

(M)Otherhood

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The first essence of being alive into life, the socially age old structured epitome of womanhood is to be believed lies on motherhood, the aura of motherhood is the ultimate legitimised respect for a woman where the ‘mother figurine’ is found in plethora of advertisements, iconographies. a concept ingrained into the societal structure lies burdened on the feminine shoulders which actually belie a woman’s choice on her body, the self imbued in the body is almost forgotten appropriately in the words of Nivedita Menon, “I am this body and that the self stops at the boundaries of the skin” the queer politics on the female body is not new but running through a purposive diplomatic malicious process under the patriarchal society. The image of the mother the arduous and elusive quest of women’s highest miracle that is as exquisitely beautiful as it is chillingly terrifying when considered about the slithering violence which is placed as codified social norm.

Western feminists, though have long theorised on the subject, especially on a key question: do women have a choice on whether they want to embrace motherhood, or are they socialised so effectively into the role almost from their own birth that they do not recognise it as one? Family, community, builds a nation, certain pseudo farcical pictures that is long percolated in the minds, Nivedita Menon, in her book *Seeing Like a Feminist*, argues that family is an institution is based on inequality its function is to perpetuate particular forms of private property ownership and lineage Decades ago, Simone De Beauvoir, in her famous work *The Second Sex* had weighed in on the ties that bind the structures of the patriarchal order and motherhood, arguing that choice needs to be brought into the equation. The mother concept, is made to believe one of the beautiful, miraculous, a universal yet intriguing concept, ie, relatively attuned with a woman since the prehistoric days. Marriage, is a highly regarded social institution that has for centuries inspired moral beliefs which encourage and protect it. Relationships in the society which

maintain a fine social balance are treasures in all civilizations because they inspire other relationships and contribute to a positive, cooperative, and stable social environment, and marriage is considered to be part of socially conformed relationship where motherhood is a normal expectable outcome. Motherhood is not biologically determined, but rather culturally constructed as a woman's primary function by patriarchal society. A social constructed process actually takes place, and designed for ultimate destination of a woman which she is designated as a woman's primary function and is glorified by patriarchal society, it is a aim which is often thrashed on her, that is most often not chosen by her, but rather imposed upon her. She has no choice but to accept this function, for if she deviates, she will be deprived of social acceptance. Moreover, motherhood is conditional and it is patriarchal society which dictates who can and cannot be a mother. The age old myths, of the child invoking in the mother, the feeling of love and care, instinctively its realization of the self and social entity develops from the mother it has come and by the mother it has been nourished the mother is the "be all and end all". The state of motherhood is always given a philosophical connotation, iconic symbol of all powerful, mother Kali or the Durga cult figure, and makes it appear a enigmatic emblem that the society, can easily regulate, confine or channelize female's life and make it the panacea of all calamities³, the act of giving birth is the only moment when both pain and pleasure converges at times many a conventional societies instills a divine impression to this motherhood making it a spiritual transformation from wifehood. The mother's impression biologically is strikes deep root in the brain of the foetus that dwells in the womb and helps in developing the child. But at the same time in this transformation the decision of a woman hardly matters. Thus, it is evolved that the progress and continuance of the human society is always dependent upon the woman's ability to give birth. Without women's reproductive labour, society would cease to exist. It is due to women, and essentially women's potential maternal function, that society has an interest in attempting to regulate female lives. Social existence is influenced by maternal potentials, irrespective of caste , class and colour. Thereof Throughout history women lacked essential freedom due to the familial and societal norms a social obligation and restriction to maintain their home and children. A girl's life moves, rather gets entangled in the domestic chores and her individuality is hardly developed

'Motherhood', this beautiful stereotypical concept, if thought is mediated by their social levels, economic circumstances and religious belief. Thus, in this intriguing social manipulation of deciding upon women's body, after marriage is well-framed social normative process, whereas if thought there could be many choices of not being or accepting to be a *mother*, for a married woman. Does getting married obliterate or specify her necessity of being a mother or rather the choice is being often due to societal pressures. Is it merely a feeling, an ideology, a concept or a social construction. This paper tries to view the whole concept under the light of Mary Sanger's thought and philosophy. Let us bring this whole concept of *being* and *beingness* that supposedly gives the ultimate entity to the women, As established in the philosophy Margaret Higgins Sanger (born Margaret Louise Higgins), was an American birth control activist, sex educator, writer, and nurse. Sanger popularized the term "birth control", opened the first birth control clinic in the United States, and established organizations that evolved into the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. At this time the spirit of age became synonymous with capitalism, working class problems, child labour and the crudest forms of industrial apathies. The Industrial Revolution in Victorian England had subsequently brought an unprecedented progress, economic growth and development, a belief in this age prevailed that unrestrained capitalism. In the First World War women had to fend for themselves and their families, without their husbands or fathers, during the First World War the roles of women changed because they had to enter the work force and be support of the family and men, off, at war. Yet still quite surprisingly a woman's primary function was to bear and raise children and there was no option to develop the individuality despite of a inconvenient, economic position. But quite synonymously women at this age also participated in the wars and was actually an equal participant in the work force of men and various other work, where women were entering into work scenario she was supposed to make an equal contribution in the work force along with her participation in the family. And quite an astonishing part is that she hardly had any decision making rights in being a mother. Quite clearly, she neither possesses the autonomy nor the authority in the procreation process. Well one perceives that there is a prudent and diplomatic deletion of the depiction of the actual stature of women at this level. Multiple pregnancies took a health toll on women, raising multiple children were economically inconvenient. In this aspect Mary Sanger was the first one to create a birth control clinic Sanger was iconoclastic in bringing the concept of safe and secured motherhood the role of mother is not merely lulling the

child but definitely rearing it and empowering it and that it all depends upon the mother , that the mother is ought to have the decision making power to decide whether “she will be a mother or not”. That women’s authority and autonomy over her own physicality , family and child is ought not to be the subject of patriarchal autocracy . Well what is noteworthy that in this whole debate motherhood concept and birth control movement runs the *question of essentialism* as the concept of feminism. The concept of Essentialism derives its meaning from an understanding of the way language functions in relations to an independent realist ‘object’. Thus, it ascribes to the argument that there are certain fixed essential qualities that determines the identity in a woman. And it has become pedantic to associate women with the essential characteristics like supportiveness, empathetic, caring, committed and motherly linking to the various cognates like biologism , Naturalism , Universalism trying to enhance the core essence of woman and making a woman susceptible to societal normative image . For instance in the words of Elizabeth Gross ‘naturalism is a form of essentialism where a fixed nature is postulated ‘or biologism in particular bonds women closely to the functions of reproduction and nurturance. Motherhood, if visualized in this aspect actually vents out the reason that women are always misrepresented or under- represented in position of social authority, status , and rather is confined to domesticity and is entailed into paradigm of work –loads and responsibilities like motherhood. The child and mother concept is the purest, serenest and the creative concept that holds the very source of creation – family , society , community, state, nation and country. And well under the light of essentialism a women invariably attributes to the social categories , fuctions and activities and is given a cultural identity. Sanger’s movement actually tries to question the patriarchal authority that has long vested authority and has given a fixed image . Sanger was a public health nurse in New York city⁴ and being a nurse she was a part of various reproductive cases she witnessed women being trapped in poverty, with occupational hazard, low wages and the appalling working condition made a larger section of women prey to many a hazard physical, psychological, economic and cultural. Margaret Sanger who led the birth control movement and the term ‘birth control’ came in vogue mainly with Mary Sanger and her book, *My Fight for Birth Control* , that woman no longer had to conform to the stereotypical bineries the structured framework to be a wife, and then a mother. Woman no longer had to enhance the masculine spirits to express the feminine but to create a world of fusion of the feminine element . Universally constructed woman is related , in terms of family and children men always had the

autonomy , and is the deciding factor in progression of the family. Sanger actually vents out the option of individuality or the development of the essential entity of the woman as mother. Sanger proclaims. Feminists and progressive reformers were divided over Sanger's crusade for birth control. Alice Hamilton, Crystal Eastman, and Katharine Houghton Hepburn supported Sanger, but others, such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Carrie Chapman Catt, thought that birth control would increase men's power over women as sex objects in her birth control crusade. The unending struggle behind all these crusade, is the basic decision regarding the reproductive rights of a woman - such as whether and when to have a child, whether and when to abort a child are by and large made for women by patriarchal society. The woman's sexuality is controlled by social structures, and ideology ensures that she is not even aware of this control over her body. The pertinent questions of debate could a woman be childless as her choice, could she have the abortion rights, the patriarchal dominance over the womb and the foetus is what throttles woman's identity and makes her one of the marginalized groups. The growing amount of fertility clinics, and the hovering queues which numbers mostly the woman in this age speaks of a numb voice largely ignored by the dominant assertive masculine world. The societal obsession and fascination with female body and reproduction has constructed the repressive pressure of being a mother which otherwise demands female autonomy and choice.

References:

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