

CHAPTER - V
CONCLUSIONS

Miss Ivy Compton-Burnett is a conscious novelist of the late Victorian and Edwardian Age. She depicts in her works what she finds around her especially about unhappy families in the society. She is a faithful witness of the family chronicles of the late-Victorian Era.

In the three novels studied here also she has blended her own experiences and happenings around her. She has used the material available around her. She has objectively observed the events and depicted them as they were. She has given justice to these events without partiality. Her criticism on society is objective. She has criticised the flaws and tyrannies in the family life. She has spoken openly against the evils in the family life. The institutions of marriage and family are widely spoken and criticized by her.

The thorough and keen study of these novels *MEN AND WIVES (1931)*, *DAUGHTERS AND SONS(1937)*, and *PARENTS AND CHILDREN (1941)* makes it clear that Ivy Compton-Burnett has reflected the family life of her age with her own experiences.

The behaviour and attitude of parents and children is truthfully depicted. The family tyrants and their wicked motives are realistically presented.

She deals with big families. Her own family background provides her ample opportunity to comment on 'Family' as a unit. Her own family was a big family consisting of twelve children. In every novel of Ivy, there is much endearing scenes of governess and children which spring up from her own childhood experiences. Children are shown quite inquisitive and curious. Though the children appear immature they are shown realizing truth and commenting freely on human activities. These children are bold enough to pointout the blunders of the elders.

Ivy doesn't depict romantic and sensual love in her novels. In the novel, *Daughters And Sons*, finally Hetta gets married. But it is not out of sensual and romantic love. Infact it is a practical compromise with the reality, of the marriage of Eleanor and Ridley. Ridley is younger than Eleanor. But it is a need of time. Eleanor desires to get rid of her burdening responsibilities. Even the arranged marriage of Matthew and Camilla does not consist of romantic love any. Ivy points out that these marriage

are a sort of adjustment with the harsh realities of life. Ivy feels that unhappy marriages lead to unhappy families.

Ivy was conscious about the issue of incest love in family. Although there is no personal experience of incest love in her life, she has depicted the scenes of incest love very effectively. In the novel, *Daughters and Sons*, Hetta remains single upto the marriage of John with the governess Edith. Hetta desires to possess John. In *Parents and Children* Fulbert's love for his daughter, Isabella is a fine example of incest love. Such instances arise from the single status of women in Ivy's society. Singleness was the drastic effect thrust upon the post war society. Ivy, here doesn't pose as a staunch moralist. Infact she seems to be interested only in presenting the factual life. She neither condemns the immoralities favours.

Ivy Compton-Burnett seems an expectant of healthy family relations. So she deals with the importance of sacrifice in family life. She herself loved her brothers. She sacrificed her own happiness for her family life. She remained unmarried for her brothers. This is reflected well in these novels. But according to her, excessive sacrifice is dangerous. In

Men and Wives the central figure, Lady Harriet Haslam, is ambitious. She is taking too much care of her sons. She spends sleepless nights for her family. Even she makes a fake attempt of suicide. She feels that she is an example of excessive sacrifice. But she remains unsuccessful. In the novel *Daughters and Sons*, France, John's Daughters desires to help her family in the economic crisis with a large amount. But she, too, faces problem. In *Parents and Children*, Fulbert goes to South America to earn money. It is also an example of sacrifice of personal happiness. Ivy seems to depict that sacrifice done for the welfare of the family remains unrecognized.

Ivy Compton-Burnett depicts the status of spinster and governesses in the society. The role of the spinsters and governess in the family structure and relationships is very important. There was no income source for them. Some of spinsters were employed as governesses. In big families, such persons were exploited. In *Daughters and Sons*. Edith, the governess in their house, is forced to marry the master, John for sake of money. Sabine a tyrant in family keeps her eye on the prosperity of Edith. In *Parents and Children* Miss Pilbeam and Miss Mitford

and Miss Hotton are employed governesses. They are ridiculed by children. They are looked down upon in the social hierarchy of the Victorian era.

Ivy's novels end melo dramatically and tragically, too. Ivy has harshly criticised the behaviour and motives of family members and family tyrants. In *Men and Wives* a fake attempt of suicide by Lady Harriet Haslam is made. The intention of the suicide and its latent results seem melodramatic. The family tyrant's death in the end by passion becomes a tragic event. In *Daughters and Sons*, the marriage of John and Edith leads to Hetta's attempted suicide. In the end Hetta's attempted suicide becomes a cause of tragic end of Sabine. In *Parents and Childrens* the real melo-dramatic event is Fulberts death news. All these scenes are used by Ivy Compton-Burnett to expose relationships in the family and the motives of family members.

The economic structure of the family and its effect on family relations are the main concerns of Ivy Compton-Burnett. Money wakens the bonds and relations in family . Even new relations are formed for sake of money. There are scenes in the novels which will-papers and deeds are changed. There are events of fraud for sake of money . Even children

are not given proper share in the property. In *Men and Wives*, Lady Harriet Haslam leaves her fortune to her husband with a condition that he should remain her widower. In her lifetime she controls the purse-strings. But in her absence her family members squander her wealth. In *Daughters and Sons* John cannot run his family. His family faces economic crisis. His daughter, France, helps her father under the guise of a grateful reader. But Sabine, the old Lady and mother of John, keeps her eye on the property of the governess, Edith. She forces her son, John, to marry Edith. In *Parents and Children* Sir Jesse denies a proper share to his children. He keeps his property to himself. He forces his children to live in a cottage. He never discloses about their parentage. This is also done for sake of money. To save the family from the economic disaster, Fulbert has to leave his family and it leads him almost to lose his wife.

Ivy Compton-Burnett has depicted families full with sham characters. In *Men and Wives*, Bellamy is hypocrite. Mr. Domonic Spong, family lawyer, is also a hypocrite. He desires for the second marriage immediately after the death of his first wife. In *Daughters and Sons* John, and Chaucer and Hetta all

are hypocrites. In *Parents and Children* Ridley is a hypocrite. In Ivy's world parents, lawyers, clergymen are not faithful.

Death in various forms has been depicted in Ivy's novels. Matthew kills his mother in *Men and Wives*, Hetta becomes a cause of death of her mother in *Daughters and Sons*, her murder and death scenes are true to her life. Ivy's brother was killed in war. Hence she suffered a lot. Ivy herself had witnessed death during the first world war.

Ivy has criticised the unqualified teachers and governess. Miss Pilbeam in the novel *Parents and Children* is unqualified. This is exposed by using comic scenes and dialogues between children and their teachers and governess.

The loss of faith, was a major event in European world during Ivy's times. Ivy shows families observing prayers and sermons, but not religiously. Even clergymen are not serious about their services. It was true of Ivy's families, too. In her works the elders look at the youngsters with a dubious eyes vice versa.

Letters, telegrams and photographs play a very important role in Ivy's works. They reveal the inner motives. Hetta's letter of a fake suicide shocks

the family . France's letter creates suspicion in the novel *Daughters and Sons*. Sabine uses a letter to Edith for her own greed. In *Parents and Children* the letter and the telegram of Fulbert are hidden by Ridley for selfish motives. These letters and telegrams become a turning point in the entire narratives.

Ivy Compton-Burnett watches her own society full of step-mothers, step-fathers. So she criticizes the social systems like polygamy and polyandry. Unhappy families emerge out of such system in the society. The Marlowes are the outcome of such systems. Eleanor and Camilla's proposed second marriages are a part of such systems. The second marriage of Domenic Spong and John is an example of Polygamy.

Ivy's families are the victim of hatred, revenge, jealousy, murders, suicides, frauds and such evils. She feels that such evils are the causes of the tense relations in the family. In her novel *Men and Wives* Matthew hates his mother and mixes poison tablet in her sleeping tablet. Ridley in *Parents and Children* deceives his friend Fulbert. Hetta in *Daughters and Sons* can't digest the marriage of her

brother John . She is jealous of Edith. These examples reflect the evils in society.

Ivy parents male as well as female tyrants. But Ivy Compton-Burnett concentrates more on the tyranny of woman than male tyranny. It shows fallen moral standard of life. These tyrants have neither morality nor belief. Their tyranny has crossed all the boundries of normality. Hetta's love for brother John is not only tyrannic but it reaches the end of incest love. Lady Harriet Haslam doesn't allow her son, Matthew to marry Camilla, whereas Sir Jesse, without disclosing the parentage of Marlowes , becomes a dominate male tyrant.

In the late Victorian era and the Edwardian Age, the family bonds and relationships were weakening. Greed and selfishness were breaking these bonds . So, Ivy has selected a typical upper middle class family with its varied problems. She is aggressive in her attack on these evils. The evils are represented by elderly person in the families. So, there are no heroines and heroes in her novels.

Ivy Compton-Burnett is a writer of vision. She has attacked human motives. As a conscious woman writer she attacks the persons who yield to temptation and act viciously. She works with a

serious object of exposing. The late-victorian unhappy-families. She as a family chronicler, presents family life of her age. She reflects the mood and the atmosphere of the late victorian era. Ivy has objectively and boldly presented the social, and domestic evils. Her truthful presentation reveals human motives through dialogues. As a vision writer of the twentieth century Ivy exposes the basic human instincts which were true to the victorian society, and which will be true to the societies existing and futuristic.