

Review: Of Mothers and Others

- Smruti Koppikar, [Hindustan Times](#) |
- Updated: Apr 06, 2013 10:35 IST

Of Mothers and Others

Edited by Jaishree Mishra

Zubaan

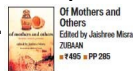
Rs. 495 PP 285

Of Mothers and Others begins with platitudes about the disheartening state of the girl child and the declining sex ratio in India. But the sense of déjà vu is dispelled as you leaf through the essays, poems, fiction and first-person accounts of motherhood, and the absence of motherhood in the lives or imaginations of an array of writers.

This is an album of motherhood that displays aspects of its subject: the aspiration of motherhood, the anticipation, the very real physical pain, the life-alerting force of a child, the absence of motherhood whether voluntary or forced, the mothering of a challenged child, the ecstasy and glory as well as the pain and interference that motherhood brings into our lives.

These pages contain many more shades of motherhood than you imagined: from Smriti Lamech's pining for a daughter that made her a reluctant mother to her first-born son to Anita Roy's funny-but-insightful take on food as the 'tender trap' of love.

Then there is Shashi Deshpande's The Business of Mothering, Humra Quraishi's layered The State Can't Snatch Away Our Children, Prabha Walker's narration of the hurt a mother inflicts on her son and herself in The Slap Flies Off My Hand, and Jai Arjun Singh's hilarious take on motherhood in Hindi cinema.



This reviewer's favourite pieces include Namita Gokhale's outstanding reimagination of Kunti, Urvashi Butalia's vignettes-essay and Manju Kapur's piece on the pain of losing a child. Kunti here is the mother who gave up her first-born Karna. Gokhale as Kunti writes: "...when the time came to weigh my duty to myself or to the Pandava clan, I chose but the empty compulsion of duty. Not the memory of joy".

Review of Mothers & Others in HINDUSTAN TIMES

Written by Administrator

Monday, 08 June 2015 12:23 - Last Updated Friday, 08 December 2017 04:43

Butalia has written about choosing to be childless. Kapur, as always, makes for compelling reading as she navigates through her pain by drawing up a list of writers whose children died young.

It's to novelist Jaishree Misra's credit that she, as editor of this volume, was able to draw out so many different voices, some highly reputed, on a rarely-explored theme. Misra writes: "...motherhood became the driving force in my liberation as a woman".

Quibble? Actor-activist Shabana Azmi, who wrote the foreword, could have allowed us a peep into her personal experiences.

Get this volume if mothering or parenting means something to you. It's like a cosy, lovely quilt. You'd do a good deed too for Save The Children India, which helmed the project to draw attention to their campaign.