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"EMPOWERED MOTHERING" - SHOBHA DE'S DEPICTION OF MOTHER CHARACTERS

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ABSTRACT

The effects of training in a multistage "complete process of creative problem solving" on attitudes and behaviors of individuals were assessed both immediately after training and return to work. A controlled field "true" experiment was conducted within an engineering department doing applied research in a large industrial organization . multiple methods and measures were employed on trained , placebo , and nonplacebo groups . The process trained addressed three critical stages : problem finding , problem solving , and solution implementation, each containing a fundamental diverging –converging two –step process called "ideation- evaluation" . the main findings strongly suggest the training resulted in significant , systematically measurable effects both immediately after training and two weeks later and work. The trained participants were significantly higher in preference for ideation in problem solving , practice of ideation in both problem finding and problem solving ,and performance in problem finding . the data give rise to speculation that there may exist differing "optimum ideation – evaluation ratios" for each of the problem finding ,problem solving and solution implementation stages. These ratios may also differ by field of endeavor.

Introduction

The fictional world of Shobha De is a world of glamorous people with the Indian upper middle class women, who are enterprising, energetic and courageous elites, as she says in one of her interviews: "The women in my books are definitely not doormats. They are not willing to be kicked around" (Interview in *Asia Week*). In the *AsiaWeek.com Magazine* (August 11, 2000, Vol.26.31) under the caption, *Whither India?*, along with eminent personalities like Suhel Seth, Judge Ahluwalia, Syed Shahabuddin, Najma Heptulla , Mani Shankar Aiyar and so on, she writes with pride: "You don't feel apologetic about being Indian any more. Indians can flash their passports with a little more pride now. As for the urban Indian woman, she is unrecognizable from what she was 20 years ago. That is all due to her being in an economically stronger position. She is an equal contributing partner to the family's kitty. "

It's not enough having a mind of your own if you don't have an income to match. So today's contemporary urban marriage in India is a far more equal marriage. She frankly portrays the real human condition and underscores the way girls think, fantasize and converse with each other when they are alone about tabooed subjects, discusses blatantly the problems, desires and aspirations of career women highlighting in general gender awareness, self-definition, existence and destiny" -- so observes Anita Myles in her book *Feminism and the Post-modern Indian Women Novelists in English* (2006, 86). Good, professional education, increasing job opportunities and exposure to media have made this generation of urban women innovative and assertive. But, in spite of the gender achievement and potency, these women seem to feel caught between the two horns of dilemma, that of traditional upbringing and modern living. Hence, they suffer in isolation and fragmentation. Shobha De shows precisely that these women have little enjoyment of contentment and are given to trauma, agony and insecurity. However, she does not fail to point out the meaningfulness of family life and parental concerns, and thus strikes a balance between a successful career and rewarding home life. Anita Myles remarks:

> *Though appearing to uphold liberated views about emancipated women Shobha De strongly speaks in favour of the institution of marriage which since time immemorial has been glorified in the Indian tradition as a holy union. The women in her novels, however liberated, educated, assertive or confident do not totally rule out the idea of marriage in their lives. . . . Shobha De values human relationships, specially family ties. Family, for her is the surest anchor in crisis .*
> *. . . Her view about marriage is very balanced in the sense that she writes of men who fail to understand the psyche of women, more so her emotional needs resulting in marital rift. (87-88)*

Shobha De seems to suggest the anchor of the family is the mother, however meek and submissive she may be. As the novelist rambles around in her novels, buoyantly portraying her spirited heroines who run chaotically to satisfy their endless desires and thus yield themselves to messy situations, she also depicts calm and unassuming mothers, who could wield strength and empowerment to their daughters. This paper is dedicated to such motherhood seen in De's novels.

Relationship between parent and child is an absorbing subject to the researchers because parents occupy an important place in human life. In a family , the mother being the main caregiver, has a more significant role than the father in bringing up children. However, mother and daughters have a stronger attachment and greater intimacy than any other parent/child relationships. The importance of the relationship between mother and a daughter in the lives of both women especially for daughters has been discussed for decades ever since Karen Horney's (1885-1952) particular emphasis on Personality theory, the roots of which lie

in her childhood experiences. The fourteen papers of her research that she wrote between 1922 and 1937 are amalgamated into a single volume titled *Feminine Psychology*, which is a revision of psycho-analysis to encompass the psychological conflicts inherent in the traditional ideal of womanhood and women's roles. Horney's Psychoanalytic Social Theory is built on the assumption that social and cultural conditions, especially childhood experiences, are largely responsible for shaping personality. People who do not have their needs for love and affection satisfied during childhood develop *basic hostility* toward their parents and, as a consequence, suffer from *basic anxiety*. Horney theorizes that people combat basic anxiety by adopting one of three fundamental styles of relating to others: *moving toward people, moving against people, moving away from people*.

These styles -- compliant, aggressive, detached -- can be observed in the behavioural pattern of men or women shown towards either the parents or others. Most normal people use any of these modes of relating to people but *neurotics* are compelled to rigidly rely on only one. As an early feminist, Horney adopted several positions that have a contemporary ring. In 1934, she wrote an essay describing the psychological conflicts in defining women's roles, contrasting the traditional ideal of womanhood with a more modern view. As a woman, she felt that the mapping out of trends in female behaviour was a neglected issue. In her essay entitled "The Problem of Feminine Masochism" Horney felt that cultures and societies worldwide encouraged woman to be dependent on men for their love, prestige, wealth, care and protection. She pointed out that in the society, a will to please, satiate and overvalue men had emerged. Women were regarded as objects of charm and beauty -- at variance with every human being's ultimate purpose of self-actualization. In the traditional scheme, promoted and endorsed by most men, the woman's role is to love, admire, and serve her man. Her identity is a reflection of her husband's. Horney suggests that women should seek their own identity by developing their abilities and pursuing careers. These traditional and modern roles create conflicts that many women to this day have difficulty in resolving. Horney, however, strongly alleged that women traditionally gain value only through their children and the wider family. She also believed that both men and women have a motive to be ingenious and productive. Women are able to satisfy this need normally and interiorly -- to do this they become pregnant and give birth, while men please this need only through external ways. Drawing on Horney's work, a later feminist Marcia Westkott wrote that "Modern women are caught between wanting to make themselves desirable to men and pursuing their own goals. The competing purposes elicit conflicting behaviors: seductive versus aggressive, deferential versus ambitious. Modern women are torn between love and work and are consequently dissatisfied in both" (*The Feminist Legacy of Karen Horney*, 1986, p. 14). This view is reflected in Shobha De's novels.

From Horney's discourse, it can be understood that once the woman is normally satisfied through motherhood, it makes them sacrifice her individuality and the ultimate purpose of gaining self-actualization as a person. A fresh type of feminist enquiry sprang up with the

publication, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* by Adrienne Rich (1929-2012) in 1976. Adrienne Rich was an American poet, essayist and radical feminist and was called one of the most widely read and influential poets of the second half of the 20th century. She opens her book with the observation:

> *All human life on the planet is born of woman. The one unifying, incontrovertible experience shared by all women and men is that months-long period we spent unfolding inside a woman's body. Because young humans remain dependent upon mother's nurture for a much longer period than other mammals, and because of the division of labor long established in human groups, where women not only bear and suckle but are assigned almost total responsibility for children, most of us first know both love and disappointment, power and tenderness, in the person of a woman. We carry the imprint of this experience for life, even into our dying. Yet there has been a strange lack of material to help us understand and use it. We know more about the air we breathe, the seas we travel, than about the nature and meaning of motherhood. In the division of labor according to gender, the makers and saviours of cultures have been the sons of the mothers. There is much to suggest that the male mind has always been haunted by the force of the idea of dependence on a woman for life itself. The son's constant effort is to assimilate, compensate for, or deny the fact that he is "of woman born". Women are also born of women. But we know little about the effect on culture of that fact, because women have not been makers and saviours of patriarchal culture. Woman's status as child bearer has been made into a major fact of her life. Terms like "barren" or "childless" have been used to negate any further identity. The term "Non-father" does not exist in any realm of social categories. (11)*

Rich's book is recognized as the first and arguably the best feminist book on mothering and motherhood, and has had an enduring impact on feminist thought because of its wide range of meditations on the meaning and experience of motherhood drawing from different disciplines. In these four decades after the publication, the topic of motherhood has emerged as the central issue in feminist scholarship. Penelope Dixon describes in her 1991 annotated bibliography on mothers and mothering as "one of the major feminist studies on mothering" (11). The book has indeed influenced the way a whole generation of scholars thought on motherhood. Lauri Umansky observes in her book *Motherhood Reconceived*: "American feminism has subjected the institution of motherhood and the practice of mothering to their most complex, nuanced and multifocused analysis" (2). The above mentioned long quote indicates the fact why Shobha De is chiefly concerned to delineate the parental, especially, mother's role in her novels.

Andrea O'Reilly (b.1961) is a writer on women's issues and currently a Professor in the School of Women's Studies at York University in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. She is the author and editor of eighteen books on motherhood. In her book *From Motherhood to Mothering: The legacy of Adrienne Rich's Of Woman Born* (2004), she discusses proposes to examine "how Rich's ovarian has informed and influenced the way feminist scholarship "thinks and talks" motherhood " (1) in diverse disciplines, and particularly explore the two key concepts offered by Rich: "I try to distinguish between two meanings of motherhood, one superimposed on the other: the *potential relationship* of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the *institution*, which aims at ensuring that that potential -- and all women --shall remain under male control" (13) and she affirms that her book is "not an attack on the family or on mothering *except as defined and restricted under patriarchy*" (14). O'Reilly precisely explicates the two terms "motherhood" and "mothering" as identified by Rich. She says:

> *The term "motherhood" refers to the patriarchal institution of motherhood that is male-defined and controlled and is deeply oppressive to women, while the word "mothering" refers to women's experiences of mothering that are female-defined and centered and potentially empowering to women. The reality of patriarchal motherhood thus must be distinguished from the possibility or potentiality of gynocentric or feminist mothering. In other words, while motherhood as an institution, is a male-defined site of oppression, women's own experiences of mothering can nonetheless be a source of power. (2)*

O'Reilly remarks that Rich thus makes a distinction between patriarchal institution of motherhood and a nonpatriarchal experience of mothering. She asserts: "Feminist historians agree that motherhood is primarily *not* a natural or biological function; rather, it is specifically and fundamentally a cultural practice that is continuously redesigned in response to the changing economic factors. As cultural construction, its meaning varies with time and place; there is no essential or universal experience of motherhood" (4-5). Several works on motherhood detail "how the modern image of good mother -- the full-time stay-at- home mother, isolated in the private sphere and financially dependent on her husband -- came about as a result of industrialization that took work out of the home and repositioned the domestic space, at least among the middle class, as an exclusively nonproductive and private realm, separate from the public sphere of work. In the Victorian period that followed industrialization, the ideology of moral motherhood that saw mothers as naturally pure, pious and chaste emerged as a dominant discourse of motherhood. This ideology, however, was race and class specific" (5). Mothering in its current ideological manifestation regards maternity as natural to women that they are *naturally* mothers, and this assumption has given rise to the construction, "Intensive mothering". Most women in the patriarchal institution of motherhood are in the patriarchal ideology of natural-intensive mothering. "Women's

mothering, in other words, is defined and controlled by the larger patriarchal society in which they live. Mothers do not make the rules, as Rich reminds us, they simply enforce them . . . an experience of "powerless responsibility". . . . a mother raises her children in accordance with the values and expectations of the dominant culture" (6). In this connection, Rich's words must be mentioned: " The institution of motherhood is not identical with bearing and caring for children, any more than the heterosexuality is identical with intimacy and sexual love. Both create the prescriptions and the condition in which choices are made or blocked; they are not 'reality' but they have shaped the circumstances of our lives" (42).

Patriarchal motherhood must be differentiated from the potentiality of mothering. In '*Of Woman Born'*, there is little discussion of mothering or realization of its potentialities. Andrea O' Reilly ventures to define the term "mothering" in her edition *Feminist Mothering* (2008). The essays explore a wide range of contemporary feminist mothering practices. *Feminist Mothering* goes beyond critiques of patriarchal motherhood to locate and investigate feminist maternal practices as sites for women's empowerment and social change. The contributors see "feminist mothering" as practices of mothering that seek to challenge and change the norms of patriarchal motherhood that are limiting and oppressive to women. For many women, practicing feminist mothering offers a way to disrupt the transmission of sexist and patriarchal values from generation to generation. Contributors explore the ways in which women integrate activism, paid employment, nonsexist childrearing practices, and non-child-centered interests in their lives—and other caregivers into their children's lives—in order to challenge the existing societal inequality and create new egalitarian possibilities for women, men, and families. With intelligence and passion, the contributors offer a variety of nuanced perspectives on women's efforts to act simultaneously on behalf of children and on behalf of themselves. Taken together, these essays remind us that care work—the work that mothers do—must be recognized as foundational to our political and personal well-being. O'Reilly in the 'Introduction' of the book claims that the topic remains insufficiently developed, particularly compared to the scholarship on patriarchal motherhood, which is now an established field. Reilly asks, "Why is the topic of feminist mothering not explored in scholarship that is explicitly about both feminism and motherhood?" She presents a valid answer:

> *Feminist mothering is also an evident example of empowered mothering and so provides a promising alternative to the oppressive institution of patriarchal motherhood, first theorized by Rich and critiqued by subsequent scholars. In other words, feminist mothering bridges motherhood and feminism, makes motherhood doable for feminism, and feminism possible for motherhood. . . .*
> *I use the term feminist mothering to refer to an oppositional discourse of motherhood, one that is constructed as a negation of patriarchal motherhood. A feminist practice/theory of mothering, therefore, functions as a counter narrative of motherhood: it seeks to interrupt the master narrative of*

> *motherhood to imagine and implement a view of mothering that is empowering to women. Feminist mothering is thus determined more by what it is not (i.e., patriarchal motherhood) rather than by what it is. Feminist mothering may refer to any practice of mothering that seeks to challenge and change various aspects of patriarchal motherhood that cause mothering to be limiting or oppressive to women. (4)*

While the scholars add many in-puts for the definition of 'Feminist mothering', it is imperative to identify the crucial differences between 'feminist mothering' and 'empowered mothering', to understand better the various ways nonpatriarchal mothering functions as a counter-discourse. *Empowered mothering* begins with the recognition that both mothers and children benefit when the mother lives her life and practices mothering from a position of agency, authority, authen-ticity, and autonomy. This perspective, in emphasizing maternal authority and ascribing agency to mothers and value to mother-work, defines motherhood as a political site wherein mothers can affect social change through the socialization of children and the world at large through political-social activism. Empowered mothering thus calls into question the dictates of patriarchal motherhood. O'Reilly gives examples of some of the things empowered mothers may believe or do:

- Importance of mothers meeting their own needs (and recognition that being a mother does not meet all of their needs);
- Involving others in their child's upbringing (friends, family, partners, community, co-mothers, etc.);
- Challenge idea that the only emotion mothers feel toward their children is love;
- Do not always put their children's needs first; and,
- View motherhood as a site of power that allows them to affect social change at home and in the community through their activism.

Essentially, empowered mothering challenges patriarchal motherhood - the type of motherhood that oppresses women, pushes them into the "private" space of their home, and helps them focus their energy on their children. *Feminist mothering* differs from empowered mothering insofar as the mother identifies as a feminist and practices mothering from a feminist perspective or consciousness. A feminist mother, in other words, is a woman whose mothering, in theory and in practice, is shaped and influenced by feminism. While there is much overlap between empowered and feminist mothering, the latter is informed by a particular philosophy and politic, namely Feminism. O'Reilly explains that the feminism is defined by the recognition that patriarchal society gives power, prominence and privilege to

men and depends on the oppression of women. Feminists seek to challenge that inequity, as well as, in many cases, other inequities that exist (race, sexuality, economics, ability). More simply, empowered mothers

> "*resist patriarchal motherhood simply to make the experience of mothering more rewarding for themselves and their children*," whereas feminist mothers "*resist because they recognize that gender inequity, in particular male privilege and power, is produced, maintained and perpetuated (i.e., through sexist child rearing) in patriarchal motherhood.*"

Empowered mothering is about freeing the individual from patriarchy, whereas Feminist mothering is about freeing society from patriarchy.

Generally, Shobha De allows very limited space for the mothers of her protagonists in her novels. But, their presence certainly provides a deeper understanding of Mother-Daughter relationship in different circumstances. The relationship between mothers and daughters has been long recognized as a salient one in the lives of both women. Theoretical writing, research, clinical observations and popular literature exist on the various aspects of the relationship between mothers and their daughters . Adult daughters and their mothers frequently share a deep bond which may be characterized by closeness and intimacy. The strength of this bond continues to be experienced throughout the lives of women from the time the daughter is an infant to the time of the mother's death. Researchers have found a higher level of inter-dependence and emotional connection shared by mothers and daughters than by any other intergenerational dyad. Therefore, the nature of the mother and daughter relationship carries a determining role in the life of the daughters in their social and psychological well-beings. Mother-daughter relationships are significant because of the importance of intergenerational relationships in and of themselves. These also serve as the mode of transmission of family patterns from generation to generation. The recent upsurge in interest in the mother-daughter relationship comes from those working from a feminist perspective. This work focuses on looking at the mother-daughter in the context of a patriarchal society and how this relationship is shaped by the oppression faced by women. However, not enough attention has been paid to these dynamics in the adult daughter-mother relationship. Clinical work in this area supports the idea that mother-daughter relationships are very important in the lives of the two women. This relationship is found to be one which women report as impacting them greatly throughout their lives. According to female development, maturity involves being able to both differentiate and remain connected, and reconceptualizes "healthy" human functioning as being influenced by both the intellectual and feeling systems. In general, while the normative route for femininity involves connectedness, the "healthy" route for a human being is believed to be that of autonomy. In other words, good mothering practices help mother-daughter relationship grow stable and

healthy. Two mothers in De's novels, *Socialite Evenings* and *Sultry Days*, will be seen how far they had been "good enough mothers" to their daughters.

In *Socialite Evenings*, the reader gets a glimpse of Karuna's mother through Karuna's eyes and assessment. *Socialite Evenings* is Shobha De's debut novel published in 1988, which ideally illustrates the hollowness and emptiness of the life of the upper middleclass. In the novel, Karuna the protagonist and narrator caught up in a drab, boring life seeks to escape by writing memoirs. The first person narrative provides her an opportunity to share her varied life-experiences. Her career as a model gives her a good chance to meet all sorts of people and she learns a lot about human relationships. Karuna comes from a remote village, hates her mundane middle class life and longs for an exciting life that gets satisfied when the family migrates to Bombay. The novelist substantiates that Karuna, both in her childhood as well as girlhood, is seen to be only in the zero level of self-awareness. She is all agog to break-out of the thralldom and assume the status of the other. A problem child both at home and at school, she declines to follow the traditional path of etiquette and manners. At home, she shows her rebellion by not responding to her Father's voice. Her parents are traditional in their outlook, in their idea of family and behaviour of the children. Karuna admits that her father played a positive role in her life and intended to rear up his daughters in disciplined and traditional manners. One of the reasons for her hatred towards the middle class society is the submissive nature of her mother towards her father. The middle class women are first under the control of their father, then their husbands and later their sons, their whole life controlled by one man or the other. They never live for themselves nor do they have a life of their own. Their priorities are always the comforts of the men folk and they have no time to think of themselves. And in this constant concern, they never realize that they have a 'self', which gets slowly obliterated in the monotonous life and thinking. Karuna is against such a kind of subordinate life led by her mother, a meek, polite, submissive woman, a member of Adrienne Rich's "patriarchal motherhood". Naturally she revolts against this doldrums of the middle class life where a woman is no person. Her father's anger towards her when her photograph appears in the newspaper for an ad makes her more rebellious. She does not want to be an obedient daughter like her sisters for she is convinced that only the middle class girls obey their parents. Urvashi Barat comments in her article, "From Victim to Non-Victim: Socialite Evening as a Version of Kunstlerroman":

> *She is clear-eyed about the implications of her social status and patriarchal regimentation . . . "this business of being part of the Indian middle class," (46) with its clichés about the necessity of discipline and austerity. . . . As a result she rebels, especially against the domination of an overbearing father who decides everything for his family -- even laughter -- because he believes in parental control over the lives of children, and invariably blames his uncomplaining wife if anything goes against his preconceived ideas. There is thus no communication between Karuna and her father, and because her*

> *mother and sisters accept their victimization, there is soon a chasm between her and them as well. (The Fiction of Shobha De 121-22)*

The comment, while indicates Karuna's adamancy to enjoy liberty, also points to the compliant nature of her mother, who never raises her voice but readily follows her husband's dictates. The parents organize Karuna's wedding in a traditional manner with a wealthy boy so that their daughter would lead a fine and cultured life with him. Later, when she gets separated from her husband, she decides to go back to her parents' home. Karuna thinks that she would not be welcomed by her mother, but there is a change of attitude in her also. She is more than delighted to see her daughter, and her dad's sullen pronouncement, " Let me just say that our doors are always open to our children" (405). Anita Myles remarks:

> *Thus Karuna realizes the valuable support of the family in moments of crisis through whom Shobha De reiterates her belief in strong human relationships specially in a small unit of society, the family. Karuna was all along aware of the fact that she was running away from reality making her existence quite superficial. . . . She had craved for independence, was defiant of all authority but indulging in introspection she discovers that snapping of family ties was traumatic and detrimental. (89)*

Self-awareness dawns in her when Girish, one of her friends who seems to act as an "Empowering mother", tells her straight without mincing words --" You are just running away from reality. Don't you see the superficiality of your existence? . . . Don't tell me you enjoy sweating it out -- you are too spoilt for that. You don't have the time for anything meaningful" (408). What her mother could not do, show her the reality and remain connected with her mentally, Girish could do. Perhaps, this is like a sharp slap on her face, and with that there appears a moral stance in her, when she confesses: "But I feel closed up and insulated. I need a little time. I am discovering stuff about myself. I'm reconnecting with my parents -- they need me. I'm enjoying their presence. We may not talk very much, but it's a lovely feeling to have them at home when I get back" (408-09). Karuna is pleased to be back within the embrace of the family. Just as she needs the moral support of her parents, they too require her in times of crisis. She has at least overpowered her loneliness. When Kunal, her another acquaintance urges her to marry his father, she is all affirmation to herself:

> *Living with my parents had opened up a new dimension for me. I felt like a responsible, caring daughter for the first time in my life. They needed me. And I needed them. We had arrived at a happy situation. They didn't have a son to look after them in their old age. They had the enormous burden of an invalid daughter to cope with. Each day in their life was a major struggle to just get on with the living that remained. How could I abandon them at this point? It would have been a callous, cruel thing to do. (434)*

Shobha De throws a surprise to the readers, perhaps to Karuna too, when she makes the docile, gentle old mother taking the role of a mentor to advice her tired daughter, to marry Girish. Girish visits Karuna's home and she silently takes notes of him. The astounded Karuna tells her mother, "You astonish me sometimes. But what did Baba think of Girish?" The sure answer is an equal surprise: "You know your father. He doesn't talk very much. He doesn't understand people who do not work for the Government. . ." (439). Her pertinent questions to Karuna, to get information reveal her confidence and wisdom, the conversation ending with a stern and sober counselling. Each statement of hers confirms her "Empowered mothering" in a silent way without foregoing the patriarchal tradition. In the limited space assigned to her, Shobha De affirms that such a kind of empowering is also possible that can validate itself within the four walls of a home.

Shobha De successfully presents a virtual empowered mother in Mrs. Verma, Nisha's mother in *Sultry Days*. After her rejuvenation, Mrs. Verma readily practices "empowered mothering". Nisha, the protagonist is presented as a sane young woman who does not yield herself to stupid thinking. She is firm and confident. Despite her home conditions with a commanding corporate father and a meek, submissive mother, Nisha grows to be a sensible girl with healthy needs, trying to explore the scope for individual commitment, progress and self-attainment. Shobha De portrays her as an energetic girl, high spirited and ready to meet the challenges ahead. Naresh K. Vats remarks:

> *The protagonist, Nisha, partially actualizes herself through her love for Deb and her love for her parents. But it is her mother, Mrs. Verma, who shows a complete transformation of personality as she actualizes herself by emerging taller and heavier than her surroundings -- the surroundings which have always been antagonistic to her. She stands the test of time with courage and exhibits a self- confidence which, towards the end of the novel, is reflected by the assertiveness in her voice which was never heard before. (113)*

Earlier in the novel, Nisha's mother is described as a "sad woman", a "finicky housewife" living in her own world of self-pity and doubt. The only relief for her is twice-a-week bridge session, for which she goes to the club dressed up nicely. She is bothered about her husband's busy schedule, and expresses her concern to her daughter: "Baby, talk to Papa. Tell him about the plane-crashes in the papers. Why he is killing himself for the company? What has it given us - or him-besides a roof over our heads and a car with a driver? Papa will get ulcers" (37). Her words show that she is also suffering a sense of loneliness, just as Nisha feels -- "Till I met God, my father had been the most important man life" (31). The novelist details how Nisha misses the heavenly smell of the house. The father is thus losing his respect from both the mother and the daughter. Perhaps, this is the reason that Nisha does not get adequate love and direction from her mother, who, of course, compensates in the end by

standing steadfastly beside her daughter. While the relationship between Nisha and Deb is flourishing, the bond between her parents continues to lose its fragrance. Nisha's mother, who feels lonely, surrounded by none, totally breaks down when her husband tells her about his affair with a Sindhi woman. She does not have the courage to raise her voice and is a typical slave of patriarchal motherhood. Self-expression arises out of the exercise of freedom of choice and action by an authentic non-alienated individual. She bears her husband's infidelity silently, and despite her frustration and fear, she is quite wise enough not to break her home. She tries to rationalize the happenings and behaves sensibly in public, but registers her protest by not wearing her husband's favourite chiffons. Pratimaben's entry into Mrs. Verma's life is God-sent. She shows her the way of living life with self-respect. Pratimaben Shah, wife of a rich Ahmedabad businessman, is a free woman "to explore the world on her own terms and without anything or anyone to bind her down" (238). In her narrative, Nisha records: "Mrs Pratimaben Shah was someone who fancied herself as a saviour of lost souls --preferably from her own community. She was eagerly sought out by neglected Gujarati ladies . . . had a soothing sort of presence, I must admit. And she was doing good things for my mother who had met her at the home of another corporate wife like herself. Pratimaben had taken my dear mother under her wing. Perhaps she saved Mummy from going bonkers altogether" (236). Empowerment blossoms in Mrs. Verma and make her embrace "empowered mothering", as she readily comes forward to help not only her daughter but also Pramila , caught in the vile machinations of Yashwantbhai. Her idea of managing a boutique comes as a boon to Mrs. Verma, as it rejuvenates her with a new spirit of self-realization and confidence. Motivated by this fresh enthusiasm, she revolts against her suppression. For the first time, she raises her voice against her assertive husband who objects to Pratimaben's suggestion -- " My wife is not meant for such jobs. She comes from a very good family. I have my reputation to think of. . .." (241). In about a page, Shobha De presents how this 'New Woman' explodes in wrath, exposing his "corporate nonsense . . . pompous talk and empty boasts." She shouts:

> *I have had enough of your bullying and hypocrisy. I have kept quiet for far too long. . . . I am sick, do you hear, sick of living this false life. . . . Well, it's my turn now. And you can listen to me for a change. I will go along with Pratimaben with anything I choose to do. She is my friend. She encourages me . . appreciates me . . makes me feel like someone. . . . you don't deserve me. . . .Whether you like it or not, henceforth I will make the decisions about my life. And the first one is that I'm taking a job. (242)*

These are not mere words bursting out of anger -- they show Mrs. Verma's intense pain in her subjugation to the male-pride against her will and her deep-seated longing to be treated as a person and establish her identity. It must be noted that strong perseverance contributes to performance accomplishments -- Mrs. Verma is an instance for this. And her perseverance attributes to her daughter's determination in turn. "Her protest symbolizes the protest of the

new-woman against male-chauvinism" observes Naresh Vats. (120) Above all, she reaches a height to know and practice "Empowered Mothering".

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