

Of Woman Born: Conceptualizing Motherhood in Terms of Power and ‘Ethics of Care’

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Abstract

*Motherhood has always been considered as the biological and natural process women go through in their lifetimes. But historically motherhood does not limit itself only into the reproductive system or the continuum of the human legacy, as it has been transformed into a discursive weapon that stereotypes and entraps women inside the myth of ideal mothering. Feminist writer and critic Adrienne Rich’s *Of Woman Born* is one of the pioneer texts that analyzes the ideologies regarding mother, motherhood and mothering from the theoretical realm and comes up with a conclusion that maternity is rather an institution more than it is an experience. Based on the close reading of this book, the paper intends to examine how power operates in the process of idealizing motherhood that helps to perpetuate women’s subjectivity in the patriarchal construct of the society. This paper also investigates how the contemporary social constitution marginalizes, devalues and dismisses the experiences and perspectives of women due to the fact that they have to perform as mothers. Then the paper significantly attempts to explore maternity as viewed differently by Virginia Potter Held through her philosophical feminist theory ‘ethics of care’, and will argue that it is not motherhood that makes women feel powerless, because it is mothering through which women step into a more meaningful dynamism exerted in extreme power to construct language, culture, morality, integrity and make human civilization to progress.*

Keywords: Motherhood, Power, Myth, Gender, Stereotype, Femininity, ‘Ethics of Care’

Introduction

The time Adrienne Rich started writing her book titled as *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* “there was virtually nothing being written on motherhood as an issue” (Rich, 1995: ix). So, traditionally she is considered the first among the feminist thinkers who attempted to put motherhood in the social context with the purpose of analyzing it as a political institution that operates inside the patriarchal framework. She observes and criticizes the strategies of the idealization of motherhood and exploitation of women based on the concept of ideal mothers that “aims at ensuring the potential- that all women shall remain under male control” (Rich, 1995: 13). Maternity is an ambivalent state- a synthesis of infinite love for the child and irrevocable exhaustion out of responsibilities, and in socio-cultural context the concept and the implication of motherhood is primarily associated with power and then secondarily with affection. But historically, motherhood has been used as a political weapon to subjugate and marginalize women both by their male counterparts and their own consciousness as both the entities believe in the ideological construct of perfect motherhood and makes every woman suffer

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from sense of shame and guilt. Rich argues, the psychological invention of motherhood done by the patriarchal discourses is a crucial matter to expose, and to find out that its power politics is important as it confines women into biological identities as mothers and dismisses the female individual potentials.

In *Of Woman Born* motherhood is evaluated as fixed, conditional, contracted and fetishized but it is observed differently in Virginia Held's book *Ethics of Care: Personal, Political and Global*. While Rich focuses on the political outlook of the institutionalized motherhood, Held analyzes motherhood from the philosophical ground called 'ethics of care'. 'Care ethics' is a moral and ethical theory that theorizes about the experiences of caring and also of being cared. Her book written in 2006 creates a significantly new approach to defend women as mothers and evaluates the traditional roles of women in human society as care providers from a very positive standpoint. Held observes that the domestication of mothers is not the central problematic part regarding motherhood. Rather she finds it extremely disturbing that the society does not recognize the contributions of women as mothers and as a result ignores and misses out valuable human roles. For her, mothering is as significant as being economic or as creative as innovating a new product; because every mothering is different and every child raised by conscious mothering is a significant contribution to the human race. Held admits that women are mostly domesticated due to the purpose of mothering or raising children, but she does not agree that maternity is responsible for women's becoming powerless as she believes that motherhood itself is a power and it keeps holding the human relationships in society through caring and nurturing and makes them to operate properly.

Though *Of Woman Born* by Adrienne Rich and Virginia Held's moral theory of 'ethics of care' agree on the ground that power is always there to operate inside the institution called motherhood but they strongly disagree on the ground that maternity makes women vulnerable and immobilized. For Rich, it is motherhood that makes women losing the power to become free, self-sufficient and autonomous, but on the other hand, Held sees motherhood as a tool to empower women making them to contribute in building up the human civilization by strengthening human bonds. At first, the paper will examine the nature of power associated with motherhood to explore how women have been historically stereotyped as mothers and how their experiences and contributions have been devalued and then, it will offer a comparative analysis between Held's and Rich's ideas of motherhood which are quite similar to some extent but highly dissimilar to a greater extent. Synthesizing these two overlapping yet different attitudes towards motherhood, the paper will finally reach in hypothesizing that if peoples' notions about mothering and nurturing get laser-focused on the potentials of women in these roles, then, the human community would not miss out acknowledging the phenomenal contributions made by the half of world's population called women.

Literature Review

Besides, being a simple biological and reproductive process motherhood and maternity for Rich becomes the political domain where mothering is institutionalized in a way "that demands of

women's maternal instinct rather than intelligence, selflessness rather than self-realization, relation to the others rather than the creation of self'(Rich, 1995: 42). To understand this transformative evolution of motherhood towards a stereotypical confinement of women (inside of the images of utopian mothers), it is important to survey the sexual hierarchy that exists in human society suggesting the male identity over the female identity and the male values over the female values. And since motherhood is exclusively a feminine phenomenon, politics circulating it becomes obvious. In Simon de Beauvoir's words, "it is in maternity that she must be transfigured and enslaved. The idea of maternal power has been domesticated. The womb- the ultimate source of this power – has historically been turned against us and itself made into a source of powerlessness" (qtd. in Rich, 1995: 68). First of all, it is the process of maternity and mothering that demands women to be at home to nurture the children and secondly, it is the conceptual state of motherhood which has been so idealized that every woman more or less suffers from a sense of guilt or shame that she has failed to become an ideal mother. The general people's notions about mother, mothering and motherhood have been overwhelmingly gender biased and maternity has become an institution, a political construct which imprison women within the stereotypes of idealizations. Feminist discussions claim that women are as inherently human as men, that neither women nor men are simply the "enlargement of a contact sheet of genetic encoding, biological givens. Experience shapes us; randomness shapes us, the stars and weather, our own accommodations and rebellions, above all the society around us" (Rich, 1995: xv).

On the other hand, philosophical discourse like care ethics argue that women will always be the ones to bear the children so mothering and caring for children has always been and will forever be associated with women's experiences. It takes examples from the very primitive condition of human beings where there was no formal institution of any kind and no notion of politics of gender at all, but still there was some sort of sex roles in the family structures: as women became mothers they got relief from hunting or other external tasks. Thus mothering, empathy, compassion or taking care of family remaining at homes, have become essential part of women's experiences as they participate not only in giving birth to the children but also in raising and nurturing them to make them to survive. So, the ethical and moral contribution of mothers to the human community is undoubtedly incomparable because people living in the society are relational and interdependent. Virginia Held asserts- "care and its related concerns of trust and mutual consideration seem to me to form and to uphold the wider network of relations within which issues of rights and justice, utility, and the virtues should be raised" (Held, 2006: 102). So, the prime hub of feminist movements of the modern world should be to fight for recognition and women's rights movement should be more focused on virtues, reassuring that women as mothers have virtues and values of different kinds and productivity in different dimensions, which are continuously devalued, unrecognized and suppressed, and the motto should be to move them up either to above male values or at least equal to them.

To comprehend all these complicated and conflicting ideas relating maternity, it is crucially important to discuss first how before motherhood the concepts like womanhood and femininity grew, established and traditionalized historically in the field of body politics and gender stereotypes. The feminist discourses consider gender not as the biological sex but as something

people need to find socially which tries to create the binary between the qualities and attitudes associated with being a man or being a woman. There is actually no specific kinds of male nature or female nature as feminist thinkers believe and claim that behaviour is essentially individualistic which has no bond, no connection and no affinity with whatever sex organs a person is born with. So, except for some biological variances there is no essential difference between men and women and gender is completely a Barthean myth—"a second ordered semiological system" (Barthes, 2000: 114) devoid of any kind of truth but as idea that signifies and creates the illusion of having a fact of masculinity and femininity. The binary or dichotomy that exists in human society is resulted from the social construction of gender which is exclusively discursive. Still, people of the society are habituated with attributing different qualities for different genders. For example, masculine qualities are taken to be- reason, dominance, provider, assertive, outspoken, competitive, initiative and mastery; on the other hand, the feminine qualities are thought to be- emotion, care, nurturer, passive, reflective, co-operative, responsive, co-existence. But the fact is that these qualities are not innate or instinctive, rather earned inside specific contexts. But the present world is mostly directed by patriarchal discourses in which women's identities and actions are prefixed and are not necessarily exerted in power.

Adrienne Rich defines patriarchy as:

The power of the fathers: a familial –social, ideological , political system in which men – by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male. (1995: 57)

Though this definition does not necessarily mean that no woman has power of any kind, they certainly have some but there is always a mark drawn that fixates the qualities and areas of power embedded in the gender consciousness. In sexual prejudice masculinity is always in conflict with femininity, and male and female models are made to analyze the power in the sexual domain; here power is of men over women, male sexuality over female sexuality and male bodies over female bodies which is often referred as body politics. And since female bodies are biologically programmed to carry and to give birth to children, this reality turns into the fixity that confines women in operating within limited roles. But people need to understand that motherhood is an experience, a phase of life but not an identity or even if it is an identity it is just one dimension of the multiple identities a woman has to carry which contributes in making the amalgam of the individuality of a woman.

Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative one as it is exploratory, descriptive and comparative in nature. The paper attempts a literature based research methodology that includes close reading, analyzing, contextualizing, interpreting and synthesizing the existing relevant literature to examine the subject matter. The research undertakes a "non-contact method" (Lin, 2009: 179) that is to basically depend on the literature reviews to indirectly access to information from a variety of literatures. Here the research method upholds two types of literature reviews, at first an integrative review that will provide a synthesis of knowledge related to the topic and then a

comparative review which will offer an evaluation of details of the subject matter from two different perspectives. Thus, collecting materials for this research mainly remains confined to textual analysis of literary works which are relevant to the focused area of investigation. Finally, the information and verities collected are interpreted, analyzed, combined and finally compared in social, cultural, political and economic perspectives using literary theories available in gender studies, cultural studies, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis and feminism.

Motherhood in Terms of Power and ‘Ethics of Care’

Inside the patriarchal construct of human society there is always a certain kind of power-play when it comes to femininity, maternity and the domestication of mothers. This power does not necessarily operate in the form of fear, force or threat of force like Marxist or Machiavellian power does. This power is more subtle and functions in emotional and psychological realms and operates insidiously whose nature is quite similar to Michel Foucault’s power as described in his text *History of Sexuality*. Power is subtle, fluid, everywhere and embedded deep in human psyche and functions in the conscious and subconscious levels. And power politics is present wherever there is a difference and an inequality in the distribution of it and in politics, it is obvious that one group will seek for dominance by subjugating the other (Foucault, 1984). Men and women are different (mostly biologically) and difference very often becomes the source and the target of threats, harassment, violence, and social and political control. According to Sigmund Freud, men actually suffer from the anxiety of emasculation that is in his term addressed as ‘castration phobia’ (analyzed in *Interpretation of Dreams*) occurs whenever they encounter women (Freud, 1913) and especially with potentially powerful women. Throughout history, women have experienced men’s power in the form of oppression- “we have experienced our own vitality and independence as somehow threatening to men and even when behaving with feminine passivity, we have been made aware of masculine fantasies of our potential destructiveness” (Rich, 1995: 71). So, the idea of power has, for most women been inextricably linked with maleness which is not clearly demonstrated but internalized through subconscious, traditions and the moral laws within. Thus, it is the politics of the body that entraps and confines woman into her feminine physique which becomes her biological destiny and her Machiavellian fortune as a woman.

The power relation inside the gender dichotomy makes it obvious that all women have to conform to the normalized practice of becoming mothers and act accordingly. The fact is that the women necessarily do not always become mothers on their own choices as sometimes it turns into a kind of social obligation to take part in the process of the reproduction. But giving birth is not enough; the women also have to fit into the criteria of good mother, selfless mother and thus an ideal mother. “Mother-love is supposed to be continuous and unconditional. Love and anger cannot coexist and female anger threatens the institution of motherhood” (Rich, 1995: 46). The generalized idea of an ideal or natural mother is problematic and stereotypical.

For Rich an archetypal mother is:

A woman without further identity, one who can find her chief gratification in being all day with small children that the isolation of mothers and children together in the home must be taken for

granted; that maternal love is, and should be, quite selfless . I was haunted by the stereotype of the mother whose love is unconditional and by the visual and literary images of motherhood as a single minded identity. (1995: 23)

Historically, women as mothers have been idealized, exploited and ignored as individuals which becomes more crucial when women do not resist the fixity or attempt to break the code of perfect motherhood. Rich finds its reason in ambivalence- woman being a mother fluctuates between paradoxical feelings, in one side there is extreme love because the child is an extension of her own self and on the other there is an extreme rage that all her liberty and time has gone forever. She describes it as “the murderous alteration between bitter resentment and raw-edged nerves, and blissful gratification and tenderness” (1995: 21). Due to this duality, motherhood becomes a magnetic field, extremely attractive and fascinating, but at the same time complicated because of its two completely opposite natures at the two ends. Ultimately, it takes a long for every woman to adjust with the new identity, and almost every woman to some extent suffers from postpartum depression which is a post-delivery psychic condition which results in disturbed, distressed, anxious and often melancholic personalities.

This ambivalence does not only function emotionally but also works effectively in power relations; it is to feel powerful and powerless at the same time. Powerful in the sense that she can create, carry and nurture life and powerless “as her body has undergone irreversible changes, her mind will never be the same, her future as a woman has been shaped by the event” (Rich, 1995: 12) and this feeling of powerlessness can lead women to self-negation, sense of guilt, and frustration. Ambivalence relating to motherhood also occurs in the ways people respond and react to maternity. Becoming or not becoming mother is considered as prime factor of women’s lives. Infertility in women is considered as a handicap and the women conditioned like that are often highly criticized, stigmatized and rejected. Ironically even the ways people view the stages of maternity are also strange, bizarre and uncanny. For example, in many societies the pregnant women are seen as living taboo, so they are hidden from the public platforms and sometimes their bodies are considered to the mystic and so to get subjected to magical and supernatural beings. Also the feelings of shame, embarrassment and segregation during pregnancy are found in almost all the cultures of the world. In many parts of the African and Indian territories, new mothers are considered untouchables, unclean and even sometimes evil. It is not only the mother’s body that becomes a fetish in the patriarchal society but it also tries to judge how that mother attains the maternity. For instance, whether the woman is married or not, is the child a product of a rape incident etc. are always crucial issues which got peoples’ attention. Legitimacy always becomes an important factor for maternity and mothering where the idea of legitimate motherhood is connected with the idea of chastity and loyalty. The experience of maternity has always “been channeled to serve male interests; behavior which threatens the institutions, such as illegitimacy, abortion, lesbianism, is considered deviant or criminal” (Rich, 1995: 42). So, the whole idea of motherhood is not a matriarchal, but patriarchal, functioning as an institution that is wrenched and manipulated by male control, exists irreplaceably inside human ideology.

Whatever format maternity comes to women; out of choice or social pressure or by force it is always a threat to the senses of liberty, autonomy and individual freedom, as mothering is a world of limitless responsibilities and obligations. “Motherhood is earned, first through an intense physical and psychic rite of passage- pregnancy and childbirth- then through learning to nurture, which does not come by instinct” (Rich, 1995: 12). In human species, babies’ survival depends on their mothers for the longest period of time and taking care of the children and raising them properly is to a great extent a laborious, extensive and exhausting task to do. It is always a great challenge for a mother to live a life entirely for the child and develop a detachment with her own self. The image of a selfless archetypal mother with its angelic characteristics is problematic, as it is never normal and that is why always remains as a state unobtainable. Even the process of learning how to be a good mother is also discomfited.

According to Rich:

As soon as a woman knows that a child is growing in her body, she falls under the power of theories, ideals, archetype, descriptions of her new existence, almost none of which have come from other women (though other women may transmit them) and all of which have floated invisibly about her since she first perceived herself to be female and therefore potentially a mother. (1995: 52)

The concept of an ideal mother can be compared with the idea of ‘ideal I’ by Jacques Lacan where the state of ‘ideal I’ being fully a psychic formation which can never be attained and realizing that might put individuals into inferiority complex and depression (Fink, 2015). Likewise the sense of guilt and shame is always there when a woman fails to match the definition of an ideal woman or an ideal mother as if she has defeated herself and also her children as “patriarchal thought has limited female identity to its own narrow biological specifications” (Rich, 1995: 40).

Along with the emotional complexity in maternity, the physical and psychic weight of responsibility on the mother is the heaviest among all social burdens. The ambivalence in motherhood cannot be compared with slavery or sweated labor because the passionate unions between a woman and her children makes her defenseless in ways, which is uncommon to the forced laborer as “he can hate and fear his boss or master, loathe the toil; dream of revolt or of becoming a boss; the woman with children in a prey to far more complicated, subversive feelings” (Rich, 1995: 52), along with the grief and sense of guilt that she is not loving her children selflessly. In the world of literature, we often come to encounter women who are having troubles because of the over-validation and conventional expectations regarding mothering. William Faulkner characterizes Addie Bundren in his novel *As I Lay Dying* as a clinically depressed mother. It was not she to choose to become a mother but it was she who was tired and exhausted out of playing the specific role and out of the constant criticism from her surroundings when she failed to meet the level of expectations. “My aloneness had to be violated over and over each day” (Faulkner, 1996: 160) says Addie in her interior monologue and as an act of resistance she performs violence in the form of bearing an illegitimate child and then embraced the path of self-destruction. Nobel Prize winner novelist Toni Morrison also voices against the

fixed, archetypal and problematic image of motherhood and its profound impact on female individuals. For example, the mother characters in *The Bluest Eye* and in *Beloved* were so damaged by the internalized sexual and racial binaries, that they could neither love nor they tried to protect their children, and ultimately become extremely violent as they either abandoned their children or they murdered them and failed to survive accordingly (Morrison, 1970 & 1987). This process of stereotyping women regarding maternity also stigmatizes the non-mothers in a very problematic and objectionable way. Lady Macbeth, the childless woman from the great Shakespearean tragedy *Macbeth* eventually turns into a hysteric, schizophrenic and suicidal individual. It can be acknowledged that her every action is produced from her disturbed being, and made to cover up her extreme sense of lack of a child (Shakespeare, 2018). Human society has its strange binary construct in which non-mothers are demons and mothers are the iconic objects who are expected to behave like angels. Historically, culturally and discursively women have been reduced to their bodies and their reproductive capacities, and so, to nullify the body politics, radical feminism took its birth. Not surprisingly, many intellectual and creative women insisted that they were human beings first and women only incidentally. “The body has been made so problematic for women that it has often seemed easier to shrug it off and travel as a disembodied spirit” (Rich, 1995: 40). Thus the popular concept of liberated woman evolved in the word of writings and authors started creating women of this kind. Henrik Ibsen’s suicidal heroine Hedda Tesman in *Hedda Gabler* refused her motherhood and another heroine Nora from *A Doll’s House* abandons her husband and children to get rid of the stereotyped maternal identity and turned into a liberated woman (Ibsen, 2012 & 2014) initiating a journey towards the unknown.

Holding an divergent view and being influenced by liberal and cultural feminism other than the radical one, Virginia Held finds the concept of liberated woman is controversial and paradoxical. As liberation generally means non-interference, it is quite impossible to become purely individualistic, self-sufficient or autonomous. People are always born with some kinds of bondages or relationships and in some kinds of social, political or economic contexts as they do not spring out from the earth like mushrooms. “People have to come to individuality only within the context of social relations” (Held, 2006: 102). If we think of all the people’s becoming individualistic and rational the world would not even operate, because in such a circumstance people will potentially loose the quality to feel for others and ultimately will fail to live in a community. Though the present era does not actually believe in the clear labour division for males and females as it witnesses women’s getting engaged in income generating activities, but that does not change their bearing and rearing children, maintaining the households and protecting the family with usual nurturing. But still, the way men are expected to become economic the women are not, and thus, empathy, compassion or feeling anything for others remain essential part of women’s social living and experiences. Even if all the women become economic that still would not solve the problem, because parenting always disproportionately falls on the shoulder of the women. Also the way becoming parents, affects the prerogative of the careers of the women does not affect men’s. Thus regarding motherhood the circumstances do not vary significantly for working or non-working mothers. Even the working women have to raise the children single handedly; after finishing works mothers do not return home but to enter another workplace and there is actually no homecoming for women after work. No matter whether the mother is or is not

an economic woman (if she is not earning money), most of the labour in the private world is done by that woman. So, when the care ethics discusses the conventional and traditional motherhood, its concern is no more women's being economic or non-economic, but the society's nature to overlook women's contributions at homes to make the families run properly. She argues that though public domain is the accumulations of private domains, women with their conditions and contributions in the domestication arena still remain out of the public concerns. The domains in which women are entangled historically remains outside the realm of public worry and political discussions. Women are rarely expected to be financially active and functional in the public domain, but the private domain in which they are normally taken for granted, becomes unrecognized and unconsidered. But this really problematizes when this great part of labour performed by women remains out of the public consideration and not taken as a serious contribution to the human community. So, for Held, the battle of women is more about to gain recognition rather than to gain rights as in today's time the basic formal human rights (e.g. right to education, right to vote, etc.) are already formally there for everybody.

So, motherhood is observed as a political domain surrounded by power using which the patriarchal discourse and hegemony make women domesticated, marginalized and discriminated. But Held argues that the problem is not that the power or the scopes to exert and exercise that power in mothering which is suppressed and marginalized by males, but the problem is that the power in motherhood remains unrecognized and unconsidered both by men and by women. She claims that women also have certain kinds of powers when they perform as mothers. Held debates that if women become conscious about the power in containing the moral virtues like - togetherness, empathy, compassion, feeling for others, caring and nurturing children, it is possible to subvert the idea of women's becoming powerless in maternity. Thus motherhood which is the 'powerless responsibility' for Rich becomes the greatest source of power for Virginia Held. As human beings cannot live or operate alone- "it is the relatedness of human beings, built and rebuilt, that the ethics of carries being developed to try to understand, evaluate, and guide" (Held, 2006: 30), and the mass indifference towards women's contribution to the society is rather a greater problem. It is not only caring and nurturing, women actually perform diverse tasks of providing, protecting, teaching and setting goals for their children, as women do not simply give birth they make it possible for the children to go on living (Held, 2006). It is the mothers who create the autonomous selves within the future generations. Mothering becomes a creative process and can be compared with creating new device, product, and institution, as it creates individuals and citizens who will consciously contribute to the human community later on. So, human mothering is not at all a mere biological process like in the other animal species (as it does not only teach the survival instincts), and also it does not simply come out of feminine instinct, as every mothering is personal, different and inventive. According to care ethics, women should not strive to fit into the patriarchal criteria of domestic ideal women or even women should not necessarily adopt the perspective of economic women. The individual potentials of women must not be judged whether they are economic or domestic. The choice is essentially individualistic whether to be an economic woman, or to be exclusively a mother or to be both; but whatever decision is taken, the society can no more devalue the experiences, perspectives, qualities of women as mothers. Because the whole human civilization is characterized by the virtue of caring

and just as the child is first disciplined by the mother, so the races of human are first disciplined by woman (Held, 2006).

Conclusion

Power relation, discrimination and self-liberation are pivotal aspects in Rich's discussion of motherhood, but Held is more interested in looking at the contributions of women as mothers in human community and moreover the recognitions of mothers. Though the focus is different for these two feminist thinkers, but both find that the treatment of maternity and mothers is problematic across the world. This problem results from idealization, minimalism and reductionism of motherhood that is deeply rooted in the gender-biased structure of the society and is perpetually fed from the formation of the concept of femininity and women's fixed roles and expected codes of behaviours. It is notable that human discourses of any kind like, philosophical, literary, logical, theological or historical value the so called masculinity or masculine qualities more than they value the assumed femininity or feminine qualities. Motherhood is biologically a feminine experience which becomes fictional when people categorize it in that way that every woman needs to meet the criteria of an ideal, archetypal, utopian mother which only exists in the ideologies, and is used as a weapon to confine women into generalizations and then dismiss their individual potentials to make them feel confused, immobilized and powerless. But Held argues that "power, energy, ambition, intellect, and the interests of the combative male; no more achieve the fulfillment of his being that they cannot of themselves build up a human society" (Held, 2006: 90). No matter how rational the men are thought to be, the world will always need the so called feminine qualities, and virtues of loving, caring and nurturing. And women have become sufficiently capable of dealing with the disproportionate responsibilities of parenting and household (comparing to their male counterparts), often even being indifferent about their economic or non-economic status. Mothering is not at all a 'powerless responsibility' (Rich, 1995) as the way *Of Woman Born* identifies it, but is extremely encrusted with power as it creates the platform for the mothers to govern the society pragmatically in shaping their children's language, intellect and potentials to turn them into conscious adults. Thus the paper has offered a detailed analysis of power-play centering maternity and then a comparative study of motherhood from thoroughly different perspectives to appreciate its essential property- the virtue of care. The paper reconceives the structure of the society, so that, it can move beyond the traditional and long-established practices and stop marginalizing, devaluing and dismissing the experiences, potentials and creativity of women as mothers. It concludes with a note that it is time the human world appreciates and encourages virtues like kindness, compassion, caring, nurturing, and acknowledges and recognizes mothering as an active, creative and authoritative participation performed by women that leads human civilization towards epoch-making breakthrough.

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