Motherhood is tied with marriage in India. The height of a woman's sexual role culminates into motherhood. It is generally believed that only after giving birth to a male child a woman (who is just a mother) acquires a fully tenured status. A new identity unfolds as she rears her children and develops self-confidence being a competent mother.

Ancient literature depicts the mother to be the central point of the family life. In Mahabharata it is said, "Mother is the highest guru". For all curses there are means of averting and countering, but for the mother's there are none. If one has a mother, one is sheltered, he grieves not, age doesn't weigh on him even though fortune may betray him. Even a man at the end of his 100th year, if he takes refuge with his mother, he acts like a child of two years. Whether he is capable or incapable, important or unimportant, the mother protects the son.
People do not welcome the birth of a daughter, which we find, is still the prevalent tendency. Whereas, the son was desired and hailed with much celebration. The woman was valued as a Samsarahetu, the 'source of the world' in which pleasure is pain. Hence, a mother symbolising sexuality and creativity was valued, feared and respected by the son as the repayment of her affections and protection. Daughters, in our view, were less valued as they represented potential motherhood and were their mothers' potential rivals. Therefore, perhaps the unconscious preference for sons. Moreover, sons tap the woman's femininity and daughters are likely to influence their fathers and be pampered and spoiled by them.

Motherhood

A woman's maternal involvement begins with prenatal care and intensifies with giving birth, infant management, health care and the socialization process. Children's entry into school today, far from relieving educated mothers, turns them into educational assistants. However, not all modern women are child-centered but traditional women remain so.
Motherhood demands full-time concentration and is home-bound. Success in her domestic domain changes the woman's status in the public domain. Barrenness, not in principle but in practice, is perceived negatively even today. It leads to divorce sometimes, e.g. Case No. 140:

She is a graduate, aged 29 years and is remarried. She lives in Hauz Khas in a nuclear family and belongs to an upper class, upper caste background. Having been married for six years without a child made her feel inadequate and guilty. Her mother-in-law expected a child from her even though she enjoyed the support of her husband. Her sensitivity made her part company with her husband as he also came under the influence of his mother. Her former husband is also remarried. She has, however, adopted a child for her family.

The mother, on the other hand, becomes a fully participating neighbour and member of the family. Differential rearing patterns caused conflict and clashes between the mothers and the grand-mothers. According to our respondents, the first child was difficult to rear.
Most of the mothers, whether educated or not, whether working or not, followed different rearing and socialization systems for boys and girls. Some mothers mentioned how they had to be more emotional with sons as they were less willing to show their feelings. In the case of daughters, they were strict and heavy as they were very emotional.

Daughters were encouraged in the field of education but were given less freedom than sons. At times the educational investment was symmetrical but higher expectations were placed on the sons, and the daughters were meant to be married off. Sons were generally raised with self-oriented expectations while daughters with other oriented expectations in the sense that sons were made to concentrate on their education and careers whereas, daughters were supposed to accommodate the relational needs of others.

The close relationship between mother and infant plays the first and perhaps, the most important role in the formation of masculine and feminine character as
the first person from whom the child breaks away and then identifies with is a woman. For a girl the emphasis is upon the fact that she is a female and she differentiates herself from the mother by having babies of her own. Whereas the boy's process of differentiation from the mother is much more complex, he must relinquish completely his original identification with her. He must learn this or that skill and prove himself to be a man.

Mothers from the lower class and castes talked about the pains of motherhood, abortions. Ten percent of women had lost their children because of miscarriages, infant mortality, pre-mature births, children with low birth-weight, pre-natal neglect or lack of proper medical facilities.

Absence of any other care-taker of children in the family intensifies and emotionally cements the mother/children bond. Mother-in-law or a maid-servant loosen such bonds. One's own mother was the most desirable help wished for, in babysitting.
Mothers mentioned a range of factors concerning stress and depression which had an impact on their children's attitudes. When mothers were undergoing such problems, they became more demanding and expected children to behave more maturely. Daughters were expected to share the household work with them. Shouting and beating were sanctions for misbehaviour. The quality of the mother-child relationship suffers when a mother remains in distress. The depressed mothers were unresponsive, inattentive and even hostile towards their children. Improvement of the life situations of low-income mothers through economic security, assistance with child-care and medical care could alleviate the emotional problems that erode the quality of mother-child relationshp.

The paternal instincts are satisfied through the economic support structure. However, in some cases we found greater participation of men in child-rearing especially if the wife was a professional woman and if the men had home as their work-base. Thus, fathers either stay away from children or become deeply involved with them.
Sphere of Motherhood

Motherhood also engages women and brings them in close contact with the helpless groups: the young, the old and the sick.

The modern motherhood experience captures the depth of complexity inherent in a woman's self-fulfilment. If, on the one hand, mothering is the sole goal, then the child's growth and achievement offers a vicarious satisfaction. On the other hand, motherhood makes her lose her autonomy and could be synonymous with sacrifice. Perhaps women in contemporary times feel an intense conflict between body and culture (i.e., between instincts and social expectations), in childbirth and childcare. Both have been the primary factors in defining woman's identity since the beginning of history. Now that they have an option of whether to bear children or not, the questions relating to these two processes depend on what is appropriate for a particular woman, e.g., we came across the case of a bureaucrat who comes from an upper caste, upper-middle class and is a social worker now, aged 32 years. She had conceived earlier but went for an abortion as
she didn't desire a child even though her husband wanted one. So, we find that women are opting for other alternatives such as their careers or socio-political commitments.

The educated conscious mothers are now interested not merely in delivering a child but participating fully in giving birth to a child. Deutsch describes child-birth as a period of regression and creativity. As in other forms of creativity, one becomes open to the unconscious and whatever may lie unresolved within it through withdrawal. Childbirth was seen to be an encounter with death by many of our respondents.

In fact, for Deutsch, all the major phases of female sexuality—puberty, pregnancy and child birth and menopause—involve an opening up of the self to the unconscious states. Thus, crisis in development means an incorporation and reorganization of the unconscious into a new mode of conscious being.

Mothers, whose children had attained maturity, adulthood and relative independence, enjoyed autonomy, obtained power and control in and outside the
household. They were in a sense repaid for their past hardships and trials through children's occupational success and marriage. At the same time, facing a role-shrinkage through ageing and fears of actual or imaginary ailments existed. Nonetheless, women in their later years especially after menopause appear to be masculinized, whereas, men appear more feminized in the sense that women become authoritarian and aggressive whereas, men become passive and submissive. (This could be taken up for further research).

Sometimes, mothers hand over the household charge to either daughters or daughter-in-law. By and large, they like their style of functioning to be repeated which creates conditions of conflict within the family.

Most of the mothers were satisfied about emerging triumphant after troubled marriage as the children retained their father, with a few exceptions of separated couples, viz. Case No. 200: She is 60 years old, uneducated lady belonging to the upper caste, and middle class joint family. She resides with her son and his family in Safdarjang Development Area. Throughout her life her husband troubled her and
tortured her sexually. He would go and live with other women as well. In fact, her mother-in-law expired because of the son's conduct. Her children are supporting her now and remain very understanding.

In the Epics it is said that far from supporting the wife, the man is called her spouse (bhartar), and from protecting the wife her husband (pati); but where this attribute is gone, there is no longer spouse and no longer husband. Therefore, the woman does not sin, only the man sins; and if he goes astray into the great crime of adultery, it is only the man who sins in this. According to Manu, the adultress casts off her sin onto the husband; he should have kept her from it. Women are seen as object of sin, so women do not sin.

In our sample, all WEHS are mothers, whereas WELS are 5 per cent, single women; 82 per cent mothers and 3 per cent are childless women.

Whether they were WEHS or WELS, they spoke of the other woman in the family being overbearing. Women were either at the giving end or the receiving end in the form of mother/daughter, mother-in-law/daughter-in-
law and house-mistress/house-maid. Here we would elaborate the antagonism between mother-in-law/daughter-in-law.

Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law Syndrome

In the ancient texts, a beautiful relation between the parents-in-law and the daughter-in-law is indicated, especially regarding the husband's mother. In our study, the broadest and the most consistent pattern discovered is the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law opposition. Depending on who had a stronger position, she used it to inflict suffering on the other irrespective of caste, class or religion. Women's education too, has not resolved this crisis. In the traditional joint family, conflict is disguised and latent, for the daughter-in-law has to comply. In fact, whatever qualifications or capacity one has becomes the yardstick to assess the other women which inevitably ends up either in disruptive behaviour or useless critical confrontations. Generation gap, different life-styles, unreasonable dowry expectations all combine to generate this conflict.
However, it also has its base in the emotional and non-rational nature of mothers. The mother who willingly approves of the son's marriage when actually confronts the young bride - who now claims her husband's affections - finds herself sacrificing her son subsequently. It just becomes unbearable for her, which results in emotional insecurity and unanticipated competition with ugly consequences. The mother often uses her son to oppress the daughter-in-law by provoking him and highlighting her negative characteristics. When it stretches upto dowry deaths, we have an indication that dowry becomes a mere pretext. Actually, either the mother-in-law's neurosis is ventilated or problems arising from impotence, pre-extra-marital and incestuous relationships cause marital mal-adjustment. This gets camouflaged by the socially acceptable evil of dowry. It is clearly a dowry case only, when, before or around the marriage, dowry demands are imposed on the bride's parents. If such is the case, it is not a categorical imperative to marry one's daughter into such a family.

We came across Case no. 70: She is 28 years old, a graduate, who lived in a joint family formerly. Now she has a nuclear family with one child staying at
Kathwaria Sarai. Coming from the upper caste, well to do background, she had an arranged marriage. For almost a year she put up with the mother-in-law's misdemeanour. Ultimately, the son took over as he could not tolerate his wife being tortured by his mother. They walked out of the family. Very rarely do such situations get resolved even by using techniques of coercing, coaxing, masking, postponing, role modifications, referral to family counsellors etc.

Generally, a woman who has suffered at the hands of other women tends to pass on the oppression onto others instead of becoming more sympathetic. Moreover, the intolerance of other women reflects those aspects or characteristics in other women which one is not ready to accept in one's own self. This 'sameness' observes Jongeward, threatens women. Thus, the possible modes of behaviour that existed for women are as follows:

1] They were oppressed and are oppressing others now.
2] They were oppressed but are not oppressing others now.
A woman is oppressing others but is not letting herself to be oppressed.

A woman neither oppresses anyone nor does she allow anyone else to oppress her.

Women adopt the above modes of action while passing through different life-stages or act on any of the singular modes.

Issues Related to Health

Let us now touch upon the health of mothers. Mostly the WEHS did not complain about ill-health or any other serious ailments. Whereas more than half of the WELS face health problems because of reproductive reasons. Otherwise, to a marked degree, the upper class women suffered ill-health owing to emotional disturbances. The middle class women suffered more from worries and anxieties. Their disorders were more a result of the phobias they endure. However, with the lower class women, general unhygienic living conditions and disease were more prevalent.
The nutritionally most vulnerable groups are invariably the lower class women, especially the pregnant and nursing mothers with their small children. Social norm of the male eating first is still being followed in some urban families. This combined with the general level of poverty and shortage implies under-nutrition or mal-nutrition of women. Frequent and closely spaced child-bearing is another major cause of the poor health status of women along with the work in the public domain. Fifteen per cent of our respondents met with such a situation. Therefore, increase in the employment status of women do not necessarily relieve them of the excessive burden of their household chores and health problems, e.g.,

Case No. 52:

She is forty-five years old, an illiterate widow, working as an industrial worker at Birla Mills, Malka Ganj. She belongs to the lower caste and has an income of Rs. 300 per month. She is a mother of six daughters and thus, has difficulty in managing her work hours and household chores. Her husband died of tuberculosis. Her health has been badly affected as she went through six abortions and on top of it had six daughters one
after the other. She was very unhappy for not having a son and dreaded at the thought of marrying off her daughters because they didn't have enough money even for their food. Consequently, she suffered from insomnia.

High fertility rate has been inextricably linked with the low socio-economic status of women, especially in the under-developed countries. Our data confirms this. Lower caste, lower class and Muslim women tended to have more children in our group. Muslim women were the worst-hit when it came to delivering children. The number of children amongst Muslims varied from 1 to 12, with an average of 5.1 children per family, viz. we had case no. 6: she is thirty five years old, Muslim woman, living in Jama Masjid. She has eight children. She works as a sweeper to sustain her family with an income of Rs. 250 per month. Her husband has an unstable, meagre income along with another wife who has six children as well. This woman was suffering from serious ailments.

Another case of a young Muslim woman aged 26 years was acute. (See Case number 76). She was educated
upto the secondary and lived in a nuclear family in Jama Masjid area with seven children. Besides this, she had six abortions and got beatings from her husband. She had no other way out but to tolerate as the husband did not allow her to get sterilized. Someone suggested her to see the social worker of the area but she was not allowed to move out of her house on her own.

Researchers have mentioned about the sexual gratification associated with parturition (child-birth) and lactation (suckling). This strengthens the mother/child bond and also indicates the pleasures of motherhood. For mothers, it was a source of happiness and satisfaction. They saw it as a source of strength and power and a confirmation of their feminine identity.

**Sexuality**

Generally speaking, women were inhibited in talking about their sexuality. The upper class educated women were more articulate whereas, lower and middle-class uneducated women provided plenty of
information. The middle class educated women were the most inhibited and cautious about discussing their sexual experience.

9 per cent of WEHS were married women and 1 per cent were widows. 5 per cent of WELS were unmarried, 73.5 per cent married, 2.5 per cent divorced and 9 per cent were widows.

Table - I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Women Expressing High Status (WEHS)</th>
<th>Women Expressing Low Status (WELS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widows</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10% WEHS</strong></td>
<td><strong>90% WELS</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the WEHS have sexual compatibility and find their sexual status satisfactory, except one case of a thirty one years old, Sindhi, graduate woman. She
lives a Usha Niketan, comes from the upper-middle class and works in a bank. A mother of two children, all is well with her but it is her dissatisfied sexual life that leads to quarrels with her husband which hampers the quality of their relationship.

Reality connected with this domain and feelings related to it cannot be explained in terms of statistics. Nevertheless, it does indicate the inner source of disturbances and the area where changes are desired.

A woman experiences her sexuality as a child through the cultural definitions of the feminine. This process continues throughout the age of menstruation, which includes puberty, repetition of cycles through adulthood and their cessation at menopause. In heterosexual or homo-sexual relationships, pregnancy, child-birth and child-care she again experiences the activity of her body in the given social context.

Women expressed their feelings of depression, hopelessness, exhaustion and inadequacy depending on the phase of their cycle. These stresses did not
necessarily accompany menopause. Although many women spoke of their menstrual life as a 'curse', yet they did not see themselves without this function. The fluctuations of the feminine temperament became most apparent in such matters. The waxing and waning phases and energy cycles made women perceive subjective and objective time differently. Subjective time means somatic rhythms coinciding with psychological time. Objective time is chronological time. Women tended to be less religious during menstruation and many women preferred to withdraw.

Current research points to the social and cultural context in which pre-menstrual symptoms are present, absent or they vary in form and degree according to a given individual's constitution. They range from nervous tension, mood swings, irritability, anxiety, weight gain, headaches, increased appetite, fatigue, depression, forgetfulness, crying, confusion, insomnia, cramps and backache.

The unmarried girls in our study were achievement-oriented persons. However, they thought that they would decide about their marriage and work after
completing their education. Few of them had the freedom of mixing with boys. Generally they communicated with boys in groups, sporadically. In the upper classes, girls enjoyed independence and were relatively more free.

Sexuality in the Ancient Literature

The epics, if one the one hand, do not celebrate the birth of a girl, on the other, declare that the parents are saddened at the birth of a girl as they think of the day when a bridegroom will rob them of the loved one.

We find that both negative and positive perceptions can be traced in the ancient literature. In the epics, people are caught between sensuality and asceticism. Therefore, two personalities are depicted: the voluptuary and the renouncer, who have perceived women to be either seductresses, greedy and lustful or all virtuous, self-sacrificing and noble. Without the sexual union, motherhood can never be achieved, therefore, sexuality is valued. However, love and wedlock have been separated. Love begins with
menstruation and during each ritu (days after the period) from the fourth day onwards, it is a holy right and command. Hence, from here came up the notion of sexual ascetic who came up with copulation in the ritu only. This differentiation helps us to understand the premarital and extra-marital relationships in a different light.

Wilhelm Reich's notion of the sexual liberation was related to the orgastic potency. The orgastically potent individual is free of destructive aggression and will spontaneously, without the pressure of a moral conscience, enjoy doing what is right and socially beneficial. Repressed sexuality is the way in which all authoritarian structures are maintained. Hence, repression disappears when sexuality is restored to its natural state. This could run parallel to the natural distinction made between love and marriage.

A woman was thus seen to go through cycles of purity and pollution. Therefore, she became desirable during the purity stage. Anyhow, it is also said about women that women, water and pearls are never spoiled and that a woman, a child and an old man are never
unclean. Her sincerity, love, sacrificing nature have however, been contrasted to her mistrust, greed, lust and quarelling nature.

Violence Against Women

Horney discusses about the fears men have of women. Throughout history man has seen women as a sinister and mysterious being, particularly dangerous when she is menstruating. Man attempts to deal with his dread by denial and defense. Men deny their dread by love and adoration and defend themselves from it by conquering, debating and diminishing the self-respect of women. Violence against women can be partially explained by the above observations. Wife-beating was very common in lower classes but we had cases in the middle and upper-middle class as well. Generally, when women behaved stupidly or denied sexual access they were beaten up by their husbands.

Many respondents associated ugliness and unpleasantness with the sexual act. It just goes to show how the cultural conditioning of sexuality colours
their perceptions and inhibits its unfolding. Women in the middle class are over-conscious about their respectability image. As one of them put it: "It suits us to project the Sita-Savitri image. We gain respect." Otherwise, behind-the-curtain sexual linkages are developed within the family members, e.g. between aunts and nephews and between uncles and nieces.

Women from all the religious expressed the existence of not only double standards regarding the male/female sexuality but multiple standards. Sexuality became a major source of marital disharmony. Women belonging to the upper class traditional families mentioned about their frustrations, e.g. Case No. 127.

Case No. 127

She is fifty nine years old, Jain, educated upto matric and a housewife living at Vasant Vihar. The family expenditure is provided by the son who lives with them plus they receive the house-rent. Her husband is retired and he is twelve years older than her. She complained about his inability to satisfy her
sexually and thus, was very suspicious and dominating. She was not allowed to move out on her own. He used economic sanctions on her whenever he got suspicious and it became difficult for her to manage the household affairs. Even in my presence he barged in or tried to overhear our conversation. Sexuality, thus, complicates situations.

Women in India today have seized new domains and are emerging as an expanding force. Education and work are substitutes for a high maternal status. Although work is a modern form of asceticism for women, they do go through difficulties in handling their sexual energy and animus. Women's very active and aggressive roles are creating male anxiety and masculine sexual fragility. This at times increases violence against women.

Modern times make the quest of identity full of trouble. It may be a challenge for the strong and independent women but for the timid experiencing the new space and time becomes a disjunctive social process. Our urban culture has aggravated the assault on identity by adding economic, social, political and
technological pressures. Thus, adjustment and achievement become urban ideals. However, identity in the urban areas, doesn't necessarily mean self-realisation but a smooth absorption into the group. Hence, the recovery of individual spontaneity and identity have become modern ideals.