



The Dynamics of Father-Daughter Relationship in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's "Queen of Dreams"

Ms. Chandni Rasikbhai Vasani

PhD Research Scholar, Department of English
KSKV Kachchh University, Bhuj

Dr. Manish Pandya

Principal, Tolani Commerce College, Adipur

| ARTICLE DETAILS | ABSTRACT |
|---|---|
| Research Paper | <p>The novel "Queen of Dreams" by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni weaves deftly in between the tapestry of intricate cultural identity, familial relationships, and personal revelation. The plot is based on the complex, poignant relationship between Rakhi, the erringly ordinary protagonist, and her mother—who is also a dream-teller—though an implicit understanding and bonding between her and her father as well. It is a research paper discussing complex dynamics of the father-daughter relationship in the novel "Queen of Dreams." The paper examines how Rakhi's identity and personal experience are shaped by her father's emotional support, presence, and illustration of cultural tension. It investigates the changing dynamics of the father-daughter relationship between Rakhi's daughter Jona and her father Sonny. In focusing on these seemingly inconsequential relationships, then, this paper will draw attention to how fathers are able to define their children's characters and legacy within the context of the overarching themes of identity and heritage evident in Divakaruni's work. It is an invaluable contribution to this specific literature that this paper thus</p> |
| Keywords: <i>Emotional support, Father Daughter relationship, Family dynamics, Immigrant experience, Paternal love.</i> | |



demonstrates a detailed examination of the father-daughter relationship described in the novel.

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15225307>

Introduction

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an award-winning Indian-born American author, poet, professor, and speaker. She was born in India on July 29, 1956, and later migrated to the United States to earn a doctorate at the University of California, Berkeley. Presently, she teaches in the nationally ranked Creative Writing program at the University of Houston, where she is the McDavid Professor of Creative Writing. This poet and prose writer has written many treatises on contemporary American and Indian life, women's lives, immigration, history, magical realism, and mythology.

Published in 2004, "Queen of Dreams" is a rich tapestry of immigrant experiences, mystical elements, and the deep-seated ties of family. In a difficult marriage, Rakhi, as an artist and owner of a coffee shop, is struggling with a difficulty of place serving a community that is changing swiftly. Her mother is a dream interpreter and was graced from birth with the ability to share, interpret, and assist others in their destiny through her dreams. Rakhi is always drawn to the gift of vision, but it keeps her apart from her mother's past in India and the dream world she lived in. She desires for something to fill up their distance. Rakhi, overloaded by her own devastating secret, is finding comfort in the dream journals that are starting to unlock the door to the past that has long been closed when, after her mother's death, she holds no blame, but the incidents take on an eerie, perplexing shape in Rakhi's mind as she tries to unravel the nature of her being that is lost. Allegory, from knowing virtually nothing about India, she is sucked head-on into a sometime traumatic past from which she is not allowed an inch of give if she tries to step back. Tormented by the unfathomable embroilments, she finds something that she has not bargained for, that is, the opportunity for her family to find new love and understanding. More has been stressed in the critical discussion of the novel on the issue of mother-daughter bond and the bi cultural struggle of the protagonist, but the father-daughter bond is also equally essential.

Literature Review

Analyzing the relationship between the father and daughter has been a major revelation in literature for the longest time. In psychoanalytic feminist theory, according to Chodorow Nancy, the father-daughter



relationship has a significant role in the construction of a daughter and her identity. In a patriarchal society, fathers constitute meaning, the external world, as well as power with regard to the difference of the mother's nurturing (Chodorow, 1978). Bharati Mukherjee elaborates on the problems that immigrants experience in upholding their cultural identity while at the same time having to join a new society. Rakhi's father gives a much subdued, sensible part of American life that theoretically balances her mother's intense association with Indian customs and traditions. This relationship becomes very important in finding a balanced identity for Rakhi, as she sways from her being an Indian to her American upbringing. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their 1979 educative review, pointed out that the father provides another kind of emotional support than the mother. Divakaruni describes this through Rakhi's father supporting her in Café business as well encourages her paintings. This is illustrated through various literary studies, for example, by Marianne Hirsch on family narratives (1989), showing the changeability of family roles flowing down the family line. The active presence and intervention of Sonny in Jona's life differ from Rakhi's experiences in a way that outlines alterations in paternal presence through various cultural and temporal contexts.

Although this is a qualitative research paper, the adopted methods for this research paper are textual Analysis, Thematic analysis and character Analysis methods for the verification of the father-daughter relationship in the novel 'Queen of Dreams'. In fact, this type of strategy is suitably apt for language research overall.

Father-Daughter Relationship in 'Queen of Dreams'

Rakhi's father, though not the same as her mother, functions as a robust character in this novel. His absence makes his presence felt since it has subtle but lasting effects on Rakhi's mental landscape. Whereas her mysterious mother is shown to have been one with visions, which let her connect to her Indian ancestors, Rakhi's father represents the more silent and reliable side of her history. He stands up as a symbol for the hidden stability and support which underpin her hectic life. In the first part of the novel his father keeps quiet and silent. He has been seen drinking and not involving in mother-daughter's relation equations.

'I wish it weren't a Friday, that's all.'

'I know what she means. My father's binges always begin on Friday evenings, and he hasn't had one in a while.'



'My father- a hazy presence in my life at the best of times-has been laid off before this, and he's always managed to find something.' (55)

These lines reflect Rakhi's anxiety regarding his father's habit of drinking and his physical and mental absence. His recent loss of job is the cause of his anxiousness and unreliability. This aggravates the feelings of insecurity and unreliability of the father when his daughter needs him. His father, however, is the true admirer of her work. He willingly came to the exhibition of Rakhi's paintings and felt immensely proud of his daughter. Rakhi suspects her father of causing her mother's mysterious death in a car accident. She felt that his father had something to do with her mother's death. After the death of her mother, she distanced herself from her father. Strangely, a new chapter of her life is opened by her mother's demise.

Now, she has a new channel of the communication to know about her parents. She finds her mother's dream journal, which was written in Bengali. Rakhi was not able to read that language. The father becomes the narrator for her and reads the journal for Rakhi. Their relationship started to get better as a result of those readings. *'I can help you read them, he says. The words hung in front of her, gossamer-winged as a fishing lure. If you want.'* (126)

The father eventually revealed to her and spoke about everything, including his life in India. Her father used to share a lot of stories about India unlike her mother who did not like to speak much about her past or about her life in Calcutta and India. When the father tells the story about India, the daughter,

'She leans forward, her eyes shing. Here is the kind of story She has waited for her entire life, has begged, cajoled, badgered, her mother for- in vain. And think it was waiting all this time inside her father, the drinker, the singer, the skeptic who never believed in dreams. The parents she always dismissed, although affectionately, thinking she knew nothing she'd have any use for'. (168)

His stories can give her a cultural background that will help her to realistically imagine India, while his cooking and singing skills make Indian culture more perceivable and real for Rakhi. In order to save his daughter's coffee shop, he suggests transforming it into an authentic

'Indian snack shop, a chaer dokan, as it would be called in Calcutta. They sit at the dining table late into the night, father and daughter compiling lists, trying out ideas.' (165)

Her father used to prepare authentic Indian food items to make it more culturally realistic. Rakhi and her father turn their café shop into a real Indian Kurma House Café, but they were not getting that much



response from customers. It was then that her father's singing talent saves her business. His Hindi songs, Indian music brought a crowd of musicians to the Café. Rakhi observes that *"some wear Western clothes, and some are in kurta-pajamas...The word foreign comes to me again, though I know it's ironic. They're my countrymen. We share the same skin color"* (193). Engaging in the pleasant, cultural rituals at her coffee shop, Rakhi revisits her perception of ethnic identity and art. She looks at her own paintings and felt detached from her the work she did before- as if it is painted by someone else.

Rakhi also noticed that her father has also given up his habit of drinking after losing her mother. Quite optimistic, isn't it? She says, *'It strikes me that he hasn't had one of his drunken binges since my mother died.'* (217).

Like Mr. Gupta, Rakhi's Father, Rakhi's ex-husband Sonny also has a decent share in his daughter's life. Though it is obvious that his path is difficult as he is away from Rakhi, he still manages to keep in touch and is involved with Jona. He seems to be a very loving and caring father who genuinely attempted to have developed a strong bonding with his daughter. Sonny's love for Jona can be seen when Rakhi says by herself, *'I hadn't thought Sonny would want the bother of caring for a three-year-old who wasn't quite toilet trained yet, but he'd surprised me.'* (23)

Being a café owner, Rakhi sometimes couldn't spend much time with her daughter. However, Sonny always tried to spend time with Jona. He took her for trekking and vacation at Mendocino. He also took care of her daughter while she caught fever and became weak. He enjoyed cooking along with his daughter several times. Rakhi also admits that *'.... I'm impressed'. The father and daughter team cooks the pancakes to the accomplishment of much laughter'* (213).

The attack of 9/11 at World Trade Center brought a tough time to Rakhi's life. Running the business of Café was not a kind of job, which Rakhi and her father could find easy. Finally, the brutal event of patriots' attack on Rakhi's café and her friends broke her completely. She and Jona were shocked by this incident. At that time, both the fathers become a support system for their daughters. After that attack, Rakhi's father encouraged her to reopen her café. Sonny also helped Jona to deal with what is going on around them and gave mental support to her.

Conclusion



Indeed, most of the interactions that go on between a father and his daughter are culturally signed with heritage and personal experiences that often lead to conflicts and reconciliations. The struggles of Rakhi, who is trying to break the silence of her father and their common past, conclude that bridging generational and cultural identity divides is founded on understanding and acceptance. She is not sufficient to be the inheritor of the two mixed cultures because of her extended discovery of Indian culture. However, Rakhi now knows how to let those two cultures progressively intrude because of her father. This journey of understanding ultimately leads to a deeper connection, one that is built on mutual respect, and recognition of the roles they play in each other's lives. What makes this relationship relevant to the narration is the fact that it acts as a microcosm for some big themes of identity, belonging, and the experience of immigrants.

References

1. Divakaruni, C.B. (2005). *Queen of Dreams*. Abacus.
2. Chodorow, N. (1978). *The reproduction of mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. University of California Press.
3. Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (2020). *The Madwoman in the attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Yale University Press.
4. Hirsch, M.(1989). *The mother/daughter plot: Narrative, psychoanalysis, feminism*. Indiana University Press.
5. Mukherjee, B. (1988). *The middleman and other stories* (1st Grove Press pbk. ed.). Grove Press.
6. <https://www.chitradivakaruni.com/>