

**Chapter - III**

**EVELINE : A QUEST FOR FREEDOM**

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I

'Eveline' belongs to the second phase of Joyce's career as a short story writer. The story deals with a girl called Eveline. She is of nineteen years old. She has no mother. Her father is a drunkard. He is a brute. He behaves with her rudely. She feels unsafe in the hands of her father. She has two brothers. While managing the household affairs, she faces many difficulties including monetary ones. And so

"She always gave her entire wages -- seven shillings -- and Harry always sent up what he could ...."<sup>1</sup>

She notices that her father pays more attention to her brothers than to her. She feels that her father has neglected her. Often he used to threaten her. He tells her that whatever he does is for the sake of her mother. This created a fear of uncertainty in her mind. But she knows that her father is growing old. He may miss her if she goes away from him. In fact, some times he is kind and gentle to her. She remembers a day when :

"he had read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire. Another day, when their mother was alive, they had all gone for a picnic to the Hill of Howth. She remembered her father putting on her mother's bonnet to make the children laugh".<sup>2</sup>

It makes her feel for him. She is very much aware of her duties towards him. She knows that she has to take care of her small brothers. She must see them going to school regularly. This routine life has made her mechanical. She is tired of this routine life. Now she wants someone to take care of her. She now genuinely expects some one to protect her. One day she comes in contact with Frank. He was a deck boy at the beginning and later he became a sailor. He is 'very kind, manly, open-hearted'.<sup>3</sup> There are many things in his mind. He wants to narrate the stories of distant past related to the sea-life to her. These stories obviously are about the adventures. She was attracted towards him because of his appearance. Probably :

"... his peaked cap pushed back on his head and his hair tumbled forward over a face of bronze."<sup>4</sup>

His physical appearance may have created a fascination for her. She many a times went to see plays to the theatres. He is more interested in music and he used to sing also. He is quite gentle with her. Now people began to discuss their love affair. She loved him deeply. Perhaps the uncertainty in her mind may have drawn her close to him. Any how, he became a promise for her. Her father does not like it. He quarreles with him. He tells his daughter that sailor boys are not good chaps. But still she begins to adore him. She finds Frank's company more useful. She wants to be his wife. She wants to live with him happily. And further she wants to run away from the present wretched conditions. Frank promises her a land of dream and happiness. She expects a new life, a new Garden of Eden-in the company of Frank. One evening when she was lonely and sitting alone, she remembered her past. She tries to connect her past to the present. And here she remembers her promise to her mother. When she (her mother) was ill she took a promise from Eveline. Her mother requested her to keep the house intact and together. She is overcome by these thoughts. Her photographic memory unreeled the reels of her mother's life before her eyes. She became more conscious. The horrible and torturous life of her mother made her shudder for a while. She decided to run away, to escape from this life.

"Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps, love too."<sup>5</sup>

At the end she comes with Frank to the station. It is full of soldiers with brown baggages. She notices a boat. Frank asks her to give her company to him. But her promise to her dying mother prevents her from going with him. She becomes helpless, feeble. She

"... prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty."<sup>6</sup>

She is torn between duty and love. She is unable to decide what to do.

"Her hands clutched the iron in frenzy. Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish."<sup>7</sup>

She prefers to live in the present condition. Though she understands that one should not be unhappy for the sake of others, still she accepts the life of worries and problems. She becomes passive and helpless and :

"Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition."<sup>8</sup>

## II

The story reveals to us inner conflict in the mind of Eveline. She is torn between duty and love. In reality she wants freedom, she wants to escape but at the same time she becomes helpless. Once she finds freedom in the company of Frank and at the same time her promise to her mother tightens her to the past. Frank becomes a symbol of freedom, promise and prosperity. But she dare not go with him. She is more conscious. A kind of fear of insecurity and uncertainty forbids her from utilising the opportunity of escape with Frank. She knows that her mother has sacrificed her life for the sake of her house.

When she takes the wings of imagination and soars high above, the promise that she rendered to her mother brings her into reality. She presumes that her marriage may bring her respect and status in society. But the dream shatters when she remembers her mother. She becomes a fragile creature. She becomes a paralysed girl. All of a sudden she felt that her Frank is :

"drawing her into them : he would drown her"<sup>9</sup>

In fact, Joyce has created in Frank a way for her to escape but she does not accept it. Sometimes it seems that she prepares to rebel against; but soon that vigour dies out. Then she becomes a mere creature who wants to grab happiness, freedom with its paralysed hands. She fears, 'that Frank's love will extinguish her heart'<sup>10</sup> It seems that she is a defeated girl. Her defeat comes not :

"... in a direct confrontation with parental authority, but through an inner struggle resolved by her prayer."<sup>11</sup>

She is not articulate in expressing her desires. She finds in her father a life of insecurity while her mother's life becomes a symbol of sacrifice. Eveline as a girl is now attracted towards her mother's sacrifice. Her emotions and feelings are freezed by the fear of her father. Naturally she becomes passive towards Frank. Frank becomes a symbol of freedom but it eludes Eveline.

"She dreams of escaping from her drab and digny life, but at crucial moment when escape is with in her grasp, she is powerless to act."<sup>12</sup>

It seems that Dublin has paralysed Eveline's emotions.

"... she is unable to love, can think of herself and her situation only ..."<sup>13</sup>

Joyce presents and portrays Eveline's character through images and symbols. She is uncertain about her future, silent and passive. She struggles for physical and mental freedom but at the very moment remains paralysed. She has created her own castle and she confines herself within these four walls.

Eveline to some extent resembles Nora Barnacle. She was Joyce's beloved.

"Joyce himself had successfully wooed Nora Barnacle with promises which must have seemed no less far-fetched than those Frank makes to Eveline."<sup>14</sup>

Joyce is the master of stream of consciousness technique. He tries to portray his characters from inward. Eveline is feeble and fearful. She has become a pendulum. She is torn between her father and her mother. But ultimately she remains faithful to her mother.



Joyce's narrative technique illumines the character of Eveline. She remembers the past and tries to convert it into present. The use of evening and shadowy atmosphere suggests the passive attitude of Eveline.

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References

1. Joyce, James. "Dubliners" London : Jonathan Cape, 1970, p.36.
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3. ibid, p.36
4. ibid, p.36.
5. ibid, p.38.
6. ibid, p.38.
7. ibid, p.39.
8. ibid, p.39.
9. ibid, p.38.
10. Joyce, James. "Dubliners" London : Everyman's Library, David Campbell 1991, p.xxxiv.
11. Patrick, Parrinder. James Joyce, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1984. p.59.
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13. Hart, Clive (ed), James Joyce's "Dubliners" : Critical Essays. London : Faber and Faber, 1969, p.51.
14. Patrick, Parrinder. James Joyce. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press. 1984. p.58.