

CHAPTER - V

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Since in the preceding chapter through presentation of one main argument of thesis has been made, its brief resumes here will help to consolidate my view on 'heroism' and 'intergenerational conflict' in Graham Swift's selected novels.

The main purpose of this study is to focus the theme of heroism which is the main cause of intergenerational conflict in Swift's *Shuttlecock*, *Waterland* and *Last Orders*.

The First Chapter 'Introduction' gives a brief survey of contemporary British novels. The contemporary British novelists attempt to reflect the ills of British Society. The nature of British Society and the state in the last twenty years have proved mostly beyond the reach of the fiction's grasp. The ethnic plurality of London, and society's changing constructions of gender are central concerns of this new generation of writers. After 1979, contemporary life came to be regarded as a field of tension and conflict. Writers confronted urban decay, immense wealth and privileges and the stark facts of war and conflict. Thatcherite individualism emerged in a period where a stable sense of social identity was difficult to maintain. The instability of subjectivity is a common theme and motif in much of contemporary British fiction. The 1980s saw the consolidation of writing careers and a proliferation of ongoing debates in fiction about the status of women in society and the dynamics of sexual relationship. Pat Barker, A. L. Kennedy, and Atwood have described the life of suppressed women. The finest British novelists of the 1980s and 1990s, male and female, have woven more subtle explorations of feminist concerns into their work.

The idea of the all inclusive 'state of the nation novel' emerged when the geographic range of British fiction has expanded. The value of non-metropolitan fiction is now so immediately acknowledged. Perhaps most significantly of all, British fiction has finally woken up to the realities of the post-colonial world, to the ongoing fallout from the dissolution of empire. In the last twenty years the realization that Britain is a multicultural society has finally been fully acknowledged by the book industry and by the publishing trade. In the last twenty years novelists like Caryl Phillips, Hanif Kureishi, Andrea Levy, Hari Kunzru, Monica Ali and Zadie Smith have given a voice to multicultural Britain. Novelists responded to both the contemporaneous political domain and their literary predecessors. In politics, the reality and myth of Margaret Thatcher and an attendant history were dominant. The place of history in everyday lives, its literary recovery and the question of its status recur in a variety of contemporary British fictional texts. Iain Sinclair, Peter Akroyd, Rose Tremain, Robert Edric, and Graham Swift have written historical novels. Malcolm Bradbury celebrates the emergence of something new in British novel after 1980.

Graham Swift is one of the most successful and highly regarded novelists writing in contemporary Britain. He was awarded the Booker Prize for fiction for his sixth novel *Last Orders* in 1996. He writes deeply 'intertextual' and 'metafictional' novels, with self-questioning narrators who tell their stories. The experienced reader can see a wide range of local echoes of other writers in Swift's fiction: Thomas Gray, Philip Larkin, Wordsworth, John Bowles, and Chaucer. He deals with the themes, like history, generational conflict, heroism, the place of an individual in a large scale of events.

His novels constantly refer to the tradition of the Canonical British nineteenth Century novels. His novels echo and engage with those of Dickens, Trollope, George Eliot, and Hardy. It is, however, to the novels of

William Faulkner that Swift's texts most consistently refer. Genre Mixture is also a prominent feature of all Swift's novels. *Waterland* is most striking in this respect.

It appears that narrative technique of Swift is remarkably consistent throughout his novels. There are elements of multiple narrations in *Shuttlecock*, *Out of This world*, *Ever After*, and in *Last orders*. There is a certain degree of uniformity in the language used by Swift's narrators. Prentis in *Shuttlecock*, Tom Crick in *Waterland*, Harry Beech in *Out of This World*, and Bill Unwin in *Ever After* stand out as users of an often highly formal, educated discourse, often playing with language and drawing the reader's attention to their linguistic fireworks. Narrative that is the organization of the novel's story materials, also takes a particular and homogeneous configuration in Swift's fiction. Although there is an overall linear progression to all his texts, none of his narrators tells his/her story chronologically.

Centrality of the Family is one of the features of Swift's Novels. From *The Sweet Shop Owner* to *Last Orders* fathers, mothers, daughters, and sons are engaged in conflict and hostility. Insanity, too, runs through Swift's families. Swift's choice of characters is also noteworthy. Swift's characters are drawn from a wide social range, from working-class figures to the lower-middle-class shopkeepers and businessman.

Dates are extremely prominent in all of Swift's novels. The reader's attention is constantly drawn to the particular year or month of events, as in historical accounts. Another feature of Swift's novels is the Second World War. Almost all major characters in Swift's novels are affected in some way by twentieth century warfare, especially by the Second World War. Taking the Second World War as a background, Swift focuses on how heroism is the main cause of intergenerational conflict in *Shuttlecock*, *Waterland* and *Last Orders*.

Regarding the concept of heroism, it was found that in every era, society has developed its own concept of heroism. The earliest source of literature can be found in myth, legends, folklore and tales. The mythical literature deals with the heroism of Lord Krishna, Rama, Mohammad, Hercules etc. Their heroic traits are sacrifice, love, mercy, non-violence, truth, devotion, worship, bravery, meditation, human welfare. In the western tradition the ancient and modern perceptions of heroism include endurance of trials and tribulations i.e. suffering that demonstrate his worth. In Homer's world fate is inescapable. Heroism could be viewed as something that is not wholly dependent on the actions of one individual. Persistence under any circumstances is a heroic virtue. Heroism is presented differently in the Indian epics, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Hero's heroism depends on his Royal birth in Indian epics. Self sacrifice, devotion and human welfare are important traits of heroism in India epics.

From the various definitions of hero and heroism, it is found that a person who is firm, brave, noble, calm, positive, courageous, intelligent, and cunning is a hero. He exhibits extraordinary bravery, firmness, fortitude or greatness. The hero embodied the cultural values of his time and functioned as a defender of society. True heroism is not the urge to surpass all others but the urge to serve others. An uncompromising commitment to morality is the foundation of Heroism. A hero or a man, without considering personal gain or harm saves others.

Every rational person growing up had his favorite childhood heroes. Maybe it was superman or anyone like a scientist or inventor like Thomas Edison or Marie curie or the Wright brothers devoting years of effort to discover new knowledge or create new products. Whatever one's individual concept of heroism; one fact is clear that the great men and women who inspire others through achievements are true heroes or true heroines. Their actions for the welfare of society reflect their heroism.

Regarding intergenerational conflict, it was found that an intergenerational conflict is a conflict between people of different generations or different ages. The term "generation gap" was commonly used to describe the condition of intergenerational conflict in early literature. It is said that intergenerational conflict is an unfortunate but inevitable byproduct of adolescence. Age and conflict are related to each other. The conflict increases in early adolescence and decreases after mid-adolescence. It appears that conflict with young children begins at eighteen months and continues over the life span. Child learns from the different experiences with their mother and begins to develop his own abilities to use reasoning and justification. The mother frequently acts as the primary caregiver. Therefore, mothers participate much more in parent-child conflict than do fathers. Conflict occurs because of parental discipline and parental attempt at compliance gaining with their children. Conflict between parents and toddlers in the two-to-four-year-old range largely reflects the child's attempt to gain social control.

The idea that adolescence is one long fight between teenagers and their parents is not accurate. Parents see doing chores as a way to show responsibility; help to share the load, and necessary for the household to run smoothly. On the other hand, teenagers may view requests to do housework as a restriction of their freedom and a denial of personal rights. In conflict situation, they no longer express hostility as a small child does. Even though both mothers' and children's behaviors change, mothers still experience more conflicts with their adolescent children than do fathers. As the child matures, the topic of conflict evolves. Whereas younger children are concerned with gaining social control, adolescents attempt to gain personal control.

Conflict between parents and children persist after the child becomes an adult. With some level of maintained contact and

interdependence, conflicts likely remain a fundamental aspect of the parent-child relationship. For example, young adults have been found to experience psychological adjustment and identity problems when they perceive that their families have a great deal of conflict. Just as personal development continues past adolescence, the impact of conflict with significant others on that development continues. Although conflict may be inevitable in families, the consequences of parent-child conflict tend to be positive rather than negative.

Parents and children have developed their own separate concepts of heroism regarding their children. They compare their children with the children of others. They develop their own ambition about their children. They like to impose their decisions on their children. For parents their children's are not less than a day-today-hero. They take all kinds of effort for their children's development and if the children fail, then conflicts occur between them. They want to develop their son or daughter heroically having bravery, courage, idealism, fortitude, morality, sacrifice, wisdom, prudence, cunningness, decision making power, having good job, top position, marital achievements and if the children fail to achieve these things, there is a conflict between them.

Those concepts are totally different according to the period, situation, upbringing and education. Therefore conflict occurs between the two generations.

The second chapter 'An Analysis of Themes of heroism and Intergenerational Conflict in *Shuttlecock*' deals with heroism which is the main reason of intergenerational conflicts between Prentis and his father, and also between Prentis and his sons.

In this novel the protagonist is testing his father's heroism. The narrator of this novel, Prentis becomes obsessed with his father's experiences during the Second World War. Throughout the novel Prentis

struggles to establish an identity independent of his father. His father's self-declared heroism in World War Second tortures him. He goes on underestimating himself. No one is perfect in this world. Every individual has his own potentials. Though Prentis has not the heroic qualities like bravery, physical prowess like his father, he is an intelligent person having good imaginative power. But his father's false heroism tortures him and makes him to underestimate himself. Prentis finds himself as an inauthentic father, because he is not heroic like his father. Here his father's false heroism is the cause of intergenerational conflict between them. He thinks that his children expect a heroic father and he is unable to fulfill those expectations and that is why they are not giving respect to him as they give to their mother. Prentis thinks of himself as a slave in office as well as in house. Quinn also tortures Prentis. Unsatisfied in job, he becomes resentful towards his family. As a father Prentis wants to dominate his children, but he is unable to do so. Oedipus complex is also the cause of intergenerational conflict between Prentis and his sons. Whenever there is quarrel between Prentis and his sons, Marian, Prentis's wife always takes the side of their sons. It creates jealousy in Prentis's mind. Therefore he becomes violent towards them.

His father is in mental institution and he cannot speak. This '*language-coma*' of his father deprives him of an important moderating influence, removing from him the ability to mediate his experience of fathering through a third party. If Prentis had heroic qualities of his father, he could have dominated his sons. Here, intergenerational conflict occurs because parents want supremacy over children and children want freedom. His father did not confess his misdemeanor. But when Quinn exposes that Prentis's father is not an extraordinary being. It establishes Prentis as superior to his father. Not only does Prentis eventually gain the upper hand position over Quinn but he also realizes his ambition of getting over with his father. Having accepted the fallibility of his father and

assumed the position of dominant male, he accedes to the status of father, husband and in the final scene as a generous lover.

The Third Chapter 'An Analysis of Themes of Heroism and Intergenerational Conflict in Waterland' discusses about heroism which is the main cause of intergenerational conflict in the life of Tom Crick and also in the life of his forefathers. Every generation has its own concept of heroism. Each generation sticks to its own ideas and values. The same is true about the history teacher Tom Crick, the headmaster Lewis Scott and his student Price. Lewis Scott and Price question the importance of history. Throughout the novel Tom proves his heroism by defeating Price, his student and also his headmaster Lewis Scott. For Price and Lewis Scott, History is an unimportant subject because it is not practicably applicable. Student cannot stand independently only with studying History. Tom proves that history teacher works for the welfare of the society. History saves the world from repeating the mistakes. Ultimately he proves the importance of History and also the heroism of history teacher. In workplace when different age group people work together, their ideas, views, attitudes, and thoughts affect their relation.

Secondly, in this novel the age gap between husband and wife causes intergenerational conflict. Sarah Atkinson and Thomas Atkinson are engaged in this conflict. When Thomas grows old, Sarah is still young and charming which creates jealousy in Thomas's mind. Out of jealousy he strikes his wife which results in Sarah's waking coma for fifty four years. Her heroic beauty causes intergenerational conflict between them. There is also an intergenerational conflict between Thomas and his sons. Because Thomas neglected their heroic mother who has a power to tell and shape the future.

Electra complex is the cause of intergenerational conflict between Helen, Tom's mother and her father Earnest Atkinson. Earnest Atkinson wants a heroic child; a Saviour of The World from his daughter. He thinks

that the world is dying. It is in stark need of saving. He also thinks that only world's most beautiful woman will give birth to a Saviour of The World who has all heroic qualities and who will save the world by sacrificing his life. Helen gives birth to the 'potato head' Dick Crick. Here Helen's heroic beauty and Earnest's wish to have a heroic son are the causes of intergenerational conflict between them.

Another example of intergenerational conflict is of Mary, Tom's wife and her father Harold. Harold is a religious man for whom chastity and morality matter much. He expects that his daughter should get well education but Mary becomes pregnant before marriage and hurts him. Her illegal pregnancy is the cause of intergenerational conflict between them. Younger generations want to live their life according to their own ethics, but parents are against it because Parent's ethics are different from children's ethics.

There is intergenerational conflict between Tom and his father Henry Crick also. Henry's superstitious nature and imposing things on sons against their wills are the causes of intergenerational conflict between them.

The fourth chapter, 'An Analysis of Themes of Heroism and Intergenerational conflict' focuses on the disturbed relationship between fathers and sons and also between fathers and daughters. *Last Orders* muses on death and dying, on complex familial relationship and memory and on the potent and uncanny impact of the dead on the living.

In *Last Orders* there is an intergenerational conflict between Jack Dodds and his father. Jack wants to be a doctor but his father asks him to run a family's butcher business. He gives him guidelines to compete in business and to be rich but Jack neglects it, which results in his pennilessness. Younger generation always neglect their parent's suggestion. Here Jack's negligence to father's suggestion makes him to beg

Vince for money. Money matters in everyone's life. Being rich is also a trait of heroism. Vince does not respect his penniless father. There is an intergenerational conflict between Jack and his adopted son Vince also. As Jack's father imposes him to run the family business, Jack also wants to do the same with Vince. But Vince rejects it and becomes a second-hand car dealer. Children are always forced to take education according to their parent's choice. They are forced to start a business against their will which results in failure. Jack's failure in butcher business is the result of his father's imposing decisions. Unlike Jack, Vince is a successful businessman because he is doing the work in which he is interested. Vince does not forget that Jack was forcing him to run butcher's business. For Vince a hero should be kind and compassionate but Jack's negligence to his own daughter, June hurts Vince. He could not forgive Jack. So conflict occurs between them. However Vic's family remains outside of these conflicts. His sons are dutiful. They dutifully follow their parent's suggestions and run their family business. There is mutual understanding between Vic and his sons. So there is no intergenerational conflict between them.

Graham Swift has widely discussed in this novel the conflict between fathers and daughters. Heroism is the main cause of this conflict. The first example of such conflict is that of Jack and June. As Jack is a war hero, having strong physique, wisdom, sharpness, he neglects his retarded daughter June. She has not produced a single word or a gesture in fifty years. Jack rejects her because she is not normal like Vince, Sally, and Mandy. He prefers the heroic qualities like beauty, cleverness, swiftness, morality, and charm of a girl, but his daughter lacks these qualities. Here, heroism requires both wisdom and knowledge which June lacks. Jack expects her to be healthy, heroic, and strong like him. June cannot fulfill her father's expectations. Therefore, there is intergenerational conflict between them.

The second example of father and daughter conflict is that of Vince and his daughter Kath. Vince offers his own daughter to Mr. Hussein, a wealthy Arab businessman, so that Hussein will buy a car. He prostitutes his own daughter to the customers and especially Hussein, so that they will sooner be persuaded to buy a car. So, later Kath leaves Vince and goes with Hussein. Kath, younger generation does not like the materialistic attitude of her father. Vince becomes pimp for his own daughter and sells Kath to Arab. Physically man is represented as more powerful than woman. As Kath is not brave, bold and courageous to deny her father, she gets suppressed. Here the father is stronger than the daughter.

The third example of father and daughter conflict is that of Lenny and his daughter Sally. Before marriage Sally is pregnant by Vince. Lenny has to beg money for her abortion. She marries Tommy, a thief who is in jail. She becomes a prostitute. A hero or a heroine is the one who perform legal and ethical act. He or she follows the norms of society and religion. Morality is the true beauty of a woman. Sally lacks this heroic quality. So Lenny hates her. Similar to the way Vince treats Kath is the way Sally is viewed by her father, as something of a prostitute. In case of Lenny who regards morality is a true beauty of woman, neglects her daughter Sally for being prostitute.

The last example of father and daughter conflict is that of Ray and Susie. Superficially Ray remains outside of the intergenerational conflict yet on a deeper level is thoroughly enmeshed in them. Ray fancies his own daughter Susie whom he believes to be more beautiful than his wife has ever been. Beauty is one of the traits of heroic person. Ray likes the beauty of his own daughter. When Susie goes abroad to live with her boyfriend, her departure is unbearable for him because he thinks that they are all part of each other.

Such kinds of intergenerational conflicts exist in Swift's novels.