

Greek Woman - Mother!!!

Who is the Greek mother? What is the role of the Greek woman - mother today and how does she bring her children up?

Much has been written on the Greek mother, praising her self-denial for the good of her children, with humour, complaints or even anger at her over-protective and often stifling loving embrace.

The Greek mother has been a symbol and a power that has played a huge part in history, the heroic mother who sent her child to victory or death in the struggle for freedom. Her praises have been sung in literature, while she has been blessed by religion itself (Panagia, Our Lady - Mother).

Women's vital role as mothers has been recognised in Greece since antiquity. Gaia, Mother Earth, was one of the most important deities, the personification of nature, which gives birth to the whole world.

In modern Greek society the mother remains the basic figure in the family and society, despite the great changes observed in recent years.

The Greek model of life

As the great Greek psychiatrist Thanos Askitis writes, "the Greek model of life was based on two axes: phallocracy and matriarchy. The man was the head of the family who kept the woman and only let her appear under his name, while the mother was the head inside the house, who nursed and brought her children up in her own way, which the father was often unaware of".

Greek mother today

Many things have changed between 18 January 1953, when Greek women voted for the first time, and the present day. Today the modern Greek mother faces a huge challenge: how to balance her traditional role and her professional ambitions? How to avoid the nightmare of combining a the image of failed mother with the dream of a career?

As a result of this dilemma, in Greece there has been a rise in abortions by working women who are afraid that pregnancy may result in the loss of their job. Indeed, many employers ask prospective female employees if they are married.

The demographic problem our country faces has already assumed worrying social and national dimensions. The number of families with many children has dropped steeply. Greece has one of the lowest birthrates in Europe and is among the five countries with the lowest birthrate in the world.

As for bringing the children up, the usual solution is to enlist their grandparents. A much smaller percentage of working parents entrusts their children



to a woman outside the family, with incalculable consequences on their upbringing and future psychology.

The state has a responsibility to undertake more actions for the support of the Greek mother, who is faced not only with the demands of modern life, but also often with the discrimination and prejudices of Greek society.

The Greek Mother Hen

In spite of changes in Greek society regarding the position and role of women, the traditional Greek Mother still exists and is represented by mothers over 40 years of age.

The traditional Greek Mother is like a broody hen who smothers her young in wings of care, love, overprotection and oppression.

The Greek Mother has certain distinctive features which make her unique the world over. Here is a list of her main characteristics:

- She makes the best dolmades (stuffed vineleaves) in the world.
- She screams hysterically if little Kostas escapes at the seaside and runs

into deep water, meaning deeper than the approved 15 centimetres.

She is always right and of course knows better than anybody else what's good for her children.

- She carries binoculars to spot the slightest cloud that may threaten bad weather and dresses her children to face polar temperatures.

- She has the nose of a hunting dog and is the first to scent cigarette smoke on her teenage son or daughter.

- Every week she sends tupperware food parcels to her children who are studying in another city, whether in Greece or abroad.

- She calls the police if she hasn't been able to contact her student children for 24 hours.

- She teaches her daughter that boys are

devils in disguise and should be avoided at all costs.

- She warns her son early on that no other woman will love him as much as her, and of course there are lots of artful minxes lying in wait to entrap and marry him, so he should be careful not to get any of them pregnant.

- She has a heart attack if her son wants to live in his own home after he's 20.

- She has a heart attack, stroke and conniptions combined if her (grown-up) daughter wants to live alone.

- She calls in the priest for an exorcism if her children fall in love with a foreigner, according to the quaint saying, "Better a shoe from your own place, even if it's patched".

- She digs up grandpa's gun from World War 2 if the prospective bride or groom is not a member of the white race.

- If a child remarks that motherly



Amusing Conversation of a Greek Mother and Daughter

The phone rings. The Greek Mother picks it up and the following conversation ensues.

Greek Mother: Hello?

Daughter: Hi Mum. Can you look after the children for me tonight?

Greek Mother: Are you going out?

Daughter: Yes.

Greek Mother: Who with?

Daughter: A friend.

Greek Mother: I just can't understand why you left your husband. Such a nice boy!

Daughter: I didn't leave him, he left me!

Greek Mother: You let him leave you, and now you go out with just anyone.

Daughter: I don't go out with just anyone. Can I bring the kids round?

Greek Mother: I never left you to go out with anyone but your father.

Daughter: Yes, but you did lots of things I don't.

Greek Mother: Now what are you hinting at?

Daughter: Nothing. I just want to know if you can look after the kids tonight.

Greek Mother: Are you going to spend the night with him? What will your husband say when he finds out?

Daughter: You mean my ex-husband! I don't think he'll be bothered, I doubt he's slept alone since he left!

Greek Mother: So you're going to sleep over at this

loser's house?

Daughter: He's not a loser.

Greek Mother: Any man who goes out with a divorced woman with children is a loser and a parasite.

Daughter: Look, I'm not going to discuss it. Can I bring the kids over or not?

Greek Mother: Poor children, with a mother like that...

Daughter: What do you mean, a mother like that?

Greek Mother: With no stability... Huh, that's why your husband left you...

Daughter: Can you hear yourself? You're impossible! You should be ashamed of yourself!

Greek Mother: Don't you

shout at me! I bet that's how you shout at that loser, too!

Daughter: Oh, so now you're worried about the loser?

Greek Mother: Aha, you see, you admit he's a loser. I knew it!

Daughter: I'm hanging up, Mum.

Greek Mother: Hold on love! Don't hang up! What time are you bringing the children round?

Daughter: I'm not bringing them round and I'm not going out, the way you've been driving me round the bend!

Greek Mother: But love, if you never go out, how are you going to meet a nice young man?

Did you know...

- Greek Women comprise 50% of a total population of 11 million. here are just 108 more women than men in Greece according to 2007 statistics.

- Greek women live 81.5 years on average, while men live 76.7.

- The average number of children per woman is 1.3 and there is a serious low birthrate problem.

- 60% of Greek University entrants are women.

- There are 1,700,000 housewives in Greece.

- There are nearly 200,000 single mothers in Greece.

- 33% of Greek women use a computer, compared to 45% of men.

- 25% of Greek women use the Internet, compared to 37% of men.

- 78% of women use a mobile phone, compared to 87% of men.

- Women make up 16% of the Greek parliament

- Women make up 40% of the working population in Greece.

over-protectiveness is a widespread problem in Greece, the Greek Mother replies with the unshakeable argument: "If it's so widespread, then it must be normal".

- The children of Greek mothers never grow up, and their mothers will always see them as small and helpless. No matter whether they're 5 or 55 years old, their mother will always worry if they've eaten enough and well, if they're warmly dressed, if they've been ill, if anyone's been mean to them (kindergarten classmate, spouse or mother-in-law).

The Greek Mother may exasperate and infuriate us, but we love her because she's the best mother in the world. We know very well that she'll always be there when we need her and will do anything to help us, forgetting her own needs.