Chapter II

"...offspring are considered essential to a full life..."

Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*
Chapter II

The Mother

In *The Feminine Mystique* (1984), Betty Friedan says "Anatomy is woman's destiny ... the identity of women is determined by her biology" (79). This means that the woman's identity as a mother is an important biological one. Friedan also says that femininity is strength which could be extended to motherhood and strength. Mother, according to Wiktionary, can be defined as, "biological and/or social female parent of an offspring." Marianne Hirsch in her study, *The Mother/Daughter Plot* (1989), states the complexity of defining motherhood 'at the breaking point between various feminist positions: between presence and absence, speech and silence, essentialism and constructivism, materialism and psychoanalysis.' (38). She suggests, that debates surrounding motherhood have been central in/to feminist theories based upon a notion of equality, where women demand social and economic parity with men, and in/to those based upon a notion of difference, where women demand recognition for their 'feminine' specificity. While some feminist theorists take Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1989) as a starting point, presenting motherhood as a patriarchal construction, as a trap that severely limits women's individual freedom, a number of 1970s and 1980s theorists considered motherhood more positively, as alternative sources of female identity from those constructed by patriarchy.

The premise of this chapter is to explore the biological role of motherhood in the social and emotional realm. The woman as mother expands her locus of power in a family and in society. She is empowered not just by her sex but also by what it achieves for her. The chapter also discusses whether the emotional make up of the mother figure
determines her locus of control. If the most important role of the woman is that of the mother then is she complacent in that assurance or does she go on to use that very role, that of a mother, as a catalyst for control impulses. The character of Yudhisthur in The Palace of Illusions (2008) says, "Haven't our scriptures declared, the father is equal to heaven, but the mother is greater?" (117). Motherhood an essentially biologically empowering role can be seen as an important power role as well. This chapter on The Mother, seeks to study this concept under two main heads: Maternal and Matriarchal.

Every mother is maternal and yet, in Rushdie's novels there is a division between the power wielding matriarch and the power indifferent maternal mother. Betty Friedan defines the mother in The Feminine Mystique (1984):

> Motherliness is a way of life. It enables a woman to express her total self with the tender feelings, the protective attitudes, the encompassing love of the motherly woman. (58)

The maternal woman is a loving, earth mother and a self defining character. From the beginning of time, the female cycle has defined and confined woman's role. Elisabeth Bumiller in May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Sons (1991), says this about the life she sees pulsating around her-

> I remember how I used to walk into Indian villages and be struck by the incredible power of fertility. Out of the dust, against every obstacle of poverty, there emerged babies- human babies ... all of them created by the most mystical force in life. (286)
The maternal woman is conformist, even prudish in her attitudes to life. One understands that while motherhood is a familiar theme in the book, it is the quantum of power associated with it that differentiates these women from one another.

The matriarch is the power wielding source of the family. Betty Friedan calls it "the power of that choice to have children" (xiv). She is a woman who rules or dominates a family, group or state. Hers is a position of strength and dominion, a power wielding, power-focused position. Friedan says, "To be well done, the mother's job in training children and shaping the life of her family should draw on all a woman's resources, emotional and intellectual, and upon all her skills." (365). She chalks her own agenda and maps her own path, putting her individual self before every other role she might play in life. Matriarchy (or gynecocracy) refers to a gynecocentric form of society, in which the leading role is taken by the women and especially by the mothers of a community. Due to a lack of a clear and consistent definition of the word matriarchy, several anthropologists have begun to use the term matrifocality. Matrifocality refers to societies in which women, especially mothers, occupy a central position, and the term does not necessarily imply domination by women or mothers. Anthropologist R. T. Smith (2002) refers to matrifocality as the kinship structure of a social system where the mothers assume structural prominence. The Nair community in Kerala in South India is a prime example of matrifocality. For ease of research and taking into consideration that the term is multi-layered, 'matriarch' will be employed.

To explain these two categories the scholar has chosen the following characters in the novels of Salman Rushdie that highlight various aspects of motherhood: Naseem Aziz, Padma, Amina Sinai, Parvati, Mary Pereira and Aadam Saini's mother in

The image of the virtuous goddess like woman is an oft seen one in South Asia. In this image, the women must devote themselves to their husbands and show loyalty and sacrifice in even the most extreme circumstances. There is enormous pressure to conform to the norms of society and the patriarchal system of family life. But now there is the questioning of the dominant patriarchal tradition and their role. This questioning and seeking leads to more complexity in the women characters and women are multi layered and more aware.

The patriarchal concept of oppression and imprisonment is increasingly being objected to and rejected by writers and women. The two greatest Indian Epics- the Ramayana and the Mahabharata- depict women in two main forms. One as the preserver and the other as the destroyer. Kaushalya is the symbol of the mother who readily sacrifices and accepts Bharatha in the place of Rama, her own son, to rule the country. Kaikeyi on the other hand is the queen who demands a hefty price of a promise made by the king. She urges her son Bharath to aspire for the throne even as she connives at sending Rama on exile to the forest. Gandhari in the Mahabharata has been portrayed as a mother who (literally and figuratively) blindly supports her sons out of her love for and loyalty to them.
As society transforms, there is a change in its literature as well. This sentiment is highlighted by Meena Shirwadkar in Image of Woman in the Indo Anglian Novel (1979) where she states that as a consequence of changes in Indian society, novels are also undergoing a transformation. “Tradition, transition and modernity are the stages through which the woman in Indo-Anglian novel is passing.” (153-54)

The western notion of women’s rights has been one that concentrates more on the defiance of labels associated with a woman. When and if the Western world of feminism looks beyond these labels and roles, it will begin to acknowledge that the Third World woman grapples with the pressures of being a mother in a significantly larger amount. While the very concept of feminism is essentially a Western one, the women of the East understand the pressure of conforming to society’s expectations and being dutiful baby carriers, cooks and comfort givers. As Kate Millet observes in Sexual Politics (1972) “For her the world is her husband, her family, her children & her home, hence the outstanding and highest calling of women in always that of wife and mother” (164).

These lines could find an echo in the third world woman who is tutored to believe that the sum total of her experience is that of mother or wife. Adrienne Rich states that, “Through worship of the goddess mother, and women oriented beliefs, we recognise women as primal power incarnate.” In Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children (1988), Indira Gandhi is Durga and is presented as an incarnate of wrath. In The Moor’s Last Sigh (1999), Uma is named after a goddess, "goddess from a machine;" and in the same novel, Aurora is considered an irresistible goddess by her family.

Rushdie extends the idea of goddess and power incarnate to the image of the mother. He suggests that postcolonial men act vengefully towards women due to their
colonized past and their need to assert their minuscule power. In *The Ground beneath her Feet* (1995), Vina Apsara launches a campaign against the forced sterilization that Sanjay Gandhi wants to inflict on the unwilling population. “We must not let this man conquer Indian women’s wombs.”(250). The use of the word conquer is particularly telling for what Rushdie seems to be saying is that the womb too is a place, a territory that men may fight for and fight over. There are a significant number of literary texts that are written from both a feminist and post-colonial standpoint. These texts often share views on the individuality and disparity of the subject, as well as agreeing on shared strategies of resistance against dictatorial external forces. For example, Bill Ashcroft in *Key concepts in post-colonial studies* likens ‘writing the body’ in feminism to ‘writing place’ in post-colonial theory. This suggests that the colonised space in feminist discourse is the vulnerable female body, thus reflecting the fertile, productive nature of both body and place, which has the power to yield crop but also to destroy it.

Anne Wilson Schaef in *Women’s Reality: An Emerging Female System in a White Male Society* (1985) uses the ideas of psychologist Erik Erikson to elucidate the need to liken the womb to territory. It is Erikson’s theory that the inner space was located in the lower abdomen and was related to the female’s identity. He believed that the vagina and the uterus remained empty until it was filled by a penis (in other words, until the female attached herself to a male) and then a baby. At that point, the woman secures her identity and became whole. (34)

The sentiment that attaches feminine identity to a man finds place in Rushdie’s *Shame* (1983) when he says:
‘Marriage is power,’ Naveed Hyder said. ‘It is freedom. You stop being someone’s daughter and becomes someone’s mother instead, ek dum, fut-a-fut, pronto. Then who can tell you what to do?’ (155)

The suggestion being made here is that perhaps to be a mother is by far the most important role a woman can ever achieve and all her other accomplishments, pale in comparison, or even hold a candle to this. Women don’t have an individual or “private” image of who they want to be—or if they do, it is too weak to resist the “public” image of what women are supposed to be.

Women identify so strongly with their bodies that the idea can further be extended to feeling a sense of belonging wherever they are. Sara Suleri says in Meatless Days (1991), Sara Suleri says, "Oh, home is where your mother is, one; it is where you are mother, two." (147). This is a thought one sees in postcolonial writing, the use of the body to colonize or seize or make peace with the past. And their body is used to create, as Vandana Shiva states in “Mad Cows and Sacred Cows” (2004), ‘mammalian bioreactors’, reducing women to child bearing machines. (183-199).

In Midnight's Children (1981) the first ‘mother’ in the material and the literal sense is Naseem Aziz. Often called Reverend Mother, she is grandmother to Saleem, mother to Alia, Mumtaz, Hanif, Mustapha and Emerald. Naseem is portrayed as a shy, retiring woman, who is horrified by minute changes in her routine and in her life. When her husband and she move to Amritsar from Kashmir after their marriage, “Naseem Aziz had a sharp headache...life outside her quiet valley had come as something of a shock to her.” (32)
An attempt at adaptation to the situation is accompanied by plaints and complaints. This martyr complex in Rushdie's women characters emerges from an almost obsessive focus on their roles as wives, housekeepers, and mothers—their biological role. In the novel Saleem's mother Amina suffers from the martyr complex and takes on guilt and blame for the way everyone, especially her children have turned out. She thinks of her ailments as punishment for her sins.

So it was not difficult to think of the verrucas as a punishment, not only for the years ago escapade at Mahalakshmi, but for failing to save her husband from the pink chitties of alcoholism; for the Brass Monkey's untamed, unfeminine ways; and for the size of her son's nose. (158)

Betty Friedan in The Feminine Mystique (1984) describes this as, "that burden of responsibility for the kids that a mother never quite escapes."(xx). For Amina, this fault finding with her own self develops into the ability to take on people's pain and burdens.

... Amina became one of those rare people who take the burdens of the world upon their own backs; she began to exude the magnetism of the willingly guilty; and from then on everyone who came into contact with her felt the most powerful urges to confess their own, private guilts. (158)

Anne Wilson Schaef in Women's Reality: An Emerging Female System in a White Male Society (1985) tries to explain this phenomenon by highlighting the importance of guilt in a woman's life. "Guilt is another stopper for women. Because we constantly bear with us the Original Sin of Being Born Female—of being inherently "wrong"—we readily accept the corporate guilt of the world."(49)
The idea of bearing burden finds fruition in Padma, the focal character of the novel. She listens to Saleem Sinai as he speaks about his extraordinary life. She nurtures him and takes care of his needs, and nurses a secret desire to marry him. She is the listener, the image of the audience. Paolo Pier Piciucco, in his essay “The (Hi) Story of Padma’s 1001 Different Faces” (2003) believes that Saleem, whose task as the talented narrator who writes and tells stories from his desk—“is all-absorbing, needs another figure to materially take care of him while he completely devotes himself to narrating anecdotes. She is a vital collaborator in his stories and in the compelling need to tell the story.” (115)

To Piciucco’s interpretation, the researcher would like to append that while Padma’s taking care of Saleem is in the material sense, it is also in the maternal sense. Padma’s role, while being essentially of the one who pushes the story forward, is also one where she needs to perform her task with the sensitivity and concern of a mother. The mother is one whose overriding concern is for her child and its welfare. To this end, she may be willing to give up on her dreams and aspirations for the good of the family. [In the case of Padma, the family is Saleem.] This could lead to a loss of independence and decision making capacity, leaving the locus of power in the hands of the male members of the family. In the domestic sphere though, the dominant role of the woman is undeniable.

The idea of the prevalence of feminine strength in the domestic realm does not preclude men; giving new life could be a man’s prerogative as well; the man does so by marriage. An instance of this is the character of Amina Sinai. She was Mumtaz, before she became Amina. Her changed name reflects her changed life as well. As Mumtaz, she
lived an unconsummated married life in an underground crypt, with her husband-in-hiding, Nadir Khan. When his arrest became imminent, Khan leaves a divorce decree and flees the scene. Mumtaz’s sister, Alia’s beau, Ahmed Sinai, gravitates towards Mumtaz and asks to marry her. He also changes her name to Amina, and in doing so, gives her new life. Rushdie speaks of her new form in the following way:

And now Aadam Aziz lifted his daughter (with his own arms) passing her up after the dowry into the care of this man who had renamed her and so re-invented her, thus becoming in a sense her father as well as her husband. (66)

Dual roles—of father and husband—means the man’s purpose in a woman’s life is two fold as well-patriarch and mate. Giving life, a woman’s prerogative and privilege becomes a man’s when he amalgamates a woman into his life. In taking his name, she does become another person and perhaps spends the rest of her life unlearning and relearning who she is.

Parvati is another woman character who plays a pivotal role in Saleem’s life. The name Parvati means she who dwells in the mountains or the mountain girl. Her mythology is inextricably linked to that of her spouse. The goddess Parvati is above all known as Shiva's wife, who obtained her husband through great heroic effort and she is the one who provokes him into creating their child, this being necessary for the conservation of the world. In the novel, Rushdie's own version of Parvati is similar to her namesake in her exploits: "Parvati...oiled his moustache, caressed his knees and...produced a dinner of biriani so exquisite that (Shiva)...devoted his undivided attentions to her for four whole months..." (411). According to myth Parvati gives birth to
a son named Ganesh, after four months of uninterrupted coitus with Shiva. Later this son
takes the head of an elephant, echoing in this Parvati's son, Aadam Sinai, who is born
with enormous ears: "ears so colossally huge (that people believed)...that it was the head
of a tiny elephant...he was the true son of Shiva and Parvati; he was elephant-headed
Ganesh" (419-420). When she is to marry him, she goes through the same process of
becoming another person. Rushdie states:

... she took a name which I chose for her out of the repository of my
dreams, becoming Laylah, night, so that she too was caught up in the
repetitive cycles of my history, becoming an echo for all the other people
who have been obliged to change their names... like my own mother
Amina Sinai, Parvati-the-witch became a new person in order to have a
child. (415)

It would appear in Midnight's Children (1981) that the women find identity as
mothers than wives. As the latter they take on the identity the man gives them but as
mothers they come into their own. This could also lead to two notable fantastic reversals
of this biological role seen in the novel. The first is that the man is the one who gives life,
not the woman. This is evident from the roles they play in the transformation of their
companions. The other is that the child creates parents, not vice-versa. Rushdie depicts
Saleem Sinai in this manner. Touted as independent India's miracle child, he nonetheless
experiences a tumultuous life. He finds homes in different places and in a sense adopts
people to be his parent, as much as he is adopted to be their child. He touches upon the
remarkable life he has led when he says:
Child of an unknown union, I have had more mothers than most mothers have children; giving birth to parents has been one of my stranger talents- a form of reverse fertility beyond the control of contraception, and even of the Widow herself. (243)

Rushdie does not dwell only on the 'real' parent to stress on the concept of child adopting parent. He fills the mother's mind with doubts too. Saleem's mother Amina, for instance, has a dream about her first husband. Describing it, Rushdie says, "In it, Nadir Khan came to her bed and impregnated her; such was the mischievous perversity of the dream that it confused Amina about the parentage of her child, and provided me, the child of midnight, with a fourth father to set beside Winkie and Medirwold and Ahmed Sinai" (127-8). Saleem thus, can claim many mothers and many fathers, thereby becoming the person that makes the parent; child is the father of man.

The theory of parentage also extends to non-biological mothers. A case in point is the nurse Mary Pereira. Although she does not give birth to Saleem Sinai, her act of switching him with Shiva *creates* him- Saleem- and in that respect, she is his mother. "She made you, you know" (119), says Padma, meaning that he became what he did because of her one act.

Saleem refers to Mary Pereira and Amina as his two mothers who seemingly compete to love him. In Rushdie's words, "Baby Saleem became, after that, the battleground of their loves; they strove to outdo one another in demonstration of affection..."(127). Amina's actions created a rage in her husband "and his growing anger at my mother's preoccupation with her child found a new outlet behind his office door- Ahmed Sinai began to flirt with his secretaries" (132). Rushdie seems to suggest...
that the mother's role takes precedence over the one she plays as a wife. This is a theme observed in other novels of Salman Rushdie as well. In *Fury* (2002), Professor Solanka, the protagonist, says this of his wife Eleanor-

> If she had a failing it was that her mother-love blinded her to the rest of humanity’s desires, including, to be blunt, Professor Solanka’s. If she had a failing, it was that she wanted more children. That she wanted nothing else. Not all the gold of Araby. (12)

In fact, this mother-love is also the idea of being in love with the idea of being a mother and finding fulfilment in this biological function, what Betty Freidan, calls ‘feminine role’. Women choose the biological role as a way to procure their right for recognition or validation. Ravina Agarwal, in her essay, “Trails of Turquoise-Feminist Enquiry and Counter-Development in Ladakh, India” (2004), describes this phenomenon thus:

> Because female fertility is the way most women secure their future, to be without children is to know the desolate possibility of being without name, without status, without family, and of dying without leaving any memory. Bearing children therefore is one of the primary ways through which women can stake a claim in familial, religious and national heritage. (80)

When the biological role subsumes every other role and relationship in her life, the woman finds herself profoundly changed. Eleanor’s attitude towards her husband Malik Solanka undergoes a sea-change and she begins to view him with different eyes:
She found his self-absorbed misery, his constant railing against imagined slights, duller and more of a strain than she was ever cruel enough to show; while he, locked into his downward spiral, accused her of ignoring him and his concerns. (105)

When she accuses Solanka, unfairly, of never initiating sex, he hits back with the retort that she herself was interested in it only during the baby making time of the month. An accusation she does not deny and is unable to see Solanka's reasoning of being old as a reason to not have another child. Thus the need to be mother seems to override all other concerns.

**Fury** (2002) also contains the woman character who compensates being rejected by her object of desire with maternal feelings. When Perry Pincus is rejected by Solanka, she begins to send him stuffed toys, as though replacing the lover with the mother and the man with the child.

"Because you wouldn't fuck her, "Professor Solanka was informed by his wife," she can't think of you as a lover. So she's trying to become your mother instead. How does it feel to be Perry Pinch-ass's little boy?" (28)

The maternal instinct is the strongest in Rushdie's third novel **Shame** (1983). Neluka Silva in the essay "The Politics of Repression and Resistance in Salman Rushdie's Shame", states that "the tribulations, vulnerability and resignation of women are carefully mapped. They are the victims of the male ego, whether it's the father or the husband, and the construction of other female characters is repeated with images concerning repression."(150-171).
In the novel, the three Shakil sisters, Chhunni, Munnee and Bunny are imprisoned by their father, “inside that labyrinthine mansion, until his dying day; virtually uneducated.”(13). Even though Rushdie has given them names, their identities are circumscribed only by their relationship first to their father and after his death as Omar’s mothers. As Omar Khayyam’s three mothers, they are seen not as individuals but as a fused triumvirate identity. They deal with the shame of an unwed pregnancy by refusing to divulge the name of the actual mother, sequestering themselves from the outside world and going to extreme lengths to maintain the façade of a triple maternity. Rushdie imparts them with the courage to bring in to this world their illegitimate offspring; yet again they do it by cloistering themselves within their private sphere and completely renouncing the public arena.

The fantastic occurrence of a shared birth among three sisters, Chhunni, Munnee and Bunny seems to rid them of the yoke of their father’s tyranny. They gain a personality, one that they share. All of them go through the symptoms and physiological manifestations of a pregnancy, although only one of them is pregnant. It is this experience, and the birth that seems to define them and the meaning of their life. The process of withdrawing from the world, barricading themselves in their mother-in-law’s house which had already begun before the occurrence, is precipitated by the arrival of Omar Khayyam Shakil. The sisters close ranks, on their servants and on the world. When the child is born, Rushdie says this of the birth:

They were all wearing the flushed expression of dilated joy that is the mother’s true prerogative; and the baby was passed from breast to breast, and not one of the six was dry. (21)
The right of a woman who has borne a child is to nurse the offspring and this is shared by all three sisters. This in itself indicates how important being a mother is to all of them, that not only psychologically, but physiologically, their bodies understand the magnitude of the act.

Omar grows up and prepares to leave his home for the first time, to attend school and it is then that he is let into a secret of the sisters. He is told by his 'eldest mother' of the desire of the sisters:

We never wanted to stop breast-feeding you', she confessed. 'By now you know that it is not unusual for a six-year old boy to be still on the nipple; but you drank from half a dozen, one for each year. On your sixth birthday we renounced this greatest of pleasures, and after that nothing was the same, we began to forget the point of things. (36)

The reader gets the impression that being mother was fulfilment and life's purpose for the sisters. Once the weaning from the breast happened, they seemed to lose the purpose for living. It is almost a sexual desire, the pleasure derived from an infant suckling at their breasts. Deprived of a man, the sisters [like Perry Pincus does with Solanka] seem to view Omar as their lover-surrogate and derive pleasure from being with him. The weaning away happened without incident for Omar, but for the mothers to be rid of this seemed to have had devastating consequences. There is something almost mocking in Rushdie to give this principal of pleasure to the sisters, as though their role was only biological and they had no impact on their son's life. For so long as they are mothers, their collective personalities are defined by this aspect alone, of being mothers.
Not as women, or as individuals, but as mothers. As Rushdie says, “they could only be comprehended if you took them as a whole.” (40). If they are caught on different sides of the same issue then it results in disorientation and worry for the sisters.

When they were divided by Omar Khayyam’s birthday wishes, they had been indistinguishable too long to retain any exact sense of their former selves, “In the chaos of their regeneration, the wrong heads ended on the wrong bodies; they became psychological centaurs, fish-women, hybrids, and of course this confused separation of personalities carried with it the implication that they were still not genuinely discrete.” (40)

In Shame (1983), another woman who finds validation in being maternal is Bilquis Hyder. She is rescued from a fire by her future husband and President of Peristan, Raza Hyder. She is forced to flee India during the Partition, after her father’s cinema house is set ablaze. She is so conditioned by her father’s will that she is left with nothing except her shame and a “dupatta of modesty” (63). After their marriage Hyder takes her to his ancestral home which contains the women’s quarters. This space is ruled over by Bariamma, the matriarch. In this cattle shed like environment, live thirty-nine other women and they are visited nightly by their respective husbands. This is done under the veil of darkness as though to absolve “the shame and dishonour” of the sex act.

And of course, all the women denied that anything of ‘that nature’ ever took place, so that when pregnancies occurred they did so as if by magic, as if all conceptions were immaculate and all births virgin. (74)

The women in the novel are under the thumb of Bariamma and are not allowed to enjoy sex, even if they want to and if she is widowed she is even “less than a wife,
worthless”. The arranged marriage between Raza’s cousin, Rani Humayun, and Iskander Harappa exemplifies codified gender relations. Rani, though, is revolted by the living conditions she has had to put up with for long.

Rani Humayun, who could not wait to escape from that house which was never left by its sons, who imported their wives to live and breed in battery conditions, like shaver chickens. (75)

Neluka Silva, in “The Politics of Repression and Resistance in Salman Rushdie’s Shame” (2003), explains the fall out of this situation:

This repression leads to sexual and psychological frustrations, the effects of which are visible later and impinge on subsequent relationships. Tenuous marital relationships produce another generation of women who are equally incapacitated by male repression. Each one negotiates her familial and social tensions differently, but whatever method they choose—resistance or resignation—they are forced to contend with cultural expectations, which include marriage and the capacity to produce male children since a female child is a sign of personal ignominy. This pathos is evoked by the representation of a climate where a woman derives consolation from another woman’s ‘inability’ to produce a son. (154-55)

The humiliation of the ‘breeding conditions’ under the rule of Bariamma is only made worse for Bilquis by the shame of barrenness. When she is pregnant, “being washed for the first time in the solipsistic fluids of motherhood” (78), Bilquis is blissfully unaware of the dark clouds gathering. Her baby is strangled in her womb, when the umbilical cord wraps itself around its neck. While she takes it better than her husband,
who is all too easily given to tears, she finds it difficult to conceive. This makes her the
target of many a jibe and at last an all out mortal combat when she is told by a cousin that
her barrenness, is a collective shame that all the women have to put up with. Bilquis
attributes her inability to bear children to the circumstances she is in, prompting
Bariamma to order Raza to take her away. He does so, taking her to the married officers'
quarters and she, like she had prophesised, conceives.

Motherhood is not always positive or fulfilling in Shame (1995). Naveed Hyder,
unlike her mother Bilquis, is fortunate to not bear the shame of barrenness. Instead
it is the shame of fecundity. On the eve of her marriage, she elopes with another
man- Army Captain Talvar Ulhaq who then proceeds to use her to fulfil his desire to have
a family.

“He had foreseen in Naveed Hyder the children who would make him puff
up with pride while she disintegrated under the awesome chaos of their
numbers.” (164)

Naveed Talvar commences to bear children every year, starting off with a pair of
twin boys, the next year, triplets, then a ‘beautiful quarter of baby girls’, five more girls
the year that followed, then six more. Named “Good News” on account of the fact that
she was a cheerful baby, this title becomes a scary testimony to the ‘good news’ India
associates with woman- motherhood. A mother more than anything else, Naveed Talvar
loses her own personality and sheer terror at yet another pregnancy drives her to commit
suicide. Neluka Silva discusses Naveed Hyder’s suicide and what led to it in
Naveed's suicide enacts the tensions of producing babies while doing so. Defining women solely in these terms culminates in the most powerful and terrifying form of self-expression. The excess inscribed in the representation of the suicide disrupts and unsettles expectations of gender identity. The extreme significance of femininity associated with Naveed's death is a form of parody of both gender and class norms and expectations. (160)

There is a tendency to attribute shame to motherhood. In describing the pregnancy of the Shakil sisters he says, "That one of the three nose-in-air girls had been put, on that wild night, into the family way. O shame, shame, poppy-shame!" (16)

Rushdie puts forward the notion that shame is the appropriate emotion with which a woman addresses an unwanted pregnancy. The act of premarital sex requires both man and woman to play, and yet the aftermath of ridicule, shame, and possible pregnancy evidently lays down heavily and solely upon the woman. After hypnotizing Farah Zoroaster, Omar has sex and impregnates her.

“She was willing,” he told himself. ‘Then where’s the blame? She must have been willing, and everybody knows the risk.”...”An outraged headmaster called her into his office and expelled her for calling down shame upon the school.” (52)

Not only must the innocent mother shame herself for executing the disgraceful act of pregnancy, but the headmaster claims she burdens his school with shame—rather he is shamed, having schooled an unwed, teenage mother—similar to the shame of Bilquis's bareness on the entire women clan.
Ravina Agarwal highlights the fate of the Ladakhi woman in “Trails of Turquoise- Feminist Enquiry and Counter-Development in Ladakh, India” (2004). It is pertinent to visit it here:

It must also be remembered that, even though Ladakhis regard motherhood as an avenue of strength and empowerment for women the consequences of childlessness are severe. Childless women are pitied and are often subject to allegations of witchcraft, promiscuity and evil. (80)

An example of this attitude is evidenced in Shame (1983) when Bilquis Hyder laments over her inability to produce a male child: "He wanted a hero of a son; I gave him an idiot female instead . . . I must accept it: she is my shame" (1C 1). Nicola Graves speaks of this phenomenon: “In Indian society, a woman's foremost role in life is becoming a mother; moreover, her value depends upon her ability to give birth to sons. Any power she wields comes from her ability to procreate, not from her dominance over men.” (Women as Matriarchs)

In fact, Rushdie asserts masculinization by feminizing shame. This is evident in his description of Bilquis’ father. Mahmoud takes on the role of both parents, shifting into the unfamiliar corollary of playing the part of a woman. As a man Mahmoud recognizes the change of the public's attitude towards him; the assumption of his maternal role signified ignominy and irrationality- because he was a man performing a woman’s role:

'Woman,' he sighed resignedly to his daughter, 'what a term! Is there no end to the burdens this word is capable of bearing? Was there ever such a broad-backed and also such a dirty word? (58).
Mahmoud ironically chooses to lament to his daughter about the dreadfulness of his heavily burdensome and repellent female nickname. Like the term woman, motherhood carries the yoke reflective of the chiding of the street children, such as failings, stupidity and shame. Literally, motherhood is the bearing of a great burden: the carrying of and caring for one's offspring, a feat of that kind of importance and responsibility refutes the previous weakness and foolish rebuke.

In contrast to the 'weakness', is Elisabeth Bumiller's quote of historian Barbara Tuchman in an acceptance speech for an award from Washington's 'men only' Cosmos club. Tuchman says,

I have never felt that I belong to an inferior sex. On the contrary, I think nature's selection of us as the sex that procreates the species and nurtures it through infancy-men's role being momentary and casual in comparison-is an obvious indication of superiority and privilege. (287)

Rushdie seems to give the men the 'burden' of bringing up a child and to the woman he gives the 'pleasure' of being mother. It would seem that he does not endorse the right of parenthood being a predominantly masculine one in the child's life. Rushdie wants to put across the idea perhaps, that it is the woman, either because of her biological role or her conditioning, who is better suited to be a parent.

On the other hand is the matriarchal mother whose strength lies in her silence. One such example is Dr Aadam Sinai's mother. Rushdie never addresses her by name but that is a trivial point when one considers her grit. When her husband suffers a stroke, she keeps the news away from her son who is studying abroad, "because your studies were too important, son." (12). Rushdie describes her strength in the following way:
This mother, who had spent her life housebound, in purdah, had suddenly found enormous strength and gone out to run the small gemstone business (turquoise, rubies, diamonds) which had put Aadam through medical college, with the help of a scholarship. (12)

There is the other side to this seemingly strong woman and that becomes clear when she says “I have worked in shops and been undressed by the eyes of strangers.” (26). This implies her reluctance of appearing in front of strangers, in stepping out of her comfort zone of the traditional way of life. That she does so is proof of her determination to do right by her son.

Naseem’s prudish attitude towards sex does not also diminish the power she wields over the family. She gives Saleem validation by accepting him as her grandson and takes the family, minus the father, to Pakistan. As Rushdie says, “Once Reverend Mother had legitimized me, there was no one to oppose her” (283). In The Ground Beneath her Feet (2000) Spenta Cama, the mother of Ormus Cama, takes a dislike to her son, the surviving twin, after she hears a comment on his appearance “she shied away from him as if he had a disease” (36). The mother, who gives validation to a child, shuns him and fails to recognize his talents. Of her Rushdie says,” To Ormus, she continued to be distant, never fond. Events had neutered her maternal feelings towards him.”(41)

Saleem goes on to add, “Reverend Mother fixed everything, my mother was like putty- like potter’s clay-in her omnipotent hands” (283). In fact, towards the end of her life it seems Naseem, who has a tendency to bloat, seems to draw from the life blood of her husband, who seems to shrink in size before he literally shatters into pieces.
Reverend Mother grew larger and stronger, she who had once wailed pitifully at the sight of Mercurochrome, now appeared to thrive on his weakness, as though their marriage had been one of those mythical unions in which succubi appear to men as innocent damsels, and, after luring them into the matrimonial bed, regain their true, awful aspects and begin to swallow their souls. ... (274)

The mother is a larger than life figure in most of Rushdie's books, and her size is only surpassed by her locus of power. No where is this more evident than in *Shame* (1983), an allegory that describes the political turmoil of Pakistan. Rushdie also toys with the nature of mother-son relationships in Indian and Pakistani society, emphasizing the perversion of their closeness.

Rushdie highlights this idea in many of his novels. In *Shame* (1983), the three Shakil mothers dote on their only son Omar, keeping him "excluded from human society by [their] strange resolve"(29). Besides, the cliched mother resents her son's new wife for taking over his affection and tries to disrupt any opportunities for intimacy in the new marriage. Both Bariamma's nocturnal segregation of the married couples in *Shame* (71) and Flory's demand for Abraham's firstborn son in *The Moor's Last Sigh* (111) exemplify this unusual attachment.

Flory feels so bereft after losing her son to Aurora that she wants another son to replace that emptiness in her life. Here Rushdie is making a comment on the excessively strong maternal bond especially in the case of sons, which exists in India and other countries of the subcontinent. It is a psychological condition where the mother feels usurped and her affections threatened by the new woman in her son's life. Rushdie has
presented Flory, like Bariamma, with a prophetic insight thus rendering her character even more quasi realistic and witch like. She predicts the horrific bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and sings incantations of death and doom.

Obeah, jadoo, fo, fum,

chicken entrails, kingdom come.

Ju-ju, voodoo, fee, fif

piddle cocktails, time to die.(73)

The huge emotional investment Indian mothers make in their sons is highlighted by Sudhir Kakar in his work, *A Psychoanalytic Study of Childhood and Society in India* (2008). Kakar believes that this kind of investment is a human reaction to the distance from her husband that a woman feels in a typical arranged marriage. Her son may well be the first male with whom she has had any sort of deep and rewarding relationship. Kakar takes his theory further and claims that Indian men find women sexually threatening which causes “avoidance behavior” in sexual relations which then causes frustrated, lonely women to “extend a provocative sexual presence towards their sons.” (218)

The fact that a woman controls the fate of other women, including when they may be with their husbands, is an indication of where power rests in Rushdie’s novels. Even the names given by Rushdie to the women- Reverend Mother and Bariamma, or Big Mother- show the place these women have in the books. Bariamma lords over the entire household and yet it is evident that the control she exercises is in the private sphere and not in the public eye. She is the one who decides the manner in which other people's
stories have to be recounted; it is she who alters Bilquis's tale of flight during partition and it so happens that "... neither teller nor listener, would tolerate any deviation from the hallowed sacred text. This was when Bilquis knew that she had become a member of the family; in the sanctification of her tale lay initiation, kinship, blood."(4)

Emperor Akbar in The Enchantress of Florence (2008) has a formidable ally in his mother Queen Hamida Bano. In the absence of her older sister in law Gulbadan, her importance expands manifold. Rushdie says, "Hamida Bano's own influence over the king of kings has been without rival. When women were required to broker a marriage or a peace, she was the only great lady to hand."(106). In describing the influence over Akbar, Rushdie compares the emperor's mother and the emperor's wives, giving the former the upper hand. "Akbar's own queens were just girls, except for the Phantom, of course, that ghostly sexpot who had memorized all the dirty books and there was no need to think overmuch about her."(106)

Nicola Graves talks about the aspect of the power wielding mother here:

In both The Moor's Last Sigh and Shame, Rushdie depicts prominent female characters (Epifania da Gama and Bariamma Hyder) as the matriarchs of their families. Although this may seem odd in such a male-dominated society, in southern India matriarchy is actually a common family organization, and women even own property jointly with men. ("Women as Matriarchs")

In the novel, it is the matriarch of the family who takes matters into her hands. Rushdie calls Epifania, "most severe and least forgiving of mothers" (32). Her iron will
combines the power of a matriarch with the old desires of a dynast- the wish for a male heir. In describing her and other power wielding women Rushdie says this:

The women are now moving to the centre of my little stage. Epifania, Carmen, Belle, and the newly arrived Aurora- they, not the men, were the true protagonists on the struggle; and inevitably, it was Great-Grandmother Epifania who was the troublemaker-in-chief. (33)

The role of mother is not only received but also one that could be taken willingly, biologically or not. In Fury (2002), Mila, young as she is, chooses to describe herself in motherly terms on her equation with her gang, “Me, I play house mother. And run the front of the house.”(119). Mila has pet projects, first Eddie, her faithful boy friend who is always around and whom she transforms from a lout to a passable man, and then the much older Malik Solanka. She tutors him on what is healthy and what looks good. Rushdie says, “He understood that she made him one of her projects.” (117)

The authority of the matriarch is also seen when a defiant Abraham chooses his love for Aurora over his mother Flory. Then, Moshe Cohen, the community leader remarks, “A bad mistake, Abie,’ old Moshe Cohen commented. ‘To make an enemy of your mother; enemies are plentiful, but mothers are hard to find.’”(83)

The Moor’s conniving grandmother, Flory, anxious to lay to rest the relationship of her son Abraham and Aurora, offers financial support to him to take control of the business and returning it to prosperity. Her condition on the loan is that he turns his first-born son over to her, to be raised as a Jew. Agreeing to this creates a rift with
Aurora, who leaves Abraham and moves to Mumbai. And it is only after Flory's death that Abraham and Aurora reunite. The loss of a mother is felt even by self centred Aurora, who chooses to express her grief in the giant canvas she creates.

... for it was Mother India herself, Mother India with her garishness and her inexhaustible motion,...but above all,...Mother India was Belle's face. Queen Isabella was the only mother-goddess here, and she was dead; at the heart of this first immense outpouring of Aurora's art was the simple tragedy of her loss, the unassuaged pain of becoming a motherless child.

The room was her act of mourning. (61)

As a post colonial writer, Rushdie feels the pain of and identifies with the loss of country. He equates the native land with one's mother. Matriarchy is the only frame of reference in Omar Khayyam Shakil's early life as well. The Hydra-headed being, the sisters as one, that one encounters in Shame (1983) is oppressive to the young Omar and this is reflected in his subsequent relationships with women.

Who would not have wanted to escape from such mothers?- In later years Omar Khayyam would remember his childhood as a lover, abandoned, remembers his beloved, changeless, incapable of ageing, a memory kept prisoner in a circle of heart's fire. (40)

And it would be easy to argue that he developed pronounced misogynist tendencies at an early age. - That all his subsequent dealings with women were acts of revenge against the memory of his mothers. (40)
Eternally aggravated by his mothers' twelve years of protection and imprisonment, Omar holds all women in contempt for his suffering. As a man living in a postcolonial society, Omar's revenge comes from a memory of his mother country, his unsuccessful home of mothers.

In *Shalimar the Clown* (2008), a living father tries but cannot compete with his dead wife who continues to nurture their daughter. It is in this novel that Rushdie grants closeness in relationship between father and daughter, both in the case of India and Max and Boonyi and Pandit Kaul. Of the pandit’s efforts, Rushdie says:

So he had done his best, but a girl’s mother is her mother even if she existed without actually existing, in the noncorporeal form of a dream, even if her existence could only be proved by her effect on the one human being whose fate she still cared to influence. (51)

The image of country as mother also finds place in the novels. Rushdie associates feelings of love and betrayal with the motherland, thereby making it another visible, viable entity. All through *Midnight’s Children* (1988), Saleem is honest enough to acknowledge that related or not, his feelings for his ‘sister’, Jamila Singer/Brass Monkey are incestuous, we find towards the end, that his feelings towards his country are what he describes as incestuous. This is a reflection of how strongly he identifies with the idea of his country as motherland, as mother.

But there are cracks and gaps... had I, by then, begun to see that my love for Jamila Singer had been, in a sense, mistake? Had I already understood how I had simply transferred on to her shoulders the adoration which I now perceived to be a vaulting, all-encompassing love of country?
When was it that I realized that my truly incestuous feelings were for my true birth-sister, India herself, and not for that trollop of a crooner ...?  (386)

The country provides solace to a child whose life is extricably linked to its own passage in time. Bharat Mata or Mother India, country as mother, is a very pronounced theme in *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995). Moraes Zogoiby, the protagonist and narrator remarks on the importance when he says, "Nobody ever made a movie called "Father India". It sounds all wrong." (168). The idea is extended elsewhere when Rushdie declares, "Motherness... is a big idea in India, maybe our biggest: the Land as our mother, the mother as land, as the firm ground beneath our feet." (137)

In his essay, "Dynasty", in *Imaginary Homelands* (1992), Salman Rushdie talks about the political acumen of Indira Gandhi in this regard:

Her use of the cult of the mother – of Hindu mother-goddess symbols and allusions- and the idea of Shakti, of the fact that the dynamic element of the Hindu pantheon is represented as female- was calculated and shrewd... (50)

The theme is a recognizable one, sometimes amusing, sometimes scornful, or impertinent but always present and it is in this book that Rushdie's post modernist irreverence shines through. He supersedes the traditional image of the kind, considerate, rustic, valiant Mother, the one of Mother India, to one who is his "own sort of Mother India...metropolitan, sophisticated, noisy, angry and different. P Balaguruswamy, in his essay, "A Post-modern, Provocative, Metropolitan Mother India: Aurora Zogoiby of
Rushdie’s The Moor’s Last Sigh” (2003), calls it “A bitchy, Goan Catholic/Jewess substitutes the kum-kum clad, devout and divine Hindu female. This “dark, bloody mother India” (5) is splashed about in the pages of The Moor’s Last Sigh (1995).

The fixed idea of Mother India has to undergo a change seeing how India is pluralistic, progressive, polyglot, mukkiehnic and pliable. Rushdie clings on to this idea of a required drastic change and presents his mother India as fiery and glitzy. And he is not far from the truth in his portrayal of a provocative and metropolitan Mother India in Aurora Zogoiby. As Moor says, “... an image of an aggressive, treacherous, annihilating mother who haunts the fantasy life of Indian males.”(139)

The image of the traditional mother is shattered in this text. Aurora Da Gama, from her girlhood, proves herself to be merciless, manipulative, crafty and even brutal. Aurora’s mother Isabella had run a cold war with her mother-in-law Zpifania, from the moment Cameons, her son had chosen to marry “a hussy from somewhere”(23). Aurora, Isabella’s only child continues this tradition of odium and ill will, even watching her grandmother slowly die from a stroke she suffers in the chapel at night.

While Mother India is retiring, ideal bride material, subservien and agreeable on her nuptial night, Aurora, at fifteen falls in love with the much older thirty-five year old Abraham Zogoiby. Far from being the coy shy ideal she seduces him: and has sex with him in her family godown that he is an employee at. She defies family, elders, for the sake of this ‘pepper love’(169). She goes through her turbulent marriage, with a scandal at every stage; in sharp contrast to the bride we see in the traditional sense.
An aspect of this conventional bride/wife, celebrated in literature ancient and modern is her unwavering love, loyalty and devotion to her husband. Aurora’s love for Abraham evaporates after a few years’ conjugal bliss, especially since she learns that he has other women on the side. She then launches her own affairs, one audaciously with the first Prime Minister of the country, Jawaharlal Nehru. Moor in fact wonders if he is the child of that union.

The narrator, Moor, who is also Aurora’s son, does tell us that his parents never really legalized their relationship but probably owing to the pressures of society they do maintain the facade of a respectful marriage. Aurora comes across as a person who could not care less about the community; yet she is shrewd and practical enough to know that despite all the progress made, Indian subcontinent still does not accord respect to a woman especially a mother continuing an illegitimate relationship.

Mother India was ideal in her ease at producing sons, but Aurora produces daughters, three of them, before she has Moor. Of these four children, only one survives. Thus she outlives her children, and in a sense causes the death of two of them. She does not breast feed her daughters, only her son, and then too, because he is abnormal. Ambieen Hau, in “Marching In from the Peripheries: Rushdie’s Feminized Artistry and Ambivalent Feminism” calls Aurora, “the culmination of Rushdie’s female artists with revolutionary potential, now for the first time taking centre stage... a "mother", as she is called, "of us all"... (42)

Aurora’s bond with her son, the only one who suckled at her breast, is evident in her conversation with the actors of the film Mother India, where she alludes to the son marrying the mother in real life. This seems to express a hidden longing for her son, the
muscular, good looking Moor, who, because of a freak genetic factor, grows faster than normal children. This Oedipal element must have been dormant in her from the time she suckled her son, and she diverts all this in her artistic endeavours. Her longing is clearly depicted in her two sketches that constitute the Moor paintings. One is where she, in a role reversal, depicts herself to be the daughter and Moor the father. The other where she is the murdered Desdemona and Moor is Othello.

The mother-son relationship is taken as an example to elucidate the general mother-son relationships in India. Indian mothers are quite often more possessive of sons than daughters. As we have seen earlier in Epifanies case, a mother feels threatened and her position usurped as the main focus in her son's life when he commits to another woman as a possible life partner. Aurora too feels the same emotions of having to give up her son to another woman Uma; the control she exercised over Moor is now being wrested away from her by a much younger woman; she does not enjoy the same place in her son's affections now.

Not only is Rushdie's Mother India figure the anti-thesis of the popular image in her roles as bride, wife and mother, Aurora is neither 'redemptive' nor 'conservatively wedded to the maintenance of the social status-quo'. On the contrary, she is a sharply-retaliating, vindictive woman in many of her reactions. Her mother Belle is described thus-

She wasn't perfect; perhaps it's time that was said. She was tall, beautiful, brilliant, brave, hard-working, powerful, victorious, but ladies and gents, Queen Isabella was no angel(...)she smoked like a volcano, grew increasingly foul-mouthed and failed to restrain her language in front of her growing child, went in for occasional drinking sprees that would leave
her unconscious, sprawled like a tart on a mat in some backwoods shebeen; she became the toughest of nuts, and there were hints that her business methods extended at times to a little intimidation, a little strong-arming of suppliers, contractors, rivals; and she was frequently, casually, shamelessly unfaithful, unfaithful without discrimination or restraint. (44)

Aurora is intolerant, as a modern woman is often depicted in Rushdie's works, of her husband's sins. When Aurora learns that her husband has agreed to give up her first born to his demanding mother, she shuts him out of their bedroom, vowing not to have conjugal relations as long as the mother is alive. She launches herself in the independence struggle, where she is compared to courageous women in her standing up to the Empire. Mother India becomes the 'bitch goddess'. P Balaswamy quotes Nair when he says this:

It creates exactly the ironic gap for post-Rushdie postcoloniality to manifest itself- the gap between the stodgy, unidimensional portrait of a traditional Mother India beloved of the days of Nehruvian nationalism and the multivalent image of a mother whose wandering sons are as unpredictable and ambiguous as herself. (XII)

Reiteration leads to the idea that, for Rushdie, India, the country he has loved may be in danger if it allows the Aurora type of mother to flourish. Despite bordering on the nihilist, being a true artist with a passion for the truth admits the greatness of the nation in this gloom. Aurora's paintings show that there is yet a saving grace available in the nation's plurality.

...that exploration of an alternative vision of India-as-mother, not Nargis's sentimental village-mother, but a mother of cities, as heartless and lovable,
brilliant and dark, multiple and lonely, mesmeric and regnant, pregnant and empty, truthful and deceitful...(204)

Rushdie's portrayal of Aurora can be read as both—a sadly lacking mother figure to her children and a very encompassing version of modern day Mother India. As a mother to her children she shows little affection except for Moor who becomes the focus of her paintings. She treats them especially her three daughters with a casual indifference even to the extent of nicknaming them after a childhood game (the names sound so similar to 'Eeny', 'Meeny', 'Miney', 'Moe'.) She is certainly not the epitome of motherhood taking into account the connotations attached to it in the Indian context. The 'ideal Indian mother' will willingly forgo any comfort and will sacrifice anything for the well being of her children.

The ideal mother is subverted to present another cosmopolitan model—this mother has children that, in Aurora's particular style of language, "...can't grow up fast enough for [her]. God! How long this childhood business drags on!" (141). Moor's observations are also similar when he says. "My three sisters were born in quick succession, and Aurora carried and ejected each of them with such perfunctory attention to their presence that they knew, long before their births, that she would make few concessions to their post-partum needs."(139) According to Gooneti leke, in his book *Salman Rushdie*, (1998) the "three daughters represent three tendencies, three possible faces of Eve—the superficial glamorous (Ina), the religious (Minnie becomes a nun) and the activist (Mynah) campaigns for a radical feminist group, WWSTP."87). Rushdie, just like Aurora, dismisses them in a very offhand manner.
Rushdie's women characters carry many shades, but motherhood seems to shine the brightest. The main ideas that come across are as follows:

Motherhood is held up as the ideal of womanhood.

The mother is an almost overbearing presence in the son's life.

The country is considered mother.

Mothers wield maximum impact on their children's lives, whether they are caregivers or care deniers, pullers to or pushers away, indifferent or indulgent, calm or melodramatic, sacrificing or selfish, they shape the way their children grow into adulthood and decide whether they progress or regress. The mothers are the quiet standbys who watch while the action takes place around them, confident in their ability to pull those strings they hold in their hand. Rushdie seems to suggest that being a mother subsumes the woman's identity and makes her only that, a mother she is overwhelmed and swamped by what it entails, often happily giving up everything except this one identity. The colonial experience creates a bond with the land and this finds its way into Rushdie's books and finds utterance through his characters and their love for the country. The concept of the earth as mother, nourishing and nurturing is rich with symbolism whether it is the bosomy earth or the red soil. The loss of the homeland and the devastation it leaves in its wake is a recurrent theme in expatriate writing and Rushdie's characters feels this loss as acutely as they feel the loss of a mother. Thus the earth, the country, is as vital a life giving force as the mother.

Hindu goddesses are traditionally considered to be strong figures, even unconquerable ones. By comparing his female characters to these goddesses, Rushdie
attributes them with a force of character. He observes the country as a matriarchy, an ideology wherein maternal power, vigour and love is the means to societal structure.

The man also makes the occasional foray into this world of cane giving but he is often inadequate, even incestuous. This may be an indication that perhaps the woman is the one nature and he, Rushdie chose to be best for the role.

One also sees a juxtaposition of roles. Indian and Pakistani women's identities in life are determined by their roles as mothers. 'Matri-shakti' (power of the mother) is seen on par with that of Goddesses and it would be unthinkable for a 'traditional' mother to treat her child the way Bilquis treats Sufiya. And yet throughout the novel we do not come across a single 'normal' or positive mother-child relationship. Omar's three mothers' obsessive need for over protection and cloistering subsequently affect his future relationships with women. His use of hypnosis to seduce Farah Zooreaster is reflective of his need to exercise ultimate power, domination and manipulation over the female sex. It becomes his tool of revenge against the maternal domination he had to go through in the closed environs of the Nishapur Haveli.

Arjumand Harappa cannot get along well with her mother Rani. Naveed 'Good News' Hyder, the epitome of female fertility, cannot bear the burden of ever-increasing motherhood annually and ultimately commits suicide leaving behind a litter of motherless waifs. The shame of motherhood is presented from different angles.

The Shakil sisters cloister themselves from the world instructing their illegitimate son Omar not to feel shame because of their deed; Omar's shamelessness becomes instrumental in making Farah Zoroaster pregnant but the shame of being an unwed
mother lies solely with her. Bilquis feels ashamed of being a mother to a daughter who in fact should have been a son. Naveed unable to live in shame for being reduced to a reproducing machine ends her own life.

In all the above instances we see that the shame—actually an ineffectual translation of 'sharam', which, in Indian context, is more a code of conduct than embarrassment—of being a woman and a mother is considered a very normal emotion experienced by the women. The narrator affirms masculinity by translating shame as a feminine emotion.

Padma is contrasted with Parvati and Bariamma with Naveed. Rushdie seems to want to keep the balance between the strong and the weak. He also seems to suggest that for this very strength to exist there must be a willing subjugated weak person. By making both roles feminine, he highlights the many roles the woman plays.

Throughout postcolonial literature, motherhood appears in the form of metaphors, imagery, and political discourse. Authors maternalize the natural: land, water, and farmland take on feminine characteristics in their creation of a motherland.

Salman Rushdie addresses issues of motherhood in and out of postcolonial society in his books. He portrays the mothers as caged women, as teachers, and as bearers of both shame and joy. By analyzing motherhood in his novels, the author explains the significance of maternal influences which supply a foundation for a society's history.

Elisabeth Bumiller in *May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Sons* (1991) remarks,

...there was a reason why Shakti, or female energy, was considered such a powerful force in the Hindu religion, and why goddesses like Durga were
more feared than the gods. Indians knew that in the order of nature, it was the women who were powerful, who bled and did not die, who reproduced life itself.”(287)

Over the last four decades, in reality and fiction, there has been a radical change in the South Asian woman and her image in writing. There has been a distinctive shift from the woman who is an all-enduring, self-sacrificing doormat woman to the one who is conflicted but seeks her own identity. This woman asserts herself and defies family structures and marriage. This woman wants her individual worth realized and attempts to break through the suffering that traditional society offers them. Young or old, chosen or thrust upon, illicit or sanctified by society, the role of the mother is not only biological, it is ideological as well.

In the next chapter entitled The Rebel, the idea of revolt is discussed against various heads in order to analyse whether or not it enhances the quality of their life.