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## EXPLORING MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATION IN *VIRGINIA WOOLF IN MANHATTAN* (2014) BY MAGGIE GEE

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### ABSTRACT:

Literature serves as a vehicle for communicating our thoughts, feelings, and knowledge to others. There are several works, narratives, and plays in the literature that depicts parental-child interactions. One of the most basic human relationship is the bond between parents and their offspring. Mothers and fathers care for their young sons and daughters on both a physical and emotional level. To be specific, the mother-daughter relationship is the most intimate relationship a girl can have. Relationships between mothers and daughters can be complicated, but they are also filled with compassion and love. Their relation frequently appears to be on an on-off track, which seems distant than they are. The present paper aims to study the mother-daughter relationship in the novel *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan*, published in 2014, authored by Maggie Gee, a renowned British writer. The research will be done keeping in mind the sensitivity of the bond mother and a teenage daughter. In the select novel, Angela is a working mother who has a school-going daughter, Greda. Their relationship takes a turn from when an outsider enters in between their relationship, thus makes Greda grow against her mother, as she develops a feeling of insecurity and jealousy.

**Keywords:** mother-daughter, complicated, intimate relationship, jealousy, insecurity

### INTRODUCTION

Only recently has a mother become a prominent presence in contemporary literature. This character's increasing appearance in contemporary texts stems largely from the women's movement and its focus on its private sphere and women's lives. In literature, the mother take on a central role once daughter begins to map and assess their lives. For many women authors, dealing with the mother usually entails grappling with the internalization of the mother's voice. In addition, researchers have been interested in the parent-child connection and its consequences since parents play an essential role in human existence. In a family, the mother, as the primary caregiver, plays a more critical role in raising children than the father.

Mothers and daughters have a stronger bond and intimacy than any other parent-child connection. As a result, the nature of the mother-daughter connection has a significant impact on the daughters' social and psychological well-being and self-esteem. The value of a mother-daughter connection in the lives of both women, particularly daughters, has been debated for decades. Closeness, tenderness, and support are typical in adult daughters' relationships with their mothers, resulting in a deeply shared bond during their lives. The quality of a mother-daughter connection impacts a daughter's self-esteem because a mother, as a key position in her life, may picture how a significant function in womanhood is experienced emotionally.

Maggie Gee is a prolific and critically regarded author in the United Kingdom. She is born in Poole, Dorset, in 1948 and then relocated to the Midlands and then Sussex. She received her education in public schools and Oxford's Somerville College, where she earned her M.A and B.Litt. In 1983, she was one of six women among the twenty writers selected for Granta's Best of Young British Novelists. She has also served on the Management Committee of the Society of Authors and the Government's Public Lending Right Committee. Maggie's research interests include nature writing, Virginia Woolf, science writing, evolutionary biology, W.D Hamilton's work, black British literature, and African and African diaspora writing. She has written several books. Gee wrote *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan* in 2014, and it received appreciation from many publishers and media.

Maggie Gee's novel *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan* (2014) is all about the relation mother and daughter share. Gee has tried to show the contemporary relation Angela Lamb and Greda possesses. Angela is a working mother who is a writer by profession and goes abroad for several worldwide conferences. Her



daughter Greda is a school-going child who manages to live alone without her mother on academic trips. The paper will explore the theme of mother-daughter relations, keeping in mind the sensitivity of the bond. To begin with the paper, Angela Lamb is a novelist cum academician who participates in several conferences around the globe. Angela Lamb travels to New York to conduct research at the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library for a paper she will deliver at a Woolf conference in Turkey. She has a daughter named Greda, who is just thirteen years old. Keeping in view the situation of the Lamb family, where husband and wife live far apart and don't have a happy marriage, Angela decides to arrange a boarding school for her daughter. She decides to send her to Bendham Abbey, far away from her home, for her better and stable education. Angela is shown a concerned but contemporary mother who has a practical vision towards her daughter, which Greda interprets wrong. "Hard, very hard for me, sending her away, and Edward protested... *don't think about that.*" (Gee 14). Greda's mother goes against her father's will, Edward, who is not in a favour sending his daughter all alone for schooling.

Greda is sent to an institute where they follow an archaic style of teaching which follows no gadget in campus rule, which impressed Angela, who believes mobile phones are like thieves who steal concentration and power to imagine. Angela's decision to send her only daughter away infuriates Greda, making her hate her mom for being an indifferent parent, even though she promised to be connected through email every day, despite her busy schedule.

...Greda is thirteen. I have kept her alive! And she's newly away at school. A rather good one, Bendham Abbey, though no-one in my family had ever been to public school before. Hard, very hard for me, sending her away, and Edward protested... *don't think about that.* Second term, Greda would be fine. Mobiles were banned -it's archaic, but apparently, problems with theft, concentration in lessons. I told her we could email every day... (Gee 14)

Angela is a mother from the twenty-first century who is willing to follow the old school part to better her only child and digest her child's anger only for her enhancement.

The belief that mothers know the most about their daughters is linked to trust in the hierarchy. Mudita Rastogi, in the research paper titled, "*The Mother-Adult Daughter Questionnaire (MAD): Developing a Culturally Sensitive Instrument*", emphasises the significance of hierarchy in the mother-daughter connection, particularly in collectivist cultures. Similarly, in his paper, Flax highlights the mother-daughter bond, which is significant because women serve as role models for their daughters and define what a daughter should be like, even though the daughter may contradict.

Along with the proposition of love and hatred shared between mother and daughter, there is also a theme of jealousy shared by Angela and Greda. Greda is already enraged for leaving her all by herself, and this feeling amplifies when she receives mail from her mother, who is in New York preparing her paper for a big conference on Woolf to be held at Istanbul University, Turkey. Her mother's email reads that she is with Virginia Woolf, who is back in life and is with her in New York. Knowing that a stranger is sharing the attention she owns makes Greda feel jealous. At first, she thinks her mother has gone lunatic whose words make no sense as she mentions a dead person who is back in flesh and blood. She reacts to her mother's information in the following way;

My mum picked up this weird old woman. That's what I thought till I googled her. for a bit, Mum thought about nothing else. She claimed this person was 'very famous'. Mum didn't bother to explain to me. I just thought, 'Yeah, she's got a loony in tow'. She should have told me. I would have believed her. and in the end- but that's much later. (Gee 27)

Greda is filled with anger on not getting any clear information about her mother, who is with a lady that is back and alive after many years.

There is a change in the nature of Greda after the arrival of Virginia Woolf. Her mother is busy with her, and she gives all the care and time Greda owns. There is an incident in the novel where Greda calls her mother to which Angela says, "... 'Someone who is *right beside me.* Someone very famous I'm having to look after. Someone special. I'm *busy darling.*" (Gee 37). After hearing these words from her mother on the phone, Greda bangs the phone in anger and says, "... 'How about looking after your daughter? Aren't I special? I hate you, Mummy.' I banged the phone down, though it missed the cradle and swung there, hopeless, like a baby on a cord. Banging its head against the glass." (Gee 37)

Angela, despite being busy and digesting the change in her life responds with love to her daughter even though they converse for a brief span. This can be interpreted from the following lines, "... She knows she is not supposed to call me. But that's children: they choose their moment. They ask a lot. Though one gives it gladly. I had told her never to hang up on me." (Gee 37)



With time the rate of their communication starts declining. The duration of their calls cut down to two or three minutes. Their everyday emailing pattern comes down to once a week. Sometimes there was no communication at all for days. As in the text, Greda states that "So Mum stopped answering my emails. I hated this school. I was furious. .... I really started to hate my mother." (Gee 50). Greda receives a strange email from her mother in which she doesn't ask about her but talks about the woman who came back to her life and says, "I am having to take care of Virginia Woolf. That was the person I was talking to. Am sending this email while she is resting. You can't imagine how demanding she is. ... It's wonderful, but it is a pressure." (Gee 50)

On receiving this type of email from her mother, Greda says,

I hated the idea of Virginia Woolf. ... Why did she have to be obsessed with this Virginia? Why's she s'posed to be such a genius? I might be a Genius myself one day. But mum didn't care, she just ignored my emails, or sent back three lines about her own life. I felt so lonely in that phonebox. Geniuses need encouragement. (Gee 51)

From these lines, one can note that Greda is feeling jealous and insecure about her mother as she is full of praise for the alien woman. Greda here misses the moral support a daughter aspires from her mother. Angela's such gestures are misinterpreted by her daughter, who takes her every action in a pessimistic tone. On the other hand, her mother thinks that her from her daughter her a strong woman, which her mother couldn't do, "... That child doesn't know how lucky she is. I suppose she might actually do better than me! I couldn't be jealous of my own daughter." (Gee 52)

This mother-daughter duo is showing the readers their vacillating chemistry. One the one hand they show brass-bound attachment, and the other hand they exhibit crumbly correlation. There are times when Greda is in utter need of support, and the first person that comes to her mind for her rescue is her mother. There is an incident where Greda wants to express her feelings to her mother about being bullied at school. But within a fraction of seconds, there is a change in her emotion, and she starts pointing out the reasons where her mother would hardly care about her troubles and bothering, which is stated as, "... These girls at school started calling me fat. I was going through a sturdy phase. ... I tried to tell my mum what had happened but I know from her emails she didn't take it in- 'Marvellous, Greda, I'm glad you're having fun. ... she's slightly defective.'" (Gee 52). Greda loses hope that her mother ever bothers to look at her and notice the change in her mood or her expression. She considers her mother as a self-obsessed woman whose world revolves around her only, as mentioned in the lines, "In fact that wouldn't work at all, because I don't think Mum's a sneak. In fact she couldn't be arsed to sneak. Meaning, she isn't that interested. Only because she has so much 'Pressure'. She talks a lot about 'Stress' and 'Pressure'." (Gee 52-53).

Again there is a switch in her feeling, which can be noted from the following lines, "[...] I do love her when she tickles me, and when I lie down and she pulls my feet, which sounds perverted, but is Normal. I liked her to do that since I was a baby, and when she hasn't got Pressure, she will. Mummy.Mum. She's in my heart." (Gee 53). Therefore, from the above mentioned lines researcher can state that mother's play an important role in daughter's life even though they share not so happy bond.

#### **Conclusion:**

Greda is in her teenage, therefore, her feelings towards her mother take a new turn every minute. She is going through the transition of emotions, body, hormones as any teenage lass goes through. During this time mother's play an important role in a girls life. At this phase, her personality can be molded in any best form possible. Talking about the novel, *Virginia Woolfin Manhattan*, can be studied in relation to a working mother and a school-going daughter. How the two struggling females manage their bond with each other and how a mother tries her best for her daughter to become a strong woman in the near future. Angela goes through many changes in her life, from living away from a daughter now and then to fulfill her academic desires as a writer and researcher. She single-handedly manages to send her daughter to school while her husband is in Artic. She hopes to keep her daughter happy while her teenage daughter finds it difficult to share her mother's attention with an unknown woman in another country.

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