

Representation of Father-Daughter Relationship in *Rukogi Nahin Radhika*

Dr. Sajeena Gayathri,
Asst. Professor & Coordinator,
Dept. of English Language Skills,
Female Campus, Northern Border University,
Arar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Abstract:

In every culture the role of a father is a significant one. He can be equated with a pillar on whose guidance and support the members of a family can rely upon. During every stage of a child's growth, the father should devote his full attention towards the child with the support of the mother. While, in a motherless home, the father assumes the role of a housekeeper and also a mother substitute. So in this respect he has to play more than one role. Some fathers have the notion that they will not be able to look after their children without the backing of a mother and therefore they remarry. But most cases turn out to be futile, and there also occurs a wide gap between the father and the child. The following chapter represents one such an incident where the father remarries when the daughter is in her teens, thus creating a fissure between the father and daughter relationship.

Keywords: father-daughter relation, remarriage, loneliness, father-surrogate

The Hindi novel, *Rukogi Nahin Radhika*, by Usha Priyamvada. is focussed on the main character, Radhika. The protagonist is a motherless child, who has been brought up by her father. Besides her father she has an elder brother, Vinay, a married man with two children. Radhika is very much attached to her father and he is everything to her. But unfortunately, her happiness is short-lived when her father remarries Vidya, who is twenty years younger to him. This incident occurs when Radhika completes her B.A., and thus becomes a turning point in her life. She also feels that this event has created a wide chasm between her father and herself. She finds it

difficult to adjust with Vidya and therefore leaves the house with a foreigner named Daniel Peterson to America. Daniel is a reporter who comes to India to write a guide book for the tourists. Radhika meets him in the library where they become friends. Her father is very much worried at the behaviour of Radhika and tells her not to go. But unheeded to his words she quits. She feels that by deserting her father, she is hurting him just as he hurted her by his remarriage.

After arriving in America, she stays with Daniel for nearly one year. He says that she does not love him because she tries to seek her father in him. But he does not wish that, and she is free to choose her own way. In America, she completes her M.A. in Fine Arts and after two years, she eagerly returns to India to meet her father. She thinks that by this time her father would surely excuse her for her deeds.

She arrives in Delhi thinking that her father would be present to receive her. Instead, she is received by a man, named Akshay. Radhika is impressed by Akshay's personality. He helps her in going to Lucknow to meet her relatives. When she meets her father, he treats her warmly but there is not the relationship that existed earlier. She does not like this atmosphere and makes up her mind to go back to Delhi. In Delhi she again meets Akshay, who for the second time looks after the needs of Radhika. They both become good friends. Radhika resides in a separate house.

Akshay and Radhika used to go for outings whenever they are free. One such day Radhika happens to meet one of her former friends Manish, whom she had met in America. He is also Daniel's friend. After this incident, Manish regularly visits Radhika and whenever Akshay is busy, Manish spends time with Radhika. Radhika has known Manish as an unsteady character who could easily change girl-friends because he has been doing so. On the other hand Radhika has a good opinion of Akshay. As Radhika had left India with Daniel, everyone including Akshay thinks Daniel to be her former husband. But this is quite wrong. It is right that she lived with Daniel for one year but there has been no such relationship between him and Radhika.

Akshay likes Radhika but when he thinks of marrying her, her past worries him. Towards the end of the novel, Akshay gets transfer to Calcutta and Radhika is brought to Lucknow once again by her brother, so that she could stay with him. Even though she is invited by her brother she is not at all happy. Manish comes to Lucknow to meet Radhika. He reveals to her that if she

is willing, he is ready to start a life with her. They both know each other for a long time. He also invites her to Khajurau where is working. She tells that she needs time to think over it. He leaves her telling that he would be waiting for her.

Vidya commits suicide and her father once again becomes lonely. Radhika is guilty for having found fault with her father, because she now understands quite clearly what loneliness is. It was for this reason that her father had remarried after remaining alone for eighteen years. Her father requests her to live with him for the rest of her life but she refuses saying that she has to accompany a friend of hers named Manish. Throughout the novel, Radhika is shown as lonely lady. When she says that she is to leave with Manish, her father does not compel her to stay on and he is left alone for the rest of his life.

In the novel, Rukogi Nahin Radhika, Usha Priyamvada has portrayed the father character as a loving person. He loves his daughter Radhika dearly. The loss of her mother is not felt by Radhika throughout. Such is the affection showered upon her by her father. He is like any other lovable father. Her father is a lawyer but that is because of the will and wish of her grandfather. Radhika's father has a passion for literature and arts. He does not show any interest in law although he has learnt it for the sake of his father. Even when his father was alive, he started writing on literature and arts. But after the death of his wife, his whole time is devoted to it.

Radhika's father completed his study of law according to the wish of his father.

There was also a dusty nameboard hanging on the gate till a few days back, but Radhika never heard that he ever took interest in law.¹

Her father is always engaged with Radhika during his leisure time. Only after spending his time with her, he used to continue his reading and writing. But this routine changes when he remarries Vidya, a girl 18-20 years junior to him. Vidya is the elder sister of Radhika's friend Rama.

Her father has never thought that his remarriage with would affect his daughter. He does not have the slightest idea that as Radhika is too much attached to him, his marriage could disturb her mental state. That is the time she feels that her father is away from her. Her father does not really mean that. He has already lived alone without a wife for nearly eighteen years. It is when Radhika had completed her B.A. that he marries again. This mental state of Radhika

makes her to go away with a foreigner and depend on him. The cause for leaving with the foreigner is her father's remarriage.

Radhika goes away with Daniel Peterson only to take revenge on her father. Daniel is already introduced to her father by Radhika. But her father does not take interest in him because he hates foreigners. Yet her father does not show it for Daniel is his guest. Her father has clearly understood Radhika's feeling and he knows that his remarriage has disturbed Radhika. He knows that she would take some silly way and he warns her against any wrong and unwise decision. But she turns a deaf ear to her father's words.

Her father is much shocked at his daughter's behavior and in the heart of hearts he feels very sad. He also has nervous break-down at her cruel conduct. This is evident through the words of Rama:

“Brother-in-law had serious nervous break-down. The reason known to others for this incident was due to over-work. But the relatives knew that it was because of you.”²

He is under the wrong notion that Daniel is Radhika's boy-friend. But this is not true. He thinks how Radhika could elope with a man who is much older to her and also divorced.

There is not a slight hint in the novel about her father's happy life with Vidya. After Radhika leaves him, he goes to stay in his house at Gangapur. Bhavani, his servant is there to accompany him and look after all his needs. When Radhika returns to India after completing M.A. in fine arts, she is more a matured person than before. She understands what loneliness is and how bad is it on her part to find fault with her father for having remarried. She also knows that her father is not only satisfied in being a father, a writer or a lawyer; he needs something more. Radhika expects her father to forgive her for what she has done and thinks that he would be at the airport to receive her. To her dismay, nothing of this kind happens and she understands that her father has not yet acquitted her, which makes her feel more isolated than before.

When Radhika goes to meet him, her father's behaviour is one of abandonment. Of course he welcomes her, but the attachment which existed before her father's remarriage is not present. He also looks tired and his hair has nearly become grey. It might be due the stress caused by his daughter. When she tells her father that she is to leave that place, her father does

not insist her to stay back. He tells her that she is quite an intelligent person and she can do what she thinks as right.

The next time her father meets Radhika is at the time of Vidya's death. She has committed suicide and the reason for this is not mentioned. But it is clear that her father and Vidya lived separately. Her father appears too much afflicted towards the end of the novel. He neither received happiness nor consolation from his daughter. The only mistake he had done according to his daughter is that he remarried and for that reason, he has received enough of torture. Neither could he live happily nor could Radhika find a good life. She had in a sense what is known as 'electra-complex'. When she finds that her father has remarried, she feels that her father's love will be shared by her step-mother too. This paves the way for the destruction of both the father's and daughter's happiness.

Towards the end, after Vidya passes away, her father is left alone once again. He bids Radhika to stay along with him just as before. She finds him to be sad, disinterested and fainthearted, still she rejects him saying that she has to leave. Her father makes no comment and leaves her to her own way. The affection of Radhika's father towards his daughter though seems to be natural goes beyond limits bringing havoc both to himself and Radhika. A father should learn to check his affection at a certain point; otherwise it leads to misery. The remarriage of Radhika's father is a psychic necessity to him because he seems to shift his dependence on his daughter to Vidya who is only a daughter-surrogate to him. Radhika's deserting her father is not a solution to the problem. Nevertheless this incident and Peterson's friendship make Radhika an adult.

Radhika seeks in Daniel Peterson, her father surrogate. Radhika who dearly loves her father is totally broken when her father remarries. In order to take revenge on her father she tries to seek in Daniel, a father figure. Daniel is a foreigner and also twenty years her senior. He comes to India as a reporter of some newspaper in Chicago. In India, he is engaged in writing one guide book on India for the foreigners. He attends the same library where Radhika is doing some reference work for her father.

Daniel's personality fascinates Radhika. She makes friendship with Daniel in the library. They used to occupy the library every day, till three o'clock they and after that Daniel takes Radhika to his house. He does not know Hindi language, yet he carries on with his work.

Having tea in the lawn, he reveals to her about his background and life. He is a married man with one child. There is a rift between him and his wife due to some misunderstanding. Therefore they continue living separately.

Radhika knows everything about Daniel. She also tells him of her father's remarriage with Vidya. Daniel understands well that her father's conduct has disturbed Radhika. He advises her that if her father had remarried why cannot she too choose someone and enter a married life. She tells him that she could not find a matured person like her father in any man. Every other man apart from her father seems to be immature and unripe. When she tells this, Daniel understands clearly about her moving freely with him. She moves freely with Daniel because she tries to find the reflection of her father in him, Daniel tells this directly to Radhika:

“Do you know why you are so free with me?

Because you find in me your father's reflection.

Isn't it right?”³

Daniel asks Radhika whether she is ready to accompany to America so that she can help him in his work. She readily agrees to it as it is her long-time wish to visit a foreign land. She has a feeling that she is attached to such a man who could become her father-surrogate. When Daniel tells her that she is seeking in him, her father's equal, she recognises that what Daniel has told is true. Daniel keeps his promise of accompanying Radhika to America. There he gets a new flat. Radhika and Daniel live there for nearly one year. He tells her that he could not continue staying with her and as he gets an offer from the East once again, he has to leave, leaving Radhika behind to choose her own way.

It is to be remembered that though Radhika attempts to find her father-surrogate in Daniel, he does not agree to her thoughts. He wanted Radhika to bestow on him some love and care which he was deprived of from his wife. On the other hand Radhika can never think of such a relation. She visualizes him as a father figure and to some extent a good friend who has helped her to overcome her grief caused by her father. She can never conceive him as a lover or a husband. Daniel can also never agree to be in the position of Radhika's father. And it is for this reason that he tells her that they could not continue living together and also that he would not be

accompanying Radhika to the East. He says that if he leaves her, she would be free to do anything she wishes and that does not mean he is rejecting her. She is trying to seek her father in him and Daniel on the other hand is trying to search his lost adolescence in her. So both their paths are different; the best thing is to part. Daniel thus leaves Radhika. She speaks of Daniel:

“Dan did help me in going abroad, otherwise remaining here how was I to know in which University should I apply.”⁴

Radhika's naivety, as well as her dependence on a father figure is quite explicit.

It is due to Daniel that Radhika learns to live an independent life. It also helps her to earn her M.A. degree in Fine Arts. Although Daniel helps her to be self-dependent, in one sense, he is also a part of her devastation. When Radhika leaves for America with Daniel, she earns a bad reputation for herself. Everyone takes Daniel to be her husband, which is not at all true. Society cannot digest such relationships.

Another character in the novel, Akshay, can also be treated as Radhika's father-surrogate. Though Radhika is unconscious of it, this is made aware through Manish's words. He says:

“That means in every man, you try to seek your father and not your husband or lover. In a moment of conflict in your life, Daniel helped you and so you gratefully started to live with him. Now that when Akshay is taking care of you, marry him.”⁵

Again when Radhika says that Akshay is just her friend who has looked after all her needs, Manish laughingly makes a comment that:

“so you have not changed your pattern. Still you are trying to seek your father in friends.”⁶

Akshay is the one who comes to receive Radhika at the airport. He is solemn, humble and gentle-speaker, according to Radhika. He is sent to receive Radhika by Vidya. He readily looks after the needs of Radhika. Although he is not much sophisticated Radhika is impressed by him. Akshay has reached his thirties, yet he is not married. The reason is that he is not attracted by any girl. But when he sees Radhika, he begins to feel a liking towards her. Something in her attracts him. According to Akshay she is simple. To him his wife should be such who would look after his house, who would care him and his children and also be his forever. In other words

Akshay obviously wants to be more a child and be taken care of by his wife. In short a wife is a mother surrogate to him. On the contrary Radhika wants to leave the entire burden on Akshay's shoulders thus making him the father-surrogate. Such a relationship cannot continue because it is ruled by a sense of possession.

From this view of Akshay it is clear that he knows Radhika's past. Whenever he thinks of proposing to her, his conscience prevents him from doing so. He too has the impression that Daniel might be her former husband and has been living with her for one year. He is also doubtful whether some other person would have entered her life during her stay in America. He also suspects Manish who is very free with Radhika. Manish and Radhika have been good friends while in America and for that matter he behaves quite freely with Radhika. Usha Priyamvada records:

Finding Manish and Radhika in a friendly and social manner, Akshay began to feel whether Manish too had been Radhika's lover.⁷

Akshay has been rejecting many good proposals. It is also clear that Akshay is not interested in any such girls who are divorced and who have lived with any other man. Earlier when his sister brought him a proposal from a divorced girl, his reaction is that it is right to be sympathetic with that girl, but he is not ready to accept any 'remainder of victuals'. But his attitude towards Radhika is entirely different. In spite of her spending a year with a foreigner, Akshay has a soft corner towards her. Once when he returns from his office he finds Radhika decorating the house. His thoughts carry him to foresee Radhika as his wife. He knows well that Radhika is more sophisticated than him and he doubts whether she could adjust with him.

Radhika spends each and every leisure time by going out with Akshay. They used to have meals in the restaurant and then have a stroll for some time. But when Manish begins to frequent Radhika, Akshay is taken aback and he stops visiting Radhika in order to avoid her. He says that it is difficult to find time for her as he has over-work. He only avoids her because of Manish. Radhika is able to understand that Akshay is trying to avoid her, but she could not know why he is behaving so. Later she finds out the reason for that. Radhika thinks:

Akshay is a high officer in a foreign firm, but at heart he is an Indian to the core. He is noble and could give a comfortable life to his wife and also be a good father to his children .⁸

Though Radhika knows that Akshay avoids her due to Manish, she never finds fault with him but has a good opinion of him.

Akshay finds time to visit her neighbour but not her. Only Akshay's attitude towards Radhika is changed, but she has always the gratitude towards him for all the troubles and cares he takes for her. Akshay on the other hand does not even reveal his transfer to Radhika. It is only through Akshay 's servant that Radhika gets the news. On the eve of his departure he asks Radhika whether she would like to accompany him and be his forever. Radhika rejects this proposal saying that he has not taken this decision carefully but has spoken out of emotion. Probably Radhika understands now that the suspicious Akshay can never make a good husband.

The three fold relationships, namely Radhika - Peterson, Radhika- Akshay and Radhika - Manish reveals interesting psychic imbalances of the human mind. While Radhika seeks a father in all these three, Peterson and Akshay are searching for a daughter and a mother respectively in their spouses. Manish, though a rake seems to be worldly-wise and capable of understanding the aberrations of the mind. He is quite frank and open to point out the weaknesses in Radhika. Probably it is a wise decision of Radhika to go with him to enter into a new life. The loneliness of Radhika's father is unavoidable and it is a kind of a punishment for his stupid move to marry a girl who is more like a daughter.

WORK CITED

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⁶Ibid., p. 69.

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⁸Ibid., p. 76.