



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Father-Daughter Incestuous Relationship: A Study

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Abstract: The objective of the present paper is to explore the gray areas of father-daughter relationship particularly the incestuous behaviour or overt or covert sexual misconduct between them. Such relationship is found in a dysfunctional family, which implies that emotional and psychological communication between family members are disturbingly impaired because apparently the family may appear nice and disciplined only to cover up the damage. But as a matter of fact father-daughter incest causes severe distress to all concerned. It is prohibited de jure but it is found de facto in families. Under legal questioning/proceedings and psychoanalytic help, incestuous fathers have been found neither criminal, nor degenerate, nor sexually psychopathic. This gross violation of father-daughter incest taboo not only creates confusion in religious order of life, kinship structures, culture and society but also poses a question mark on the nature of sexuality.

Keywords: Incest, sexuality, relationship, dys/functional family, society, culture, religion, psychology.

The restraint over sexuality seems to be not so natural as culturally imposed on human behaviour. Because sexuality is pre-existent to relationships which are one of the props of a functional society. Sexual activity appears a natural compulsion for a species that dictates an inherent desire to procreate and multiply itself; it is manifest in physiological response. The relationships are socio-cultural facts which are arbitrary. It implies that sexual orientation and behaviour is learnt through education or socialization. There have been numerous theoretical positions with regard to the question of regulation and restriction oversexuality that is implemented chiefly through the ubiquitous institution of marriage. The "interconnected roles of husband, father, wife, mother, son, and daughter. Social relationships within family are structured in terms of a set of related norms"(Haralambos, 10). The institution of family restricts sexual activity by permitting only husband and wife to carry out their role performance in procreation and thereby help build a stabilized society. Free sexuality not only disrupts social order but also make relationships a confusing category. Thus, sexual competitions invariably influence a society negatively and they may culminate in incestuous relationship. In an established society incest is unanimously considered a deviant behaviour. At present it is imperative to reconsider incest taboo, or incest prohibitions so as to understand comprehensively human behaviour.

Aristotle's renowned postulation that human being is a 'social animal' contains two diametrically opposite sides such as civility and brutality, intellect and instinct, superego and id, culture and nature, etc. The adjective word 'social' qualifies a nominal case 'animal', which indicates that there is a process of education aimed at transforming the psychophysical nature of human beings. It can be logically concluded that human behaviour as such requires a continuous endeavour of educating children and correcting grownups. Undoubtedly, other lower species of animals have been found living in some sort of social life. Their social life is not only instinctual but also educational in the sense that they have mental capability to acquire knowledge from repeated experiences and change their behaviour. Man, being a superior animal, certainly would have been

in some commonly accepted norms of social and cultural set up. But he has no innate genetically programmed directives for behavioural patterns. As M. Haralambos states that "Man's genetic code does not contain specific instructions to behave in a certain way"(Haralambos, 2). In absence of instinctual directions, it can be ascertained in sociological terms that a child happens to learn the culture of its society. The success of a functional society by and large depends on how elders inculcate in its children the accepted behaviour. Truly, "if the history of his society is brought alive to the child, he will come to see he is a part of something larger than himself, he will develop a sense of commitment to the social group"(Haralambos, 173).

In fact, there is no strange reason behind incestuous impulses in a child. Both sexual hunger and food hunger are natural to him/her. S/he fixates his/her hunger need on food that is usually available to him/her, similarly s/he fixates his/her sexual hunger on familiar people around him. The child's orientation happens in the area of food habits and his/her inclination toward close people for physical gratification. As Freudian psychologists suggest that incestuous longing is "instinctive, that somehow a person 'just naturally' focuses his sexual desires upon a relative rather than upon non-relative, and, among relatives, upon the closer rather than the remoter degrees of consanguinity"(White, 423, 424). Leslie A. White, first, duly recognizes this proposition, then opines contrarily that "This view is quite as unwarranted as the theory of an 'instinctive horror' of incest; and inclination toward sexual union with close relatives is no more instinctive than the social regulations devised to prevent it"(White, 424). Importantly, s/he is morally innocent and ignorant about the seriousness of its consequences. Then, it is the matter of proper socialization that informs the responsibility and accountability of elders in the family to put a check on him/her through inculcating or transferring moral values and cultural norms to him/her. This way the child's sexual hunger fixated in close proximity or family relations is curbed and repressed. That is why, in case of father-daughter incestuous relationship, the sole responsibility lies on father. Because it is father's /elders' duty to socialize and educate children, owing to their condition that Professor Park better brings home when he emphasizes,

Animals and very little children are notoriously innocent of convention and of the complications it introduces into the behaviour of adult human beings. They have no reputations to sustain, no status, legal or social, to maintain; and no desire to be respectable or respected. On the other hand, since they are unconscious, or nearly so, of any censorship, either of conscience or public opinion, they have no secrets, privacies, subjectivities. They possess no sense either of inner conflict or inner freedom, and no conception, finally, of themselves (Park, 36, 37).

Sociologists opine that the position of women in Western society is caused and justified by the mythological / Biblical assertion: "Original Sin in the Garden of Eden was woman's. She tasted the forbidden fruit, tempted Adam and has been paying for it ever since"(Pandey, 4). Hence the (revengeful) Western males (as being representative of Adam), though they are equally born sinners, and lamenting the loss of heavenly abode, cultivate misogyny and use it as a tool to justify their ownership and sexual impropriety. Father-daughter incest replicates primordial act, which is unacceptable as it being a negative deviant behaviour. The Western mind is overwhelmed by the view that human beings are born sinners hence they need to be trained and disciplined as they are subjected to the just punishment of monotheistic male God. Sudhir Kakkar has rightly pointed out that in Western tradition, the model, prior to 20th century "was that of disciplining and conquering the child's will"(Kakkar, 245), which changed into "socialization" using the terms of 'bring up' and 'rear' which suggest "training the child, teaching him to conform to social norms and 'channeling his impulses'"(245). Father-daughter incest is conceptualized as a violation of social role responsibility in interaction on the part of the father, who, as an abuser, is responsible for overt or covert sexual behaviour toward daughter because "it takes as given that a child is physically and psychologically immature and thus that sexual activity necessarily constitutes exploitation because the child is incapable of giving fully informed consent"(Rea, 7). There are also

other distinct forms of abuses such as violence, threats, coercion, emotional blackmail, etc. but, significantly, all are secondary to sexual abuse. Marriage between father and daughter is always socially forbidden and as such incestuous behaviour has been condemned throughout history so much so that it is categorically taken as a universal taboo. As Rea supports by collecting from several sources that father-daughter "sexual behaviour prohibition is universal"(13). But it is ironic that beliefs and expectations regarding behaviour may not inform or reflect in the actual behaviour. That is why there are most often reported cases of father-daughter incest, let alone the unreported cases due to public shaming.

The word incest is first used in English around 1225 in *Ancrene Wisse*, a conduct manual on religion and culture in the middle ages wherein incest is treated as sexual sin:

...and incest --- that is lechery between kin fleshly or spiritual. That is divided in many parts: foul desire to that filth with consent of reason, helping others thitherward, to know and witness it, to hunt thereafter with wooing, with touching, or with any allurement, with flirtatious laughter, whorish eye, any light behaviour, with giving, with wooing words or with love speech, a kiss, ignoble groping, that may be capital sin... that must be avoided, if one does not wish to fall vilely into great filth (Mann, 9).

Thus, incest as sexual norm-violation has been dexterously and meticulously delineated that it is not merely a sin committed through physical action but also a sin of thought and spirit. In Middle Age, the father-daughter incest was severely punished by a fifteen year penance, as it was considered an abuse and victimization of daughter, an abhorrent deed with disruptive consequences (Mann, 9). However, the general consensus and position of incest writers is that the father daughter incest is more or less universal at any point of time in society; simultaneously, it is a *de jure* prohibition, yet researchers have found it *de facto* present. Scholars like Weinberg and others confirm that father-daughter incest has been as acceptable form of sexual interaction and there are "intriguing exceptions" in which the incest taboo is violated: "that father-daughter sexual interaction was, is, or should be socially prohibited, does not appear to be manifest in practice"(Rea, 38). In Western society throughout earlier known period to 16th century there has been a wide practice of pedophilia that male adults usually made physical relationships with female children (age ranged between 3 years to 12 years), but necessarily with the consent of father; it is pertinent to note that the same approval did not hold for father and daughter (sexual) affair (Rea, 32).

Anthropological researchers have found out that there have been gross violation of father-daughter incest taboo with social acceptance, for instance, fathers in the Sierre Madre Mountains of Mexico commonly indulged in incest with daughter because of poverty. In pre-Islamic Arabia "it was not uncommon for a father to marry his favourite daughter" (39). Importantly, the Persian rulers, Sasanian Dynasty, followed *xwedodah* which refers to nuclear family incest (father-daughter, mother-son, and brother-sister) and dictates this most pious action to please Ahurmazda. There is only one example of father daughter incest that occurs in Bible (Genesis 19 :30 – 38; 19 : 32 :35), wherein two daughters purposefully cohabit with their old and intoxicated father,(named) Lot, in order to utilize his seed for continuation of his patriline. Incest writers opine that the sons (born one to each daughter) and their mothers did not incur "the slightest social or Supernatural disapproval "(40). On the contrary, the son born from their incest grew into adults and became powerful tribal leaders. Pope Alexander VI in fifteenth century "proclaimed that he was the father of his daughter's children" (40). Adonis was also born of incestuous encounter between his mother Myrrha and her father Cinyras while she was disguised as a prostitute. Incest is, in postmodern terminology, "an utterly confused category"(Mann, 7). Incest prohibition is a must for supporting social structures, kinship, and patriarchy. In other words, free (biological) sexuality might have existed prior to the observance of incest taboo which was necessitated for constructing stable identities and relationships. Otherwise incestuous marriages disrupt social identities and create much inconvenience by

multiplying relationships. Social identity roles are confused and unsettled. The Lot example is a case in point, as is given in the riddle,

A man sat at table with his two wives and his two sons and his two daughters, dear sisters, and their two sons, noble first born children; the father of each of those princes was therein with them, uncle and nephews. In all there were five men and women of those sitting within (Mann, 1).

The Bible provides us the name of the patriarch, Lot, who has a clear identity, and his progeny that is, Moab and Ammon, whose offsprings are Moabites and Ammonites respectively. But it is significant to note that nowhere in the Bible or in the subsequent texts have Lot's daughters been given a separate identity than that of just his daughters and mothers to his sons, are they neither named nor described. Since they have been shorn of clear identities, the incest that they indulged in for inbreeding does not call for an ideal imitation by the subsequent generations. Thus, the concept of the daughterhood or daughterly value is absent in Western patriarchy. As is stressed by John Starr, "In terms of family relationships, we have well developed paradigms for fatherhood, motherhood and sonship; but we lack a suitably developed theology of daughterhood" Starr, 7). Nevertheless father's liaison with daughter is a disturbing event because it not only debauches her but also damages the social structures; as Bullon-Fernandez contends that it is "the negation of the social and public act of marriage, even the negation of society itself"(Mann, 4). It undermines the very base of patriarchal social setup that rests on daughter's inevitable transference in exogamous /endogamous marriages. Further, this incest not only destabilizes interpersonal relationships in family but also prove it subversive in another sense as Bullon-Fernandez further emphasizes that "it recognizes the father's desire for the daughter and thus the possibility that the father could be seduced by the daughter"(Mann, 4). And that's what actually happened in the Lot narrative. Augustine in defense of the biblical incest, contends that "incest was a necessary evil" in ancient times owing to the scant population, but, at later stage, incest prohibition was instituted for exogamy in large population for a meaningful society (Mann, 8). It is underscored that free or biological or "natural sexuality" is inherently incestuous. Claude Levi-Strauss contends that all the rules regarding incest taboo are relevant to maintain a functional society, as he emphasizes that incest taboo is universal "as a signifier of the transition of humankind from a state of 'nature' to one of 'culture'"(Uberoi, 20).

The family positively strengthens social structures through avoiding incest because "No form of conflict is more disruptive than sexual competition and jealousy"(Murdoch, 1949, 295). Thus, the 'family disruptive theory' holds that the avoidance of incestuous behaviour helps in maintaining interpersonal harmony in familial relationship and a healthy society. Biological theories centre on "inbreeding" claiming that humans may have learnt with a passage of time that inbreeding produced physically deformed and mentally challenged offspring. It cannot be denied that at some point of time in ancient or prehistorical period that consanguine marriages were in usual practice, so the deformed progeny being associated with endogamous marriages caused humanity to adopt the option of exogamy and develop a law like incest taboo (Rea, 49). In psychoanalytical theories, Westermarck argues that "intimate childhood association promotes sexual aversion" to avoid misunderstood feelings regarding sexual arousal, as a result this becomes a learned behavior (Rea, 56). That is how sexual aversion developed into incest taboo. This sexual aversion theory is important but more important is Freud's psychosexual theory that has been highly influential in 20th century. Freud in his book Totem and Taboo acknowledges that even "the most backward and miserable savages (that is the Australian aborigines) have an unusually great horror of incest" and they "set before themselves with the most scrupulous care and the most painful severity the aim of avoiding incestuous sexual relations"(Freud, 2). However, Freud believes that incest taboo is not inborn nor a (genetic) instinct but it is acquired from cultural upbringing and it had originated through "a primal scene as a family in which sons killed their father to possess their mother" but fought among themselves thereafter for the same (Rea, 58). Consequently, having realized that they have disrupted social

order and committed patricide also, they initiated and foisted incest prohibition on themselves as a sort of penance. Freud further views that the inescapable conflict between incest taboo imposed by parents and child's incestuous impulses eventually results in frustration, failure and ambivalence in him /her. Thus, child incestuous desires are curbed and finally repressed which constitutes his /her unconscious and becomes a part of his her personality. S/he defends, as a grown-up individual, against his/her own repressed desires by criticizing the incestuous impulses in other's behaviour. Thus, the pre-historic father might have learnt and practiced asexual interaction with daughter for the maintenance of society. Malinowski highlights the issues of incest prohibition as follows,

The sexual impulse is in general a very upsetting and socially disruptive force, ...Sexual interest is therefore incompatible with any family relationship, whether parental or between brothers and sisters ... If erotic passion were allowed to invade the precincts of the home it would not merely establish jealousies and competitive elements and disorganize the family but it would also subvert the most fundamental bonds of kinship on which the further development of all social relations is based ... A society which allowed incest could not develop a stable family (Malinowski, 630).

All such theories can be comprehensively merged into a multidisciplinary approach because all unanimously support the unavoidable necessity of 'incest taboo' in view of the facts that, first, human beings are biological organisms that have adaptive strategies; second, human beings as social animals require groups, restricted sexuality, family, parenthood, kinship, in short, social structures and social systems. So what if the plausible explanation of the incestprohibition are lost in history, father-daughter liaison is forbidden under this taboo to make this world a better place to live in by upholding and maintaining social relationships.

Several researches have been conducted by incest authors by surveying history to find out pedophilia practices, excluding father daughter incest. Rea succinctly summarizes as follows: "The Bible and the Talmud also encourage sex between men and little girls both in marriage and slavery. The Talmud held that a female child of three years and one day could be betrothed by sexual intercourse, but only with her father's permission... The Bible, although, not as specific with respect to age as the Talmud, also refers to male-adult female-child sex... According to Hebrew Law, then, both before and after Moses, adult men having sex with little girls were found to be neither uncommon nor socially undesirable"(Rea, 29,30). Under such historical contingencies it is little wonder that pedophilia emerged in Western social paradigm. Importantly, pedophilia has been confirmed as psychiatric disorder.

Gebhart et al (1965) justify and contend in sport of pedophilia through comparing human behaviour: "...sexual activity between adult and immature animals is common and appears to be biologically normal" (Rea 27). Also Well (1978) forcefully argues that "most of the sexual trauma stuff is nonsense" hence trash (Rea 27). Literature reflects society. Likewise some of the Western literature and Hollywood cinematic narratives represent father-child daughter incest.

Western social paradigm seems to be too preoccupied with sexuality and 'pleasure principle'. The justification of incest and pedophilia, as is based on animals' behaviour, is untenable, because human conduct/behavior is dictated by customs, traditions, manners, and ethics. Hence, there is space neither for incest nor for inbreeding in a functional society. The ongoing argument can be safely summed up in the following quote from Professor Park:

If man differs from the lower animals in the fact that he lives in a temporal and spatial perspective, he differs also in the fact that he lives, to an extent and in a way impossible to the lower animals, in society... But animal society is characteristically symbiotic rather than social. Society, in the strict sense of the term, is based upon consensus, custom, and common understanding. Language, communication a universe of discourse and a moral order are prime conditions for the existence of society as we know it... Behaviour is fundamentally neither reflexive, instinctive, nor even habitual merely, but conventional and rational, that is to say, governed by rules, codes, and institutions... Thus man turns out to be a sophisticated animal, keenly conscious of himself, knowing good and evil, calculating and casuistic, concerned about his reputation and his soul(Park, 36).

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