

## From Silence To Resilience: Intergenerational Identity In Sheeba Shah's Mother Mine

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### Abstract

*Sheeba Shah's Mother Mine (2025) investigates the construction of identities, intergenerational trauma, and maternal bonds within the setting of South Asian and diasporic contexts. Within the context of a sophisticated narrative that weaves together historical events and modern experiences, Shah investigates the influence that silence, sacrifice, and displacement have had on the identities of women over the course of multiple generations. An investigation into Shah's portrayal of motherhood as both a burden and a source of liberation is carried out through the use of qualitative textual analysis, with postcolonial and feminist frameworks being incorporated into the analytical system. According to the findings, the novel places human stories within the context of global cultural frameworks, highlighting the importance of resiliency alongside inherited pain through its narrative. Memory, migration, and reconciliation are only few of the topics that are intertwined throughout Mother Mine, which contributes greatly to the advancement of global postcolonial discourse and significantly enriches current South Asian literature.*

**Keywords:** Sheeba Shah, Mother Mine, resiliency, postcolonial, generational trauma, identity

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### I. Introduction

Sheeba Shah's *Mother Mine* (2025) is a significant addition to modern South Asian writing, examining mother identity, generational trauma, and diasporic memory. The novel examines motherhood, both biological and elective and the mother-daughter relationship within socio-political and cultural contexts. Shah's narrative examines silence, sacrifice, and perseverance as maternal motifs, reflecting postcolonial and feminist discourse. The primary tension of the novel narrative is around the daughter's resolution of her mother's concealed truths. Shah asserts, "Silence was her inheritance, a wordless language transmitted through generations" (*Mother Mine*, 5), encapsulating trauma and resilience. This silence constitutes agency, embodying Gayatri Spivak's concept of the "subaltern voice" that resists obliteration. Shah situates maternal identity within a contradictory framework wherein silence serves as both a source of pain and a tool of power.

In Shah's work *Mother Mine*, Priya serves as the protagonist. She is stunningly gorgeous, impulsive, and driven. Her aspiration to become a film star compels her to undertake the extraordinary, forsake her eight-year-old daughter, a devoted husband, and a lavish lifestyle in Kathmandu to pursue Rohit. He is an aspiring film producer, in Mumbai, a metropolis where aspirations often falter and stark realities soon emerge. Priya soon realises that her life deteriorates from unfulfilled promises to exploitative casting couches and destitution, immersing her in a realm where only drugs and drink can sustain her from one indistinct dawn to the next. Medha, the daughter she forsook two decades prior, locates her in her dishevelled flat in Goa, where she has commenced a 'new life', no longer an actress, but a waitress, still grappling with alcoholism. Medha embarks on a quest to rescue the mother whose affection she desires, yet grapples to maintain her composure among the turmoil

surrounding her. Developing romantic feelings for the strikingly attractive Pritesh and becoming entangled in an unusual love triangle complicates matters. As the lives of mother and daughter converge, the narrative progresses toward an unavoidable yet unimaginable conclusion. In *Mother Mine*, Sheeba Shah presents an irresistibly engaging narrative that captivates us via the power of its storytelling.

Shah's *Mother Mine* is included in the canon of diaspora literature with Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003), Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). These texts explore intergenerational conflict, cultural hybridity, and the legacy of trauma. Shah's approach highlights reconciliation through the mother rather than the kid. Morrison highlights the anguish experienced by mothers due to slavery, whereas Lahiri focuses on the identity struggles of immigrant children. Shah emphasises the mother's silence and sacrifices as central to meaning, directing diasporic discourse towards maternal resilience. *Mother Mine* employs Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity to illustrate how dislocation disrupts identification while fostering new forms of belonging. Shah perceives migration as a psychological rupture that impacts successive generations. The mother's exile shapes the daughter's destiny, illustrating the interconnectedness of human histories and global culture. Marianne Hirsch's post memory theory is relevant here, as the daughter inherits her mother's emotional burden unknowingly.

Shah's story explores feminist concepts concerning motherhood as both a hardship and a means of emancipation. Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born* (1976) distinctly differentiates pregnancy from mothering. Shah depicts motherhood as a wellspring of strength and self-identity in contrast to conventional notions of sacrifice. The mother's silence, albeit oppressive, enables her to endure patriarchal and diasporic limitations. *Mother Mine* is notable for its conceptual intricacy and narrative technique. Shah uses poetic prose, varying perspectives, and chronological fluctuations to depict the fracture of memory and identity. The novel, characterised by its non-linearity, complexity, and pervasive silences, encapsulates the diasporic experience. Shah employs narrative form to convey cultural displacement, following in the footsteps of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*.

This study aims to analyse Shah's *Mother Mine* through postcolonial and feminist perspectives, investigating how Shah's narrative relates to discussions on migration, memory, and reconciliation. This research positions the novel within the realm of comparative diaspora literature, emphasising Shah's distinctive concentration on maternal silence as a locus of identity construction. The analysis will illustrate that *Mother Mine* depicts motherhood as a paradoxical state, both a hardship and a liberation, while emphasising resilience as the legacy of generations. Shah's work enhances modern South Asian literature by providing a nuanced depiction of maternal relationships in diasporic settings. This approach broadens the parameters of postcolonial discourse, placing maternal identity at the core of comprehending the interconnections of trauma, memory, and migration. The inclusion of *Mother Mine* in academic discourse offers a rich basis for comparative study, prompting readers to reevaluate the influence of motherhood on diasporic tales across various cultures.

## II. Maternal Bonds And Silence

In the novel *Mother Mine*, the concept of silence is not shown as a state of emptiness but rather as a powerful inheritance transferred from mother to daughter. According to Shah's narrative, silence is not merely the absence of speech; rather, it is a language that has the ability to impact feelings and identities. The daughter is compelled to understand unarticulated narratives as a result of the mother's silence, which comes to be seen as a contradictory endowment that is simultaneously a burden and a monument to survival. The load of generational trauma is encapsulated in this silence, which functions as a cultural and psychological legacy since it simultaneously provides a method of survival. One of the statements made by Shah is that "her mother harboured unspoken worlds within her" (22). A repository of memory, a container for untold narratives, and a method of agency are all encapsulated in this sentence, which is the central topic of the novel. The refusal of the mother to reveal her history is not only an act of repression; rather, it is a conscious act of rebellion against the patriarchal and diasporic influences that she has been subjected to.

Gayatri Spivak's concept of the "subaltern voice" provides a comprehensive framework, when it comes to analysing Shah's maternal silence. The subaltern, according to Spivak, has a difficult time expressing themselves within the framework of power that is now in place, and even when they do, their expressions are usually misunderstood or completely erased. In the novel *Mother Mine*, the mother's silence perfectly depicts this internal contradiction. She opposes absorption into patriarchal discourses that require confession or justification by not recounting her story. This is accomplished by not sharing her story. Her refusal to be completely visible inside repressive structures is evidenced by her use of silence as a technique of doing so. Therefore, the maternal silence that is depicted in Shah's narrative is not a passive form of resistance; rather, it is an aggressive form of resistance that protects the individual's dignity and distinctness. Understanding this silence, gaining meaning from it, and coming to terms with the implications it has for her identity are the challenges that the daughter must overcome.

Especially in its portrayal of immigrant parents whose shyness causes generational gaps, Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* offers a poignant example that fits the bill. Ashoke and Ashima, the immigrant parents depicted in Lahiri's work, are a prime example of the difficulty that arises from attempting to communicate cultural dislocation to their children. Gogol, their son, becomes divorced and disconnected from his cultural roots as a result of his parents' reluctance to discuss the difficulties they face in the United States. Like Lahiri, Shah places a strong emphasis on the importance of quiet as a fundamental aspect of emigration. Shah shifts the focus to the mother herself, while Lahiri emphasises the child's struggle to find their identity within the context of parental silence. A premeditated act of resistance and perseverance, the mother's silence in *Mother Mine* is not only a generational split; rather, it is a representation of generational divide. Her repositioning of mother identity as the primary point of diasporic negotiation, rather than the assimilation of the child, is highlighted by this difference, which highlights Shah's singular contribution.

Consequently, Shah broadens the topic on motherhood within the realm of diaspora writing by positioning maternal silence as both a legacy and a kind of empowerment. In *Mother Mine*, silence is not a void that needs to be filled; rather, it is a language that needs to be interpreted; it is a form of resistance that guarantees the preservation of maternal dignity. Lahiri's comparative approach stresses the universality of generational differences in diaspora tales, but Spivak views silence as a subaltern strategy employed by subalterns. She reorients the mother's silence as the cornerstone of identity construction, which enhances feminist and postcolonial views of maternal relationships. This is where Shah's creativity makes her stand out.

### III. Migration And Displacement

Migration is more than just a matter of moving from one location to another in *Mother Mine*; it is a profound psychological shattering that reverberates down the generations. The daughter's destiny is shaped by the mother's disappearance, which exemplifies how displacement can shatter one's identity while also fostering resilience. In the portrayal of migration, Shah represents it as a state of perpetual liminality, which is marked by fragmented belonging and the continuing negotiation of identity. Exile causes suffering, but at the same time it opens up new opportunities for resiliency and adaptability. This contradiction exemplifies the dichotomy that is inherent in the nature of diasporic living. The sentence "Her exile was not voluntary, yet it became her daughter's fate" (45) is a perfect example of the tension that Shah describes. However, the daughter's character is shaped by the consequences of the mother's involuntary relocation, which exemplifies how migration may be passed as both a traumatic experience and a source of determination.

Homi Bhabha's the concept of "hybridity," one might examine Shah's story through a critical lens. According to Bhabha, hybridity is the place where conflicting cultural identities come together and develop throughout time. The daughter's struggle to reconcile her mother's silence with her own diasporic identity is an example of hybridity in the fictional novel *Mother Mine*. Whereas the daughter is a symbol of cultural negotiation, the mother is a representation of cultural rootedness! Collectively, they showcase the fact that diasporic identity is never fixed nor singular, but rather is continuously redefined by the process of displacement. The story told by Shah demonstrates that hybridity is capable of going beyond cultural fusion and acting as a source of both conflict and innovation. In spite of the fact that the daughter's identity is shattered as a result of her mother's silence, the spirit of resiliency that it embodies is strengthened. *Mother Mine* is placed within the larger context of postcolonial discourse as a result of this dynamic, which highlights the way in which migration develops identities that are both powerful and complicated at the same time.

Especially in its depiction of generational strife among diasporic households, Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) creates a startling juxtaposition from the perspective of the reader. As they navigate cultural identities across generations, the characters in Smith's work struggle with hybridity. Like Shah, Smith emphasises the conflict between rootedness and assimilation, illustrating how migration disrupts familial connections. Smith's narrative is similar to Shah's. The maternal figure is positioned as the primary center of diasporic connection, which is how Shah defines herself from other people. Hybridity is investigated from a variety of viewpoints in *White Teeth*, including those of children, parents, and communities. On the other hand, the fundamental theme in *Mother Mine* is the mother's silence and displacement. The shift underscores Shah's distinctive contribution, which is that she presents maternal identity as the cornerstone of diasporic resilience. Rather than fragmenting the story among numerous generations' viewpoints, she stresses this change.

As it investigates migration and dislocation, *Mother Mine* places maternal identity within the context of the dilemma that is living in a diaspora. In addition to fostering resilience, displacement causes identity to be shattered, which ultimately results in hybrid identities that are both wounded and powerful. The narrative of Shah is consistent with Bhabha's concept of hybridity; nevertheless, it distinguishes itself by putting an emphasis on elements related to motherhood. Shah repositions the mother's silence and exile as the major axis of diasporic negotiation, which is in contrast to Smith's *White Teeth* as the central axis. Establishing *Mother Mine* as a work that places an emphasis on maternal resilience within the greater framework of migration and identity formation, this invention contributes to the enhancement of postcolonial discourse.

#### IV. Intergenerational Reconciliation

The daughter's attempt to make sense of her mother's unexpressed feelings is the driving force behind the story of *Mother Mine*. This quest is portrayed in the story as being both emotional and intellectual: the daughter's objective is to uncover hidden histories while simultaneously coming to terms with the unspoken truths that determine her identity. This journey is portrayed by Shah as a format for intergenerational discourse, in which stillness is transformed into a narrative that may be interpreted. It is not via revelation that the daughter is able to restore her relationship with her mother's silence; rather, it is through acceptance and the recognition of silence as a resilience language. As Shah puts it, "Her mother hid worlds within her that she never spoke about" (72). The phrase highlights the daughter's realisation that her mother's stillness reflects not emptiness but rather a richness, an accumulation of experiences, trauma, and love. This is emphasised by the word 'quiet.' Therefore, the daughter's search is less focused on eliciting a confession and more focused on acquisition of the ability to abide with the burden of histories that have not been articulated.

Reconciliation, which serves as narrative closure, is vital to the novel's resolution. As an alternative to delivering a definitive resolution by means of revelation, Shah emphasises the daughter's recognition of silence as an acceptable manner of maternal expression. As a result of this reconciliation, silence is transformed from a source of hurt into a connection, which enables the daughter to inherit both courage and suffering. Accepting ambiguity is the definition of narrative completion in *Mother Mine*; it does not include divulging secrets. In order to reconcile generational differences, Shah does not provide perfect openness, but he does emphasise the necessity of empathy and acceptance. When this option is made, the novel is placed within a broader framework of postcolonial writing, which places an emphasis on reconciliation rather than resolution and places more emphasis on the process than the conclusion.

One of the most important parallels is provided by Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), which focuses on the concept of generational empathy. The narratives written by Lahiri usually depict characters who are contending with the interpretation of silences, miscommunications, and cultural gaps within the setting of their families. In "Mrs. Sen's," the protagonist's reluctance to discuss her relocation causes those who are in her immediate area to find themselves perplexed. In the story *Interpreter of Maladies*, the act of interpretation is used as a metaphor for bringing together inequalities in terms of both culture and emotion. In a manner that is comparable to that of Lahiri, Shah places a focus on explaining silence. As a means of distinguishing herself from others, Shah saw reconciliation not as interpretation but rather as acceptance. In contrast to the characters in Lahiri's work, who usually attempt to transform quiet into verbal expression, Shah's daughter learns that silence may be a valuable kind of connection among mothers. This discrepancy highlights the unique contribution that Shah makes: she places reconciliation not in verbal communication but in the act of listening, so re-centering maternal silence as a locus by which empathy and resolution can be found.

It is not via revelation that intergenerational reconciliation is achieved in *Mother Mine*; rather, it is through the acceptance of silence through the lens of resilience. As a result of the daughter's efforts to comprehend her mother's silence, she develops empathy, which transforms the stillness into a link rather than an enemy. When compared to Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, Shah's narrative places a greater emphasis on listening rather than interpretation and acceptance for the purpose of translation. This new approach contributes to the advancement of postcolonial discourse by establishing *Mother Mine* as a work that reinterprets reconciliation in diasporic contexts. It places an emphasis on maternal silence as the foundation of intergenerational empathy.

#### V. Conclusion

In conclusion, Sheeba Shah's *Mother Mine* offers a multifaceted analysis of the concept of maternal identity. The author portrays motherhood as both a burden and a source of liberation, quiet as both a pain and a weapon, and endurance as the genuine heritage that is carried down from generation to generation. Shah broadens the discourse of South Asian and diaspora literature beyond the typical emphasis on the obstacles faced by immigrant children. She does this by highlighting the mother's silence as a locus of action and reconciliation. In doing so, he positions maternal resilience at the core of diasporic negotiation. Her work is consistent with feminist and postcolonial theories, but at the same time spotlighting silence as a coping mechanism in a way that is distinctive. In the sphere of global postcolonial discourse, *Mother Mine* is positioned with works such as Lahiri's *The Namesake*, Smith's *White Teeth*, and Morrison's *Beloved*. It provides a distinctive maternal perspective that strengthens comparative assessments of trauma and migration, and it is positioned among these works. It is possible that future research will expand upon Shah's results by exploring maternal silence in various cultural situations. This would bring about an improvement in our understanding of resilience as a phenomenon that occurs across borders. In the end, *Mother Mine* demonstrates that despite the fact that maternal identity is split as a result of silence and displacement, it continues to serve as a crucial center of resilience and healing.

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