



Father Fixation: Revisiting Usha Priyamvada's Novel *Rukogi Nahin Radhika*

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Abstract: Psychoanalytic theory explains human relations with respect to its chief postulations like Oedipus complex, Electra complex, the tripartite id, ego and superego, penis envy, defense mechanisms amongst others. Father fixation requires being resolved in a girl's life trajectory to grow up into maturity. Otherwise, unhappy conjugal relationship ensues from an unresolved fixation; its presence in daughter's behaviour makes her native family a dysfunctional unit. She demonstrates erratic and unstable behaviour. A daughter's identity and superego develop under the direct influence of her father. Certain schools in Sociology and Psychology, other than Freudians, have also contributed tremendously in exploring interpersonal relationships through different speculative tools. Usha Priyamvada's novel is revisited in the present paper to explore father-daughter interaction and to focus on the resolution of Radhika's father complex. Masculinity in father's persona needs to be transformed into effeminate behavior so that he may appear graceful in sublimated desires. Contrarily, he can be a potential threat to the established order of society. In non Western cultures, the psychoanalytic concepts may not get verified owing to different world-views; still they can be employed for a comprehensive understanding to obtain a variegated discourse.

Keywords: Electra complex, father fixation, identity, masculinity, psychoanalysis.

Historically, the relationship between psychoanalysis and non-Western cultures has not been particularly satisfactory... it is apparent that psychoanalytic engagement with these cultures was of an appropriating kind, as territories to be annexed, particularly for the Oedipus complex... The paramount concern of psychoanalysis seems to have been in protecting and gathering evidence in support of its key concepts rather than in entertaining the possibility that other cultures with their different world-views, family structures and relationships, could contribute to its models and concepts (Kakkar, 1997, p.33).

It is the close observation made by none other than the eminent Indian psychoanalyst and novelist, Sudhir Kakkar, that the Western module of psychoanalysis, especially its Oedipus/Electra Complex theory cannot be adequately applied to non-Western, i.e. Indian and Japanese cultures. He undermines the Western psychoanalysts' belief in universalized Oedipus/Electra complex. The narrative of *Rukogi Nahin Radhika* presents a case of Electra Complex, as is declared by a number of characters in the text, however, it is interesting to point out that the third person narrator tells the story through Radhika's point of view and the father's point of view remains ignored. Importantly, the fact that the writer herself was raised by her single mother due to her father's early death leads to an inference that she does not have firsthand authentic information from a personal and inner father. Father fixation informs an extraordinary or abnormal emotional

relationship between father and daughter. Choosing to write a fiction on the theme of Electra Complex is in part inspired by the present buzz term of Electra Complex and the idea of free woman in 1960s, as is the topic of Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962), and in part the writer's interest in her contemporary celebrated storyteller Nirmal Verma's Westernized outlook. These ideas may not suit to Indian sensibility, because Hindu mind not only rejects individualism in favour of collectivism but also abhors incest as such. Indian way of life has its roots in Vedic culture in which incest was strictly prohibited and condemned as "evil" (O'Flaherty, 07). Priyamvada has acknowledged that she is deeply influenced by Nirmal Verma's art and craft of fiction writing. He is one of the exponents of Nai Kahani in Hindi literature. Both have an exposure to Western culture and literature. Verma was too bold and experimental in writing a story, 'Sitamber ki Ek Sham' (1960) that expresses the theme of brother-sister incest; yet his command over narrative technique is such that even a meticulous critic makes deceptive interpretation and false conclusion. Though Priyamvada imitated him in choosing a similar theme of Electra complex for her novella, she falls short of an equal mastery over her subject and expression. Priyamvada has also incorporated Verma's favourite themes of existential angst over homelessness, loneliness, boredom and casual physical affair in the present novel. Verma's *Ve Din* (1964) and *Rukogi Nahin Radhika* (1967) contain similar events: Radhika and Akshya make love as the first person narrator and Raina do in *Ve Din*. Ryan belongs to Hemingway's lost generation. Radhika gets rid of her father fixation because she has an ardent faith in the institutions of marriage and family; hence her incessant search for a person who would accept her scandalous past and her as she is ends in Manish. She rejects her Papa's request to stay with him. Kakkar points out significantly,

"In some of the best modern Indian novels, the introspective passages are generally hesitant and unsure, the look inward often coming to rest upon the self of Indian philosophy rather than the self of a uniquely personal psychology" (Kakkar, 37).

The object relations psychoanalytic theory proposes that internalized images of father affects her future relationships. The factors, the way daughter perceives father and the way she imagines her image in father's mind, contribute to form her personality and the nature of father-daughter relationship. It is primarily human need to be social that leads to meaningful relationships. Whereas Freud studies human relations focusing on id or aggressive sexual derives seeking immediate gratification, which subsequent thinkers find unfair and declares father fixation is not the final psychoanalytic interpretation of human bonding, as "later psychoanalysts such as Jessica Benjamin have asked of Freud and Freudians 'why the phallus and the father have this exclusive power, this monopoly on desire, subjectivity and individuation', positing that 'the Oedipal world is not the whole world'" (Bruzzi, 53).

However, Freudian concepts are useful speculative tools in exploring interpersonal relationships in *Rukogi Nahin Radhika*. The protagonist was just one year old when her mother died and she was brought up by her father, who remained single for eighteen years only to focus his attention on her. Importantly, it is appropriate of her father that he raised her in authoritative and permissive parenting styles. As a result she has grown up into a stable identity with high self-esteem and a developed superego. Radhika is given excessive freedom to explore the world around, because her father believes in full realization of an individual's personality. He instills in her *rajasik* qualities such as clear-sightedness, intelligence, grace, activity, gentleness, tolerance, and energetic enthusiasm for work. Apart from being an art critic, intellectual elite, erudite scholar and writer, he is an extraordinary person with positive traits of openness and agreeableness, so that she acquires most of his qualities through imitation, and she emulates him in dealing with strangers in respectful detached manner. Akshya, on the bases of first impressions, happens to evaluate her persona, which informs her father's role in her growth.

He thought what makes her extraordinary. Is it her self-confidence? Is it her sophistication owing to foreign education? Or the intense depth and incomprehensibility of her character that she derives from her elite father?(57). (All translations from original text are done by the researchers)

What upsets her is her father's second marriage to Vidya, who is superior to her. She finds herself disturbed, insecure and indecisive, so that she leaves her Post Graduate course in History and plans to go abroad with Den, an American journalist, twenty years older than her, to which her Papa forcefully disagrees. At this critical juncture of her life, she is discontented, disorganized and rebellious. Apart from such

consequences of permissive parenting style, her psychological fixation is an additional significant factor to destabilize her. She is jealous of her stepmother and feels happy in making her father delay going to Vidya in next room, whose tiresome waiting for her husband gives Radhika a morbid sense of happiness and victory. Den instigates her to look at everything in proper perspective.

'Well, what if your father married second time? You too come out of your boundaries; explore the world; develop your possibilities. Make a young man your friend.'

'I find young men very immature.'

'Because you try to find your father's mental maturity in everyone of them. Do you know why are you so free with me?'

'Why', asked Radhika.

'Because you see in me a reflection of your father. Am I right?'

'Absolutely not,' protested Radhika in loud voice.(32)

Den is instrumental in developing her maturity. He takes her on path of healing through normalizing her morbid possessive attitude toward her father. It is a painful process and Den acts as a psychoanalyst. Though he is involved and undergoes a sexually frustrating relationship with Radhika, as the narrator tells,

She is frigid like a snow-girl or a statue of marble, and then Radhika would understand under a smarting pain that what else more than this can he say? Later... she often brooded why no man attracted her? Was Den right in his observation that her feelings for her father have gone into mental disorder; and no man would pass in comparison with him. A long time after the bitter emotions for both Papa and Den got washed out from her mind, rather she felt a sense of gratitude to Den, because only he, by piercing finger into eyes, forced her to look at everything in right perspective(37).

Radhika's stepmother insists her husband to get her married, to which she objects. It gives her a chance to reveal a disturbing fact that "[I]t has been often observed that the girls suffering from Electra complex don't find happiness in marriage"(52). Radhika gets extremely angry over her observation, but keeps her calm like her father. In fact, dissatisfied desire, thwarted hopes and self-centered attitude lead to anger. The disclosure as such stunned the whole family at dinner table; Radhika suppressed anger and silently observed:

Then her eyes met with Papa's. Papa wore a grave expression on his face but his soft eyeballs were submerged in sober liquidity. Earlier there always used to be a different language between them, the language of silence, as if their minds were on the same frequency, but now he was not tuned in. He appears remote and lost in himself"(52).

Radhika gets instigated due to her obsessive and unfair attachment with her Papa, she not only disrespects him but also upsets herself through introjecting her father's masculine persona. The positive point is that her anger gets directed at others, which saves her from depressive traits and consequent hysteria, as found in Freud's patient Dora. It is espoused by the following conversation:

A revolting anger flashed through her, as she said, 'Why should always that happen which you want? Does my wish mean nothing? I am your daughter, right, but I'm grown up now and I'll do what I like... Enough is enough. You've prioritized your wishes and never paid attention to what makes me happy. Only leave me alone'(52).

Whenever, in her childhood, she gets angry with her Papa, she used to threaten him to run away from home, after packing her luggage and counting the money she had in her wallet, no sooner did she close the door behind to leave, than Papa would come out from study and pick her up in his arms and then please her with gifts. But as a young girl of nineteen, she doesn't find ways to reconcile with her personal father. They drift apart. And she elopes with Den to America. Radhika constructs her identity through imitation and reflected appraisals. In her native family, her grandfather maintains a beautiful concubine, and now her father

marries a twenty years younger woman than he. Importantly, she tries to find her father figure in all her affairs with men, as Manish says, "It means you don't seek lover or husband in a male, but father in him"(82).She imitated them.

Children come to define themselves in terms of how they think their parents see them. If their parents see them as worthless or incompetent, they will come to define themselves as worthless or incompetent. If their parents define them as valued and capable, then they will come to define themselves as valued and capable... In part these effects are strong because there is no prior identity that the children act to maintain and verify by resisting alternative definitions. But we also know that even if there are some prior self-definition that are different than the way the parents treat them, with no power to construct this 'disturbance,' their identities will change to ultimately conform to the set of meanings being portrayed by the parents"(Burke and Stets, 195).The observation is espoused in Cooley's notion of a looking-glass self, as a daughter's "*reflected appraisals*" constitute a way to comprehend who she is (25).

In addition to the marked postulation in Sociology, the object relations psychoanalytic theory proposes that internalized images of father affects her future relationships. Both the factors, the way daughter perceives father, and the way she imagines her image in father's mind, contribute to the quality of father-daughter relationship. It is primarily the human need to be social that leads to meaningful relationships. Whereas Freud studies human relations focusing on id or aggressive sexual derives, which later thinkers find unfair and declares father / mother fixation is not the end of the world. Nevertheless, Freudian concepts are useful in exploring interpersonal relationships. Moreover, a father must give up his masculinity in favour of effeminate conduct to ensure his capacity for a sublimated love which is a daughter's need. As Bruzzi points out, "That the father's power is in part founded upon the renunciation of his sexuality and his potential allure has always seemed to stem from an easy compromise the father has 'proved' his sexually and desirability by siring a child but in order to conform to the symbolic need for the father to no longer pose a sexual threat to the family (but rather to protect that family from the sexual threat of others) he must give that active masculinity up. The father's strength is stable only as long as this 'lack' is accepted rather than challenged"(Bruzzi, 60).

Finally, Radhika behaves responsibly as her character develops through the course of action. The narrative is a bildungsroman genre with a happy ending, and she successfully emerges out of a entangling emotional situation in father fixation.

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