

**Dissertation- Parenting of the Adolescent Girls: A study in Kolkata**



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## CONTENTS

**CERTIFICATION**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION-----1-18**

BACKGROUND-----1

PROPOSED RESEARCH AND RELEVANCE-----2

LITERATURE REVIEW-----4-14

PARENTING THEORY-----4

INTERPRETIVE REPRODUCTION-----9

FEMINIST THEORIES-----12

THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY-----13

METHODOLOGY-----15-17

NATURE-----15

DATA COLLECTION-----15

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW-----16

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE-----16

DATA ANALYSIS-----16

POPULATION, SAMPLING, SAMPLE SIZE-----17

DATA COLLECTION SITE-----17

CODING AND TRASCRIPTION-----17

LIMITATIONS-----17

ETHICAL STANDARD-----17

OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH-----18

**CHAPTER 2-EDUCATION, HOUSEHOLD CHORES, ATTIRE-----19-27**

EDUCATION-----19

HOUSEHOLD CHORES-----23

ATTIRE-----25

<b>CHAPTER 3-<u>CAPACITY BUILDING, SEXUALITY, BODY IMAGE</u></b>	-----28-44
<u>CAPACITY BUILDING AND AGENCY</u>	-----28
<u>SEXUALITY</u>	-----34
<u>BODY IMAGE</u>	-----42
<b>CHAPTER 4- <u>CHOICE OF ‘BEING’ OR ‘BECOMING’</u></b>	-----45-48
<u>ROLE PLAYING</u>	-----45
<u>MODERNITY AND PROGRESS</u>	-----47
<b>CHAPTER 5- <u>OVERALL PARENTING STYLE</u></b>	-----49-54
<b>CHAPTER 6- <u>CONCLUSION</u></b>	-----55-60
<u>FUTURE ASPECT OF THE STUDY</u>	-----60
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	-----61-64
<b>APPENDIX</b>	-----65-67
<u>INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (PARENTS)</u>	-----65
<u>INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (ADOLESCENT GIRLS)</u>	-----66
<u>INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS</u>	-----67

## Chapter 1

### **Introduction-**

#### Background-

Interpretive study of children and adolescent is an alternative and counter approach of socialization theories. Prior to the 1980s, children/young people were at the margins of sociology. (Bhadra). The convergence point of the socialization theories lied in the consideration of children as 'passive'. The focus of the new paradigm studied the children as active individuals. Crick identified this shift of centre of study as the 'shift from function to meaning'. (Prout)

The focus to this narrower course of studying children prompted in 1980s with the increasing interest of a number of European and American scholars to include this important study in the discipline of Social Sciences. Lyod de Mause (1976) opposed Aries idea of 'The Discovery of Childhood' explaining the notion of childhood to be universal and referred the new paradigm of childhood.

Giddens in his theory 'Structuration' suggested the sociologists to understand study and structure as the opposite sides of the same coin. He emphasized 'every act which contributes to the reproduction of a structure is also an act of production, and as such it may initiate change by altering the structure at the same time as it reproduces it.' (1979:69)

This view of structure and agency being complementary to each other was taken as an essential component of the new sociology of childhood. William A Corsaro (1997) studied active participation of the children in peer culture with the new approach of 'interpretive reproduction'. His study focused on the study of children with their own rights and as full social actors. He has highlighted that children has their own understanding and interpretation of situations.

Alan Prout and Allison James (1997) has worked further on identifying the problems with the construction of childhood in the socialization theories and tried to reconstruct the paradigm with the light of the emergent paradigm of interpretive reproduction. This study also focused on studying children and childhood as a social construction than a cultural and biological construction.

James and James (2004) worked to build the pioneering original explanation of the socially constructed childhood that framed the new paradigm of childhood studies and its elaboration. The study developed and expanded this emergent paradigm by identifying some missing elements in the analysis of the relationship between structure and agency. The study also specified the mechanisms connecting structure and agency results to which social change and social continuity occurs in relation to childhood. (Bhadra)

### **The Proposed Study and Relevance:**

The proposed research tries to explore on the parenting styles and strategies practised by the contemporary parents for their adolescent girls in Kolkata.

Parenting has always been in the centre of the studies on childhood. As defined as the primary 'significant other' of the child, a parent is expected to not only just give birth to the child but to carry on with multiple roles all together. The roles include- providing emotional, physical, psychological, social, health aid to the child along with safety and protection. Sociology of childhood focuses on the different style of parenting by evaluating the practices that parents take up to parent their children. The study focused to study parental decisions and reasons over certain fields of education, career, attire, sexuality and risk awareness for their adolescent girls.

Within the new sociology of childhood, agency and capacity building are two main domains that are evaluated with the interpretive approach of studying childhood. Agency can be defined as a right given to an individual to identify, understand and utilise their capacity in situations required. It revolves around the thoughts and action people take by emphasizing their logic and interpretation. In sociology, agency is very much associated with the social structure. Considering family as a structure of institution, the specific field studies the amount of access to agency given to the children by their parents. The four basic foundations of agency are-free will, residual structure, mode of action and analytic counterfactual site of future intervention (James). The research focused on how much agency is given by the parents to the children as individuals. This study explore in which areas the children are given freedom to decide and choose.

Agency constitutes capacity building. Capacity building refers to an opportunity to accomplish and follow a life style that one perceives as valuable. It includes the concept of risk awareness. The study aims to evaluate and determine the contributions of parents in capacity building of the children.

A child can be defined as someone below the age of 18 years. The new sociology of childhood has divided childhood into different age groups. One of the groups is adolescence. Adolescence can be identified as the children in the age group lies between 10-18 years. It is a process of achieving the attitudes and beliefs needed for effective participation in the society. (Rogers) Interpretive approach studies the adolescence focusing on the individuality given to the people in this age. The proposed research has focused on the parenting strategies adopted and practised by the contemporary parents for their adolescent children.

The study focuses on the parenting style of the adolescent girls of 12-15 years of age by contemporary parent in Kolkata.

Class has been a deep concern in the theories of sociology. It is a group of people found in same class situation, where class situation is identified with supply of good, external living concerns and personal life experiences. (Weber) The idea of middle class is referred to almost the same class idea, but in an indigenous plot. Middle class is a vast category of people that can be identified with a certain academic achievements, a certain income group and a certain style of consumerism. Middle class in this study has been defined by a specific level of education (graduation) of the participants and a monthly income slab (60000-62000 rupees).

The study had a very limited time period. Kolkata was the easily available place to conduct the study of research in short time. Kolkata is a city full of diverse categories of people among which the largest group is the middle class. It was easy to get access to middle class parents in Kolkata to study their parenting style.

The contemporary time has become very much vulnerable for the girls of all age. This particular age being the transition age of the girls, has been found to be very sensitive. The study evaluates the concern and awareness of the parents regarding this age and situation and the kind of parenting they are applying in relevance to this particular time. The research focuses on how much important it is for the parents of adolescent girls in middle class families to take up a strategic parenting style to fulfil the purpose of parenting. How much relevant this parenting style is for this contemporary time for the particular class chosen for study, the research focuses to explore this as well.

## -Literature Review-

This section deals with the theories referred for the purpose of this research. The chapter is divided into three sections mentioning three theories and relevant articles and books on the specific themes. The themes are- a) Parenting Theory, b) Interpretive Reproduction Theory, c) Feminisms and d) History of Sexuality.

### a) Parenting Theory-

#### Parenting Style Theory-

The concept of parenting has always been at the centre of child development and socialization theories. Defining the concept of Parenting has changed according to time. The word parenting has been derived from the Latin verb, 'perere'. It means 'to bring forth, develop or educate' (My Etymology, 2008). Parenting has been assigned with many other important aspects than just to bring forth and educate. If we are to talk about bring forth that means, carry forwarding something exactly in the way in which has always been there. So, it is stereotypical. To educate means to provide the child the opportunity to study in academic institute. That again is a partial explanation of the essence of parenting. Parenting can be defined as- 'the single-minded, unconditional desire to provide a loving and caring home.' (Oxford English Dictionary) Parenting is a very complex activity. It includes many specific behaviours work individually and together to influence child outcomes. Parenting revolves around the issues of control- be it the child's behaviour or the situation. Parenting style captures two basic elements of parenting i) to be responsive refers to the 'extent to which mother intentionally foster individuality, self regulation, and self assertion by being attuned and supportive to children's needs and demands'. ii) to be demanding refers to 'the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family and society whole, by their maturity, supervision and disciplinary efforts'. The parenting style can be defined as the typical and various ways in which parents think, feel and behave in turns of growing their children up.

Depending on the high and low on demanding and responsive to the child, Diana Baumrind has categorized parenting style into four categories. Each of these parenting styles reflects different naturally occurring patterns of values, practices and behaviours and a distinct balance of responsive and demanding behaviours.

- a) **Authoritarian Parenting:** This is a kind of parenting where the mothers are strict on their principles of parenting. This parenting style establishes an avoidant relationship of the mother with the children. An authoritarian parent sends effort to constrain the child's choice for a purpose. The basic features of the parents adopting/applying this parenting styles are-
  - i) The parents are dictative and dominating.
  - ii) They set the strict rules with no leniency.
  - iii) They are non-negotiating at all and seek 100% obedience



- iv) They settle punishments over disciplines
- v) They are very controlling and repressive in nature
- vi) They are least responsive over values and seeks high expectation from the children
- vii) Parents adopting these parenting style escape consequences
- viii) These parents always compare their children with others
- ix) Non-respective to teachers and their opinions
- x) These parents practice one way communication

This parenting style generally leads to children who are obedient and proficient, but they rank lower in happiness, social competence and self esteem. Such a water tight style of parenting has many effects on the child. These are-

- a) The children faces enforcement and hence grow a strong feeling of fear.
- b) The capacity of problem solving and actively act to challenges are not groomed in the children at all.
- c) The self confidence and reliability is heavily affected to in the children. Instead of being taught to make better choices, they are always apologetic for their mistakes in childhood. Hence, they grow up being a passive child who are not always actively participating in interactive processes.
- d) These children grow up being hostile and aggressive.
- e) As they are always punished for their own deeds, they grow up expert in saving themselves. That means there is a high probability of these kids to grow as pretty good liars.
- f) The children rarely take initiatives.
- g) They are socially withdrawn and look to others to decide what's right.
- h) The children tend to be low in self-confidence and lack social and academic competence
- i) The kids grow with lack of spontaneity and curiosity.

**b) Authoritative Parenting Style-** This is one parenting style where the control and response of the parents are balanced. This parenting style is also known as 'Disciplinary' and 'Attachment' Parenting. It is by far the best among the all parenting styles. In this particular type of parenting, the parents grow a secure relationship with their children. One can call this parenting style as 'Consultant Parenting', where the parents follow an equalitarian approach. In this style of parenting, the parents spend efforts to mould the child's preference for a purpose. The following features of this parenting style are-

- i) This parenting style is full of empathy and responsiveness, is approachable, reasonable and flexible
- ii) This parenting style grows positive relationship with the child

- iii) Parents adopting this parenting style set up rules, but explain the rules clearly to their children as well
- iv) The parents are not very strict with all the rules; they consider children and their feelings sometimes.
- v) They are authority figures, but validate children's demands as well
- vi) They invest time and energy into to prevent behavioural problems of children
- vii) Their parents use reason mostly to achieve parenting goals
- viii) They have certain positive discipline strategies like praising their children if they do well in something, set rewards for the children to encourage them to do well, but not to bribe them.
- viii) They feed children with love and respect
- ix) These parents practise nurturing touch, they balance the personal and family lives in balance

This parenting style tends to result in children who are happy, capable and successful. The other outcomes of this parenting style are as follows-

- a) The children grow up being happy and successful
- b) As these children are given certain circumstances by their parents and they need to bring solution to these situations, they train good in decision making
- c) They grow very well in evaluating self-risks
- d) As they grow up through a logical and balanced parenting style, they become responsible adults and expectedly successful parents as well.
- e) The kids score higher on a variety of measures of competence, social development, self perceptions and mental health.

c) **Permissive Parenting Style-** This is another kind of parenting style where the parents have a lenient kind of attitude towards their children. Their demands as parents are quite lower than the average, but their responsiveness to their children demands are remarkably higher. This parenting style grows an ambivalent relationship with the children where the parents respond but not consistently. This parenting style is known as the 'Laissez Faire' parenting. This parenting style makes the parents refrain from influencing the child's choice, but also does not simply minimize parenting efforts. The features of this parenting are-

- i) The parenting style does not let the parents set any boundaries to their children's behaviour and actions.
- ii) These parents set rules, but they remain in pages only with no execution or implementation of them in reality
- iii) These parents believe in a theory that their children are born with the ability to raise themselves
- iv) The parents let their children raise themselves
- v) These parents are easily manipulative
- vi) They use bribery to cover up their insufficiency as parents

- vii) The parents maintain no structure or schedule
- viii) Any time the children make mistakes, they take it leniently and do not even make the children understand that they are doing mistakes.
- ix) The parenting style is weak inconsistent and passive
- x) They live with an approach of ‘whatever will be, will be’

This parenting style affects the child’s happiness and self-regulation. Besides, the other effects of this parenting are-

- a) Kids grow up through this parenting style are very much persuasive
- b) The kids grow with an ability of efficient interaction where they can easily convince to get what they want
- c) These kids face more behavioural problems in later youth as they are not very accustomed with strict rules and the punitive consequences
- d) The kids grow with low esteem
- e) As parents do not take much care of the children’s health and give them whatever they want, these children grow with health problems like obesity
- f) As they have not grown to make good habits, the kids grow up with bad habits and bad manners
- g) They grow a very high self esteem, good social skills, but are equally prone to problematic behaviours

**d) Uninvolved Parenting Style-** This is the worst kind of parenting style among the four types. This parenting style involves least or non-involvement of the parents in the parenting process at all. This parenting style is also known as ‘Free ranging’, ‘Hands-Off’ and ‘Disengaged’ parenting. A neglecting parents makes the parenting choices that minimize the parenting efforts. The basic features of this parenting style are as follows-

- i) These parents are neither demanding nor responsive
- ii) They act dismissive, neglecting and indifferent to their children
- iii) These parents do not involve in supervision
- iv) They rarely care about the children
- v) They prioritize their own needs over children and hence have no expectation for the children
- vi) This parenting style provides little knowledge about parenting and little information about children
- vii) The parents are negligent. Sometimes the negligence is intentional, sometimes they are not
- viii) Usually these are parents who suffer from mental health issues, or substance abuse problems
- ix) These parents hardly communicate with the children

Children growing up through these parents face the worst problems. The affects of this parenting style on children are-

- a) Kids are at high risk as they are to grow themselves up
- b) They have least idea of what is good and what is bad for them or in general

- c) There is an equal possibility of the child to grow up as an excellent adult as they become self dependent. Also there is an equal chance to grow as the criminal human being as well
- d) The kids can grow and suffer from severe self esteem problems.
- e) The children lack self control, have lower self-esteem and are less competent.

However, there is another kind of parenting that one can connect with the Authoritative Parenting Style, but a comparatively different one. It is called the '**Helicopter parenting**'. Here the authoritative parents, besides being drill sergeant parents, also hover over their children heads at various activities to guide them and protect them. What makes them annoying to their children is their habit of repeating things overtime to their children. At the same time, they support coercive methods and corporal punishments for their children just as the Authoritative parents do.

American Sociologist Annette Lareau has coined this term. There can be another kind of parenting which is called '**Intensive Parenting**'. In this kind of parenting, both the parents put equal efforts to raise their children together.

Contemporary time has given rise to another type of parenting theory, which is not a theory as a whole but a reflective compilation of strategies that can be treated as a theory. It is '**Positive Parenting**'. This parenting can be defined as contributing to a construction of a child that revolves around the promotion of a loving, co-operative relationship respecting the child's individuality and focusing solely on guidance not compliance. It is a 'wise, timeless and kind' style of parenting that teaches, instead of making demands; seeks to understand instead of labelling, boosts up instead of knocking down. Most of all, it is an effective parenting style in which the parents themselves slips into the shoes of what they want to see their children become. There are certain foundations of positive parenting.

- a) Settling some parenting goals
- b) Bring in the warmth and structure in the process of interaction
- c) Set some ground rules
- d) Acknowledge and empathize the child
- e) A problem-solving approach to conflicts.

Stressing back to history, there were some people who have not mentioned the term positive parenting, but have stated ideas which are completely reflective to the essence of positive parenting. Proximal origin can be stressed into the British child psychiatrist John Bowlby's 'Attachment Parenting', but he has not used the term positive parenting. The term was coined first by Jane Nelson in her book 'Positive Discipline' (1981).

But the essence of the idea can be stressed back in time, with the statements of some renowned personalities.

Plato (428-348 BCE)- “Do not train a child by force or harshness; but direct them to it by what amuses their mind, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.”

Plutarch (46-120 AD)- “Children ought to be led to honourable practices by means of encouragement and reasoning”

John Locke (1603-1704)-“Children should seldom be corrected by blows.”

Jean Rousseau (1717-1778)- “the words obey and command will be excluded”

Allison James and Alan Prout have written a remarkable book on the concept of childhood and how to treat children, named-‘Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood’. This book is a very classic study to identify and explore the new paradigm of childhood studies that considers children as active members of the societies. First they have identified the various stages of development in childhood and the associated terms of addressing them. They have termed this process as the ‘structuring becoming’. Their conception of childhood was not just a function, but a theory, considering childhood as not only a part of individual life but also an integral part of the society. Hence it was possible for them to draw inferences from sociology in defining, exploring and explaining childhood. They have also reflected how with the use of certain instruments and concepts are re-shaping the idea of childhood. Though they have not directly mentioned the role the parents should contribute in the childhood, but they mentioned certain images of the children that need to be reflected in the sociology of childhood, that sends a message to the parents about their necessary parenting style. They have addressed child as a social actor, in a generational order, with a futuristic approach, followed by some ethical concerns and have addressed the parents to take a rational approach in parenting to successfully contribute to the construction of the childhood.

In the book, ‘Understanding Mother-Adolescent Conflict Discussions: Concurrent and Across-Time Predictions from Youth’s Dispositions and Parenting’, the author has reflected on the problematic relationship that almost every mother face when their children enter into this life phase of adolescence. This is a multi-method, multi-reporter study of over 4 long years that tried to identify the amount of adolescents in extreme conflict with the mother and in which areas the conflicts are inevitable.

Seamus Carey in his book, ‘The Whole Childhood: Restoring Wonder to the Art of Parenting’ has identified some of the philosophical classic themes of how parenting was supposed to produce wonder and happiness. He tried to entangle this idea of happiness to the modern parenting virtues like courage, compassion, integrity and discipline.

#### **b) Interpretive Reproduction-**

Before coming to this theory, it is important to mention why this theory came up. Childhood has always been a very important domain of work in the history of sociology. Though it is one of the

most recent topics to be taken up by the scholars of sociology, there has been enormous work done on this area. The child development theories were all explaining certain aspects of childhood, development and socialization. From Erik Erikson's Psycho-Social Development Theories, Behaviourist Theory, Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, George Herbert Mead's Socialization Theory to Sigmund Freud's Psycho-Sexual Development Theory- all these theories have explained the development process and socialization of the children from different perspectives. But there was one common aspect of all these theories which can be taken as the limitation of these theories. In all these theories, the children have been given a passive position. In all the theories, it was stated how children are expected to learn and imbibe what they have been told by their significant others without their own understanding, interpretation and meaning of the things. However, to break free the concept of children's sociological development theories from the individualistic doctrine, regarding social development solely as the child's private internalization of adult skills and knowledge, the contemporary American sociologists came up with a new theory. William A Corsaro in his book, 'The Sociology of Childhood' has mentioned about a new theory named 'Interpretive Reproduction'.

His idea of interpretive reproduction was influenced by a Soviet psychologist Vygotsky's work on the conception of internalization. He mentioned that cultural development in children occur twice- first between people and then inside the child.

Corsaro used the term interpretive reproduction. The term interpretive means the creative and innovative aspect of the children's participation in the society and also how children even as young as two years create and participate in their peer culture by appropriating information from adult world to address their unique culture. And the term reproduction interprets a twin process in the children. On one hand, it is how the children are actively contributing to cultural production and change; on the other hand their being constrained by the societies and culture in which they are members. This process of reproduction is neither linear nor an exact copy. Corsaro's point of departure is his discussion of the ways in which children and childhood have been conceptualized. He followed the lead of many academics criticizing the approach of previous socialization theories that conceive children as passive objects to be acted upon until they become 'fully functioning members' of the society. From a socialization standpoint, children are valued as future adults. Taking this issue with the underlying assumptions of this theory, Corsaro conceptualized children as active social agents with whom, as opposed to on whom research should be conducted, their voices, perspectives, interests and rights as an individual is to be focused, by the significant others. This theoretical position emphasizes children's and adult's collective participation in and negotiation of a socially constructed childhood as well as a wider shared culture. In this perspective, the children gets into a social nexus through interaction with others; establish social understanding that becomes fundamental social knowledge on which they build continually. In subscribing the notion that childhood is socially constructed, Corsaro perceived that childhood is not only 'a period in which children live their lives' but also a 'category or part of society, like social classes.' He also considered that 'childhood is a temporary period for children, but it is a permanent structural category in

society’.

The approach is essentially interpretive, stressing that the children discover a world endowed with the meaning and help to shape and share in their own developmental experiences through their participation in every day routines. It views development as reproductive rather than linear. This model of development refines the notion of stages by viewing development as a productive-reproductive process of increasing density and reorganization of knowledge that changes with the children’s developing cognitive and language abilities and with changes in their social worlds. A major aim of this interpretive reproduction is to understand the crucial role that the children play in the development of their childhood, the kind of interpretation they have of the culture they have been thrown into. This approach deals with children’s attempt to deal with confusions, concerns, fears and conflicts of daily lives and children’s resistance to and challenging of adult rules and authorities. Once the child recognizes that it has the ability to produce its own perspective without direct dependence on adults, the nature of the socialization process itself is transformed. Never again will the asymmetrical child-adult relationship dominate.

Jens Qvortrup along with William A. Corsaro and Michael Sebastian- Monig has edited a book on childhood studies where many scholarly researches on childhood from various aspects are bridged together. The book is ‘The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies’. In this book, they have illustrated why there is a need of studying childhood and children in the society. Qvortrup has emphasized on the idea of agency while Corsaro addressed the interpretive reproduction approach to the studies. Monig was associated with the discovery of appropriate method and methodology for conducting the study. The book has varieties of sub themes under which ideas related to children and childhood in different aspect are included. There is children’s everyday life that includes discussion on children’s bodies, changes, leisure, education, culture, peers etc. While in the children’s rights theme, various writings on children’s fundamental, developmental and legal rights were discussed. In this theme, there is a very important chapter that deals with the constitutional rights of the children and the reality behind them that addresses the idea of parenting strictly.

I consulted the ‘Sociology of Childhood and Youth’ book of the series of ‘Readings in Indian Sociology’, edited by Prof. Bula Bhadra to refer to certain conceptual ideas of terms associated to childhood and youth. This book is one of the first books that provide the sociological articulations on Indian children and young, along with the multifaceted discourses on childhood and youth situating it in the history of India. I have referred specially the first chapter of the book, the introduction part to clearly understand and refer to the basic ideas of children, childhood, youth, children rights and the history of childhood. The editor in this book has articulated how weak the position or importance of children is in sociological discipline and why there is an increasing need of doing more frequent researches on childhood and youth to explore the important field.

The first indigenous literature that I have referred to is Hia Sen's book – 'Time Out in the Land of Apu: Childhoods, Bildungsmoratorium and the Middle Classes of Urban West Bengal'. In this book, the author has done an extensive study on children by using the interpretive reproduction method of understanding children's everyday life. This book aimed to develop an alternate picture of the childhood in a developing country. The focus of the author's study was to minutely study and interpret certain specific action and time of the children, the time out of the school and the leisure culture of the children in the middle class households of West Bengal. The study is a comparative analysis of two older generations and the contemporary generation to identify the change and development that has taken place in the culture of childhood since 1950s-1970s to 2010s in West Bengal. The approach of the study is totally different from that of any other studies that have been conducted since as it focuses on the active participation of the children in their culture, activities and growth, a reference to the 'Interpretive Approach' coined by American Sociologist, William A. Corsaro. This book also indicates the gap of childhood researches in India. The author aims to develop a critical stance towards the quest for other childhoods in contemporary social science research. Also, she aims to identify the scepticism of some theoretical shifts from contemporary research in childhood. The usage of the German term 'Bildungsmoratorium' stands for the 'new' paradigm of childhood which is way different from the early childhood studies and researches conducted by the scholars.

### **c) Feminist Theory**

There has been number of feminist theories and ideals revolve around in every field.

Liberal feminism is one very specific field where the discussion on women's equal treatment before law is explained. Mary Wollstonecraft's book 'The Vindication of Women' has been a huge work from the feminist perspective. She has elaborated on women's rights to various things, including education, suffrage rights and profession. Her focus was on how and why women should be educated.

John Stuart Mill and Harold Taylor have been very famous faces of women rights and freedom movement. Mill in his 'The Subjection of Women' has sharply identified what kind of freedom and choice women deserves and they should fight for it. Mill has mentioned about two special kinds of freedom- intellectual freedom and Personal freedom. Such a powerful position if a woman can achieve will give the woman the agency to practice individuality in the existing rules in society. Discussing on personal freedom, he has talked about choices and freedom in many field that can be exercised in that can be very easily reflected to the analysis of my research.

Bell Hooks was a feminist writer who has done extensive work on parenting and feminism. In the book 'Feminism is for Everybody', she wrote a chapter on 'Feminist Parenting'. It talks about the advantages and flaws of women parenting/ parenting. When a woman is parenting, she is doing both the job of the father as to earn and mother. Besides she has argued how such parenting style reflects and establishes parenting as a women's vocation. In an excerpt from the



book 'Feminist Theory from the margin to center (1984) named 'Revolutionary Parenting', she has expressed how parenting is the concept of mutual understanding and role playing.

Shilpa Phadke in her article 'Feminist Parenting?-Some Reflections on Sexuality and Risk from Urban India' has eloquently elucidated about the increasing risks for the girls around the world irrespective of time and zone that is having tremendous effects on the parenting strategies of the girls taken up by the contemporary parents. Post globalization has forced the world to face various moral panics and questions on the concept of sexuality and safety of the women irrespective of their age. However, Phadke has focused more on the concept of body images and sexualities of teenage girls and how it is bothering the parents as to be more dangerous and vulnerable for the adolescent girls over their safety. Her explanation of politics of clothing/dressing has helped me enormously to shape the backbone of my study. And there are certain kinds of decisions that the parents are taking as parenting strategies to save their adolescent girls from being victimized in those indecent situations which in turn is becoming the focal point of conflict in the adolescent-parent relationship.

In her another article, 'Risking Feminism; Voices from the Classroom', Phadke has elaborated the concept of feminism in the contemporary people, the kind of dilemmas people go through and the notions of following feminist ideals of being free, independent, active, yet not the feminist. In this article she has also identified how the parent's response or talk can either turn the adolescent a rebellious- ground-breaking- non-obedient 'bad girl' or to a subtle-understanding-guilty-feeling 'mature girl'. These are the areas where she has identified the effective kinds of parenting strategies that contemporary parent should take up for their adolescent girls. It is not always the power position that disciplines; sometimes it destroys things and relations in name of fixing it.

#### **d) The History of Sexuality**

Adolescence is a time when the children experience many new things, as discussed- both physically and psychologically. Some of them are deterministic for the rest of the life of the individual. Among those, the most crucial one is the discovery of sexuality, an area I wanted to explore in my study. And the impeccable theorist to refer to analyse this concept is Michel Foucault.

Foucault's main goal in the 'History of Sexuality' books is to disprove the idea that Western society had repressed sexuality since the 17th century and that sexuality had been something that society did not talk about. He identifies a free and easy attitude toward sex in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, where there was less shame in thinking of sex as an object of pleasure. He also agrees that this free and easy attitude was suppressed, and that it was a result of the controlling power of the rising bourgeoisie. Sex outside of the boundaries of husband and wife was not only prohibited, but it had also been repressed. His notion of sexuality is very intrinsically associated with that of power. By separating the children from this concept of sex

which was a public domain before was nothing but to regularize them. By regularizing and disciplining their behavior had the core intention of disciplining their body. Foucault had focused on the very concept of how power disciplines a person by disciplining the very innate part of him/her, which is irrational, works on pleasure principle, the body. He has also mentioned how the concept of heterosexuality was put as the universal form of sexuality and hence separating the people who does not fall into the universal domain, enlist them as the 'other Victorians'. This idea again can be defined from two points. One is to have an idea about the population as a whole. The second is to introduce a segregation or categorization among the all, whom can be 'guineapigged' in the experiments of medical discourse.

Foucault argued that his study of the 'History of Sexuality' was to trace the history of 'sexuality'. He quoted- "My aim was not to write a history of sexual behavior and practices, tracing their successive forms, their evolution, and their dissemination; nor was it to analyze the scientific, religious or philosophical ideas through which these behaviors have been represented. I wanted first to dwell on that quite recent and banal notion of 'sexuality'; to stand detached from it, bracketing its familiarity, in order to analyze the theoretical and practical context with which it has been associated." (1985)

Foucault follows what has been called a "genealogical method" to study sexuality. For him, the concept of sexuality denotes nothing fixed. Instead, he suggests that our concept of sexuality has a number of different meanings, used in a number of different ways and served a number of different purposes.- to distribute certain kinds of power. He identifies the proliferation of discourses on sexuality as a means of social control. Sexuality linked to confession, to self-scrutiny and self- analysis. These latter two has been extended to every aspect of our life. For the sake of a healthy sexuality, we keep a close watch and control over own behaviors and that of others. This is very much relatable and justifiable on the parent's concern of sexuality in their adolescent girls. He was the first person who defined sexuality as a constructivist approach by debunking the notion of this is an 'essentialist' position. Foucault seems to have uncovered the secret motives behind our self-image.

## **-Methodology-**

Each and every scientific study has its own process of being carried out. This process includes multiple numbers of steps and varieties of steps. The whole process is known as 'methodology' of research. Methodology can be defined as the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to the field of social study. It comprises the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge. It is the study or description of the methods.

The researcher has chosen to conduct the research in a qualitative approach where in-depth interview of the respondents were done by creating a semi-structured interview schedule with specific topics to talk about. But it was flexible enough for the respondents to talk on topics related to the field that has been included in the interview schedule. In this methodology and data collection part, the nature, approach, methods and sample of the research is discussed.

**Nature: Qualitative Research-** Qualitative research is a research strategy that emphasizes on words over quantification in the collection and analysis of data. As a research strategy, it is broadly inductivist, constructionist and interpretivist. It is a research method that is widely used in the field of academics. Denzin and Lincoln defined- 'Qualitative research is a method of enquiry employed in many different academic disciplines, traditionally in the social science contexts. This research's goal is to collect in greater details the understanding of the human behaviour and the result/ reason that led to that particular behaviour. It revolves around to find the answers to the questions of when, what, where and most importantly, why a person would act in a certain way towards a specific matter. Smith has defined qualitative research as an empirical one. A wider aspect of qualitative research is the data collection and data analysis method. Qualitative research provides detailed description and analysis of the quality or the substance of the human experience.

Under the qualitative approach, the phenomenological approach is selected. Phenomenology can be characterized by understanding and interpreting the experience from a micro perspective.

**Date Collection-**The study was conducted on the qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviewing of the participants.

The data collection can be done by two ways- Individual Interviews and Focus group Interviews. Individual interview can again be constructed in three different ways- a) In-Depth interview/Unstructured Interview, b) Focused interview/Semi Structured Interview and c) Structured interview. The researcher has chosen to collect data through individual interview through in-depth interviewing method with a semi-structured interview schedule.

### **In-depth Interview-**

In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intense individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation. This method is usually an unstructured method of collecting data where there is a basic interview plan in the mind. Here the researcher prepares to discuss on a number of topics with the interviewee. They give space to the respondents to engage to the interview and discuss about the topic as in greater details. This gives the researcher to gather as much data as possible from the meeting. The in-depth interview seeks to understand the 'lived and personal' experiences of the individual to acquire a subjective understanding of a specific situation or condition or topic. However, in-depth interviews are issue-oriented. In-depth interviewing offers the researchers to have access to the individual's ideas, thoughts and logics on decision taken by them in a certain situation or condition.

Though in-depth interviews are mostly unstructured; a research-plan with the desired topics to discuss for the benefit of the research study was required. The researcher has created a semi-structured interview schedule to cover fields focused to be explored in the research.

### **Semi-Structured Interview Schedule-**

Though the in-depth interview is supposed to be unstructured, but in sake of finding the result according to the needs of the study, a semi structured interview schedule has been prepared for collecting the data. A semi-structured interview is conducted with a specific interview guide- a list of written questions that needs to cover within a particular interview. It includes a number of basic questions but all are open. The respondents are given a topic that is of my interest of research but is free to talk about anything related to it. So, this interview schedule is welcoming for new questions and opinions that come out in the spontaneity of the interview. Throughout this method, the researcher has a minimal control over the interview but the agenda needs to be focused properly.

The researcher has chosen to include 5 basic areas focusing which the questions were asked according to the objectives of the research. The fields included were-a) education, b) teachings on household chores, c) sexuality, d) capacity building, e) agency and f) clothing. To establish a conversation, the personal data were collected (name, educational qualification, monthly income) to identify with the chosen class in the research. Spontaneous questions were asked on the focused fields to gain insights of the respondents in the field which was required to analyse the research. The questions were open-ended, with emphasis on the criteria of why such decision I taken by the respondent. The data was recorded in an audio-recording device (mobile phones).

**Data Analysis-** The data analysis is a process that is done after the choosing of the field of research, sampling process, data collection and elaboration. The narrative analysis and thematic analysis was chosen for the research. This method involves the reformulation of stories presented by respondents taking into context first. Then the thematic analysis was done to identify certain themes in which the collected data from the respondents match and hence can be analyzed under one specific field.

### **Population, Sampling, Sample size-**

A non-probability sampling process of snow ball sampling was used to collect data for the study. The researcher initially made contact with a small group of people who had contacts to persons in fields as chosen in the study, fulfilling the chosen criteria of class. Initially, there is one respondent with which the researcher comes into contact and then gained access to the other people appropriate for the research study.

The sample was acknowledged to be very small for the qualitative approach of the study. The researcher has interviewed 9 families with 12-15 years old daughters living in Kolkata fulfilling the basic conditions set for the study. The fathers were employed in professional occupations of IT (mainly) with two businessperson. 5 out of 9 mothers were employed in academic fields, 1 mother was an IT professional and 3 mothers were home-makers.

**Date Collection Site-** The month of December was chosen for the collection of the interview. The study was conducted in Kolkata. The interviews were taken within the respondent's households, keeping the children away from the interview place. Each of the interviews lasted for one hour to one hour fifteen minutes. For the authenticity of the data collected, similar questions were asked to the children on the same day of interview with absence of the parents.

### **Coding and Transcription-**

After the data collection is over, all the data were transcribed from electronic to manual scripts, including the expressions of the respondents in relatable responses. Once the complete transcription is done, the process of coding is conducted, where the researcher has started identifying answers to similar questions from different respondents according to the focus of the objectives in the study.

**Limitations-**Due to the short time period, the sample size was chosen to be very small and analysis was done on the basis of those only.

**Ethical standard-** The ethical standard throughout the respondents was maintained. The respondents were not forced to talk about any of the issues. Data recording were done with the consent of the respondents. To maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents,

pseudo names were used by the researcher to identify them. The information of the respondents was attached at the appendix part.

### **-Objectives of my research-**

1. To gain insight behind the parent's choices of education, household chores, and attire for their young girls.
2. To identify the contribution of the parents to the capacity building of the girls in contemporary time and constructing the young girls' agency in decision makings. The objective also focuses the parents' concern about the growing sexuality and body image of their young girls and risk awareness.
3. To identify the parent's attitude towards the choice 'being' or 'becoming' for their adolescent girls.
4. To identify the traits of the parenting styles to the contemporary parents for their adolescent girls.

There was a particular limitation that was very much important to declare at the very beginning of the study. The study was focused the parenting style of contemporary middle class parents or their adolescent girls where the contributions of both the fathers and the mothers were expected. In all the cases, the access to the fathers present was not gained due to various reasons. So the data collected and analysed is completely on the parental decisions of the mothers taken from the position of parents for parenting their adolescent girls.

## Chapter 2

### Education, Household Chores Teachings and Attire

This chapter is based on the first objective that I have chosen; that is to reflect on the 'Education, Household Chores teaching and dressing choices' for the adolescent girls by their mothers.

- **EDUCATION-**

The emphasis on education can be stressed back from the emergence of the middle class (Bhadrolok) in the society. Education was one of the two yardsticks that segregated this particular class from the rest of the classes. And the similar amount of emphasis on education is given by the mothers of today. The mothers have had a longer planning of their daughter's education, which can be reflected through their choices regarding their daughter's education.

Their emphasis on the mediums of the schools can be identified as to maintain a 'class' of education for their daughters.

I admitted my girl in an English medium private higher secondary school because of the well name of that school. (Tania)

The mothers were so dedicated to give their children a good schooling that they were ready to go to limits for that.

I had to fight with the other members of the family to admit her in an English medium private school. The school was far away from my house and my in laws were not ready to let her journey that long way from childhood. I wanted her to study in a good school with students from different layers and I knew it will help her being good in studies and also wider her perspective on many things around. (Priya)

But the decision was for the welfare of the girls and never a choice that has been imposed on the girls by the mothers. Such an attitude expressed how the mothers are reflecting their rational side over prioritizing their dreams.

I wanted her to study in that school because I myself am an ex-student from that school. But later she could not cope up and I changed her school. (Aditi)

Their decisions of co-education and girls schools can be reflected with the idea of consciousness for the daughter's adolescent age. The mothers were very much concern for their daughters to reach this age and will be discovering themselves. Their belief reflects that girls' school for the girls in this age is safer.

I was worried if my daughter first menstruates in school. As it is a girls' school, it was okay. But I would have been more worried if she studied in a co-ed school. (Tania)

I was worried about this age why I wanted her to study in girls' school. I know that this age is very difficult to understand for the girls and I was afraid she might end up mixing with a boy in any other way. (Baishakhi)

However the co-educating mother believed that it is good to be in touch with boys from a childhood time because the relation between the boys and girls become easier. As they could be good friends, they share many things with each other and the relation grows healthily. The girls get to know that changes occur to everyone, irrespective of the sex which makes them to accept the changes easily. They also believe that if boys and girls grow together there is a mutual belief that grows within them for each other. The mothers educating their daughters to co-educating school had a wider and rational aspect of thinking. Their reasoning as such peer mixing will help the girls grow a healthy relation with boys is very rational.

Mixing up with boys as friends from the childhood helps a girl grow naturally. As they get to grow up with the boys, there is a mutual understanding that grows. (Tania)

But there is a sense of fear and worry that can be reflected in the responses of these mothers of adolescent girls studying in co-ed schools.

But yes, at one age, like after puberty, it is a little risky time for the girls. Often I feel worried when they go for school picnics. Though my girl is very frank with me and shares everything with me, she has never talked about liking someone yet. But still, the worry and tension is uncontrollable. (Tania continued)

The mothers support to their daughter's choices of schools after boards has shown their practice of liberal parenting style, where they value their daughter's choices.

My daughter wants to study nursing and I am okay with that. I want her to do something she finds interest in. (Ahana)

She wants to go to some other school in higher secondary because she does not find her geography teacher is not good enough. And she wants to continue her study in geography. I told her that I will be consulting other people to find out a better school. And if she has a choice, I am okay with that too. (Rima)

Emphasizing on the necessity of extracurricular activities besides academic proficiency can be reflected as the continuation of an age old practice that has been mentioned by the mothers.



I was very much into music and my parents always supported me. I have two sisters and a big brother. One of my sisters was not very much interested in such ideas. So my mother never emphasized. But my other sister loved knitting so she learnt that. And my brother was very fond of playing 'tabla' (kettle drum). (Baishakhi)

What is found to be liberating in this contemporary time mothers are their consideration of extracurricular activity not only as an refreshment, but also a career choice. The respondents' parents as they have explained to be taught these extracurricular activities just to add them as an extra knowledge. And their parents attitude towards their teachings of extracurricular activity was to make them more efficient for marriage has changed. The mothers are found to be supporting these extracurricular activities as their choice of profession is what makes them a positive parent, who supports her daughters.

It is important to study, but at the same time it is important to have some 'me time' as well. I believe there is a huge necessity for today's children to indulge into extracurricular activities as they do not have any time to play. So, spending sometimes other than study will keep their mind fresh and relaxed. Once she loves the activity, she will bring out time to practice it regularly and thus it will turn into a skill of her. (Anindita)

I have heard my daughter sing since she was 3-4 years old. I understood that she loved singing, so I admitted her into a singing school. And she has continuing her 9 years in singing. I have seen how this acts as heal for her when she has a mood swing or she is not well physically. Education is no doubt important, but as mother I would suggest every mother to involve their children in extracurricular activities. If it is of the child's choice, it is brilliant. Otherwise, they should make them love something that can be taught besides education. (Priya)

But even till today, the practices are found to be largely gendered teaching. Though it has been mentioned that it was the girl's choice that has been valued, but it is very difficult to evaluate as most of the girl's choices of dancing, painting, singing. But there were two exceptional choices that quite break the stereotypical understanding of extracurricular activities.

"She used to play chess with her uncle. She was so interested in chess that she used to invite everyone who came to our house on any occasions. So, we admitted her in a chess school. She has passed the easy stage and is studying in the moderate level. Meanwhile she has attended three inter-state chess competition and has won one. Also there were many inter club competitions where she participated and won. (Ahana)

The support of two girls' unique choice of extracurricular activities by the mothers has introduced the idea of support of the contemporary mothers to their daughters' independent choices.

She first got an idea of this quelling last year after watching a you-tube video. And she loved it. So, when she asked me to bring quelling papers, and the special gum, I brought them to her. By now she has gifted all of her cousins, aunts and friends one pair of quelling earring she has made. I am searching for an institution where she can learn more accurately from professionals. It is an amazing skill and art and as a mother, it is my duty to go an extra mile to her to appreciate her talent. (Subarna)

Besides, their acceptance of their daughters' taking up such extracurricular activities as profession has enhanced the image of the mother to be rational.

Now-a-days, nothing is unimportant and worthless. The scopes of establishing oneself in the society have grown beyond imagination. And the conventional belief that we had faced that education is the only way to be successful in life is a myth. (Rima)

She can move and establish herself in life in any line she chooses; I will always be supporting her. But I want her to have a minimum degree of education, a graduation, before she starts her career in her chosen line. This academic degree is nothing but a back up. If she fails in her career so that she can get into some respectable jobs with this degree, I am worried about that. You cannot deny that knowledge and degree always have a greater purpose to serve. (Baishakhi)

Such an idea emphasises that support to any career choice by the mothers, but the importance of a minimum level of education is not compromised even in today's generation. Such an idea can be very closely relatable to the 'middle class' characteristics, which evolved for their unique emphasis of education back in 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Here, on the decision of the mother's support to the choice of education and career for the young adolescent girls can be identified with the ever-increasing concern of women subjectivity and freedom, a very prominent line of thought from the contemporary feminism and the post-modern feminist approach to the concept of choice. The post modernist feminism talks about providing respect and importance to the individual decisions. That can again be stated as the importance of subjectivity. The girls are not adult yet, but is approaching adulthood, where they will be living, learning, doing things on their own decisions. The mothers somehow have understood the importance of being supportive. As they have experienced the adolescence, they very much

understand about the girls' changes, both mentally and psychologically. Supporting them in this crucial period of time in decisions that will play a major part in their life is a very positive side of this contemporary middle class mothering style. Here, education plays a very important role. Belonging to the middle class families with standard earning on scale and secure job status, the mother are somehow trying to uplift them into an intra-generationally better position that they can afford. Because, a very common tendency of the middle class is to be afraid of critiques and avoid doing something that will cause them to answer for their actions. So, taking a further step in providing 'agency' and supporting their daughter's choice of career, they are quite sure that their decision will be appreciated by everyone. Besides, they are striving to prove themselves as a better version of mothers than they had in their adolescence. Besides, these mothers rely on their daughter's as individuals because they know that the time has changed and the children of contemporary time are way more sincere and mature about their career and line of study. So, supporting the young girls in their choice of studies and career is a giving more success to the contemporary mothering style that are taken up by the contemporary mother. Such freedom given to the daughters are actually a form of power, if we take up Foucault's notion 'Knowledge is power, power is knowledge'. Letting the girl decide and take decisions on their education and career is a certain form of agency. And this agency is given by the mother to her, willingly and voluntarily. So, this is a form of power that the contemporary mothers are providing their daughters to have. They are being very much understanding how much important it is to have a say of your own. All the respondent mothers were firm believers of modernist approach of women liberty and equal access to the opportunities that again can be reflected and justified by the ideals of feminism. As feminism talks about the independency of women in every field; it includes the field of academics and occupation as well. John Stuart Mill's Subjection of Women can also be referred in this part as he has talked about personal freedom that includes educational proficiency along with self development that includes freedom to choose a career as well. And he was the first person to question the subordination of Women in fields of work and existence, challenging the Victorian era.

- **HOUSEHOLD CHORES-**

The practice of household chores by the mothers again reflects the idea of gender parenting. Similar kinds of practices coming through ages has makes this contemporary parenting style an apparently gendered one. The girls being taught certain feminine traits from ages have not changed at all.

As I am letting her be an equal part of the family, she should do something for her family too. There are certain household chores that I have taught and teaching her. She needs to know these little but mandatory everyday things like making her own bed before going to sleep and also to fix the beddings after waking up in the morning. I let her wash her own clothes and shoes since she was in class 6. (Soumi)

But purpose of teaching these household chores as explained by the mothers is rational and progressive.

I am supporting her in her higher studies. And for that she might need to go in other state or country and have to stay away from home. I won't be there then to do all her stuffs. So, she should know how to manage herself. (Tania)

If she is ever lives on her own, I want her to be self-reliant. At least I would be relieved to know that she can live happily on her own, sufficiently. (Subarna)

There is another part where the rationality of the mothers in exercising these traditional practices is that these mothers maintain a very frequent age slabs and teach the mentioned chores according to the capacity of the girl.

I started her teaching how to do these little things like cleaning the rooms, show-cases and beds, keeping the study table and the wardrobe arranged, washing her own clothes and shoes since she was 10-11 years. Now she is 14 and has added a new thing in her to do list. She washes her own dishes every time after having food, even if it is before going to school. I liked that in her. (Ahana)

She helps me in kitchen at times, like spilling the beans, peeling the potatoes, handover the dishes and water etc. But after 2-3 years, I would teach her slowly to do some basic cooking like making tea, boiling eggs, omelettes, rice and some 2-3 items of chicken. She loves to eat chicken. (Priya)

As one can see that the practice of teaching girls household chores has been continuing for a very long period of time. And there is no change in the contemporary time and in the middle class families. This attitude of teaching the girls conventional things with intellectual meaning/reason behind it can be articulated as the primary focus of contemporary or post modern feminism. Though liberal feminism talks widely about women's equal participation and opportunity in education, but at the same time it also focuses on the idea of women giving more focus to the household work, for which it was largely criticized. The idea or the intention behind the teaching of household chores to the young daughters as mentioned by the mothers is to make them more self sufficient. As the children are tending to go for higher education and also choosing careers of their own there is a high tendency of the daughters to go and stay outside home. So, the mother's logic behind the teaching is to make them self-reliant in a situation where they might have to do their own work by themselves. This explanation is throwing a challenge to the core idea of liberal feminism that states that women must focus on their roles as housekeeper more importantly over every other role she plays. The contemporary mothers have mentioned that they are teaching their daughters such small but necessary household chores to help themselves in situations, but they have not mentioned that even not secondarily they want their daughters to be perfect for 'marriage' by knowing all these. This particular point I have analysed as the

opposition to what liberal feminism talks about. It is true that the practice has remained the same, but the logical explanation and rational meaning attached to it has drastically changed. Again, I have to draw the effect of education that these generation mother have to analyse the importance of knowing such basic things over the conventional and patriarchal meanings attached to it. But there is a certain trait of 'gender parenting' can be reflected on the decisions the mothers take in this field.

### **ATTIRE-**

The idea of clothing and dressing the girls have torn the two dominant side of the mothers- the mother and the modern women. The emancipatory feminist ideals help them choose to grow individually, freely. But on the other hand it is only the concern of a mother for the safety of the girls. And the mothers mostly promote and support certain freedom to them but still there is a 'no' in certain placed. And clothing is found to be one of them.

I am okay with the other kinds of choices she takes, but I can never take risks of certain choices that lead her to some risk. And clothing I find is very risky now-a-days. So, this is one particular area where I am very much concerned and strict, if requires to. But I am not sure how long I can stop her. (Rima)

Talking on the choice of the dress type of the daughter, the mother's choices reflect traditionalism, driven by concern.

My daughter's wardrobe is full of cotton, handloom, block prints clothes, acutely placed at one side of the wardrobe. Of course they are my choices... (shilpa)

The most concern was for their daughters to be sexualized hence be at risk. The mothers are talented enough to identify what is hidden and politicized.

As she is very fair, I tell her to choose lighter colour clothes. But mostly she chooses darker colours. As mother I should not say this, but those colours look very beautiful on her. But, it makes her look alluringly attractive and sexualized as well. And yes, I am afraid to let her go somewhere alone in that dress. I am not at all criticizing her choice, but it turns out to be sexualized. (Aditi)

The parent's concern for the colour reflects their helplessness to their daughter's advance choices.

People get mesmerized to see plenty of colours of clothes, but they rarely understand the sheer politicization behind it. There is separate colour for boys,

colour for girls, colour for dark complexion, colour for pale complexion, colours for slim people, colour for fat people, colour for thin people, colour for parties, colour for seasons, colours for sports and the list never ends. There is no one colour that you can say that fits all the purposes and occasions. And then adds the various shades of the colours. Sometimes, it becomes impossible to choose the colour of clothes I want my girl to wear! (Rima)

Every time I go for shopping with her and every time the same conflict comes up. She turns up with a dark coloured shiny dress that I find very bold. And my choice of light coloured comfortable clothes is always boring to her. But, you know what; sometimes I even become so confused to choose among the so many shades of one colour, say blue. I go to buy one blue kurti for her, and I get lost into 13 shades of it. Sometimes, I find her choice is easier than mine because those dresses do not have so many colours at all. (Anindita)

The mothers are found to be concerned and intelligent enough to identify the tricks of printing on clothes. And it is possible for them to identify the politicization behind them as well. This kind of intellectuality can be identified as a dominating trait in the contemporary parenting style of parenting the adolescent girls.

My girl wears a t-shirt at home with a face printed on the front of the t-shirt. It has nothing but two eyes on the two breast pieces; one of them is a winking eye. Now I find it very disturbing. The whole front of the t-shirt had many other places to draw the eyes other than that particular place. (Baishakhi)

These Bengali t-shirt with messages is very common now-a-days, people from all the age wear them. I find the writings very provocative and with full of indications. 'hobe naki!', 'dekhle hobe khorcha ache', 'ami ki jinish, janlei tui finish' are some of them. She finds them so interesting and catchy. I don't know whether people do not understand the meanings of these or they just wear it knowing everything! She is not at all ready to let me interfere in her t-shirt choices. (Aditi)

The girls' response to their mother's intellectuality is found to be casual. They are not at all ready to understand or listen to their mothers 'over-protective', 'exaggerating' (as termed by them) concern for them.

My daughter has 90% of her t-shirts with written messages on them. And I am afraid that the writings are so with hidden meanings." She brought some of them out and showed me. "See, just read them- 'Knock- knock; who's there; be ready, the bombshell is here', 'dekho magar pyaar se', 'Interesting isn't it?' with two arrow marks. These are terribly offensive. I repeatedly told her not to wear them. She says me to chill.(Subarna)

The various politics behind clothes identified by the parent leads them to take up certain strategies. This is the field, where the mothers are in constant flux with their daughters. Such a decision can again be identified as an intellectual usage of policy and power in the parenting style of the mothers for their adolescent daughters.

I try to make her understand that what she wears for comfort while going out with their friends is genuinely jeans, tops, casuals. But that does not look good in any of the family occasions. And she agrees with me. Again, what she wears at home, a loose shirt and a hot pant is not something she should wear while going for a morning walk or evening stroll. (Ahana)

Every occasion has its own essence and has differing flavour of clothes as well. I try to make them learn that and she still agrees with me on this point. So, I can make her wear western along with ethnics as well. (Rima)

I have tried a number of times to make her concern about the choice of clothes that brings risk to them. But she refuses to understand. So, I had to take up this strategy. I separated the clothes from parties (short stylish sequin dresses), to family occasions (marriage, get-togethers, relative's birthdays), to tuitions and hanging out with friends (jeans, tops, palazzos, chinos, long skirts). Still now I am being able to control her in these ways, but I have no clue how long can I be! (Anindita)

The girls' choice of clothing and appearance reflects the concern of the mothers from their position of being a care-giving and protective significant other. The mothers are being very much worried about the choice of globalized clothes by their growing daughters. And they are in huge conflict with their daughters for their choices. Now, being restrictive on someone's freedom of choice, given to them is a very core feature of authoritative mothering. So, here, like authoritative mothers, the mothers of the adolescent girls have been trying to stop the girls from choosing their dressing styles, which are global, exposed, sexualized and alluring. But, these contemporary mothers have found a refined way of practising the same authoritarian mothering style in this particular space. They are dividing the clothes according to the occasions so that their daughters do not always choose to wear party dresses. There is a growing concern in the adolescent girls that the mothers are making use of. The girls are not willing to wear same dresses in frequent occasions. So, they have to buy clothes according to the need of dresses for their occasions. This particular trick of the mothers is also letting them fall into their own traps as well. As the mothers are forcing the daughters to buy dresses other than their choices, they are being forced to let the girls buy dresses of their choices in times as well. So, there is a mutual enforcement that is working in this particular field where both the mother and the girls are willingly participating to draw on each other's benefit. And also they both know very well what politics lie underneath.

## Chapter 3

### Capacity Building, Sexuality and Body Image

This chapter reflects on the second objective of my study- to reflect how the mothers of the adolescent girls are contributing to help their daughters in capacity building, their opinions about the sexuality and what are their attitudes and measures towards the sexuality of the girls and their concern for body image.

- **CAPACITY BUILDING AND AGENCY-**

The idea of capacity building is as per definition is to accomplish and function within a style of living for a person who believes it is logical to live in this way. One of the major choice through which capacity building can be accomplished is giving the girls agency. The contemporary mothers have emphasized on these concept by taking various decisions.

Firstly, they have given their daughter's agency to various fields to emphasize on a positive and rational type of parenting. I have mentioned some of them with the personal quotation of the respondents. On this particular note, I evaluated the responses of the mother into three different degrees. One is the areas where the mother are providing agency to the girls to take their own decisions. The other is the certain instances where they are not giving agency to their daughter. And the third and the most conflicting one is where the mother have no other choice but to provide agency to them. Agency as understood by the respondents is the one's individuality, say and sense of rationality accepted and respected by another individual.

Contemporary middle class mother are supporting their daughters by giving agency to them in various situations. For instance,

Firstly, in the field of education and career, the mothers have given the full freedom to the girls and also supporting them in carrying on their studies in their chosen subjects. They are not only supporting by giving permission, they themselves are involving equally into the field to search for the best place in that line for their girls. And this has been assured by the daughters themselves.

I want to sit for Olympiad and as I told my father about it, he started collecting information for that. My mother and father are very supportive in my education. And they are very keen learners as well as I experienced because my father collected me all the details of the exam within 2 weeks after I expressed my wish. And before that as he confessed, he knew nothing but only the name of the Olympiad exam.” (Aditi's 13 yr old daughter)

Secondly, letting the daughters pursue their career in their choice of line is another instance where the girls are given agency by their mother.



We will always guide her and support her as much as we can in her effort of achieving something greater. I just want my girl to be successful in life through academics or any other. (Tania)

Thirdly, the amount of space the girls are given to enjoy their adolescence by their mother. As the decision taken by the mother to let them hangout with their friends and go to malls and restaurants to have some 'me time' is another example of agency and freedom given to the girls by the contemporary mother.

I let Ahana go out with her friends every alternative Sundays. Mostly they go to the parks and sometimes to a mall. Mostly they go to malls because almost every mall has a food court. So, they can eat together as well. (Ahana)

...the girls need to have a break from their increasing pressure of studies as well. As mother we often fail to take her out for some break because of our busy life. So, I let them go out with friends after regular interval of time. (Baishakhi)

Fourthly, discussing certain family problems with the daughters and to seek their opinion to solve them is another unique approach by the contemporary mother to let their daughters feel to have an equal importance and existence as a family member.

I try to make her feel her presence is important as a family member mostly. Like every other family we do face certain problems on random issues which we discuss with her as well. We let her state her opinion on it. And it is not only she just says and we listen; we listen to it carefully and often find it useful as well. So, the very empowerment of women we talk about, it should start from the family first. (Subarna)

Showing her that she is an equal part of the family, that she has an equal right on the family as individual just as we have is the important things. If we do not acknowledge her how responsible we think she is, she would never understand her duties and responsibilities for the family as well. So I believe it is important to give her agency in certain things, and for the others, explain her where she is wrong. (Tania)

Fifthly, as responsible mother, they understand the negative effect of belittling their daughter after a certain age that can be problematic for the growth of their personalities in future as well. As they are supported by their own significant others to express freely their opinion in certain matters, the mother are also helping the girls aware about their right to speak as well.

I let her participate in discussions, and ask her to say what her opinion is..... I find this is empowering in some ways. (Tania)

Discussing problems with her opens the door for her to believe that she can discuss her problems with me frankly as well. (Ahana)

Sixthly, the decision of not only warning their girls about the existing risks all around, the mother are also making them aware of the possible solution to these problems. This attitude by the mother is also sending an indication to the girls that the mother belief they are individuals capable of escaping a problematic situation. And providing knowledge to them about the safety measures and protection tips from escaping risk situations is also contributing to the capacity building of the adolescent girls. This I will discuss in details under the discussion over capacity building.

The areas where the mother are being restrictive and not providing agency/individuality to their daughters' are- the breaking of the certain grounded rules they have created for their daughters. The rules include- to maintain a strict time schedule while going out (that is to be back at home by 9 pm), informing the place and people they are around. Though they believe to be liberal or permissive mother, they prescribe strict punishment for the breach of these grounded rules by their daughters. But the punishments are more intellectual forms moral punishments, and certainly not any kind of physical punishment.

I have set a ground rule that she must come back to home by 8.30 pm in the evening. And I put a condition that if she breaks it once, I won't stop her from going out that would be rude. Rather I would accompany her everywhere from the next time. (Anindita)

However, the only area where the mothers are found to be helpless but to provide agency to their daughters is the girls' choice of clothing and appearance.

My daughter is a one hand ahead of all these. She prefers to go to malls to buy clothes. When she enters the clothing section, first she picks up 6-7 dresses and then asks me which one/two to buy. I have no other choice but to select from them only or else she won't buy any single cloth. Also she has strictly said me not to buy her dresses without accompanying her. (Baishakhi)

There is a clash between the two dominant alter egos of the mother, the mothers that play the key role. Those are the feminist ideals of the mother that girls should be equally free and independent and the motherly concerns. They are determined not to use their power positions to curb their daughters' agency. So, they have tried with various tricky way outs to stop their daughters to become a victim of the pre-maturely sexualized dress culture. But they have admitted that they were not successful.

The last thing they tried is to aware the girls about the politicization and hidden tricks of sheer consumerism behind the designs of the clothes. But their daughters come out to be desperate enough to continue dressing in such ways even after knowing about the risks.

My mother thinks I don't understand the politics behind the clothes. I do. And still I choose to dress and appear like that because I feel confident in that. (Ahana's 14 year old daughter)

And the contemporary mothers are mature enough to understand that trying to stop their daughters by using their power positions will turn it worse. So, all they have to do is to worry about their daughters' safety.

I could have treated my daughters the same way as I was treated as a daughter. But, here is the difference. I have the rationality to judge which action provides a better solution to the problems. I have learned to work on my logic, which my mother never did. They always handled the situation believing them to be at a superior power position. But I won't do the mistake. I won't use my power on her... (pauses) unless I have to. Co-operation with her is good until she takes it as submission and takes the advantage of it. (Baishakhi)

By "...unless, I have to" she meant are the situations where she finds it is risky for her.

Here I have noticed that how the adolescent girls of 21<sup>st</sup> century are intelligent and stubborn enough to earn their agencies as a free individual to have their own choice of look and dress from their mother.

At times, when I refuse her choice of western clothes, and I try to bring up one pretty good convincing replacement for her, the situation turns out to be utterly embarrassing. By the time, I turn up with one replacement she brings up her new three sequin choices. And I have no other option but to be convinced by her or else she would throw tantrum inside the store. (Tania)

The concept of agency is very much highlighted in the method of studying childhood by American Sociologist William A. Corsaro. Corsaro has used an incredible method of observing childhood and relate development to it. This particular method of interpretive reproduction is very different from that of the previous methods that the early socialization theories have talked about. The early socialization theories like the Piaget's Cognitive development theory, Eric Erikson's theory, Sigmund Freud's psycho-sexual development theories and more, have dealt with different problems, but there was one thing very common in them. All these theories have considered the child as a passive individual, who mugs everything that is taught to them by others, especially the significant others. Even when it comes to be associated with cultural inflow, the children were expected to be following the cultural norms as they were taught to. But Corsaro was the first person who tried to study the childhood from a different direction. He, in his interpretive reproduction approach, considered child as an active social actor, who not just imbibes what is being learnt to him/her, but with its own understanding and interpretation to it. He focused mainly on how the child participates and creates their peer cultures. This idea of interpretive reproduction approach from peer culture is extracted and applied it to the method of

parenting. It has made it easier to justify the mothers' decision to provide agency to their adolescent girls. Corsaro when addressed the children as active social actors, the children were given the chance of free access to their actions in their peer group. This can be identified with the concept of agency. And the mother also, through their contemporary type of mothering, focus on providing agency to their adolescent girls. They are giving freedom of choice to their daughters in many areas. Not only that, they are also making them aware about the existing risks that might happen to them along with the kind of precautionary measures to fight or avoid such situations. Agency as per its definition is not just to have the freedom of choice, but also is to know one's capability to act accordingly in any situation. As the girls are still not adult and are not expected to be aware of their own capabilities, the mothers are playing a major role in making them aware about the situations and their corresponding actions. This whole concept of capacity building in the adolescent girls can be reflected with the idea of positive mothering. Here also, Foucault is inevitably relatable. Creating awareness is always a part of providing ideas about possible happenings and consequences. And such is nothing but to give knowledge to someone about certain things. Once the girl has the awareness of the situations or the vulnerability of the situation, she is empowered already. She is advanced in assuming the situation, identifying the problems and act accordingly. Now no doubt such effort to put emphasis on the capacity building of the adolescent girls is again out of the concern for safety. It is very important to have concern, but at the same time, it is very important to know the effective measures of expressing the right execution of concern as well. And that is where the skill of the mother lies. And these contemporary middle class mothers are playing their role of responsible mother in the best ways by providing the important information in the most effective way possible. But again, here is a little concern that comes up. Though the mothers are making their adolescent girls fully aware and prepare for the indecent situations, but they hardly are letting them into situations that might turn out to be indecent. To save them from all these situations, then have put restriction on their movements, appearances and many more things that can fruitfully invest to the situation. Having knowledge is half the power, but the rest of the power remains in its execution. To evaluate her capacity and the effectiveness of the safety measures, one needs to have proper implementation of the strategies as well. In this field the mothers are becoming illogical, being blinded by her emotionality and motherly concern for her adolescent daughters. If one never experiences how to execute the knowledge in practical situations, the knowledge becomes passive and ineffective. So, as a result the mother should be a little more brave, loosen their restrict surveillance on the girls, let them grow to face situations positive handling to which will inculcate self-confidence and self-reliance as well.

Capacity building includes the awareness of risk and prevention to be taught by the parents to the adolescent daughters. The mothers are playing the role of a very responsible mother who are striving to make their daughters aware about the existing risks and dangers that are lurking everywhere.

Media plays a very important role when it is about creating awareness. I take help of media and newspapers to make awareness about the risks. Risks have always been there. But the awareness was not. In this time, the everyday incidents taking place- I feel it is the first priority to teach my girls about these incidents. At least knowing about these things can let her fight in such situation, than being a victim (Soumi)

I utilize the time I spend with her when I am home. I do not only tell her about the situations; rather I tell her why she needs to know about this. Once something happens you cannot change. And I am afraid of the mental trauma she will have forever. So, I try to educate her in these areas so that she can at least try to fight these situations than simply becoming a victim to it. (Rima)

Not only just making them aware, but also providing them with certain precautionary measures as well to handle them situations if they unfortunately fall into one of them. And there is another positive thing that has changed- that the mothers are creating awareness to the daughters by giving each minute details of it. The primary focus of the mother to make their daughters identify the situation is a unique effort.

The very first thing she needs is to identify a situation that she is being violated. Rape, physical molestations are more intense crimes and are well aware. But the small daily issues that we all faced/face in our everyday life. These are risks too. I try to explain her several situations like being touched on the private parts, repetitive touches to any body part, being grabbed or pushed by anyone, being looked at in a way that creates an uneasy feeling, which can be equally provocative and abusing as well. (Ahana)

I have made her aware about the harassment situation long back when she was 7 years old or somewhat around. She was grabbed at her butt by a stranger... but she told me that later. I was horrified first to think about it. So, by that time I started telling her about these harassment situations she has faced. Though harassment can occur to anyone irrespective of one's sex/gender, but still there are certain risks that the girls are openly more vulnerable to be a victim of. I am afraid to think of a situation like that. But I have to be prepared and make her prepare to handle it as well. (Subarna)

There is another ground-breaking change in capacity building that has been practiced by the contemporary mothers of the adolescent girls is to make her aware about every form of crime, criminals, crime prone places; which include the domestic violence as well. Till the last generation, it was quite impossible to even think that familiar faces and safest places can be criminalized as well. But the contemporary mothers are breaking barriers by acknowledging the unaccepted reality and making the girls aware of that.

umm...it was difficult to say this to her, but I had to. Whatever going on around, everyday news reflects on them. And after seeing much news of children being violated by their familiar ones, I was worried. So I told her that if she finds anyone's touch uncomfortable, even if it is a relative or a familiar one, she must let me know. I know there will be a problem if any one of my relatives comes to know about it, but I cannot take risk. (Ahana)

I told her not to go very intimate or close to any of the relatives. If she finds any of the relative's activity weird, then I told her to protest against it. If that does not stop, let me know about it. This might sound weird, and to some even wrong. But I had no other choice. (Soumi)

Not only just awareness, the mothers are also indicating that they will always support their daughters. But it is not only the concern to aware, the parents are being responsible to provide them certain precautionary or preventive measures as well.

I have said her to carry her bag at the front whenever she is travelling in public transport. These will act as a shield and protect her from being touched or grabbed by her breasts. In situations where she is being continuously stalked by a person and it is causing uneasiness to her, I told her to stare back. Because that causes uneasiness to the person sometimes and he might look away. But there is no guarantee that this will help..... But at least she could try. (Anindita)

I let her to carry folding sticks and pepper sprays with her. She won't use it unless she needs to. But she can always carry for her safety. (Priya)

Some parents are providing importance to the more conventional means of protection.

I have admitted my daughter to karate classes and she is learning since class 3. I think this is her advantage that can help her protect herself and others around. (Rima)

- **SEXUALITY-**

Sexuality is found to be as difficult to discuss as that of clothing as discussed with the mothers. But the mothers have taken initiative to discuss about it to their daughters and create awareness. While spending time with the daughters, the mothers discuss about the various changes and feelings that she might be having/ will happen. Their discussion includes taboo topics like sex and virginity. The mothers are being very much rational as they can understand that discussion on such topics will give them a knowledge that she will need for the rest of her life.

Educating their daughters about the normal biological action of sex is what the mother's find an important issue to be addressed, which none of the previous generation middle class mother have ever bothered to talk about to their daughters.

My daughter is 15 and she is having a boyfriend. Though I did not want to talk to her about sex now, but I had to because of her safety. I know this age is very sensitive, young people are very much emotional and edgy at this time. So, I am worried that any sudden decision might not waste the charm of her entire life. I had to talk to her about the act of sex, and mainly the safety measures. Though there is least chance she ends up having sex with her boy friend. But still, precaution is better than cure. Anyways she will know about this even if I am not telling her about this. But as a mother I thought I should. (Soumi)

The reason behind such an open and progressive step of talking to their daughters about the most taboo topic of the society is again driven by the motherly instincts only- the concern of safety for their daughters.

I know she discusses about sex with her friends and she is more comfortable there. When I tried to talk with her, she told me that she is growing up, she knows about it and she will ask me anything she needs to know. But all the information she is getting from her friends or people of her own age is very vague. I want her to know this sensitive issue from someone who will not be giving them inappropriate or unnecessary information. (Tania)

As they have been a teenager, they are aware of the kind of activities their daughters might involve into that can make a lot of difference. They are playing a key role as more a care giver than a mother to make their daughters understand that whatever change is going through them, is normal, happens to everyone, including their mothers and there is nothing to be afraid of. One of such issue they have emphasized is menstruation.

First I asked her if she has heard anything about this before from anyone because this is one very common topic to be discussed among the school groups. She said she has heard the name of it from her friends and she knew nothing more than the blood. I gave her as much biological detail as she can understand. But rather explained her how it feels, what happens, what she is going to see every minute details of this. And I repeatedly told her not to be afraid of because it is normal and it happens to every girl after a certain age. (Anindita)

But yes, the concern they have expressed for talking openly about sex to their daughters is to make them aware of the choices they make. Because the mothers know that the action of sex is associated with many irrevocable changes, including the concept of virginity and the mother are even talking to their daughters about virginity too.

She is adolescent and this is the time usually everyone discovers their sexuality. And along with that, she is about to feel and explore many other feelings one of which is to be sexually active. I myself got to know the term virginity when I was in college. But as these girls are growing faster and are more advanced than were we in our adolescence; it is important to let them know about these things before. Anyways, she will get to know about it later, but to let her know about this now is to keep her safe. (Subarna)

We have a wrong conception that virginity is lost once we have sexual intercourse. My girl learns dancing. I learned from internet that in dancing and gymnastics, there are certain rigorous steps like stretching, splitting. Practicing those in a regular basis can rupture their hymen too. And in that way she can also lose her virginity without being sexually active. I explained her whole thing in the elaborate manner. And I would be glad if she let her friends also know about this, because this breaks the social glass of purity attached to this concept of virginity. (Priya)

See all the terms- sex, sexuality, and virginity are related to one another. So, when I was discussing about the sexuality to her, all these popped up in our conversation. The reason I wanted to let her know specifically about virginity is because, this is something that you once lose, can never regain. I know she will be having boyfriend later on, and will be in relations. But I do not want her to do something without having knowledge of it. As virginity loses with the first attempt of being sexually active and having first sexual intercourse, I think it is important for her to know about it before she chooses to lose it. (Tania)

From this conversation one can find how much the mother is providing equal emphasis on safety and her choice, which is a part of providing agency to her.

However, none of the mother have agreed on asking their daughters whether they have had already experienced sex or not and they kind of ignored on talking of that. SO, there is a gap between creating awareness and accepting the reality, where the mothers are stuck in between.

Giving agency to the girls is equally accepting their decision about their personal life and respects it. So even if the mothers are worried about their young daughter's sex life, they are stopped by their open mindedness and feminist ideals of giving freedom of choice to the daughters as individuals.

As a parent, I feel it is my duty to let her know about everything important in life. So, I talk to her about everything. But just because I am her mother, I do not have right to judge her personal choice, I might not accept as well. So, I will be having argument. But as I have given her freedom to many fields, she



would use it to rationalize her choice. I will be in my position, she will be in her;....but the only thing I want her is to be safe.(Ahana)

Now the conventionality rises as the concept of sexuality and acceptance of various kinds of sexuality comes up. The very first thing to mention here is my respondents have referred to the concept of 'sexual practices' as sexuality. When it was to talk about the various kinds of sexuality other than the conventional one, and especially about homosexuality, the general opinion of the mother was impressively advanced.

We have long been living in a society where heterosexuality is legalized as the only legal sexuality of people. But, sexuality is not something that can be imposed from outside. It is an innate feeling that everyone discovers at certain times, mostly in adolescence. As I have gone for higher studies in history I know that there are full of historical evidences of homosexuality around the whole world. Something that exists in the society so abundantly cannot be a curse or a fault. So, I support and am very happy for the recent decriminalization of the section 377. (Priya)

But, when it came to the acceptance of any other kind of sexuality explored by their daughters, it was back to the middle age and hence not accepted at all.

In middle class families like ours, it will never be fruitful or acceptable any other form of sexuality than the other. My daughter hasn't explored her sexuality yet, of course, she hasn't told me, But if she does and it is homosexuality, there will be a big problem. (Tania)

There was an interesting finding where two mother expressed that even if they are ready to accept any kind of sexuality their daughter discovers to have, they don't know how to fight with the society and the relatives and keep supporting them.

Even if I am okay with her discovery of her sexuality to be homosexual, but I do not have any idea how to fight others and the society. The relatives will never be accepting this. And this will make the situation and relations worse. If I cannot provide support and protection from others for her choice and for being herself, that would be wrong. So, even if I am willing to accept, I can't because I have no idea how to fight against every other thing that is against it. (Ahana)

So even if homosexuality is legally decriminalized in the society, it is way too far for the people to accept it as normal and other than a just a crime. So, here again we can see how the conflict between the two alter egos in the modern mother play important role. The liberating opinion about sexuality is what the mother are expressing from the modern feminist position, while the un-

acceptance of any kind of sexuality other than the conventional one is the exact point of view from the position of a mother. (Subarna)

However, the mother is always concerned for their daughter to become sexualized. Somehow, the unwilling acceptance of the choice of dresses of their daughters can still be justified by saying that there is a chance of change in the choice. As the young girls are exposed and driven by the global culture, they are following the trend. If there is a change in the trend, there will be a change in their choice as well. But a part of sexuality is to choose a partner to get involved with sexual activities; and this is something that is innate; it neither can be influenced, nor can be imposed forcefully from outside. So, the acceptance of the conventional sexuality and strict rejection of the other is a sheer example of typical mediocrity of the motherhood where the contemporary mother are actually being modest to their responsibility of creating awareness to the girls about the surroundings, but when it comes to accepting the reality over the conventional one, they are not being ready to face any of the unavoidable social consequences that comes with the acceptance.

Last year, during the decriminalization of Homosexuality, it became a very frequent topic in our house to talk about. I found my mother talking to her friends that this is a very progressive step and this should have done way before. So, one day, I jokingly interrupted and said that now I am relieved that at least I have someone who will be around me if I turn out to be homosexual.... (winks and laughs).. The look she gave me needed no answer. Though, I am not homosexual and that was just for fun. But still! thank god that I am not. Because if I were, I am afraid what they would have done! (Baishakhi's 15 yr old daughter)

But, some parenting strategies are associated with hidden control, but deep down they are sexual oppression only. Here are some of the areas where the sexuality of the adolescent girls have not been supported or acknowledged by their mothers.

Firstly, behavioural adjustments, especially the way the physical gesture of the girls are controlled can be reflected as a controlled practice of sexuality.

My mother is strict when it comes to behaviour. Be it in home, or on street she always tells me to be concern about myself. I might find a person staring at my gesture or posture, which happens quite often. When I ask her what to do in this situation, she tells me to move from the place. (Soumi's 15 yr old daughter)

My mother says me to be very much cautious when I walk around in the street or in the public transport. Sometimes, it is okay. But sometimes when my body

hearts and cannot do it, I have to do it. Every time she is with me in a public transport and I am sitting, she continuously indicate me to pull my top up so that my cleavage doesn't pop up. I am a girl and I will have cleavage and it is very normal. But I find my mother's concern very bad. Then again in another instances, she always tell me sit properly. I cannot sit my legs open because I am a girl. Why? What if my leg hurts when I sit pressing both my legs inward! I tried to explain these problems to her. But she hardly understands and supports me. (Aditi's 13 yr old daughter)

The acceptance of boyfriend of the girls can be identified an advance strategy of the mother. But restricting her from mixing up with the boy or getting intimate is strictly not allowed by the mothers. As the girls are have hit puberty, there are certain bodily and psychological changes that will grow in them. One of them is the inquisitiveness for getting indulged into sexual actions. Mothers have exclaimed to make the girls aware about such changes and given importance to educate them about such happenings. But practically, when it comes to the acceptance of their girls discovering such acts, they are being very much strict rather than showing flexibility. This is concern for the mothers of the girls who study in co-education schools. Even some decisions regarding the hangout of the girl curbs their sexual freedom. They do not let the girls go for overnight excursion is an example.

My daughter has a boyfriend who studies in her same class. I do not have any problem that she has boyfriend. But that is one of the reasons why I am concerned and not willing to send her into overnight excursions arranged from schools. I am afraid that she might get involved into any intimate situation with him. (Tania)

In this particular part where I have interviewed the mothers to talk on their ideas and acceptance of their daughter's sexuality, the responses have come up with a contradictory outcome. To the respondents, the idea of sexuality was very narrow and was as common as in any other layman. They meant sexuality to be the kind of sexual orientation only and their responses were bound within the acceptance and rejection of heterosexuality and homosexuality only. But, the responses that they have given on other contexts have helped me analyse their ideas and link it to the theories I have referred in my study. The mothers have said that they are okay with the girls having boyfriends, about hanging out, about allowing them for school picnics and excursions. But when it comes to night stay in some friend's house or sleepover with their boyfriends, the answer is strictly negative from the mother's side. This partial acceptance of the mother can be referred to the idea of Michel Foucault about sexuality and power. As Foucault has said that a body is the embodiment of the person and emphasizing power on some person is more appropriately said to be power emphasized on the body for disciplining it, this can be reflected in the mother's denial of girls having sleepover with their boyfriends. As the girls have reached their puberty and have gone through many physical changes, including some prime hormonal changes, it is quite natural for them to discover their sexuality and have bodily desires according

to that. Heterosexuality is where a girl involves into a physical relation with the boy which is widely accepted in the society. Though the mother are accepting the heterosexuality of the girls, but are not allowing them to satisfy their heterosexual needs for example like having sex with their boyfriends. This is nothing but to exercise power to their body to punish it for having desires like that, to make the body understand that such desires in this age is not right, which is exactly what Foucault has mentioned. And, the same thing can be identified in an even clearer form is the dejection of homosexuality by the mother in their girls. The girls who have yet not discovered their sexuality, mothers to them are very much restrictive to let their daughters have sleepovers, even with their girl-friends. Because, they have admitted that they are afraid, their girls might discover their interest and satisfaction in a woman body and hence discovers themselves as to be homosexuals. Here again, it is the control over the body that has been exercised by the mother, not to punish it, but to discipline it. Foucault has mentioned that the individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus...on which power comes to fasten. It is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires come to be identified and constituted as individuals.

Also, the idea of sex education, to let the daughters know about the normalcy of the changes is something very progressive. But, here again, the only access to information and nil or least opportunity of scope of experience provided by the mother is somehow again bringing up the concept of exercising disciplinary power to the body and mind as well. As the girls are on the verge of legal maturity, they are making their own ways of satisfying needs of their bodies in different other ways, as per the adolescent girls' statements. And technology is playing a very crucial role in that. Letting them know about the existence of pornography, but not letting them to have access to those or even scolding one to access that is a rudimentary form of discipline applied by the mother which are producing adverse results. With the help of technological advancements, the girls are actually pretending to be obedient to their mothers to keep the situation calm, while accessing the same things without the notice of their mothers.

The mothers' choice to provide important information about sex and sex related taboo topics to their adolescent girl is apparently a very progressive step, as compared to the conventional types of parenting style. But there are two things that need to be kept in mind. The information they are giving to their daughters is out of concern. All the discussions the mothers have mentioned to have with their daughters is just to create awareness in them. The decision of having an open discussion with the daughters about the very normal things in life can be traced down to save the girls from the unexpected consequences of the choices they might have. Here again, the mothers are trying to hold on to their position as superior, hence can be identified to strive to maintain their position as superior to their daughters. However, providing such information is resulting as providing important knowledge to the girls as well, which following Foucault, turns out to be a form of power as well. So creating awareness out of concern is resulting into a flow of power, which again is restricted with power exercised by the mothers when they are not allowing the daughters to have practical access to the knowledge, rather trying to restrict their practice of

sexuality. There is a lot that can be included within this vast concept of sexuality. The mother's acceptance of their daughter's boyfriends but not allowing to have sleepovers with them is a reflection of how, the mother is trying to control the normal bodily desires of the girls with power. Restricting them to choose exposed dresses or body hugging dresses is also a part of curbing their freedom of choice, aiming to discipline their body. Restrictive teaching on behavioural aspects, especially the bodily gestures also an example of how the mothers are exercising power to discipline. All these can be included within this field of sexuality, free practice to which is barred even in 21<sup>st</sup> century by the middle class mother. This strategy is again throwing the mother into the whirlwind of their own decisions of positive mothering. When the girls are questioning about the reasons behind their mothers' decisions, the mothers having no other compatible reason to show, are taking advantage of their power positions and exercising authoritarian mothering strategy of using punitive measures to stop the daughters. This decision to give full access to knowledge and least access to implementation is again throwing the mothering strategies in this field back to the Victorian era. However, here the girls are being benefitted only. Because, whether it is given to them voluntarily or purposely or out of concern, the knowledge has already been acquired by them. And as 'Knowledge is Power', they are making use of those knowledge to satisfy their needs, without even mentioning this to their mothers. And that is where they are becoming powerful. The mothers are striving to save the daughters from becoming visually sexualized by trying to restrict their clothes' choice, but what about their voluntary choice of having discussions on sex and sexuality? Is that strategy of deliberate lectures on taboo topics not sexualizing the daughters? Rather, the second kind of sexualisation is way more vivid and stronger than the former one. The previous one is a temporary one, a trend that is alluring the girls to be sexualized which might change overtime. But the latter one is a discursive one. Having the knowledge of something prohibited is a super power to explore the prohibited field fearlessly. And the decisions of the daughters to dress; appear and look in a sexualized manner even after knowing about the associated risk situations and trouble is also the fruit of the same power and knowledge. And with such bold steps is how the adolescent girls are making use of their agency, even in the situations where they are in conflict with their mothers for such decisions. The adolescent girls are fulfilling their needs, desires but in a so perfectionist way that neither they are facing the problematic consequences, nor are they letting their mother know that they do not obey her rules at all. Foucault saw the construction of sexuality as constituted along three axes- a) the knowledge about sexual behaviours, b) systems of power which regulates the practice of sexual acts, and c) the forms within which individuals are able, obliged and recognise themselves as subject of this sexuality. The knowledge is helping the girl to identify the right choices and decisions over the act. As they identify the system that restricts her to conduct the act, they hardly try to mess with that power by questioning its legitimacy. Rather, they find their own ways of satisfying themselves without any visible breach to the system regulates it. Again, I cannot help but to bring Foucault in;- 'the sexualizing of an infant body, a sexualizing of the bodily relationship between the mother and

the child and a sexualizing of family domain- sexuality was a far more positive product of power than power ever was a repression of sexuality.'

- **BODY IMAGE-**

Body image is one of the biggest concerns in teen age girls. They have this commercialized definition of body image that is mostly provided attention to how one looks.

My daughter started following diet chart from the last 6 months and she was losing weight. She lost all her charm, became skinny and bone-y. (Soumi on her 15 yr old daughter)

I want to be slim. I don't like to have extra flesh on my body. I want to be like the models that you can see in advertisement. You know Priyanka Chopra! Have you seen her body shape? She is so beautiful, curvy, with a perfect body shape. I want to be like her. And I have started following a strict eating to follow that. (Rima's 13 yr old daughter)

The girls' concern of look can be related to their choice of clothing as well. As the girls prefer to choose fashionable clothes that are body hugging, reflecting the body structure of the girls, they have exclaimed to maintain a perfect body shape.

You cannot look fat when you are wearing party dresses. They are to expose your body shape, the perfect hour-glass shape on. You cannot wear an off-shoulder dress if you do not have exposed collar bones. People will laugh when you have a tummy and you wear a crop top. It is not always the party dresses. Rather for almost every dress you need to have a proper body shape. As I go to my friend's birthday parties, they wear party dresses there. So, I have also started wearing. I find I need to lose a little weight to make my look perfect for the dress. (Ahana's 14 yr old daughter)

To maintain body image, the consumption and the choice of food plays very important role. While the girls are choosing to eat as less as they can, to focus on their body weight and look, the mothers are aware how much this will affect the health of the girls.

I support her to be fit and slim. But the way she wants to do it I find very much wrong. You cannot stop consuming food that gives you nutrition and most importantly energy to work. I have repeatedly told her not to compromise with your food, eat proper food. She often skips breakfast. And she is so stubborn you cannot make her force doing something. So I have to come up with new innovative ideas to feed her good, healthy food to maintain both her concern for look and health at the same time. (Subarna)

So, the mothers are coming up with new innovative idea of cooking dishes that are both delicious in taste, have proper nutritious values. They are trying to provide the girls food that serves the purpose of maintaining body weight and at the same time, are tasty that their daughters will love to eat them. And to expertise in these skills, the parents are being challenged to discover their expertise in the field of cooking.

I have started following various you-tube channels to discover healthy food recipes. I have learnt to cook many type of nutritious food which tastes good but does not contain fat. So, after I come home from my job, I spent time watching food recipes and try different dishes frequently. The concern for her food choice has really improved my skill and knowledge about cooking!  
(Tania)

The concern for maintaining a body image is seen to be enhancing with the ages of the girls. The mothers concerns are also shifting as the girls grow up. For the early adolescence, the girls are up to eat spicy fast food regularly.

I don't like eating home cooked food. They taste very dull to the street foods. Those chicken drumsticks and mayo sauce are heaven! (Priya's 12 year old daughter)

However, the concerns for body image of the middle adolescent aged girls are pushing their parents to limits to maintain their health. They have become so conscious that they have almost stopped eating food to maintain a low body weight.

My daughter has made it difficult for me to leave her on the terms they are living. It is terrible to see her food habit. I had to go to a nutritionist. (Soumi)

Body image is an area where the mother and adolescent daughters concern are having a common convergent point. The adolescents girls in the middle class families are striving to reach the virtual portrayal of how a feminine body should look. For this they are compromising their necessary nutrition. The mothers of the adolescent girls are more health conscious for the girls, which eventually force them to be look-conscious for their daughters as well. However, body image is something that can be associated with many things. One of which is the appearance of the body and gestures which the mothers want to be more feminine. But the teaching of repressive movements in the young girls' body is where again, the disciplining is coming into sense. The mothers are trying deliberately to avoid their daughters to look pre-maturely sexualized by restricting their cloth choices. On the other hand, they are concerned with the body proportion and body weight of their daughters as well. However, here is a conflict of choices between the feminist ideals that the mothers have and the practices they are doing in real life. Post modern feminism challenges the very concept of universal femininity while respect and celebrate every individual's unique body shape. It promotes to accept the body one has without body shaming. So, from this point of view, every mother should encourage the girls to be the

way they are, healthy, fat, chubby, slim, thin- instead of investing positive energies in their choice of following a universal body image promoted globally by media. Following Bordo, it can be reflected how these concerns are hyped by media. The commercialization of the food items extensively uses models who themselves are slim but are shown to be eating those. Both ways it is a trap. The early childhood adolescents are falling into the sensuality of the food as they are made to look like. And the middle adolescents are falling for the slim model who are seen in those food ads.



## Chapter 4

### Choice of 'Being' or 'Becoming'

This chapter revolves around the third objective that I have chosen to explore- the decisions the parents are taking to support their girls as an individual 'being' or emphasising them to 'become' what a woman is believed to be. This particular objective emphasises on the parents' belief of whether to raise their girls by following the ideals of conventional idea of women- to be poised, feminine and docile; or to follow the ideals of individuality where the girl does not have to follow certain gender roles to fit herself into the society into her given social position. Rather, she can grow up relying on her own beliefs and choices.

- **ROLE PLAYING-**

The very first emphasis can be drawn on the importance of role playing in the mothers. There are many areas where the mothers are supporting the girls to believe and grow with her individuality. These are the same area that has been discussed under the idea of agency inside objective two. Providing individuality in the fields of choice of education, career, overall as an individual is where the parents are supporting the ideal of being for the girls. But that supports revolves around the education and professions only.

However, in certain specific areas the mothers are intentionally following their daughters to follow the existing gender roles, that means to emphasising on the 'becoming'.

Instructing to maintain proper feminine gestures is what the mothers are emphasizing over the idea of comfort is one of them, that was broadly discussed in under the objective of behavioural teaching and in sexuality. Another such area is emphasizing the girls to maintain certain cultural practices can be traced as how the mothers are emphasizing on the gender roles.

Sometimes, I just don't get my mother. She says good girls do not fake. And then again she tells me to follow something which is a good manner by societal norm, but I do not feel any good about it. But still I have to pretend that I am happy to follow that. This is also faking. So, I am faking to be a good girl turns me to a bad girl ultimately. Then I find it is better to be a bad girl by not following the norms than pretending to be a good girl by following the norm! I do not like to touch the feet of my elders. I find it belittling myself. But every time there are elders in my house, my mother makes me touch their feet. I do not like it I told her repeatedly. She told me this is an age-old 'sanskar' and I need to follow it. Thus I am being bad to myself. Neither is she respecting my feelings, nor is she letting me value what I feel! (Ahana's 14 yr old daughter)

The teaching of household chores itself is a reflection of gender parenting, where the mothers are carrying on with the practice of teaching their girls about certain necessary household works.

Though their reasoning for such teaching has changed and become more rational, but the practice has remained the same.

Somehow I have found the whole idea of role modelling to be in conflict with the parental strategies the contemporary mothers have come out with. On one hand they are letting their girls to reflect and emphasize on their rational choices. On the other hand, they are trying to uphold the image of a modern woman in front of them.

Firstly, they are emphasising the effect of certain good practices that they believe can help their daughters look up to them.

Honesty, dedication, compassion are the things that she learns from me. At the same time, if I do something negative, she has the equal chance of learning it too. Now I want her to learn some good values for which I have to practice them in front of me. And at the same time I stop myself from doing negative things... like overlooking someone's needs, establishing my opinion by exercising powers, belittling someone no matter how younger she is from my age and many more. Discussing problems with her opens the door for her to believe that she can discuss her problems with me frankly as well. (Anindita)

And at times the girls find it worthy and sometimes worthless as well, as they expressed.

Well, I won't say my mother is a bad role model, but if I were in her place, I would have been more logical. Of course a person is not all good and no flaws. What I like about her is that she has a lot of patience. From listening to my demands in high tone to searching the perfect alternative and convincing dress for me over my choice of clothes to putting unending efforts to convince me that I am wrong I don't know how she does it. But the thing that I do not like about her is, she needs to be more logical of why she should stop me from doing certain things. (Baishakhi's 15 yr old daughter)

There is one thing positive that can be noted is the way the mothers handle conflict situations. Comparing to the respondent's parents ways of handling conflicting situations, the contemporary mothers are way more rational in handling critical situations. And by this way of handling situations, come up their advance, mature and rational type of parenting strategy only.

I believe my daughter is not only a girl, but an individual first. Neither is she a kid anymore who would need me in every single situation. It is quite normal that she is growing opinions of her own and it might clash with mine. I find it is not wise to handle the situation with power and anger. A mutual respect for each other's opinion is the best and effective way to solve it. (Soumi)

There are instances where the mothers have said that they become apologetic to their daughters for behaving in a certain way, which she herself does not believe is right, but eventually reacts.

I try to keep my calm when there is an argument. But at times, I also run out of patience. Or the choices I find risky for her, just to establish my command on her I shout. I know my opinion is better than her, but my way of establishing is wrong. So, I apologize to her for being rude. (Ahana)

Such a gesture of these mothers reflects another important side of contemporary parenting- the priority over the power; the logic over the ego. This is a unique feature of the contemporary parenting style taken up by the mothers of the adolescent girls. It is a way more effective way of handling situations especially in this age, where exertion of power from the parent's position results into worse outcomes.

- **MODERNITY and PROGRESS-**

In evaluating the mother's support to their girls' 'being' or 'becoming', there is another important aspect that is required to be studied. It is the idea of modernity and progress. As the respondents are contemporary, independent and rational mothers, it is very important to reflect on their ideas and beliefs over these two concepts and their application of these two ideas in their parenting styles of their adolescent daughters.

Progressive to the mothers is to evolve gradually into a better position in something than the previous stages. As the mothers reflect their visions on the ideas that make their parenting progressive are quite a few.

Identifying their daughters more as an active individual than a child can be mentioned as one instance.

In our childhood, anytime we wanted to talk about something, my parents said me that I am a child and I do not know anything. But, I do not do that with her. She is free to talk with me about anything, in any way. She might shout on me, she might not, but I have to give her importance that she needs to be given important. I take her to shopping where I need to choose something. I always take her opinion and try to maintain it. I believe these small things can make a big impact. (Rima)

The ideas of supporting the being over the becoming are a result of progressive, rational type of parenting. But the instances where the mothers are stick to the ideals of becoming over being are where the conventionality of becoming lies. And the main reason why the mothers are failing to support the complete sense of their daughter's 'being' is constant concerns over pertaining to tradition and expectations which can be considered as the apparent reasons of the mother's

decision. The practices they are continuing to exercise is traditional, but the reason of practising out of limited choice is the concern of safety.

## Chapter 5

### Overall Parenting Style

This chapter is based on my last objective, identifying the parenting style of the adolescent girls. As there are varieties of parenting style to be defined from various aspects, this chapter tries to analyse the mix kind of parenting the contemporary mothers are practising through their choices and decision makings. However, there is no one particular 'pure' parenting style that has been identified to be practised by these contemporary parents. Hence I have defined it as a 'mixed' parenting style that includes a few unique characteristics and some strategies of the parenting style.

**Intellectual:** As parents it is very important to be with the child. But the contemporary mothers are mostly (6 out of 9) found to be associated with professions that is binding them to spend maximum amount of time outside their home. But these parents are not leaving any stone unturned when it comes to the question of their duty as mothers as well. Being associated with professions they are getting lesser amount of time to spend with their daughters. But the amount of time they are managing, they are trying to utilise it by emphasizing on the quality of the time over the quantity of it.

I try to keep engaging with her verbally. It can be daily talks on every day routine that we share with each other. Or it can be even a random topic that we start talking about. (Aditi)

I spend at least 1.30 hour after dinner with her. I usually avoid discussing any topic that might give rise to confusions. Some good time I try to spend. But I keep the new channel in the TV on. This I can utilize when there is a risk news pops up, which happens almost daily; to keep her attention to it. This acts as a very useful way to discuss important issues. (Ahana)

Such an approach to provide importance to their child even after they have grown into adolescent has two sides of parenting. One is a positive one where they are trying their best to involve with the girls as much as possible in very little time.

I play chess with my daughter every night after dinner. This I think is very helpful to enhance her intelligence and logic. And while playing, we keep the conversation on. (Baishakhi)

However, they are utilizing this time to satisfy their concern mothers to discuss on important topics to the girls that they believe are important for them to know. Situation handling and safety measures are some of those.

The increasing risk situations for the girls have become so frequent that almost every conversation involves one or the other of these issues. To teach and

discover their ideas, I keep making situations and tell her that what would she do to come out of these situations. Asking on what she will do if she is alone in the house. She said she will keep the doors and wide windows locked. (Subarna)

Coming on to the negative side, their concern for the girls of these parents are becoming to some extent invasion to the life of the girls. As the girls are growing up, they are quite normal starting to have a personal life.

Even if I lose it, my mother has nothing to do in that. In fact none has anything to do with that. She has informed me about this is very good choice. But I think I will be on my own. (Aditi's 13 yr old daughter)

And this consideration to become free enough to have a taste of the personal life is again granted by the parents only.

You can stop a 10/12 or less aged girl from buying a revealing dress by convincing her that it does not look good on her. But, the same is not effective enough for a teenager. If you try to say it, she starts arguing by saying from which side it looks bad on me? I still can stop her from buying certain dresses. But it becomes difficult when some of her friends buy such a dress and their mothers buy them. (Tania)

Another instant for this is the mother's tricky decision concerning the clothing of the girl.

Every occasion has its own essence and has differing flavour of clothes as well. I try to make them learn that and she still agrees with me on this point. So, I can make her wear western along with ethnics as well. (Anindita)

**Caring-** No matter how much busy they are in life; they never compromise their professional duties with their personal ones. And one of the most important personal duties is to take care of the child. Though the girls have become adolescent, the mothers are still being caring for them. This is somehow unknowingly practicing a form of gender parenting only.

**Possessive-** However, the excessive amount of caring is often leading them to possessive parents. They are often found to practise certain things that are making them possessive and over protective to their daughters.

I support my mother's effort to let me know about the sexualities. She is doing her best as her mother. But she should not be so possessive about me. I know the risks I have around. But if she protects me every time, it will not help me to grow. (Subarna's 13 yr old daughter)

As she is letting me know about the risk and the situation handling, she should rely on me to see whether I can handle the situations or not. I find her protective when she talks about the risks with. But when she restricts my movement and choices being concerned for that, I find it very much over protective. (Anindita's 14 yr old daughter)

I would love to be like my mother- kind, caring, compassionate and sympathetic; but certainly not over protective. (Aditi's 13 yr old daughter)

**Concern-** The main reason where care turns out to be overprotection is concern. Now there are more than enough reasons for these middle class mothers to be concerned about their daughters. Concerns of sexuality, clothing, - these are the main areas where the mothers are found to be concern for their daughters. And the main reason behind their concern is the safety of the daughters. The consciousness for the health of the girls has turned these mothers to come up with strategies as well.

Sexuality- She is adolescent and this is the time usually everyone discovers their sexuality. And along with that, she is about to feel and explore many other feelings one of which is to be sexually active. I myself got to know the term virginity when I was in college. But as these girls are growing faster and are more advanced than were we in our adolescence; it is important to let them know about these things before. Anyways, she will get to know about it later, but to let her know about this now is to keep her safe.(Tania)

Clothing-My girl wears danglers and pencil heels. Her new obsession is to look like a lady and no more just a girl. In a society, where there are people who can even get provoked by one's dress to do something heinous with her, how can I say that a 13 year old girl looking like a lady is safe. Besides, her make ups while wearing westerns are too edgy. She might think of looking very good, but such looks are even dangerous for people who might find an indication of permission through that. Then again how can I convince her not to wear, look or dress up like that when all her friends I find wearing those! (Priya)

**Gendering-** The mothers are educated, employed into paid jobs and cultural; but that does not certainly stop them from practicing gender parenting. The main areas where they are emphasizing gender parenting mainly the household chores and the behavioural teachings. Though the practices of household chores are being rationalized by the parents that they are teaching them because they want them to be independent; but the practices themselves have hidden practice of gendering only. And about the behavioural teaching, the same logic is concerned. The mothers have come up with better reasons, but they still haven't overcome the gendering practices; and unconsciously, they are practicing that only.

**Majorly Authoritative-** Among all the four parenting style explained by Baumrind, this is the most effective, right and fruitful type of parenting. According to the characteristics of the authoritative parenting style, the parent are- providing freedom to their daughters to enjoy adolescent life, treating their daughters more as an individual active person than a child, explaining the rules rather than enforcing them, encouraging, respecting the daughters and many more.

...There are so many things to learn from this generation youth and adolescents, that sometimes I also get impressed by her thought skills and rationality. Another thing that I have discovered through the course of time- the more you talk louder to them, the more you order them to follow your opinions, the more she becomes stubborn and does the same thing repeatedly. So, establishing power over her is of no benefit these days. If you need to win an argument with her, you need to be logical. (Tania)

I have a rule that I have set for her safety. I told her to inform me wherever she goes. First she reacted when I told her for the first time. But I explained this to her. If she is somewhere and some problem takes place, I would be having no clue. But if she informs me where she is, I can rush to the place as soon as possible if something bad happens to her. I am not saying that something bad will happen, neither that I want. But just in case it happens, this will help her. (Subarna)

**Partially/ at times Authoritarian-** There are times when responses to certain situations and decisions of the mothers are found to be authoritarian. The area where their parenting strategy is found to be authoritarian is the ground rules. The intention of the mothers is not to support the authoritarian parenting style. But there are some areas where they finds the power that authoritarian parenting has can help improving the situations. Certain ground rules that they have set for their daughters will seem to be seen as authoritarian, but as they explain the rules to them, this makes them authoritative parent. But the power that has been infused in this rules are very much authoritarian in nature.

**Responsible-** The over growing concern and the risk situations for the girls everywhere is forcing these mothers to work on their parenting strategies to be more responsible. The enormously enhanced responsibility of the mothers as parent can be reflected in the following areas- sex education (quote), risk awareness (quote), precautionary measures (quote).

**Positive-** This is one characteristic that is abundantly available in the contemporary parenting style of the mothers. Positive parenting strategies include certain characteristics that are all reflected in all the choices of these mothers' choices. Giving feedback, Support, parental involvement can be identified as one of them. The idea positive is infused in the practices that the mothers are emphasizing. It is positive in the sense where the logic and the reason behind this



is something that makes the understanding better. This parenting can be defined as contributing to a construction of a child that revolves around the promotion of a loving, co-operative relationship respecting the child's individuality and focusing solely on guidance not compliance. It is a 'wise, timeless and kind' style of parenting that teaches, instead of making demands; seeks to understand instead of labelling, boosts up instead of knocking down. Most of all, it is an effective parenting style in which the mother themselves slips into the shoes of what they want to see their children become.

I never use mobile phones while cooking. I use this instance as a reference when I tell her not to touch the mobile or engage into something else when she is studying. (Anindita)

I try to keep my calm when there is an argument. But at times, I also run out of patience. Or the choices I find risky for her, just to establish my command on her I shout. I know my opinion is better than her, but my way of establishing is wrong. So, I apologize to her for being rude. I know that her stubbornness and arrogant reaction is a characteristic of her age. But, I am not a teenager; I should control the situation in a more convincing way because I am expected to. (Priya)

She first got an idea of this quelling last year after watching a you-tube video. And she loved it. So, when she asked me to bring quelling papers, and the special gum, I brought them to her. By now she has gifted all of her cousins, aunts and friends one pair of quelling earring she has made. I am searching for an institution where she can learn more accurately from professionals. It is an amazing skill and art and as a mother, it is my duty to go an extra mile to her to appreciate her talent. (Subarna)

**Modernist-** This is a characteristic that can be reflected to the modernist ideals of the mothers for being 21<sup>st</sup> century women. They believe in certain things that they are trying to inculcate and teach to their daughters as well. The choices of education that leads to a better future and support for career can be identified as modern choices.

She can move and establish herself in life in any line she chooses; I will always be supporting her. (Soumi)

It is quite difficult to categorize the parenting style of the contemporary parents for their adolescent girls into one particular type as it includes varieties of aspects from different fields. Some of them are even contradictory to the others, but yet found to be practised. There are

positive and negative traits of this whole parenting category as well. But it can be encapsulated that the sides that does not let the parenting style to be completely modern are the ones that concerns of the girl's safety. On the other hand, the positive outcomes that have improved the position of this 'flexible' parenting style from the other 'concrete' parenting styles mentioned in theories are again the concerns. So the concern plays a very important role in the contemporary mother's parenting strategies for their adolescent girls which is placing parenting style into a contradictory position of being rational at times, and being conventional at the same time.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

Evaluating the contemporary parenting style for the adolescent girls by their educated middle class mothers have been an intense one. I would first mention the things that have actually got better than the parenting styles of the last generation.

Contemporary parenting of the adolescent girls has shown a stronger bond between the daughters and the mother, be it the morals of the mothers to be friendlier with their daughters or the risks and the fear of victimization of contemporary time that has driven them to be more close to their daughters, at this age. No one particular kind of parenting can encapsulate the essence of contemporary parenting where the mothers are choosing the best patterns to handle the conflicting situations more maturely. They have become more accepting to their daughters as care givers than being reactive as mother. The use or the misuse of power superiority as guardians is gradually fading away, and a mutually beneficial friendlier aspect of parenting is gradually making space in the contemporary middle class families.

Contemporary parenting has now turned into a priority relation over a power relation. In this mix positive parenting style, the young girls are given space to speak, given agency to choose, personify and given freedom to establish their position as individual first and then a child. Mother' are breaking the barriers of shyness and conservatism and talking to their daughters about important things. If we see the last generation parenting, mother curbed certain kinds of freedom of the young girls in order to save them from being victimized to certain risks which were equally present in the society. But, today's mothers are being compassionate. They are worried for their young girls, but they are not snatching the opportunities from them to enjoy their adolescence. They are creating awareness to their daughters about the existing risks and dangers, but to save them from that, they are providing possible solutions instead of keeping them locked in houses.

The parenting style of the contemporary mother has led them to be more inclined towards justice. So, till the last generation parenting, forget about accepting but the mother never even mentioned that there can be violence inside the home itself, where the perpetrator is one of the family members. But, in contemporary times, the mother are not only just explaining to their daughters that risk and violence has no specific place, no specific face- it can be caused by anyone and everyone, but also tend to support their daughters by staying beside them and doing everything to bring justice to them. The fear of victimization in the contemporary mother is not necessary, but they are actually being prepared for the worst. And they are also preparing their daughters for any kind of situation which might not happen to them, but has the highest chance to happen.

However, such wider aspect of parenting has also led the mother to face certain new issues that the mothers of the last generation have never faced. As my respondents were from middle class families and they were higher educated, they were more aware of certain situations and their opinion about certain issues had logic. Logic drives them to be a rational mother, which they all are striving to become. Being liberal and compassionate has led them to certain situation which they are finding difficult to handle. Giving agency to the adolescent girl, placing them first as an individual then their daughter have given certain power to the girls who are using this in situations where they are not given freedom from their mother.

As these mothers are highly valuing the emancipatory ideals, they are trying to inculcate those ideals inside their daughters. These are to be free, to have opinion, to be respected, to protest against something wrong, to have agency and to have capability of establishing oneself as an individuals. But these individuals are mothers at the same time. So, there are two equally dominating alters egos in them- one of an independent woman and the other of a caring mother. And at certain situations, their dotting mother-side is causing direct conflict to their feminist ideals.

The awareness they are creating to their daughters about the vulnerability of the risks around her in the contemporary time and the possible solutions of the situations is helping the girls in their capacity building. But, ceasing their daughters to do things that might throw them into those risk situations is a daunting ideal of motherly concerns. And these are the places where their independence ideals are coming back as boomerang to them and are being challenged by their daughters themselves. When the daughters are asking them if they are creating awareness to them about risks and the also the ways to escape such situations or the possible prevention measures, then why being worried and stopping them to be completely free, they have no answers. When their daughters are asking that as they have given them agency to choose education, to choose career and many other things, then why being orthodox when it comes to the choice of dresses, outlook? The mothers have no answer.

These unavoidable circumstances are making these mothers question and get torn between the responsibility of their motherhood and the feminist ideals they believe in. But then again they are fully aware that such situation where their decision is being questioned by their daughters is also the result of their choices of giving them more space, more power. There is a conflict within the mothers themselves. The areas where they are giving freedom to their daughters are where they are being proud to be a feminist mother. But where their motherly concerns are becoming prominent over their modern feminist ideals, apart from being questioned by their daughters, they also doubt their own beliefs. The contemporary type of healthier, friendlier parenting is somewhat they felt is important for the time, but somewhat it is out of their choice as well.

Most of my respondents belonged to nuclear families where it is the mother and the children who live. So, having no other person to judge their role as mother, it was easier for them to take up certain modern ideals to raise their adolescent daughters up. But, it is again a concern for the

mothers who live in joint families. Even if they are willing to accept changes, they do not know how to survive and live with those changes in the family and in the society. No matter what, they can think beyond society, but they still are not sure to think out of society. That is why there were mother who were willing to accept their daughters as homosexuals, but then again are concerned if they do so, there is a whole society to fight against, but first their own family. They neither can flourish, pass their full ideals of independence to their daughters; nor can they blatantly follow the motherly ideals which they were mothered through. And 'prioritizing her feminist self over her universal motherhood will leave her being a burning example of a social pariah'.

The contemporary mothers of the middle class family are striving to find better ways to mother their adolescent girls. Somewhere I found there is a communication gap as well, especially in the areas of choice of clothing of the daughters. The mothers are being concerned that certain choice of clothes will cause them to fall into indecent situations of risks. But when talking with the girls, they said they are also fully aware of the existing risks that might occur when they choose to look like that. And it is still their choice. Whenever the mother is restricting the girls from their choices, the girls starts attacking their ideals. If the mothers could understand that the girls are choosing to dress and appear like that being aware of the risks, their concerns could have lessened. But there is a deeper stress running underneath these. As today's mothers are intelligent enough, they understand that the choices of the young girls to appear like that is still their choice, even after knowing about the risks that might cause to them for such choice. But it is the motherly concern that is driving them to do anything to stop them from being victimized of undesired situations.

The mothers are trying to set the parenting styles in such a way where they can justify their daughter's choices as teenagers because they have been through this same stage. And again can justify their decisions as mothers as well. But, the conflict they are having between being totally modern besides being a mother is still inconvincible to them. So, these contemporary middle class mothers are having a tough time parenting their adolescent daughters. At the position of being a mother, they are appreciated by their daughters at times. But at some other times, they are badly criticized for their decisions. And they are also facing a conflict between being an individual progressive woman and a mother at the same time. But, in the end it is the motherly concerns they are not being able to rationalize with their certain feminist ideals.

There is another part that cannot be unseen or omitted, that this progressive, positive parenting style is somehow feeding the idea or notion of gendered parenting only. If we reflect to the mother's routine, most of them go to their jobs, do their jobs properly as a professional, comes back home and then fulfil the duties of a home maker. They express how much they are putting effort to balance both and compared to that, the fathers are being associated only at the profession outside home. As the mothers are focusing more on the role modelling part, then unconsciously it is a type of gendered parenting only. They are putting example on how a woman can be successful in the outer realm, but is being perfectionist at the household as well.

Her success in outer world is not letting her keep any shortcoming in her role inside the household only.

This is what can be reflected by the idea of liberal feminism that ultimately supports the fact that women must be efficient homemakers. As per liberal feminism says the efficiency in the market and productivity of the market should include the women power and the use of women's capability. But, its sole focus was how women should be raised as feminine as possible. The contemporary mother's choice of their girls to be feminine in certain behavioural aspects is another side where the idea of gendered parenting can be reflected. And there is a hidden flow of the same notion in the teaching of household chores to the daughters. The only difference that stands is because the mothers are educated and are intellectually more advanced, they have come out with a logic that justifies their practice or choice of such teachings but fails to change the age old notion that is being flowed throughout the practice of the teaching. In this parenting style study, the participation of the father is very much missing. So, the concept of 'intensive parenting' is lacking. A role where the mother is being successful in both home as well as in work, an absence of involvement of the parents in such parenting style is also reflecting the practice of 'Androgynous Parenting' as well, where the mothers are playing both the roles efficiently, without the help of the fathers. From their responses, it was clear that there is hardly a need for the fathers to be concerned about the parenting of the adolescents. The mothers are doing all the jobs single-handedly.

There is an axis around which two things are constantly and complementarily revolving. One is empowerment and the other is safety. The contemporary mothers are torn between these two. The belief as an independent woman they have is pushing them to empower the girls as individuals, free, active social agents in the society, where as motherly concern about safety of the girls in the frequent vulnerable situations is holding them back to cross the line. The positive parenting strategies that these mothers have taken have elevated their positions as responsible mother and guardians than their mother. But reasons of choosing such strategies of parenting are also driven by the concern itself.

Concepts of agency and application of it in various fields have empowered the girls in many areas, where their individuality is concentrated more than her adolescence. But the mothers still have to go walk miles to be modern enough to choose their daughter's empowerment over their safety. And this concern for safety is putting their whole positive parenting strategy in the question of validity. But still they are experimenting and trying to explore their best through trial and error method to discover a better strategy of parenting, in which they can equate both empowerment and safety in a universal equation. This positive parenting strategy does not let the mother be indifferent about their power; rather it promotes a very profound type of power relation where the power is the only way to find better solution to situations. So, though apparently it ceases the mother to go for arbitrary execution of power on their children, but deep underneath, it is the power only, with a refined use and effective and positive outcome only that promotes and produces benefit for both. As Mill has stated-

“in the present day, power holds a smoother language, and whomsoever it oppresses, always pretends to do so for their-own good.”; So even in today’s positive parenting style, it is very prominent that even in 21<sup>st</sup> century, the parenting strategies are revolving around the Foucauldian concept of power, knowledge and discipline.

This parenting strategy is a common and familiar reflection of the traits of belonging to the category of middle class. The choices that the respondents have taken or supported since the infancy of their adolescence girls can be reflected on the concept of stereotypical middle class attitude. Emphasizing education is one of the identification of this middle class category of people. So, the mothers’ unquestionable support to their daughters’ choice of education is nothing but a mere reflection of their class trait. However, the choice of English medium schooling can also be reflected on the typical middle-class will of mobilizing into a higher class. The English medium schools have a lot of expenses which these middle class mothers are able to bear. So, without a second thought, relying on their financial efficiency, they have chosen this particular type of schooling for their daughters.

The extended support towards the involvement of the girls into extracurricular activities can again be found at the root of middle class as a discourse. The accumulation of cultural wealth or capital is what distinguishes the middle class from the rest of the population. And the contemporary mothers are being flexible enough to even support their daughters if they wish to take up a career in those. Here, a path breaking can be identified as the middle class is highly associated with certain specific occupations or professions that do not include any of the artistic profession. But taking up any other stream over academics as professions reflects an elite class mentality as some of those professions bring in huge amount of financial gain. So by lending their support to their choice of career in extracurricular activity is a striving effort to upward mobility, a common characteristic of the middle class. The behavioural lessons and adjustments the contemporary mothers teach their adolescent daughters can also be rooted in the middle class mentality.

Tracing back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the ‘Bhadrolok’ introduced a new kind educational system for the mass, they did not exclude the women; rather they introduced a special kind of education for them. Besides the mass education of teaching literary lessons, the girls were in parallel taught their ‘Shtridharma’ and how to behave like a woman. Though there are many yardsticks that can evaluate a middle-class woman, but a particular one can still prove her whole life of achievement- that is the absence of her chastity. And the contemporary middle class has still not got over from this mediocrity. Though the reason behind not teaching their girls to accept their body and appearance has changes by time, and have replaced the culture with concern of safety; however, the practice remain the same. And within this, the control of the mother over her daughter’s body, her sexuality, sexual choices, appearance and look can be explained as well.

A middle class is always concern on how they appear in front of others. They strive to look and live in certain way that will differentiate them from the rest of the mass, giving them a unique individuality. But they still have second thoughts before taking up a choice that questions their intellectuality. If the mothers accept and support their daughters' sexual advancements, their choice of pre-maturely sexualized look, they know that instead of being appreciated for her choice, she will be highly criticized. Such insecurity makes her take the reject their daughter's advance choices and the concern for the safety of the girls play a very political role here.

Just as the middle class has never been static; they are always in a flux. Necessary and rational modifications in strategies are always welcoming; maintaining the essence of the practices. Likewise, the parenting style of the middle class has always been modifying with circumstances, giving more space to flexibility in the mother-child relations; but keeping the essence of power in the relation intact. The exercise of the power in parenting is no more naked and exposed as it was in the authoritarian parenting style, rather more complex, refined and unintentional. The contemporary positive parenting strategy taken up by the mothers for their adolescent girls in middle class families in Kolkata have reflected a very responsible, understanding and constructivist approach that values the adolescent more as an active social individual than a passive child. Though the decisions of mothers as mother have rationalized, but the same mediocrity lies behind their every rational or concerned strategies of parenting. And the contemporary vulnerable situations and risks for the girls justify the parenting style, unknowingly feeding the conventionality of middle class parenting style, underneath.

### **Future Aspect of the Research-**

The study was concentrated on a very small population. And one of the bigger limitations of the study is not to collect and evaluate the fathers' opinion, choices and decisions in this particular field of parenting. So, anyone taking up this field for further research, the researcher would like to suggest the fellow researcher to focus on both the mother and the father's perspective and parenting strategies. And study was conducted on a generalized category of middle class, the future prospect f this study could choose to make the field little narrower and concentrate on the sub-divisions of the middle class.



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## **Appendix-**

### **Interview Schedule (the parent)**

1) Personal information-

a) Name-

b) Occupation-

c) Educational Qualification-

d) Monthly income (both mother included)-

e) Age-

2) No of children-

3) Educational importance for girls (including the choice of schooling, medium of education)

4) Career choices for the girls

5) Emphasis on the girls' association to extracurricular activities

6) Adjustment and behavioural lessons

7) Discussion on socially restricted topics (including sexuality, sex, virginity, menstruation)

8) The amount of time spent with the girls and the discussions they take up during that time

9) Opinion on choices of clothing, appearance, body image of the adolescent girls; does it match with their choices or what strategies they take up in the related fields.

10) The amount of allowance and restriction put up by them in the peer mixing of their girl (I have given them four situations to identify how often they let their daughters hang out or spend time outside home with their friends-hanging out, school picnic, sleep-over, overnight excursion from schools)

11) Awareness creation to the girls about the existing risks around and precautionary measures to avoid or handle the situations

12) How would they want their girls to grow up- being the way they are or to become someone they desire.

13) Emphasis on role-modelling and its effect on the adolescent girls

### **Interview Schedule (for the adolescent girls)**

I have used the same interview schedule for the girls in order to collect data on their choices and how much the mother are supporting/restricting them from fulfilling those. The questions that I have added in the interview schedule for the adolescent girls are mentioned below.

\*) What is the attitude of the mother while there is a decision or choice conflict between the girl's choice and their mother's choices?

\*) From whom they have first got the ideas of socially restricted topics and the influence of peers in gaining knowledge about the topics of sex, sexuality, virginity

\*) Do they share everything with their mother?

**-Information of the Respondents-**

<b>Pseudo-names (Mothers)</b>	<b>Educational Qualification</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Age of the Daughter</b>
<b>Ahana</b>	<b>Graduate (Hons. Sanskrit)</b>	<b>School teacher</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Aditi</b>	<b>Graduate (Hons. English)</b>	<b>School teacher</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Priya</b>	<b>Post Graduate (History)</b>	<b>School teacher</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Anindita</b>	<b>Graduate (Hons. English)</b>	<b>Home-maker</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Baishakhi</b>	<b>Graduate (General)</b>	<b>Home maker</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Soumi</b>	<b>BCA</b>	<b>IT Professional</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Subarna</b>	<b>Post Graduate (Bengali)</b>	<b>School Teacher</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Tania</b>	<b>Graduate (Hons. Political Science)</b>	<b>Home-maker</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Rima</b>	<b>Graduate (Hons. Geography)</b>	<b>School teacher</b>	<b>13</b>