



## Representing and reinforcing ‘Motherhood?’: A sociological study on televised advertisements

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### Abstract

Motherhood is a universal phenomenon. In a pronatal country like India, every young girl is regarded as a natural and potential mother. Becoming a mother is her virtue which she is supposed to fulfil as a wife to continue the line of descent of her husband.

The anecdote of motherhood takes place in the life of a girl from her childhood. The gender socialization of girls is not only significant in India but it is a universal feature. Not only that, the society teaches her that her identity depends on her motherhood—her womanhood is not complete without motherhood. An ‘incomplete’ woman is not socially accepted. Family, school, radio, television, newspaper—everywhere motherhood is eulogized and glorified.

In this paper, I would use content analysis to look into some of the televised advertisements to show how motherhood is reinforced through the advertisements of contemporary times.

**Keywords:** Motherhood, motherhood in media, media, television advertisement, mothering in advertisements

### Introduction

Cultural norms and values contribute at large in the advancement and establishment of stereotypical gender roles, and these roles are transposed from the actual world to the realm of advertisements. Advertisers, therefore, widely use gender imagery for capturing the attentiveness of the viewers and linking positively their commodities with the fervours of their selected group. It is generally asserted that women’s task has altered as a result of changeable economic, social, and demographic patterns or forms, there is no substantial or significant interrelated comparable shift in the stereotypic or prototypical media depiction of women. Gender advertisements restrict women to their traditional function as housewife or as beauty object and overlook large-scale multiplicity of women’s function in actual life. Women’s depiction in absolutely ornamental functions has become greater during the past several years and this is an indication of the endurance of prototypes and their sexual objectification. Women are widely depicted as ‘childish’, and are exposed to domestic and subordinate roles in the advertisements and these advertisements do not provide real portrayals of the actualities of women (Bögenhold & Naz 2015; Eisend 2010) [4, 7].

According to E.Goffman (1979) [8], the “mirror argument” appeals to the idea that advertisers absolutely “conventionalize our conventions, stylize what is already a stylization” (84). Conforming with this position, advertisers take on extensively established ideas about gender roles. After careful analysis of four hundred images from print advertisements, Goffman came to the conclusion that advertisements exhibit gender differences through gender display and that a pseudoreality is created through rigorous selection of models and settings by advertisements. Gender display portrays the stylized presentation of prevalent gender roles. Goffman argued that women’s function in advertisements exhibits our ideas of gender roles through simple gestures; these advertisements accept or consider gender displays such as relative size, facial expression and simple positioning. The images viewed in advertisements are rigorously selected from the same collection of displays,

as anticipated by the social conventions (accepted conducts) which is already existent in the culture. According to this argument, very subtle messages about gender roles are carried by gender advertisements. In this process, gender identities are mirrored or reproduced and in turn framed through ritualized cultural performance in commercial advertisements. The advertisements selected here give us a sense of freedom from traditional gender stereotypes as mentioned by Goffman. These advertisements are not in full sway against patriarchal and stereotyped image of mother and women but help us to visualize a changing society and shifting balance in gender equity. The paper shall seek to find out how the traditional idea of motherhood is reinforced through televised advertisements in post globalized era in India.

### Methodology of the study

It is with this in mind I have the purpose to examine how the traditional notions of motherhood are exhibited in the televised advertisements. To fulfil this purpose, content analysis of the advertisements is the most suitable approach. I have used content analysis instead of thematic or discourse analysis. In thematic analysis, subjectivity and interpretation can introduce bias or inconsistency in the coding and analysis, which may affect the generalization of the findings. Additionally, there are no clear and standardized guidelines or criteria for conducting and reporting thematic analysis, which can lead to varying levels of quality and rigour in research. Lastly, this method may oversimplify or overgeneralize data by reducing it to a few themes or categories, potentially missing nuances or subtleties that are important for understanding the data. In discourse analysis, there is excessive emphasis on context in which the text is used. Moreover it is complex and challenging field to study, requiring a high level of linguistic and analytical skill. It can be subjective as the interpretation of a text or conversation depends on the perspectives of the analyst. As it is context-specific, it can be difficult to apply insights from one context to another. On the other hand, content analysis looks at the text, so the analysis captures the central aspect of it.

There have been quite a lot of televised advertisements. I have used non-probability sampling in selecting advertisements since the complete list of televised advertisements reflecting motherhood is unavailable. Among non-probability sampling methods, I have used purposive sample. The researcher chooses the sample based on who s/he thinks would be appropriate for the study. In this approach the selection of participants, settings or other sampling units is criterion based a purpose (Mason, 2002; Patton, 2002) <sup>[9, 11]</sup> those advertisements which exhibit motherhood.

For this purpose eleven advertisements that showcase products which are very essential in our everyday life. These products are also related to domesticity. These advertisements on products give messages of motherhood. The time line of the selection depends on the time they were uploaded on You Tube ranging between 2011 and 2020. I have not selected an immediate time-frame after globalization (1990s), but chose a later period to highlight a distant time not immediately after globalization so that the effect of globalization can be much better understood. The advertisements are numbered according to the time in which they were uploaded in the You tube.

### Analysis of data

#### Advertisements on shampoo

#### Advertisements 1, 2, 9 and 10

**Advertisement 1:** #‘Swasth ghane bal jeet ki pahechan’ (uploaded on You Tube on 22 October, 2011), (Healthy thick hair is a hallmark of victory)

The advertisement starts with a mother who along with her girl child goes to a cricket coach. Her child wants to play in school cricket team. The coach turns down the mother and daughter saying that it is a boys’ game. Mother assures him that her girl child plays absolutely like a boy. Then the coach tries to discourage her mentioning that dirt may spoil her child’s dress or that dirt would damage her hair. Eventually after much persuasion the mother wins the confidence of the coach. The advertisement gives the message to its viewers that nothing can stop anyone if clinic plus shampoo is with him or her.

The advertisement is conveys the message it tries to bring forth to the audience. The subtlety of the message is important. Here it is the mother who takes her girl child to the coach. Father is present only in last scene- at the gallery witnessing the success of the daughter in an outdoor game. The advertisement makes the viewers think that it is mother who takes, rather has to take full responsibility to rear children. It is mother’s duty to fulfil the child’s dream. But the mother is not a traditional mother. Cricket is an outdoor game popularly encouraged as a boy’s play and she does not restrain her daughter but encourages her to have her dream fulfilled. She breaks so-called socially constructed boundary of outdoor games meant for boys and indoor games for girls. It is through creating this boundary that the society tries to confine girls within four walls of the household. Therefore, the advertisement also showcases a changed attitude towards rearing of children. Here mothering is redefined. Mother tries to break the boundary created in between boys and girls and encourages her girl child to enter a male dominated arena. That is why she is distinct at least in her outlook or thought.

**Advertisement 2:** #‘Ma se Maa.... Maa se Majbooti’ (uploaded on You Tube on 2 May, 2014)

(Strength comes from a mother)

The advertisement starts with a question asked by an adolescent girl to a young woman— how she can manage job, domestic chores and teaching children on holidays. The woman replies that it is very simple and easy as she gains strength from her mother (as reflected by the shampoo she uses). Then she recalls her childhood where the viewers visualize an extended lower middle-class family. The now young woman who was then an adolescent girl, a school-goer. The uncle, aunt, grandmother objected to her going to school but it was the mother who was very patient and stopped everyone by saying that daughter would go to school only for one year more. In this way she made hard efforts and struggled to pursue her daughter’s education. In the mean time daughter grows older. Now she has a job and resides with her old mother. Her class position has changed. But she has not forgotten the hair care routine—to use clinic plus which not only provides strength to and care of her hair, but also gives strength to fight against all odds. She is surprised of her strength to which she realizes that it comes from the braids of hair nourished by Clinic plus which helped her fix the aims in life.

The traditional view of mothering is clearly portrayed in this advertisement. Mother does every domestic job—raising child, taking care of each member of the family. When all members are against her daughter’s education, she fights with all her might. It is not clear to what extent she is educated. But she understands the value of girl’s education. Her family members nourish the traditional and orthodox views towards girl’s education. But the mother is ‘modern’, understands the value of education although she may not have so-called formal education. While doing domestic work she fulfills the traits of a good wife, good daughter-in-law and of course a good mother. She is also an efficient home manager. She does not make any noise to pursue her daughter’s education and manages all objections in a wise way and ultimately wins her battle to make her daughter self-reliant.

**Advertisement 9:** The Advertisement does not have any tag line (uploaded on You Tube on 23 January, 2020)

The advertisement starts with a little girl who is ready for school. The girl gets a photo of her mother in her childhood with short hair and becomes surprised to see her mother’s long hair. She complains to her mother why she (girl) like her mother as a child does not have long hair. Mother replies that to have long hair is time-consuming. In her childhood it was her grandmother who used to take care of her long hair as the grandmother did not go to office. So it was possible for her grandmother to take care of her long hair as she had enough time at hand. As her mother (child’s mother) goes to office, how can she get time for her long hair? In the mean time mother drives car to the child’s school. After getting down from the car in front of the school the little girl demands to her mother not to go to office like her grandmother. The advertisement ends with the solution of using clinic plus shampoo (as clinic plus shampoo takes care of long hair) and eventually the viewer understand now that the girl does not have any objection regarding her mother’s office.

The advertisement is also created in an urban setting. Mother is a working woman. In spite of being a working

woman she cannot avoid mothering. She inevitably carries the same legacy of being a woman, especially a working woman and a mother. She makes the point clear to her daughter that as she has time constraint due to her job and she cannot take care of her long hair and for this reason she (child) wears a short hair. But the child is not satisfied with this answer. She insists her mother to leave her job and concentrate on mothering and caring of the child. This reinforces the typical traditional demand on women. But the advertisement like the above too shows spaces of adjustments made by women to win over traditionalism and at the same time adjusting to the demands of patriarchy. The advertisement draws our attention to the fact that it is the mother whether she is educated or uneducated, working or housewife she has to take care of her children. The task of child rearing is allotted to her by the patriarchal society which tries to confine her within the four walls of the private domain. Mothering is her prime duty which she is compelled to do. To avoid it or to neglect it results into the condemnation of the mother.

Another issue that the advertisements highlight is the fact that very often mothers have to compromise their jobs when there is any problem in rearing the child. She has to take leave as the nanny or *aaya* does not come or she has to return from office earlier for her child. It is social construction of social expectation from the mother that she will give first preference and priority to her child- her job, her career, her life comes second. Many working women in India have to give up jobs for the sake of their children. Our society never expects fathers to give up jobs for rearing children. Research on women's paid work and child care arrangements in India (which started from the 1970s till the post-liberalisation period) exhibit how care-giving role become first priority for employed women (Rajadhyaksha and Smita 2004) <sup>[12]</sup>. Taking into consideration the emphasis on 'intensive mothering' (Hays 1996), the clash between paid work and care-giving responsibilities create guilt, even when familial support structures may be available to paid employment. Belliappa made a study among middle class employees of Bangalore's IT industry and shows how motherhood precedes other identities and relationships of women. Even in paid employment women get assembled in low skilled and low growth jobs (Belliappa 2013:160) <sup>[3]</sup>. Apparently, India has recorded over five million women who have given up their corporate jobs and have become jobless for two to ten years. About ninety percent of them want to rejoin the job market. But only twenty percent are capable to return to their previous jobs. Most Indian enterprises are likely to be unwilling to hire those women who have taken a break. The employer has often nurtured the idea that those women taking a break are insincere professionals (Tejaswi 2012) <sup>[17]</sup>. Research states that sixty percent of highly educated female researchers in Indian science remains out of job due to child care responsibilities, besides of course sexist glass ceilings (Basu 2011) <sup>[16]</sup>, which William and Segel (2003) have rightly termed the "maternal wall". Interestingly, the dilemma between childcare-paid employment experienced by women and families has resulted into a business opportunity: companies like Fleximoms (Nandy 2017:96) <sup>[10]</sup> help women find jobs that have flexible timings so that they participate in both care and paid work. When child care support is unavailable, working class women are hired as *ayahs* or babysitters by middle upper class women.

**Advertisement 10:** 'One mother can make her daughter strong from the root and it is with clinic plus shampoo.' (uploaded on You Tube on 7 February, 2020)

In this advertisement, a young mother is braiding the hair of her daughter. The mother is an urban and educated lady and she dresses up in modern urban attire. Her daughter is a school-goer and she goes to school by bus. The little girl complains to her mother that the boys disturb her in the bus. Then the mother while combing her daughter's long hair advises her that the hair does not feel any pain as it is strong (of course due to the use of clinic plus shampoo), she also has to be strong like her hair. Here the mother wants to make her daughter strong which is very much related to masculinity. So she does not walk in the traditional familiar path of so-called male-female differentiation. Moreover she also teaches her daughter to be strong to fight against all unwelcomed situations. Facing odd situations is a part of life and the mother tries to train her daughter to face it. This is also antithetical to feminine qualities as being woman means to be confined within four walls and facing all hurdles.

Strength is to be thought to be of the male domain. She does not want to confine her child within the four walls of the home. She dreams her child to be working outside. So here the ideals which are carried by the mother are totally opposite to the so-called idea of femininity or the so-called division of private-public domain. But at the same time we can find that it is sole responsibility of the mother to raise her children and this fact reflects the traditional view of child-rearing which, from the ancient period, is considered a mother's domain. In the advertisement also the father is absent. Although the advertisement is created in the modern urban setting, it once again reminds us the fact that the women's primary role is to raise her children.

All the advertisements mentioned above emphasize on 'care' as an instinct of the mother. It is a responsibility bestowed on her and it is she who should be carrying it out. Mothering as a process and a structural expectation has care as an integral part. The omnipresence of care as an integral part of mothering reinforces the structural expectation from a mother thought the mothers in the said advertisements may be contextualized in an urban, modern, industrialized setting.

### Advertisement on Mouth Freshener Consumption

**Advertisement 3:** # Maa Kehti Hai. (uploaded on You Tube on 12 May, 2017), (The mother speaks)

The family seen in the advertisement is a nuclear family—mother is a housewife. Mother is very careful about her children. Apart from managing every domestic work she takes care to every requirement of them. She also helps them do home-assignments. But her eldest adolescent girl child becomes quite annoyed with her and speaks against her. This makes the mother becomes sad and father consoles her silently. Then the viewers see that mother is not present in the home and father and eldest daughter try to manage domestic jobs but with great difficulty. But it is completely a mess, a chaos. The eldest daughter tries her best to mother her younger siblings. But she cannot do it as efficiently as a mother does. In the absence of mother, the home is almost deadlock. In the evening when door-bell rings, they expect their mother home and children become happy and tension free. Eldest daughter tells mom that now she can understand mothering is not an easy job, it is very tough.

This advertisement gives us a message that mothering is a matter of learning: girls are taught how to be a mother. In third world countries, girl child belonging to poor families help mothers in domestic chores and they also look after their siblings. From the very childhood they learn how to take care of family members. But the male children are not subjected to this type of training or learning. It is the private–public dichotomy which reinforces the notion that domestic world is meant for women. And this notion is socially constructed. Father in his childhood perhaps is not exposed to domestic work. That is why in the advertisement he makes a big mess in doing those. That is why at the end the eldest daughter can realize mothering is not as easy as she thought. What is embedded in it is that mothering is a matter of learning; it requires rigorous training which is provided only to the girls by the society through gender socialization. But we all know that to do domestic work or to look after children does not require penis, vagina or breast. It requires only two hands. It is absolutely socially constructed dichotomy of private-public domain since the emergence of capitalism that women are for private world and the public world of power, prestige is for males (Walby 1990) [13].

#### **Advertisement on Anti Bacterial Personal Care Product**

**Advertisement 4:** # 'Bharosa Maa Sa' (uploaded on You Tube on 8 December, 2017), (Assurance as a mother).

In the advertisement we find some girls running down a tract. Suddenly one falls down and gets injured. She utters the name of her mother in pain. In the second scene we find a boy practicing in the gymnastic court. Suddenly he falls down and becomes injured. One again he recalls his mother. In a similar way we find that a boy playing basket ball has injury and he calls for his mother. A mother takes care of her child's injury with the product. The panacea in injury is the product which takes care like a mother as there is no medicine comparable to mother's love.

Mothers are known for their unconditional love and sacrifice, selfless love and care in a patriarchal society. We become acquainted from our childhood with this image of mothers. Rather this is the trait of a good mother. 'Mother' in our society means a person having no demand or desire of her own, she defines every bit of her for her family, particularly for her children. When children are sick, who will take care or spend sleepless nights? Obviously it is mother, not father or anybody else. Fathers also can take care of the children. But our society does not expect a father to spend sleepless nights for a sick child. If he does so, he is eulogized. But in case of mother it is taken-for-granted that mother must look after her sick child. It is the social expectation with which we grow up. Women learn it from their childhood that one of her main responsibilities is to look after the family members, especially her child when they are sick. This job of looking after does not get registered to someone else. This is another way to make women confines to the house, thereby reinforcing the traditional division of public-private domain.

Mother's love is eulogized and glorified. But why is not the father's love eulogised? The idea of glorification of mother's love acts like a opium for the whole society including the women themselves who do their best to look after others, sometimes crossing the line of their abilities paying no attention to themselves. But the question is who

will take care when mothers become sick? Our society does not have any answer to this question. Rather we are fashioned to think that mothers never get sick. So it is the patriarchal construction of glorification of mother's care, which distracts the mother's attention from their own choice, self or life. She is made only to sacrifice her all for the well-being of her family. It is the society's expectation from them.

#### **Advertisement on Biscuits**

**Advertisement 5:** # 'Real Ristey...' (uploaded on You Tube on 17 February, 2018), (Real relations)

The advertisement starts with showing a busy morning in a family. Mother is working in corporate sector—busy and tight schedule, the duty is not time-bound. In that morning everyone except grandfather prepares for office or school. Mother gets ready and prepares her son for school and finishes everything in a hurry. In spite of her hurriedness, she answers the father to find his tie or watch. Meanwhile, the grandfather informs her about the arrival of the driver. The boy tries to tell her something. But she cannot lend her ears to him. Giving him love and affection, she leaves for office. The boy becomes disappointed. In the tiffin break, opening the lunch box, the boy finds a packet of his preferred cake which he had requested her in the morning but was turned down. In the tiffin box, there is also a piece of paper on which mother writes to her son not to think that she does not have any time to listen to him as she knows very well when her child desires what.

The advertisement shows a new way of communication. The piece of paper becomes a piece of communication between the mother and the son: telling him that his mother's love and affection towards him shall never be less whether he scores good or poor marks in the examination, advising him to find out the spectacle of grandfather and to say sorry to his friend with whom he quarreled as little things like saying sorry is very effective in solving larger problems. She guides her son to do his homework, also gives time to the family and play carom. The advertisement ends with campaigning for enjoying cake up which represents real goodness from inside thereby developing real relationship (real rishtey).

The advertisement envisions the age-old social construction of mothering which is the arena of mothers only. Here the mother is educated and employed and at the same time she has full control over her domesticity. Still she cannot avoid duties and responsibilities towards the family. She is very careful to all requirements of every member of the family. But nobody is there to help her. Nobody shares with her any domestic job. In spite of her tight schedule, it is she who looks after her child. The viewers cannot see the father to assist her in rearing the child or in doing domestic jobs. Somehow she has to manage it. She is innovative too. She advises her son, writing on the pieces of paper which is kept in the tiffin box of her son. She never orders her son but tries to make him understand what to do. She also teaches her values like how to solve a quarrel with friends by saying sorry or to share everything with others. She does not have any time of her own. She gives her leisure times to family. She fulfills all criteria of good wife, daughter-in-law and mothers as inscribed in the religious texts. The advertisement reinforces the socially constructed traditional view of mothering.

### Advertisement on mosquito repellent

**Advertisement 6:** #An All Out Ad Stand by Mom's Tough Parenting Decisions. (Uploaded on You Tube on 8 March, 2018).

The advertisement is regarding a tough mother who tries to teach her son some values— never steal anything from anywhere etc. The context set is that a son steals a ten rupee note from his father's pocket and his mother teaches him a lesson. At the outset of the advertisement, the viewers can see a dinner table and all the members are having their food. The family portrayed in the advertisement is an extended family. The daughter-in-law and other adolescent girls are serving dinner. The mother also the daughter-in-law serves dinner to her son who is about five-six years old. But that little boy repeatedly rejects dinner. Then she takes away the dinner plate and places it at another place. Mother-in-law comments that daughter-in-law belongs to 'uncultured family' and she asks her whether her mother has not taught her anything. Her husband rudely comments that their son has taken ten rupees from his father's earning not from her father's (boy's grandfather) pocket. But what is surprising is that the daughter-in-law does not comment, but tolerates every rebuke silently. Finally her father-in-law opens his mouth and narrates the whole incident that the boy has not taken ten rupees note, but rather stole it. He supports her daughter-in-law and declares that if he were in the mother's place, he will keep him in starvation for two days. After that the viewers can see a room where her father-in-law and son are sitting together. The daughter-in-law enters the room and switches on all Out and gives her son care and affection. There are many shades in the advertisement. First of all it conforms to the ideal of patriarchal extended family along with envisioning a married, heterosexual mother as the epitome of femininity and womanhood. Like the norm of extended family, she cannot take any decision of her own, even for her son. If she takes a decision herself, she is bound to be answerable to everybody for it. The norm of the family or the society does not give her permission to take decision for her son although her motherhood is glorified and her reproductive potential is meant for her husband's lineage to continue. She is only permitted to give birth and for mothering and taking care of the family-members. Not only that she is expected to tolerate every word of her in-laws, not to reply, even if in-laws teases her parents— as if it is the right of the in-laws to tease her in any way, it is allotted to them. What is funny is that the women belonging to the status of mothers-in-law speaks to her in an offensive way. May be they were also teased by their in-laws they are acting as the agent of patriarchy, not the agent to change the situation. They are enjoying power and status by showing authority on the daughter-in-law under the disguise of patriarchy. Finally it is the father-in-law who supports daughter-in-law to be tough to the child as she tries to teach him a lesson.

Here the daughter-in-law fulfills the norm of a 'good' wife, daughter-in-law and of a mother. She acts as an agent, who stands against all the members of the family for the well-being of her son. Like them she does not indulge her son. She does not quarrel or argue with anybody. She does silently what she wants to do. She has the courage to think or to decide independently and it is difficult for her in the extended family where authoritative figures are always present to bring her under the lens of scrutiny. She is farsighted too—she wants to induce in her child the eternal

moral value— stealing is a sin— thereby dreaming to make her child a good and responsible citizen of the country. She can understand if her son goes spoiled, society will blame her, not the father or any other member of the family and she will be judged as a failed mother. Our society does not recognize mother's contribution. If the child is successful, credits goes to the father or family, but the society makes offensive comments towards mother if the child cannot grow properly.

### Advertisement on Junk Food

**Advertisement 7:** 'Happy Mother's Day from Domino's' (uploaded on You Tube on 10 May, 2018)

This advertisement is regarding the affection and love of a mother. Here the mother an old lady is sent to Old Age Home, 'Sudha Briddhashram' by his son. As both the son and daughter-in-law's are working professionals, they do not have time to take care of the old mother. In the Old Age Home the old mother always remembers her son. Chatting with another mate living with her, she always talks about her son—son's preference for ginger-tea made by her and his dedication for work. She tries her best to adjust with the life of Old Age Home. She asks the worker whether her son rings or not. Most important thing is that she learns to use smart phone just to order pizza for her son as he likes pizza very much. One day the son (with wife and daughter) comes to old age home with his family with pizza packet. Both mother and son become very emotional and hug each other. They enjoy pizza altogether. But it is not clear whether son brings mother back to home or not.

The advertisement also portrays the traditional view or expected traits of 'good' mother, where a mother is judged in terms of her service given to children and other family members. She is always ready to sacrifice everything for the cause of children or family. There is a proverb—there may be unworthy son, but there never be unworthy mother ('kuputra jadyapi hoy kumata kadapi noy', translated by the author). The mother in this advertisement carries on the legacy of 'sumata' (good mother). Her son does not want to keep her with the family and this of course makes her sad and unhappy.

### Advertisement on tooth paste

**Advertisement 8:** # 'Colgate Adoption: Smile Karo Aur Suru Ho Jayo' (uploaded on You Tube on 16 May, 2019), (Start with a smile).

The advertisement starts with a couple (Mr. and Mrs. Mallick) waiting at the waiting room at Asha Adoption Centre to adopt a child. They converse with one another. Husband asks his wife what she is thinking and the wife responds by asking another question whether she can become a 'good' mother. Then the authority of the adoption centre calls them into the room. They enter the room where the authority comes with a girl child, holding her hands. The child is about five years old. At first the girl hesitates to go to the lady. The problem is ultimately solved with a Colgate smile. The child accepts the lady as her mother.

This advertisement informs us a lot of things. When the couple is waiting in waiting room, the lady thinks whether she can become a good mother. It is the dream of every woman to become a good mother. It is her virtue. Our society teaches the girls to become a good mother- what to do and how to do to be a good mother. It is through the process of gender socialization that a girl child develops

herself as a good mother. Here patriarchy functions in a very subtle way. Patriarchy through the gender socialization induces among girls the traits of a 'good' mother. Patriarchy manipulates the girl child in such a way that girls adopt and adapt with it as one of her virtues/*dharmas*. But there is no such instruction for the fathers, no such caption like 'traits of a good father'. Rather there is no social pressure on fathers to be good fathers. We frequently see in the printed or electronic media that the father kills his child by beating or impregnate his girl child or step-child. But he is not so much socially condemned like a mother who kills her children or aborts a child or flees away leaving her child. It is the duty and responsibility of a woman only to rear the child/children with care, making hard efforts. It is she who always has to sacrifice for the children or for the family. When the question of sacrifice arises, it is always the mother who is called for, not the father.

### Advertisement on Regular Flour

**Advertisement 11:** #*'Eta Amar Ma'* (uploaded on YouTube on 14 May, 2020), (This is my mother).

On the first scene of the advertisement, viewers can see a woman doing yoga. Perhaps it is morning. Along with the visualization, viewers can hear also the voice of a little boy who introduces the woman, "this is my mother." Suddenly doorbell rings, that little boy opens the door and a delivery boy brings the product (flour). Mother instructs him to place it on the table. On the next scene viewers see mother practicing Karate with other women and children. From the background that voice utters that when mother joins karate class, he feels ashamed. Then mothers of other children following his mother, also joins Karate class. On the next scene viewers see some boys playing football in the ground and the mother with her child passes the road by rickshaw. Suddenly the ball comes to the mother and she, getting down from the rickshaw, kicks the football from the roadside. The boy says that mother does not only do karate, she can play football also. On the next scene mother practices singing with 'tanpura'. From the background the boy says that mother fulfills both her hobby and the desire of other family members. Then the mother makes 'roti' on the gas. Her husband tells the boy that his (boy's) mother is like our goddess Durga-many hands, many forms and boy says that mother possesses a lot of energy. The boy then declares proudly that when he will grow up, he wants to be like his mother. Now viewers can hear mother's voice – crushed by grinding stone it is the flour in which there is fibre in proper amount and it makes all happy and active.

The mother showed in the advertisement is a modern woman. She goes to karate classes, does yoga at home. She knows to play football. Simultaneously, she practices singing. At the same time she maintains the whole household including cooking, taking care of all members of the family. She does not break the traditional notion that the private zone is made for women: viewers can see her to make different kinds of food like 'samosa', 'roti' etc. They do not see anybody helping her she does other domestic jobs too. But what makes her different from other women is that she can maintain her own hobbies or desires- yoga, karate or singing. She does not sacrifice her own dreams. But she is very dutiful to her child and husband; she fulfills the desire of other family members also. In this sense she tries to be good wife and good mother. She is compared with goddess Durga- like Durga she has many forms and many hands. She

can do all tasks alone. In our society a woman is expected to do all tasks alone, she should be like Goddess Durga- she will do domestic chores, look after children, and take care of other family members with smiling face. She will never get tired. She should have inexhaustible energy. She does not require rest. Now-a-days women do jobs. They maintain both the private and the public world simultaneously. Here the mother is not working. The patriarchal notion of featuring woman as superwoman gets pressed once more.

The little boy feels ashamed when his mother joins karate classes. Karate, the outdoor game, is usually meant for men and it is practiced by women for self-defense. It is generally not meant for mothers. In this sense mother breaks the shackles of patriarchy. Not only so she inspires other mothers to join karate classes. Here that little boy imbibes patriarchal idea. He feels quite relaxed when mothers of other children also join karate class. Apart from that at the end of the advertisement the boy expresses his desire that when he will grow up, he will be like his mother. It is almost rare of the rarest that a male child wants to be like his mother. Society also does not expect that a male child will aspire to be like his mother. It is expected and usual that boy child would be like his father. Once again the patriarchal norms are seen to be broken down.

### Conclusion

In order to recognise the essence of contemporary society and investigate the shifts in the culture in postmodern world, advertisements play a crucial role in the society. The postmodern market ethos constitutes the idea that it is not requirement but pleasures and desires that become crucial. Therefore, postmodern advertisements in most cases encourage images rather than products. We live in an era that the genuine and the portrayed are becoming blurred and advertisements in most cases reveal this doubt. In modern era there are specific borderlines between subjectivity and the actual world. This borderline becomes dissolved in postmodern world. Undifferentiation has been the regulative rule of the current world (Deniz Çalık & Ülkü N. Aktaş 2018) [6].

There are five themes which are characteristics of postmodern marketing—hyper reality, fragmentation, reversed production and consumption, *decentered* subjects and the juxtaposition of opposites. Hyper reality indicates the creation of atmosphere of marketing that are "more real than real". The borderline between reality and imagination is obscured. With regard to postmodern marketing, consumption in postmodern times can be designated as speedy, ephemeral, and hyperactive. This situation to a certain extent is assigned to the activities of marketers with their brands, ever-expanding channels of distribution, commercial breaks and marketers strive to utilize every accessible surface as an advertising space. The consumers in postmodern era play multiple roles. They play an active role in the production of meaning, of marketing, of consumption. With regard to the feature of reversal of production and consumption, postmodern era involves a culture of consumption whereas modern times express a culture of production. Like marketers postmodern consumers can produce symbols and signs of consumption. In centeredness (a feature of modernity), individual are categorized in terms of their occupation, social class, demographics, personalities and so on and this changed in postmodern era. Postmodern marketing perspective focuses on the extreme proximity of

the merging and matching of opposites, by making a combinations of contrary styles, motifs and allusions (Brown 1993) <sup>[5]</sup>. Postmodern marketing strategy involves *decentered* subject theme which exerts influence on every arena. Postmodern individual identifies himself/herself as a subject rather than an object. New postmodern consumer can be defined as someone who through consumption gets identity.

Messages in postmodern advertising focus on emotions and symbolic meanings. In the advertisement number six (on all out), the little boy steals a ten rupee note from his father's pocket. His mother notices that. Then mother teaches him a lesson that never to steal anything from anywhere. She actually wants to induce in her child moral values that honesty is the best policy. Her efforts knock down the door of our conscience. If every child in every household is taught with moral values, a strong belief system will prevail in the society and consequently the situation of normlessness can be avoided to some extent. This advertisement signals how mothers can gift 'good and responsible' citizens to the nation.

The shift in the 1900s and 2000s can be designated that there is an enormous dependence of credits to achieve what consumers do not require. Postmodern consumerism ethos, "Buy now pay later" dominates the entire consumer world where consumer use credit cards. Towards the end of the twentieth century, apart from products and services, feelings and experiences began to be incorporated in the arena of consumption. Postmodern field of market is not only related to the production of goods but producing consumers also. Consumers are offered the good life as an endless party and they are showed marvelous lives and the main purpose of consumer culture is to depict what life can be if consumers purchase the product (Deniz Çalık & Ülkü N. Aktaş 2018) <sup>[6]</sup>.

Televised commercials provide us with other form of life by giving fallacious guarantee that it seems to the consumers that everything is better than it really is. Television advertising produces such a virtual world in which everybody begins to think that "the products of technology can free us". Contemporary advertisements differentiate all the cultural distinctiveness and allow to leave them in a floating place which is called by Baudrillard as hyperreality, in which they are merged with the products. Significant changes occur in the strategy of the marketers and more emphasis is given on cultural representation than the direct promotion of the product itself (Woods 1999:196) <sup>[14]</sup>.

Baudrillard (1994) <sup>[2]</sup> argued that Television gifts its viewers a replica of everyday life which demolishes our connection between reality and its representation. In postmodern era TV commercials do not speak anything about the characteristics of the products or services promoted by them. In order to promote their products, ad companies focus on scarcity, dreams and desires of the consumers. The content in advertisements in most cases highlights on the characteristics of the consumers and strives to represent them as more beautifully and successfully than they really are. Postmodern advertisements mostly focus on the feelings and emotions of the consumers. In postmodern marketplace, consumers acts as passive actors. They do not have any influence on producers or market decisions. They are exposed to company policy. They have only the opportunity to select from several options of products (Addis and Podesta 2005:391) <sup>[1]</sup>.

It is important to discuss the concept, 'aporias' in this context. 'Aporias' in advertisements indicates a moment where it gives messages of the future to the viewers, it raises a question about the present. Viewers get an indication of the future. In advertisement on mosquito repellent the mother tries to teach her son values that never to steal anything from anywhere. She tries to induce in her son 'good' values so that her son could be a 'good' and 'responsible' citizen in the future. So teaching moral values has an implication for the future. It gifts to the country a 'good' and 'responsible' citizen.

In the advertisement number eleven on regular flour, the boy wants to become like his mother. His mother is super active. She fulfils her own dreams or hobbies and at the same time she takes care of her child and husband. She prepares delicious dishes for them. But the desire of the boy to become like his mother is unusual. Our society does not encourage a boy to be like a woman. Men are expected and accepted to be 'tough', 'independent', 'strong' and 'fearless', he is never expected to do domestic chores. Domesticity is considered exclusive for women. In the disguise of domesticity women are kept within the four walls of household. Men are allowed for outside world of money and prestige. The private-public domain, made for women and men respectively, is created by patriarchy. In such a situation, when a boy declares that he wants to be like his mom, does it indicate an end of patriarchy? The advertisement signals a ray of hope by making an end of patriarchy by the present generation. Now-a-days many men share domestic chores with their wives and they also take part in looking after children. Seeing through this lens this advertisement brings a fresh air for the women by indicating an end of patriarchy. Like the boy in the advertisement, if all boys promise to break the boundary of private-public domain, the demarcating line between men-women's duties, especially in the household, becomes to some extent blurred. In the academic discourse there is only one ism, i.e., feminism which relentlessly fights against patriarchy. Feminism shows us how patriarchy functions in subtle ways to dominate women. To make an end of women's subjugation, breaking of the private-public dichotomy is needed.

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