

Disentangle the Concept of Motherhood in reference to Hindu Mythology and Contemporary

1. K. Priyadharshini ² Dr. K. Shantichitra

1. *Ph.D. Research Scholar (Full-Time), Department of English, College of Science and Humanities, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur, ORCID iD: 0009-0000-8161-1185, priyakarah1922@gmail.com.*
2. *Professor, Head of the Department, Department of English, College of Science and Humanities, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur, ORCID iD: 0009-0008-4917-6564, hod.doe.ktr@srmist.edu.in.*

Abstract

In recent years, the talk of the town has been about motherhood and childbirth. This paper intends to offer a theoretical insight into the concept of motherhood and the myth or the familial culture that is passed down from generation to generation. From a societal view, motherhood is a requisite for women to substantiate their femininity. In modern concepts individuals have different notions of motherhood and mythology are reflection of the people and their lifestyles who lived thousands of years back. There are direct contradictions with the scientific truth. Motherhood is a state of being a mother. This process happens when a child is born through various means like adoption, surrogacy, fostering, etc. Mothers play a critical role in the family which is a powerful force for social cohesion and integration.

Keywords: *Motherhood; Hindu Mythology; Simone de Beauvoir; Child; Vedas.*

Introduction

Motherhood concepts indicate the general practices to be followed in bringing up one's children. Various theories are contemplated about the same in consonance with the known scientific findings. This can be classified into two parts namely during pregnancy and after child birth.

During pregnancy the mother has to follow the advice of the elders and experienced people. In this aspect the role of Gynaecologist and Obstetricians is paramount important. This is for the better development of the child in the womb.

The mothers duty towards the child, after birth is to inculcate good manners, habits and behaviour. The knowledge of child psychology to a desired level is very important in child development.

Lot of books has been written on this aspect. Many researches has also been undertaken and concluded on this front. The conclusion of the researches indicates giving love and affection , initiating activities for the mental and physical development of the child.

Among Hindu mythologies 'Rig Veda 'stated that the mother should be a role model. It compounds every aspect of child development in the above two words. It is evident from the above that the contemporary concepts stem from the mythologies.

Simone de Beauvoir Concept of Motherhood

Simone de Beauvoir elucidates various representations of women that exist in myth and how these myths are embedded in the psyche of humans. In her book "The Second Sex" she deciphers the perpetual myth of the 'eternal feminine' by showing that it arose from male discomfort with the fact of his own birth. Throughout the antecedent, Maternity has been both worshipped and reviled.

The author speaks about 'Montherlant or the bread of disgust' where one gets to understand the tradition males adopted or got influenced by adopting the arrogant 'Manichaeism of Pythagoras'. The presumption of gender classification was men oppress women by hearing the notion and practicing baseless ideologies that are set by the people. At times women are forced to do something because of societal constraints.

Through motherhood, woman fully achieves her physiological destiny, which is her "natural" vocation, since her whole organism is directed towards the perpetuation of the species. So, just to prove her womanhood a woman has to bear a child, but many are not aware of the psychological and physiological changes a woman undergoes during her pregnancy and after her pregnancy, in particular women go through postnatal or postpartum depression. In a few parts of the world, women are forced to get pregnant and the practice of childbirth differs from region to region. The women sacrifice their comfort due to the constraint imposed by following a set of pre-ordained regulations in the name of social assimilation and equality but their perceived ideas are misconceptions of egalitarianism.

Simone de Beauvoir concludes that the 'eternal feminine' fiction is reinforced by biology, psychoanalysis, history, and literature. Women are not born 'feminine' but shaped by the society.

Concept of Motherhood in India

Motherhood is considered sacred in India, normally people use the sentence "Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him." Motherhood is connected with god and people ruminate in this regard.

People don't understand that it's the choice of a couple whether to have a child or not and they intrude into their personal space. One good example to support this statement is mentioned below. One Part Women / Madhorubhagan by Perumal Murugan is a novel about a couple Kali and Ponna who are unable to bear a child and the concept of impotency barge in. The couple was directed by their families to practice customs, rituals, and traditions like visiting temples, drinking a concoction prepared by the in-laws, etc.

There were a lot of stories narrated by their family member who mentioned " the reason for them not getting pregnant is because of the sins committed by their ancestors."

In the end, the families persuade Ponna to visit the chariot festival where women are allowed to have extramarital sex with random persons to get pregnant. Due to the actions of others, it affected their relationship as they were forced to have a child.

In precise, A couple living contentedly but not for long, the intervention of peeps kindle to chaos entailed dismay. The aura was More impassive than fondness, A seed of betrayal which is cropped in the mind from love it ceased unrequited.

There is a reference to lord Arthanareeswar which depicts half men and half women in the context of lord Shiva and Parvati. There are various interpretations, I would interpret on the basis of equality. The idea of adoption, surrogacy, IVF, etc is yet a complex idea / thinking in Indian families, they are more inclined to the natural way of giving birth to a child. Though we are evolving and adapting to the modernizing environment our thoughts are rigid as acceptance is not negotiable.

Surrogacy

Labouring and giving birth to a child by a women, on behalf of a couple or intended person is known as surrogacy. This agreement will be undertaken legally. The agreed woman is termed as "surrogate mother" . She will hand over the child, after birth to the intended person or couple, who will be treated as parents.

In India, commercial surrogacy is banned. This is in accordance with the surrogacy (Regulation) Act,2021. Offenders will be punished with 10 years of imprisonment and a fine upto Rs 10 lakhs.

Altruistic surrogacy is allowed only in India and the surrogate mother should be genetically related to the intended couple. The Indian law considers the child through the process as the the child of the intended couple. As the emotions and experiences of a biological mother during her pregnancy is missing, it can be used only in medically unfit cases of pregnancy.

In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF)

It is a scientific cum medical procedure by which embryos (fertilised eggs) are developed in a laboratory. This is done by mixing of a women's egg with a men sperm . The developed embryos, one or more in numbers are put directly into the women's uterus. The difference between the normal pregnancy and IVF is the development of embryos outside the uterus. The motherhood in this case is also, more or less as that of a biological one.

Adoption

This is an establishment of a permanent legal relationship with a child to a parent, who is not the biological one. In India, it removes the stigma attached to a childless family especially the woman. It gives family rights to orphan and abandoned children.

Any person, irrespective of the gender, who has got physical, mental and financial capabilities can adopt a child. Subject to the Indian rules and regulations. The motherhood developed in these cases are incomparable, as the mother and the adopted child are more emotionally attached.

Fostering

It is a kind of adoption without establishing a legal relationship for a limited period. Normally it is for specific purposes such as providing shelter, education, health care, etc. Foster homes are available across the universe which offer variety of requirements for the abandoned children for some days, weeks or years. They provide these services through their trained foster care.

Raising of Child

It is a process of developing childhood into adulthood. Child must be raised in such a way that he/ she should be physically tough and mentally strong to face any situations throughout his/her life.

For this purpose, the mother must:

- Unconditional love and affection.
- Spend enough time with him/her.
- Be adjustable and flexible in parenting style.
- Create positivity, inculcate good habits and manners.
- Boost self esteem.
- Develop social skills - eg. Interaction and Communication skill.
- Be a role model.

Mother and Motherhood in Hindu Mythology

In mythology, children are adopted and there is a close relationship with nature. Each of them has a peculiar trait or characteristics. In precise inevitable, powerful, and ethereal. Hindu mythology comprises Vedic literature which are Sanskrit scripts and epics such as Mahabharata and Ramayana,

Puranas. These are written by the adherents of the Hindu religion. The Vedic literature is classified into four namely Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva. It is a pioneer of all other myths.

Various Puranas, few in vernacular language fortify Lord Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva as gods of creation, protection, and destruction respectively. Goddess Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Parvati are the wives and they are also known as “Tridevi”.

In Rig Veda, It is identified mother is a respectful and important woman in one’s life. She creates and protects the child. In further analysis Mahimata, the divine female power as a great mother. The duties of a mother towards the child are mentioned, To give love and affection, Mental and Physical development, Shaping personality and character, Provision proper education, and be a role model.

In the Puranas, Goddess Saraswati, The wife of Lord Brahma is known for her wisdom and she is considered the mother of the universe. Hence she choose not to bear a child. Goddess Lakshmi wife of Lord Vishnu is the symbol of wealth and is often associated with illusion also known as Maya. She has eighteen children who are biological and adopted. Goddess Parvati or Adi Shakti wife of Lord Shiva is known for the energy and motherhood. She is considered to be the supreme Goddess among the “Tridevi”. Goddess Parvathi is known for her fierce protection of children, in her incarnation as Durga.

Conclusion

Motherhood is a boon and it avoids social stigma. The modern-day childhood psychology as well as the duties of motherhood mentioned in Hindu mythology guides the mothers in bringing up their children. The elaborative mention of the duties of mothers towards their children in Rig Veda still holds good. The modern-day study of child psychology is about conscious and subconscious childhood development. The general findings of those studies more or less coincide with the statements of Rig Veda.

The general mention of “Tridevi” in various Puranas is also a guideline for modern-day mothers. The special mention of the goddess Parvati as a universal and divine mother further amplifies the aspect of motherhood.

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