more or less should be linked to the idea that all roles and contributions in a family should be respected and regarded as equally important. Whether a person works outside the home or manages the household, their efforts should be valued without discrimination, based on gender or societal norms. Managing a household requires a diverse skill set, including organization, time management, problem-solving, and multitasking. Recognizing and appreciating these skills are essential for the morale of homemakers. For many mothers who also work outside the home or have other personal pursuits, finding a balance between various responsibilities can be challenging. Acknowledging and supporting their efforts in managing this balance adds to their dignity. Societal attitudes play a crucial role, where motherhood is perceived as a valued and respected role. Recognizing the dignity of mother also involves advocating for their rights, such as access to education, financial independence, and social protection.

In conclusion, it is essential to recognize that some individuals choose to be mothers and find fulfillment in this role. Respecting their choice and acknowledging their agency in deciding their path in life is a crucial



aspect of preserving their dignity. There also can be many instances when mother may not receive financial compensation for their work, but their contributions have significant economic value. If the same tasks were outsourced to paid services, the cost would be considerable. Recognizing the economic importance of their work is part of dignifying their role. Motherhood often creates a nurturing and supportive environment that positively affects the emotional and social well-being of their family members. This emotional labor should be appreciated, as it helps foster strong family bonds, and contributes to the overall happiness and mental well-being of everyone involved. Ensuring that mothers have a voice and agency in decision-making processes is crucial for upholding their dignity. We should recognize and respect the contributions made by our nurturers, appreciating the various skills they possess and advocate for their rights. It is essential to foster a society where all individuals, regardless of their roles, are treated with dignity and respect. Motherhood in India reflects the rich cultural tapestry of the nation, where family, community and nurturing relationships have been cherished, for generations. As Indian society continues to evolve, the role of mother's will undoubtedly continue to adapt to the changing dynamics, emphasizing the importance of dignity, respect, and recognition for their invaluable contributions.

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The Distance between Being and Becoming: Motherhood as A Socio-Cultural Conundrum

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Becoming a mother leaves no woman as it found her.
It unravels her and rebuilds her.
It cracks her open, takes her to her edges.
It's both beautiful and brutal;
often at the same time.

Nikki McCahon.

When Simone de Beauvoir professed that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman;" there might be a Freudian anxiety within her feminist psyche trying to define the pressing roles that society imposes upon the female self; along with the biological ones that nature has already saddled her with. Motherhood, it seems, is an exquisite amalgam of natural and sociological moulds wherein the woman is sought to be fitted. Moreover, the psychological tussle is inflated by the fact that more often than not, she herself seeks to fit into these pre-defined roles or rather, role-models; irrespective of her personal choices and aspirations that might be leading her into a totally opposite direction.

Is motherhood then, simply, a role, a role-model, or a complex social construct? Is it merely an emotion specific to the female gender, or is it something beyond the emotion, that needs to be understood and gauged critically? Is motherhood as emotionally fulfilling and gratifying as it is conventionally conceived to be? Or is there a psychosomatic scope available to women beyond the confines of rearing and moulding potential heroes of the nation? These are some of the questions that this essay would like to explore, keeping in mind the critical route that is to be charted between BEING and BECOMING a mother.





The natural responsibility that a woman bears in order to keep the human race going has been twisted by various agencies as a means to control women. Patriarchy, of course tops the list. The most readily available definitions of motherhood in both Western and oriental cultures of the world have set up the motherly figure on a pedestal so high that modern mothers find both daunting as well as challenging. More often than not, they fall short of achieving these aspirations due to the superhuman levels of efficiency, sacrifice and self-denial involved in such a process. The consequent pressures that entail serve more to subdue the mother figure than to elevate her at any kind of level. Right from the legends that surround the Holy Mother, down to the famous mothers in Indian legends and scriptures, (of which both Yashoda and Mata Jijabai have partaken their claims to fame), motherhood and its mythological glorification goes on. The established standards do not privilege the common, not-so-heroic mothers at all. They rather serve to set up practically unreachable goals and utopian ideals regarding an extremely basic and subjective relationship of the mother and the child. The objective standard of the “GOOD MOTHER” finally ends up doing more harm than good to the entire social fabric that is woven around the relationship. For as Khalil Gibran puts it —

Your children are not your children.

They are sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you.

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

(The Prophet)

The irony of one's own flesh and blood not really belonging to one's own self is one of life's most blatant truths. Patriarchy refuses to recognize it since it thrives on precisely the very model of control and domination that parenthood is expected to exercise, but cannot, in actuality. The confusion is further confounded when only one of the two parents, that is the mother is completely burdened by the task of controlling /



moulding / successfully modelling the raw 'clay' that the child is taken to be, whereas the male parent is accorded the already familiar domain that he's used to; that of being the economic provider and the final rule-maker.

So the woman ends up, as usual, in a margin within the margin - the controlled female self, trying to control the child according to the laws prescribed - not by herself - but by an external agency. This can be patriarchy, religion, social conventions - or all the three put together (as one often witnesses in case of Indian motherhood). So much so that any kind of 'transgression' or 'betrayal' from these standards in the name of self-preservation or self-promotion is so very thwarted in a patriarchal set up, that it unknowingly initiates debilitating guilt patterns and depressive tendencies in the "not so-good" mothers.

But one may stop and ask at this point; 'What exactly makes up a good mother?' Uttara Bisht tries to specify this goodness in terms of the self-effacing characteristics that patriarchy has loaded the concept of motherhood with:

It is through the denial of the self, that the mother achieves the status of a 'good' mother. The qualities usually associated with motherhood such as tenderness, compassion, sacrifice and selflessness (to name just a few) which are considered to be a given when it comes to defining the mother further help patriarchy both to assert itself and to deny the woman her identity.

It is precisely at this juncture of expectations and denial that the conflict between being and 'becoming' a mother assumes frightening proportions. Since patriarchy does not easily take into account the



questioning female self, the mother questioning the 'given' standards of motherhood stands the danger of criticism and ostracization from the circle of "good" and "successful" mothers, as defined by patriarchy. The whole idea of "performance" unreasonably loads the mother with, unforeseen challenges and presumably impedes her own subjective ideas of motherhood and her individual relation with the child. The unseen burden of these challenges marks the "becoming" of a mother so very problematic, that the modern, educated and enlightened woman ends up staying away from the very process of being a mother in the first place.

Even a rough statistical estimate of Indian social history shall provide enough reasons as to why being a mother is no longer seen as gratifying or even important for the upkeep of the marital relationship. The post-1960s Indian daughters, who've grown up witnessing the struggles of their respective mothers as career women have also seen something more important: the socio-cultural burden that these women have borne in order to prove themselves as "successful" and "good" mothers. Famous contemporary author and social figure, Sudha Murthy wasn't any exception, it seems, as she juggled the various responsibilities of life as a young mother. Her daughter, Akshata Murthy was largely brought up by her sister and parents in her native town, and this shifting of motherly duties came down heavily upon her. As Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni recounts in a joint biography of the couple:

When Sudha read about the time when Akshata had taken her first step, or when she spoke her first word ... she laughed and cried at the same time, trying to imagine the scenes. Her mother-heart was wrenched as she realized anew all the things she was missing. And later in the same chapter, we are told: It would take Sudha a great deal of effort, and a



prolonged stay in Hubli (after her second child's birth), to build a true relationship with her daughter. (An Uncommon Love; 156-158)

The Indian social milieu has indeed come of age in realizing the importance of education and skill empowerment in relation to women. Where it is still lacking an answer is the domestic arena - wherein the space is sought to be filled by paid care-givers and doting grandparents, and not by the male parent, whose first priority continues to be his particular career advancement. The female parent is at an obvious disadvantage since her child-bearing years seriously coincide and collide with her career-building years. Plus, there's enough medical evidence to prove how children must be borne till a certain age in order to avoid reproductive and gynaecological complications later on in life. So where does the answer lie?

In not being a mother at all, since the becoming seems so very problematic? Or in postponing motherhood till the stage where the challenge of bringing up a child would be lesser in terms of career goals or a supportive family environment? The latter part of the statement actually pushes one to pause and think as to how this enigma might be resolved.

In a recent interview, Indira Nooyi, (ex-ceo of Pepsico; one of the most successful women corporate heads in recent years) tries to shake up the erstwhile notions of motherhood and expands it to change the particular patriarchal notions of family that have been harboured since years:

*We have to get into a mode where we say
'family is family, it's not female.'* (Emphasis mine)...

Both members of the family should come together and say, 'how do we together set priorities and manage this family'...



Families have to come together and work on children and priorities and allow everybody to have a paid job. So you can build up family wealth and have a nest egg when you retire.

The societal focus on motherhood must be thus expanded to include 'fatherhood' and transformed into 'parenthood' if we are to build modern successful families. The nurturing, formative aspect of this construct must be reconstructed in a manner wherein it does not daunt the woman from both 'being' and 'becoming' a mother. Needless to say, it will end up doing a lot of good to children who'll imbibe gender-specific values from both the parents, rather than becoming mirror-images of either the mother or the father. And they also might end up belonging both to the father and the mother, defying Gibran for once.

Depiction of Mother in Indian Cinema

Aryan Anand
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The portrayal of mothers in Indian cinema, particularly in Hindi films, has undergone significant evolution, reflecting societal changes and cultural shifts. From the archetypal self-sacrificing mother epitomized in classics like *Mother India* (1957) to more nuanced and empowered representations in contemporary films such as *English Vinglish* (2012), the cinematic depiction of motherhood mirrors the dynamic landscape of Indian society. Two films that exemplify this evolution are *Deewar* (1975) and *English Vinglish* (2012).

In the early decades of Indian cinema, the mother figure was often depicted as the epitome of virtue, selflessness, and endurance. Films like *Mother India* (1957) portrayed the mother as a symbol of the nation, embodying resilience and moral integrity. Radha, the protagonist of *Mother India*, sacrifices everything for her children and upholds her moral values even when faced with insurmountable hardships.

“Mere paas maa hai”

In *Deewar*, Nirupa Roy's portrayal of the mother embodies the archetypal image prevalent in the 1970s. The film showcased the mother as a moral anchor amidst familial turmoil. Nirupa Roy's character, Sumitra Devi, a widowed mother torn between her two sons—one a law-abiding citizen and the other a rebellious outlaw—personified the traditional virtues of patience, sacrifice, and unwavering moral integrity. Her steadfast adherence to ethical principles, even in the face of personal loss and societal challenges, reinforced the idealized image of the mother as the custodian of familial honour and righteousness.



Fast forward to 2012, *English Vinglish* marked a departure from the traditional portrayal of motherhood by introducing Shashi Godbole, played by Sridevi, as a mother seeking.

Self-empowerment and personal identity beyond her domestic roles. Directed by Gauri Shinde, *English Vinglish* tells the story of Shashi Godbole, a middle-class housewife and mother often belittled by her family for her lack of proficiency in English. Shashi's journey of self-discovery begins when she enrolls in an English language course during a trip to New York. Through this process, she not only learns a new language but also gains confidence and a renewed sense of self-



worth. The film challenges the traditional perception of mothers as self-sacrificing individuals whose identities are confined to their domestic roles. Instead, it portrays Shashi as a multifaceted individual with her own dreams and desires. Critics have lauded *English Vinglish* for its progressive depiction of a mother's journey towards self-empowerment. The film underscores the importance of recognizing and valuing the individuality of mothers, who are often taken for granted within the familial structure. The transition from the sacrificial mother to the empowered individual in Hindi cinema is indicative of broader societal transformations. As noted in an article from *Café Dissensus*:

"Cinema has always been a reflection of society. With changing times, mother characters have also evolved. The era of tragedy queen mothers is passé. Hindi movies have a knack of ferreting out the best in onscreen moms who will go a step ahead to prove themselves and keep their self respect intact."

Moreover, the depiction of mothers in films like *English Vinglish* challenges traditional patriarchal norms by presenting motherhood as a dynamic and evolving identity. As discussed in an article on *Youth Ki Awaaz*, "Gauri Shinde's *English Vinglish* (2012) mirrors the lives of many mothers in Indian households. Sridevi is subjected to ill-treatment in her home and is not respected by her own children. That is until the mother (Sridevi) decides to learn English. The filmmaker has truly paid tribute to all the women who choose their homes over careers." Such narratives contribute to a broader discourse on gender roles, autonomy, and the redefinition of familial relationships in modern India."

English Vinglish traces the journey of a woman and a mother to find her identity. Shashi transforms herself to become a mother who has her own



identity and self-worth and is respected by her family and children thereafter.

In conclusion, the depiction of mothers in Hindi films has evolved from the idealized, self-sacrificing figures of the mid-20th century to more complex and empowered individuals in contemporary cinema. This shift reflects changing societal values, a growing recognition of women's autonomy, and a move towards more authentic and diverse representations of motherhood on screen. As aptly noted by *Café Dissensus* regarding the evolution of the mother's representation in Hindi cinema: “Her character is modified as she marches ahead with changing times.”

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The Myth of the 'Perfect Mother': Reclaiming the Narrative of Motherhood in the Modern World

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Motherhood has always been romanticized as a holy, selfless, and complete vocation – vocation during which a mother keeps on giving herself, balancing her job, home, and self-image to fit the picture-perfect image. For generations, the notion of a "perfect mother" has been reinforced in cultural norms, media portrayals, and societal expectations. The harsh reality of motherhood does not seem perfect, and the myth of perfection tends to cast an unbearable shadow of pressure, stress, and self-doubt over modern-day mothers. In spirited opposition to such unrealistic standards, a battle ensues to reclaim the story of motherhood in acceptance of acceptance, perfection, individuality, and candidness today.

The media has for decades built a skewed image of motherhood: graceful mothers who multitask with ease and are lovingly present for their children. It's a portrayal that movies, advertisements, social media, and parenting books reinforce. Whether it's the ideal family breakfast, an impeccably clean house, or perfect children, the "ideal mother" is often pictured as an impossible standard. These portrayals set up expectations so astronomically high that many mothers put themselves under considerable pressure to measure up, which can lead to feelings of guilt when they don't.

There is even greater import to "meeting" the expectations created in these millions of images of "perfect motherhood" shared, liked, and commented on which can foster a sort of competition to be a perfect mother. From the glam shots of immaculate-wearing children to perfectly-kept homes, home-cooked meals, and just-right moments spent together, social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and





Pinterest are abuzz with polished images of motherhood. They can inspire and motivate, yet they solidify the faulty belief that mothers must hold everything together all the time. It can lead a mother to compare herself with others unfavourably and feel inadequate and anxious.

Yet, the notion of a "perfect mother" tends to gloss over the diversity of experiences, backgrounds, and challenges every mother has to face. Motherhood is a personal journey influenced by culture and socio-economic standing, values, and circumstances. Each mother's path is distinct, as no set standard qualifies as being the right way to mother. The myth of the "perfect mother" ignores these complexities and presumes mothers must fulfil their roles while juggling the more individualistic roles; mothers are people with their ambitions, aspirations, and hurdles.

The weight of such an unrealistic ideal can also add to a mother having suffered with mental health issues. Studies conducted have shown that those mothers who steps outside of the definition of how to be a 'good' mother are thereafter witnesses of increase in the levels of stress, anxiety, and unhappiness. In a way, she tackles the combined rounds of support--without-this and besides falling short of this ambiguous concept of a 'perfect' mother makes it even more isolating to her; making things just much more overwhelming, perhaps even with no appreciation. Often underappreciated is the toll on the mind and spirit as one tries to push the envelope on perfection. Motherhood, when observed objectively, plays an equally important role in establishing well-being alongside their children.

Fortunately, there is now a shift to a more realistic and inclusive story



that challenges the myth of the "perfect mother". Mothers are daring to share their lows, highs, and faults, a much more connected representation of what being a mother looks like. Where social media was once that selective utopia of motherhood where mothers had to produce their glory reels, it is now evolving into a language where mothers bring their vulnerabilities, exhaustion, joy, and failures to the surface. By unmasking perfectionism, the mothers are creating a supportive community where they can build one another up instead of bringing each other down.

However, this movement is not limited to personal narratives alone. There is also a growing acknowledgment that both social and structural changes need to take place that support mothers. Practical measures, from maternity leave to affordable childcare, can ease the burden of motherhood and let mothers flourish. Society must value motherhood and give mothers room and resources to flourish, free of improper perfectionist expectations.

To subscribe to this motherhood narrative means to underscore multiple experiences and accept the messiness of any motherly quest. Motherhood does not have to fit a mold. Rather, it is about love, experience, and the unique bond created between a mother and a child, not an aspirational model imposed by society. With this retreat away from the myth of the 'perfect mother' comes room for real, true, and empowering representations of motherhood that highlight mothers' resilience, complexities, and beauty.

Finally, I should conclude by saying that the myth of the 'perfect mother' is a cultural construct that places unrealistic demands on women, causing undue stress and damaging the real essence of motherhood. In



so doing, we will spare ourselves the unrealistic unattainable ideals and acknowledge that every mother walks down a messy journey, then give more support and a more pragmatic approach to motherhood. Motherhood is no longer about perfection. It is about love, maturation, and the little moments that develop into the strands of attachment between mother and child. Reidealizing this would allow mothers to feel empowered, valued, and appreciated for the tremendous job they do, with all its imperfections.



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