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Social and Psychic Prisons: An Intergenerational Reading of Krishna Sobti's *Dil-o-Danish*

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Abstract:

This paper offers a reading of Krishna Sobti's novel *Dil-o-Danish*. It highlights the psychic complexity of characters who are imprisoned in social and psychic prisons; whether these are prisons of love, marriage or deep down of patriarchy. The paper in particular focuses on the intergenerational trauma that the three generations of women in the novel carry and depicts the manner in which despite this acute trauma Mehak Bano, the protagonist is finally able to redeem herself. Delving deep into the psyche of the characters, the paper analysis the inner and outer walls in which the characters are trapped. It depicts the manner in which these women, who are treated as mere objects, finally come into being as persons through understanding maternal anguish and internalising maternal love.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Prisons, Psyche, Intergenerational trauma, Redemption.

Situated in Chandni Chowk, Dilli in the 1920s within the domain of four walls, Krishna Sobti's novel *Dil-o-Danish* (1993) weaves multiple stories around the lives of women. The narrative primarily centres around Kothi Kilamukh, which is also called the Haveli Charburzi, that faces the Red Fort, where Vakil sahab Kripanarayan lives with his

mother, his widowed sister Chhunna bibi, his wife Kutumb Pyari and their three sons Rajjio, Pammo and Dammo; and the Farashkhana household where Mehak Bano, Kripanarayan's mistress and their two children Badruddin and Masooma live.

The novel is revealing as it brings to light the complexity of human relationships and the reality behind the veil of marriage. It brings to fore the reality of a man Kripanarayan who all his life has lived an extramarital relationship and now he suddenly becomes insecure of this relationship at the slightest suspicion and begins to doubt Mehak Bano who is utterly devoted to him. He eventually abandons her for fear that she may abandon him and returns to his wife Kutumb Pyari who all along has waited for his love. On the other side is the story of Kutumb Pyari, who after living a long life of confrontation with her husband because of his extramarital affair, herself feels drawn towards Bhairo Baba who, bestows on her what her husband has failed to give her. After years of waiting, when her husband returns to her she has no need of his affection. In his touch she experiences the ecstasy of Baba's touch who, she feels has touched the very depths of her soul. Though in moments, she experiences guilt, yet she is an aware woman who understands that if a man can have his way, then a woman too has a right to find love. She is able to release herself from the psychic prison of marriage in which, being the mother of Kripanarayan's children she has to uphold the dignity and honour of marriage.

The novel also depicts the loneliness and the longing of Chhunna bibi whose husband really loved her. She refuses to accept the dictates of society that because she is a widow, therefore she has to be desireless. It shows the politics within families and the way a woman whose husband dies is treated both by her own family as well as by her in-laws. She is wanted by none and is perceived as a burden by both families. She is considered a wayward girl by her mother-in-law, only because she meekly protests that she desires to wear coloured saris. On the other hand, the story hints that Chail, her brother-in-law wants to use her sexually, "A

widow's treasure is for common pleasure", (98). A widow is not just deprived of her rights and property, especially if she does not have children, but also of her right to experience herself and her body, the novel suggests. Chhunna bibi too refuses to abide by the rules of society and she lives a relationship secretly. It is only towards the end of the novel that we are told that Chhunna bibi eventually got married to Umrao Bahadur with whom she had gradually fallen in love. Both the women live relationships which are public secrets. *Dil-o-Danish* thus demolishes the so-called sanctity of marriage and reveals the complex dynamics of characters who believe themselves to be strong advocates of marriage, especially Kutumb.

The novel is radical because it depicts women as sensual beings desiring love in marriage, and if not granted within marriage, then they are willing to explore possibilities even outside its fold. The novel also depicts the subtle interplay of patriarchy in which the oppressed women, no matter how much they are oppressed by patriarchy, continue to oppress other women and see to it that they are not released from the clutches of patriarchy. It thus depicts the social prisons around marriage and man-woman relationships in which all the characters are imprisoned even if they are psychically peeping out of these prisons and the way they continually perpetuate these prisons for their fellow prison mates. Later even Mehak, who herself is a victim of the institution of marriage questions Kutumb whom she calls unfaithful because she has had an extramarital relationship.

The narrative form of the novel is extremely modernist as the narrative technique involves various narrators. The novel sometimes is told in a third person narration and sometimes it changes into a first person narration as a new chapter begins. Almost all significant characters, in the novel are allowed to narrate their story from their point of view. Such a technique allows the characters to offer their subjective points of view. This technique also subtly questions the power of the authorial voice. Woven in the conversation and dialogues of

the characters, are revelations into the inner workings of the characters, their thoughts, confusions and predicaments. In "Lekhan Me Soch aur Nishpsata" Sobti writes, "A writer through her writing tries to arrive at the depths of unknown human emotions" (my translation), (68). The narrative explores the interiority of Mehak Bano and Kripanarayan in great detail and brings to surface the unknown parts of their selves.

The structure of the novel becomes extremely ironical as the plot revolves around Kripanarayan's illegitimate affair with Mehak Bano who is blamed and victimized because she is his mistress and an unwed mother. Mehak Bano all along, has to live in the social prison because of her illegitimate relationship, she says, "I walked a tightrope then, a thousand eyes upon me and now only my own two look back" (148). It becomes ironical when her narrative is juxtaposed with the hidden reality of several characters who too under the respectable garb of marriage are having extramarital affairs. However, because of the fact that they are living within the sanctity of marriage, they are not exposed and humiliated. The novel subtly hints that Kripanarayan's father too had a similar temperament. His mother says to Kutumb, "What can sons do but follow in their father's footsteps" (73). The novel thus weaves its discourse around legitimacy and illegitimacy and depicts the falsity of these categories. But despite this falsity, it depicts the utter humiliation and degradation of Mehak Bano and her children who are all deeply devastated because of the stigma and humiliation of being illegitimate.

The narrative depicts the psychic state and agony of Mehak's children, who do not have the protection of legitimacy on their side and so have to live with the shame of illegitimacy. Their internalisation of this humiliation goes deep into their psychic core to the extent that in the most innocuous manner these children disown their mother, who has borne tremendous suffering and humiliation to bring them up. Mehak Bano thus becomes a victim of this complex dynamic of her children, who consciously in their search for legitimacy and the

respect that comes with it are willing to project their shameful past of illegitimacy onto their mother. The novel towards its end portrays the height of patriarchy which has the power to subsume within its fold everything; including the people whom one has loved the most and, who one could have never imagined would betray them.

The story also revolves around the agony of Kripanarayan, a man who is very erratic and patriarchal in all his relationships. With both Kutumb and Mehak, he lives his relationships on his own terms. As Mehak thinks while waiting for him, “It is over two months now. Strange are the ways of his profession, strange the ways of his heart. He comes in once and doesn’t show up for months. He disappears as if lost. But when we meet, I don’t even get an opportunity to complain. And neither does he explain anything.” (133) “. . . His truth is the truth, the rest mere lies,” (134). Though he himself has marginalised Mehak, a Muslim, belonging to a minority and therefore living at the fringe of the society, yet he lives with the constant fear that he may be discarded by her. *Dil-o-Danish* explores the complexity around the dynamics of power. Kripanarayan is afraid that Mehak, the woman whom he desires tremendously, will abandon him for Khan sahab. This feeling of insecurity though it apparently brings Kripanarayan close to Mehak eventually psychically distances him.

The novel becomes an interesting study into male psyche as it delves deep into the need of men to possess women and in case they are unable to, then as a psychic defence, the need in them to abandon the endangered love object. Mehak Bano remains an object for him and never becomes a person, a ‘Thou’ as Martin Buber discusses in *I and Thou*. Like all men, despite his grand love for her, he uses and discards her when he experiences the death of his emotions. The call of patriarchy finally takes over him. Deep down within himself he cannot accept his relationship with Mehak Bano. He is clear that the rightful owner of his life is his wife Kutumb who is the mother of his children. Though he has two children by Mehak, yet

for him, they remain her children and not their children. It is only when he has claimed them completely that he begins to, and yet hesitatingly consider them as his own children. For him too Mehak is a mistress, whom he wants to save from humiliation but not at the cost of sacrificing his family honour, "People might eat sweets as leftovers, but no one eats leftovers for its own sake, do they?" (109). This lack of respect for Mehak symbolises the deep seated prison of patriarchy within which men are imprisoned. They live relationships outside marriage but are unable to respect or accept them. This shows an inability in men to own and respect themselves and their escapades. Though to a large extent, he defies the social prison of marriage, he is the one who inhabits the psychic prison most profoundly. In this aspect, the novel becomes a deep critique of patriarchy. It explores the male psyche which can transgress the givens but finds it really hard to accept one's own transgressions. The relationships outside marriage are eventually discarded, as one's own unaccepted parts are projected onto these relationships and therefore sooner or later they are to be cast-off.

Through the context of Kripanarayan, the novel depicts the predominance of the whims of men in relationships and how relationships are governed by these whims. He himself lives two relationships but even the thought of Mehak's closeness with Khan sahab disturbs him and he tries hard to control Mehak. Being a man, Kripanarayan never had to bear the humiliation of society. He fails to understand the cost that Mehak Bano has paid in the relationship or the purity of emotions with which she has loved him. Gradually, as he begins to estrange himself from her, she remains confused as to what has happened to his love for her and yet she accepts all. "He was hunting for the right words, when Kutumb's sindoor suddenly flashed in front of his eyes and he realised that whatever he had felt for this woman was long dead I can't come back now, not in this life. We are strangers now. There should be no misunderstanding about this" (171). Mehak is left with no choice but to be discarded by this man. Nevertheless, the novel also explores Kripanarayan's psychic

complexity. He eventually becomes weak, as on the one hand he gives up his claim on Mehak, for fear that she may discard him and on the other, he internalises that if he continues with this relationship, his wife may discard him. Further he finds it very hard to come to terms with the change in Mehak when she begins to defy the subtle power he has held over her, and this leads to his final decline.

The novel also explores inter religious dynamics and the way Muslims, especially a Muslim woman and her children are perceived by a dominant Hindu family and community which finally annihilates their identity in very subtle ways. Badruddin, Mehak's son, it is hinted will become Badrinarayan and Masooma's ties are absolutely severed from the Farashkhana household and her mother as the novel culminates.

The most striking aspect of the novel is the story of Mehak Bano. Mehak Bano is portrayed as an extremely malleable woman who is willing to accept her position of being a mistress and yet she is willing to give herself with absolute loyalty to Kripanarayan as and when he wishes. There are times when Kripanarayan only visits her after long gaps which increase as the novel progresses. Besides this, he hardly cares for the way she and her children exist. There are moments when the narrative gives us subtle hints about Mehak Bano's attraction towards Anwar Ali Khan known as Khan sahab but Mehak Bano remains loyal towards Kripanarayan and does not ever complain about anything despite the fact that she feels trapped in this relationship. In this relationship she is supposed to remain loyal to a man who has put a roof over her head, "So I can move neither away nor on" (135). Since she is not a married woman hence she is obliged to accept everything with gratitude that comes from him. She is depicted as an ideal woman who fits in completely within the definitions of patriarchy. As the novel ends we see the emergence of Mehak Bano from a docile woman to

a person who develops insight into her oppressed state and takes a firm stance against being a doormat to be used and discarded.

As the story unfolds we realize the complex childhood that Mehak Bano had. Born into a family of courtesans she lived with her mother who was mostly indifferent to the emotional needs of her little daughter. Mehak's childhood passed in a state of self-effacement. She experienced a complete lack of love and as a result, she unconsciously learnt to efface her need for love and recognition. Mehak recalls, "For each wound of Ammi's, I dried that many tears with my odhni. But was she even aware of this daughter of hers? Maddened after each fall, she would angrily stand up again to take things head –on, to fight. If she even knew that I was around she would say, as though speaking from some distant dream . . . do your riyaz" (148).

We are told that Mehak is the daughter of Naseem Bano and her ustad Surajsen who taught her music. From the narrative we gather that he was a caring man but Naseem Bano lost him as she hurt him deeply in her pursuit of Nawab sahab. Mehak's childhood passed in extreme agony, "I would watch Nawab sahab drown himself in drink surrounded by boys. I remember Ammi's shrieks and his mother watching it all laughing. If Ammi spotted me she would pretend sleep. If my sobs grew any louder than a whimper, she'd beat me some more" (149). As a child, the dominant feeling in Mehak is that of fear. She vividly recalls her mother running after Nawab sahab and his mother, and her mother's bitter wanderings which leave her quite withdrawn. She witnessed her childhood in which, ". . . her mother and Nawab sahab hurled anger and hostility at each other, she understood very little of it, except one thing, always instinctively: "Fear" (147). Nawab sahab after using Naseem Bano, as his mistress not only rejected her but even refused to return her family jewellery that she had kept with him. After several attempts of imploring him to return her family jewellery which

was more valuable than all the property of Nawab sahab put together, Naseem Bano in a fit of rage killed Nawab sahab and eventually went mad.

Naseem Bano dies in a prison but before her death, she gives Kripanarayan, her lawyer, the custodianship of her jewellery and Mehak Bano almost as a fee to fight her case. Naseem Bano instructs Mehak that come what may, she should follow the orders of Kripanarayan and do nothing that will offend him. Mehak has no place to turn to after the disgrace and passing away of her mother. She accepts Kripanarayan who is overwhelmed by the beauty and grace of Mehak and can do anything to acquire her. Mehak is left with no choice but to accept her destiny. When her mother tells her, "I have handed you over to Vakil sahab. Mehakiya never do anything without asking him. My mind was in turmoil. I wanted to scream – Ammi! What will I do? Where will I live? But not a sound came out" (151).

There are moments when Mehak Bano experiences herself as her mother and feels completely identified with the pain, conflict and mental trauma that her mother experienced. She is willing to accept anything but to follow the trajectory of her mother's life. She gears her temperament in absolute contrary directions to that of her mother, until she realises ironically, that her life too has followed a similar pattern, no matter how much she resisted it. It is this intergenerational psychic interplay which is at the heart of the novel. To her shock, she realises that no matter how much she resists her mother, her mother continues to exist within her. She once tells Kripanarayan, "I am my mother's shadow, I have made myself into her shadow. Sometimes when I am alone, I feel its Ammi's head on my shoulders. Sometimes she whispers words of caution in my ears . . ." (138). It is her mother's face and her being, she recognizes that she wears. It is in coming to terms with this reality that her psychic growth begins and she eventually is able to individuate as a person rather than

function as a reactive being, who will live her life in a manner contrary to her mother's, through the defence of denial.

As Kripanarayan gradually estranges himself from her, Mehak realises the inevitability of her destiny. She had tried that her life would be very different from that of her mother's and yet when he abandons her, she questions him: "Are you going to punish me for the faults of others?" (145). Listening to his reply, "She is my wife Bano!" Mehak is shocked "Her body grew cold. From a cast-off skin of a long time gone, Naseem Bano emerged. Mehak was pensive and quiet. Shutters came down on those lustrous eyes, doors were latched to that warm heart, and it was as if Vakil sahab had finally shaken off the dust of ages. He stood up to go. . . . It takes no time to start and still lesser to finish" (145). She gradually understands that the man towards whom she has been most faithful to; abandons her and claims her children as well, not taking into consideration her human condition. It is when apparently for the good of their daughter, Masooma that Kripanarayan betroths her to a respectable family, on the condition that she will pass as Kripanarayan's legitimate child; who will have no right to meet her mother after her marriage; that we see glimpses of disequilibrium in Mehak Bano's inner life. The most devastating moment for her occurs when Kripanarayan claims Masooma, not as his daughter in the real sense of the term, but as his child within the legitimate domain of patriarchy, "They asked for Masooma's hand as if she were Kutumb's daughter and mine. As if she were not a child born outside of wedlock. Our families are particular about these things, he finished lamely" (171). He further says, that after marriage the haveli will be known as her father's home, ". . . she won't even have the permission to come here. It was as if she had suddenly gone deaf. His face disappeared. An earthquake shook the walls of her existence, tore the roofs free and set the doors of the house flying. From the ruins, three inseparable shadows rose and stood in front of her, Naseem Bano, Mehak and Masooma" (172).

Dil-o-Danish delves into the predicament of an unwed woman who is also a mother. She faces a deep conflict as a mother, who if she wants the best for her children has to disappear and if she claims her children, “. . . the future of my children disappears. To test a mother like this . . .” (173). “But on that coal fire it was her heart that boiled with rage. I bore these children but today I cannot claim them. Just one decision and they will be snatched from me” (174). The novel depicts the acute pain of women who are considered to be ‘mistresses’, who bring up their children and yet cannot claim them. Ironically, if they raise a voice against this injustice, they are considered to be selfish even by their own children. The novel is a strong indictment of patriarchy in which women are always punished for the whims of men. In her self-effacing manner she waits for her daughter to protest against this gross injustice or even to hug and acknowledge the pain that she is undergoing. Sadly no one, including her children seem to understand the draining away of her real wealth which is infinitely more precious than the wealth for which her mother had killed Nawab sahab. In some ways, her life is worse than her mother’s. Nawab sahab had only taken her mother’s jewels after draining her of everything but Kripnarayan steals her children from her and does all of this in the name of propriety.

She realises that ironically her life has followed the same trajectory as her mother’s life, that of complete deprivation and abandonment. Given the social class to which she belongs, it almost seems destined and inevitable. Despite the fact that Kripnarayan treats her the way he does, she still has to feel grateful towards him given her social reality, “Who else would have spared even one kind thought for my mother’s daughter?” (148). The novel weaves the human psyche within the social fabric of inevitable destinies. Mehak knows all along that she will be betrayed by her children. At one point in the novel, she feels looking at her children, “What should I tell them? That you are of no consequence, your names do not

figure on that family tree? And you are determined to betray the only one who actually belongs to you!" (156). She tries her best to keep to herself and never play Ammi's game, "Ammi had lost herself when Nawab sahab turned his back on her. She lost everything at the altar of love. Ending up in prison sentenced for murder. Such a hard road to tread" (147). But like her mother she too touches the brink of insanity. She lives a real conflict. It is at this moment that she decides to turn the intergenerational oppression and destined social histories into a destiny that she would carve for herself. She refuses to live the way Kripanarayan and her children and the social mores of motherhood demand her to. She decides to live as an individual who has a right to claim, that which belongs to her.

From a person, who has all her life lived as a self-effacing person who cannot claim anything as her own, she comes into being. She asserts her right over her daughter in the august gathering of the marriage ceremony in the most graceful manner imaginable. It is in this act that she realises her release lies, "Mehak heard instead the screams of an era long gone. Bringing her emotions under control she decided she was nobody's slave" (184). She demands her jewellery back; she is firm with everyone, including her son, who is perpetually teaching her the 'most proper way' to behave, given the respectable status of his father's family. She threatens Kripanarayan that she will become like her ammi, if her jewellery does not reach her, on the evening of her daughter's marriage. She looks at her shoes and she feels, "... my own shoes and I had forgotten about them all these years. I wonder how many times I have worn them? Draping a shawl over the dupatta, she bolted the door, locked it and climbing down the stairs thought, why had it taken me so long to leave this room?" (191). "Mehak Bano smiled inside. Before today I was not even a woman. I was ... I was an odhni, a blouse, a salwar ... The shoes were mine, but I had given away my feet" (192). She wears her mother's jewellery. Later Chhunna bibi recounting the entire episode to her brother says, "It was almost as if as soon as she wore those jewels of Naseem Bano's, the spirit of her

ancestors descended upon her and she stood tall, the world at her feet” (205). Mehak Bano changes as a person and in this change her salvation lies. From a subdued woman she does not become like her mother, but becomes a strong woman who will take the reins of her life in her own hands.

Dil-o-Danish is thus an interesting study of intergenerational trauma of its three women characters, Naseem Bano, Mehak Bano and Masooma. It subtly brings to fore the psychological fact that whatever is consistently neglected or not attended to across generations becomes a symptom locatable in an individual ultimately (Erikson 1967). We see this in the case of Naseem Bano. Even though we are not given an insight into her childhood and her life history, yet it seems from the reading of the novel that she too has had a difficult life history marked by parental deprivation of love, given the social class that she belongs to. She becomes the carrier of the symptom of madness not only towards the end of her life journey after she kills Nawab sahab but even in the way she brings up her daughter Mehak, by neglecting and abusing her. Though the novel seemingly offers insights into the story of these three generations of women, yet implicitly through the depiction of Naseem Bano’s life, it unravels multiple lineages of trauma across generations of women’s lives and experiences. The novel in an understated manner shows the way Naseem Bano wastes her life in Nawab sahab’s pursuit; neglects her daughter and eventually lands up in prison in a state of madness. She becomes a mother and yet in no way is a mother to her daughter Mehak Bano whom she leaves in the custody of Kripanarayan. In passing her daughter and her jewels to Kripanarayan, Naseem Bano unwittingly seals the fate of her daughter. She denies Mehak her access to her jewels which could have been the way to her emancipation. In commanding her daughter to unquestionably accept Kripanarayan, though she apparently tries to reverse her destiny, she actually seals her daughter’s destiny who is an obedient slave to her mother. She

believes and knows that her daughter will never have the courage to go against her mother. McDougall in *Theatres of the Body* writes, "Turning a blind eye to one's own traumatic past leaves one less accessible to one's children, as well, so that the child registers the difficulty in the body, through the symptoms that mark the distress that cannot be spoken about" (51). Another psychoanalyst Charles further states, "Trauma that is passed along the generations in this way tends to speak in coded form, through those very symptoms that mark the distress" (78-79). The novel offers deep insights into this unstated transgenerational trauma that Naseem Bano lives and the manner in which she, unknown to herself passes this trauma to her daughter Mehak Bano.

Mehak, the second generation woman is symbolically carrying within her the deadness of her mother. In her attempts to provide ample love to both her children, she tries to bring her dead mother back to life, gives birth to her mother and infuses life into her. Being the middle generation, she carries the burden of maximum responsibility. It is most difficult for her to make choices and to recognize her strengths and weaknesses as her life is marked by emotional disruptions and unarticulated trauma. Even though her mother dies, yet she lives her entire life acceding to the commands of her mother. As the novel progresses, we see a great struggle in Mehak to come to terms with her mother within her. This brings to light, the fact that when the history of generations is marked by trauma and anguish, the sources may be multiple, yet the struggle towards identity formation in a member of a subsequent generation will necessarily be inflicted by ruptures and discontinuities. This is well delineated in the life history of Mehak Bano, who all along her life, tries her best not to be like her mother and yet towards the end recognizes her mother's face in herself. It is only when she comes to terms with the fact that she too can be, like her mother that she is able to recognize with empathy, the suffering of her mother. She recognizes the fact that if she does not take charge of her life now, she too like her mother is doomed to madness. It is her, this

realisation that redeems her. Finally she breaks free of the walls of respectability and moves out of the confines of her house, her psychic prison. From now onwards, she will not look back.

The most significant aspect to notice is that despite all the oppression Mehak experiences from all quarters she does not become bitter or violent. She is able to preserve the human in her, though in moments when she is being deprived of her children, she experiences rage and wants to destroy everything, thus becoming her mother's daughter. But she is able to control herself and find meaning in her life without destroying anything for her children or for her own self, unlike her mother.

The third generation woman, Masooma apparently rejects and disowns her mother. But a deeper reading suggests that she can do so and make choices in her life which her mother Mehak could never make, only because her mother is fully alive within her. It is because her mother has provided ample love and nurturance that she can come into being. Though Masooma is able to make a choice for herself by keeping at bay the brothel, which she unconsciously knows awaits her, yet by accepting marriage according to the dictates of patriarchy, she actually imprisons herself. The redeemed woman in the novel is not Masooma but Mehak.

Right from her childhood we are given an insight into Masooma's character. It seems that she is truly her mother's daughter who feels deep empathy for her mother. As a child when Kripanarayan would take too long to visit Mehak, Masooma would be unhappy, "She would cast a hard look at Vakil sahab and terrify me. It was as if I had raised my own eyes and glared at the Nawab sahab" (151). In an unstated way the intergenerational trauma seems to continue. She is caring towards her mother and as Kriparayan's visits dwindle, Masooma's silence would, ". . . wrap me in an unconditional embrace. She would search my face, but

neither questions me nor speak” (151-152). She too inherits an almost aggressive claim on her mother's family jewellery, like her grandmother Naseem Bano which is a little scary for Mehak to internalise. Though Masooma is traumatised that she cannot meet her mother after her marriage yet we see her compromising, “Masooma lifted her head from the pillow, her eyes awash in tears. I don't understand anything Ammi! I am so scared, it is like killing me” (177). But when Mehak asks her, hoping that she will protest; that how will she manage without meeting her ammi, Masooma has no answer other than her tears. Soon her tears turn into an anxiety and she cries “I know, Ammi will never agree. We will be stuck here forever” (178). When after living much conflict, Mahak directly addresses her children, hoping that they will stand for her, Masooma begins to cry, “Hearing her daughter's sobs, she wanted to scream, Not once did you say Masooma, Ammi, how will I leave you and go? If only you had, I would at least have had that memory to live by” (181). Finally Masooma leaves with her brother to meet Chhunna bibi for the wedding preparations. She has made her decision and has compromised her mother to get the gains of legitimacy.

Masooma lives a real conflict and is guilty throughout but somewhere deep down she knows that if she rejects this offer, there is really no choice left in her life. She knows that perhaps for the first time, a daughter in her mother's family is being given in marriage. She realises that if she lets go of this opportunity then her life, if she is fortunate will be like her mother's life and if she is unlucky then it will be like her grandmother's life. Perhaps all her childhood, her only dream has been to live a life of a married woman who can claim her man as her own. She does not want to, like her mother wait in obligation for a man to turn up according to his whims. Perhaps marriage alone in her limited perception is the path of sanity for Masooma; who in order to fight against becoming her grandmother Naseem Bano, whom she would become, if her life were to end in a brothel; chooses the path of selfishness and respectability; even if it means to step over and crush her mother's life in the process. We

experience the pain and the limited choices that Masooma has, as she struggles to move away from her mother's and her grandmother's life, as we also experience the pain of Mehak's lonely existence betrayed by all.

Dil-o-Danish provides us a three generational axis to understand the lives of women. It depicts the unfortunate severing of bonds of women-to-women relationships. Patriarchy destroys the bonds of women both at a conscious as well as at an unconscious level. Women are taught by the dictates of patriarchy to become adult mature women by severing their bonds with their mothers, the first love of their lives. As Irigaray mentions in *The Bodily Encounter with the Mother*, "The imaginary and the symbolic of intra-uterine life and of the first bodily encounter with the mother . . . where are we to find them? In what darkness, what madness, have they been abandoned? And the relationship with the placenta, the first house to surround us, whose halo we carry with us everywhere, like some child's security blanket, how is that represented in our culture" (Irigaray 419).

The novel ends in hope. No matter how many psychic prisons we may be caught in yet by coming to terms with one's reality and psyche there is hope for release. Towards the end of the novel, we meet the redeemed woman Mehak, who has not just forgiven Kripanarayan it seems, but also her daughter by understanding that she as an individual in a patriarchal system cannot be held responsible for the de-subjectivised choices she will have to make in her life. Masooma may sever her ties with her mother but she will continue to live in her. Her mother will live in her, especially in the nurturance that she provided her with, which has given Masooma the experience of an inexpressible love. This in turn she will carry into the love that she will provide to those around her and to her own children subsequently.

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