

## **CHAPTER – V**

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**The Death of the Heart, The Heat of the Day and The Little Girls** are the novels written in different stages of Elizabeth Bowen's life. All the three novels reflect her own image at different stages of her life. Almost in all these three novels and the rest of other novels even, Bowen has expressed her sense of regional spirit. Her approach towards the upper and the lower middle-class society is distinctly elaborated. She, herself being a part of the upper middle class society, uses the opportunities provided in her novels to express her views regarding the lower middle class society.

Characterisation is a major part of Bowen's fictional works. In all these three novels Bowen has concentrated upon the elaborate portraying of female characters. All these three novels are female dominated novels. She creates various character sketches of the lower middle class women, working class women and mixes with the imaginary fictional mode. All these three novels are an out come- of her personal experiences throughout her life. Her suppressed feelings from her childhood to the old age are obviously presented in these novels. Her childhood and adolescent experiences are directly expressed in her novel '**The Death of the Heart**'. Her experiences and feelings of a matured woman are directly displayed in her novel **The Heat of the Day**; and experiences of the old aged woman are directly reflected in her novel

**The Little Girls** . In this way almost all the aspects of her personality are clearly visible in these novels. **The Death of the Heart** stands to represent the early period of her life, **The Heat of the Day** represents the middle period of her life, and her last but one **The Little Girls** is related to the last period of her life.

Though themes of these novels are ~~different~~ and independent, they are entirely concentrated upon the same idea of Bowen's personal experiences about war and her life. **The Death of the Heart** deals with the theme of innocence and guilt i.e. confrontation of experience by innocence. **The Heat of the Day** focuses upon the theme of effect of war upon the life of civilians and **The Little Girls** pays attention to her childhood experiences which are just alive with Bowen. Bowen's entire attempt is to make it possible to understand positive and negative effects of wartime. London life and life in Ireland too, is totally disturbed due to the war. To reveal this transformation of daily life of human beings is the main objective of Bowen. Bowen has adopted themes related to the contemporary life of her times. Her personality merged with social life is exhibited in the picture of the novel. She has been very successful to explain her themes through the stories she told. War time London has affected both personal and individual life of the people. Her themes are highly woven into the complete fabric of the novels.

Plot construction of these novels is well <sup>constructed</sup> Events and episodes are well organised into the structure of her novels. Sequence of events is almost maintained throughout the novels. **The Death of the Heart** has a complex plot, **The Little Girls** has entirely <sup>different</sup> kind of plot, as the narrative moves back to the past from the present; and finally again in the last part of the novel it returns to the present.

War atmosphere is <sup>a</sup> common aspect in almost all novels of Bowen. Her fiction is representative of wartime and age. Life of soldiers and civilians is affected by World War- I and II. All major characters, both of male and female are part of contemporary life and war. They are naturally involved in tense atmosphere of war time and it has become a part of their existence. Most of the novels of Bowen and even these three novels deal with <sup>the</sup> effect of World War I and II upon the life of civilians in London as well as in the other part of England. **The Heat of the Day** is a war novel dealing with the effects of World War II on the civilians as well as soldiers. Bowen has reflected the feelings of civilians towards war and its disastrous effects on them, making them homeless and always lived under constant threat of bombings. Moreover she has concentrated on the life of woman during war time which emancipated them. War symbolise a change in the life of Bowen, <sup>the</sup> freedom and women worked with equal footing with men.

The disparity between men and women was lessened due to war. War uplifted them and made them realise their potentiality. Hence Bowen has maintained balance by trying to focus on the negative and positive effects of war. The war story is intermingled with the romantic love relationship between Stella Rodney and Robert Kelway. War sprouted treason and betrayal which are nicely interwoven in the romantic love story amidst war tense atmosphere.

**The Death of the Heart** is a novel concentrated on the theme of innocence and guilt. Portia is an orphan girl fighting with external realities of the world and with inner conflicts of mind. She finds no right place to express her emotional feelings and hence her emotions are dislocated. Bowen has showed the disparities that existed between the high-middle class and the low-middle class societies in England. The life of an orphan girl like Portia and her constant yearning for love and understanding in modern world ultimately disillusion her resulting in her death. The present modern world has no place for an innocent girl like Portia. It is a journey of an adolescent girl trying to understand the world better but fails in all ways.

Bowen's treatment of ridicule of the lower-middle class society shows her less regard for that class. Though Bowen feels that war bridged the gap between the high-middle class and low-middle class society, she has intelligently maintained a satiric tone and has made fun

of their habits and way of life. War not only uprooted families but the emotions of characters are <sup>also</sup> affected and hence their emotions are dislocated.

**The Little Girls** is a mature novel dealing with life of old woman and also about their childhood life. The three women unite together at the age of sixty years reflecting their intense childhood friendship though it is difficult to maintain when one becomes old and has one's own way of life. It also deals with Bowen's views on history which are specifically reflected in the character of Dinah. The suppressed feelings of Bowen in childhood are reflected in the characters of the novel. So it is seen as a compensation for that loss in Bowen's life. It is seen that most of major characters are emotionally dislocated in all these three novels. The themes of all these three novels are almost different but are closely related with different phases of Bowen's life i.e. **The Death of the Heart** as a reflection of adolescent age, **The Heat of the Day** as a reflection of mature age, and **The Little Girls** as a reflection of old age, but childhood experiences of Bowen's life <sup>are</sup> common in all these three novels. Though **The Heat of the Day** is a complete war novel, her other two novels have given little scope to the expression of effects of war on the life of soldiers as well as of civilians.

In all the three novels the protagonist belongs to the upper-middle class but other characters come from the lower-middle class. Bowen's

approach towards the lower-middle class is same in all three novels. It is some times comic, sometimes satiric and sometimes witty. The three novels written in different phases of Bowen's literary career maintain her attitude towards the class structure, the females<sup>and</sup> personal memories. Bowen seems to be consistent throughout her treatment to these objects. She is the only novelist after Jane Austen who gives an immense ~~scope~~ to the lower-middle class female potentialities.