

## CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

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### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter deals with the introduction. It gives a brief survey of the contemporary British novels from 1980 onwards. It discusses life and works of Graham Swift. It also discusses the term 'heroism' and 'intergenerational conflict'.

### **1.2 A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE CONTEMPORARY BRITISH NOVELS FROM 1980 ONWARDS:**

After 1979 in Britain a new phase of history might have begun. It is separated from the earlier post-war period. In 1979, the first ever woman Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher led a conservative administration. An increasingly complex contemporary world has given rise to increasingly complex contemporary novels. The contemporary British novelists attempt to use the novel as a means of undertaking a grand, sweeping analysis of society and its ills, but the results are never very successful.

There are enormous changes and upheavals in British Society between 1980s and 1990s, from the social deconstruction of the Thatcherite years to the emergence of New Labor. Traditionally, fiction always reflects such changes in society and politics. Yet the nature of British Society and the state in the last twenty years have proved mostly beyond the reach of the fiction's grasp.

After the Thatcherite experience of the 1980s, the British urban environment is transformed. Middle class people who are living in cities become greedy and outrageous at rural people. Contemporary fiction achieves some measure of 'ironic distance' from a culture of greed and

acquisition, explore in a variety of ways. Will Self will reserve his greatest skepticism for a culture of inanition running counter to the inner drives of his characters. Hanif Kureishi and Zadie Smith produce the characters which are affected by Thatcherite ideology and by intellectual liberalism. The ethnic plurality of London, and society's changing constructions of gender are central concerns of this new generation of writers.

Modern urban fiction generates its own form of myth, a changeability often labeled as 'post-modern'. The term postmodernism is

"a general and wide ranging term which is applied to literature, art, philosophy, architecture, fiction and cultural and literary criticism, among others. Postmodernism is largely a reaction to the assumed certainty of scientific, or objective, efforts to explain reality. In essence, it stems from a recognition that reality is not simply mirrored in human understanding of it but rather is constructed as the mind tries to understand its own particular and personal reality. For this reason, postmodernism is highly skeptical of explanations which claim to be valid for all groups, cultures, traditions, or races, and instead focuses on the relative truths of each person. In the postmodern understanding, interpretation is everything; reality only comes into being through our interpretations of what the world means to us individually. Postmodernism relies on concrete experience over abstract principles, knowing always that the outcome of one's own experience will necessarily be fallible and relative, rather than certain and universal."<sup>1</sup>

This term serves almost as a short hand label for a whole new phase of writings concerned with tensions of city, which can be no longer seen as the domain of middle-class professionals alone, the territory of so much

previous post-war urban fiction. The concept of new forgotten identities came to the fore during the end of the twentieth century, emerging from the under classes and the margins.

Conventional lives are transformed through a quite different context in the work of A.L. Kennedy. Her characters are engulfed by the world. They are individuals unable to direct much of their lives. Many of Kennedy's characters become like ghost or marginal figures. Such a residual responses to the city are recurrent in many of new recognitions of urban identity found in contemporary British fiction.

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. Martin Amis's protagonist in *Time's Arrow* (1991) reflects certain aspects perhaps of the author's own British sensibility. The search for identity can be seen to bring the individual into collision with the curious objects that are other subjects. As Geoffrey H. Hartman says,

"The search for identity, which never seems to cease, plays its role in this strong and potentially pathological fantasy that others live my life, a life I want to live – fully – myself".<sup>2</sup>

This captures something of the instability of subjectivity that may be regarded as a common theme and motif in much of contemporary British fiction. On the other hand this broader characteristic might be described effectively as the pathological. The term refers to the disorder of the body or mind. The contemporary fiction of pathology draws upon a tradition seen in the works of Evelyn Waugh, Anthony Burgess and B.S. Johnson, among other. Their protagonists, and those of their successors, Amis, Carter, Winterson and Ishiguro, operate in a space that is often determined

by desire, perversity and sexual abandon in a contest with containment, tradition and self-negation.

For British novelists in the last two decades the dramatic changes in politics and society have demanded some response but the response has best been made in a dialogue with changes in specific cultural arenas. The first is gender. It was in the 1970s that the renascent Woman's movement began to find new voices in fiction but it was in 1980s that the voices began to move closer to center stage. The 1970s saw the rediscovery of voices from the past, the first novels of writers like Michele Roberts and Sarah Maitland, and influential work by Angela Carter and other female fabulists. 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's early novels, *Union Street* (1982), *Blow Your House Down* (1984) and *Liza's England* (1986), all focus on working class women, victims of poverty and violence, factory workers and prostitutes. Twentieth century British history is told from Liza's point of view in *Liza's England*. Barker writes,

"Elieen was not Elieen, Liza was not Liza, but both were links in a chain of women stretching back through the centuries, into the wombs of women whose names they didn't know."<sup>3</sup>

It reflects Barker's desire to reinsert women into stories and recent histories. It is driving force in *Liza's England*

A.L. Kennedy is clearly writing in a context that is informed by feminism. In her work there is recognition of the social constructions of femininity which have held women in particular roles and positions of powerlessness, and her frequent interest in themes of domestic violence and child abuse show her alertness to the inequalities classically associated with such structures of power. Janice Galloway, the Scottish novelist, whose all three novels, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1989),

*Foreign Parts* (1994) and *Clara* (2002) centre on women. All of the women are in different ways trying to find a way to live, a way to be in more or less adverse circumstances.

Like female writers, acclaimed male writers have addressed themes that would, in earlier decades have escaped their notice. A major part of Ian McEwan's literary project, certainly in his works of the late 1980s and 1990s, has been a series of attempts to answer his own question, shall there be womanly times or shall we die? The finest British novelists of the 1980s and 1990s, male and female, have woven more subtle explorations of feminist concerns into their work.

Margaret Atwood is the most celebrated late-twentieth-century Canadian poet-novelist. Her novels,

"Which explore among other things the socially-constructed nature of gender, male-female and female-female power relations, and "the notorious victim positions Canadians have adopted to survive in the face of domination by imperial powers."<sup>4</sup>

have been translated into thirty five languages. Though the status of women is improving, the danger is expressed by Michele Roberts. She thinks that eventually there will be male writers and female writers, rather than as at present "feminist writers" and "writers" still exists. The feminist novelist still runs the risk of being neglected, but the voices of a wide variety of women writers are heard more clearly than at any earlier period in the history of British fiction.

The idea of the all inclusive 'state of the nation novel' may have been consigned to dustbin. But it emerged when the geographic range of British fiction has expanded. Just as the political arena has been devolution and in the late 1990s, the creation of new parliaments for both Scotland, and

Wales, so in literature there has been resurgence in fiction set outside the narrow ambit of London and its satellite states (North Oxford, Tuscany, the Home Countries). The value of non-metropolitan fiction is now so immediately acknowledged.

Some of the most exciting and challenging fiction in the last ten years came not just from outside London but from outside England. In Wales, writers as different as John Williams, Niall Griffiths and Trezza Azzopardi have emerged to expand ideas of what Welsh-fiction might be. The most celebrated Welsh novel of the period is Bruce Chatwin's *On the Black Hill* (1982). In Scotland, always the home of a rich tradition of fiction, there has been a remarkable renaissance in the last two decades. A renaissance of sorts in the Scottish novel was heralded by Alasdair Gray's *Sui generis Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (1981), widely regarded as one of the greatest Scottish novel ever written. Irvine Welsh has been the most visible of the new Scottish writers. Alan Warner, Janice Galloway, A.L. Kennedy, James Kelman, Jeff Torrington and others have also made important contribution to the renewal of fictional vitality in Scotland.

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 most instances it is sixty years since independence is granted to the colonies of the British Empire, but the political and economic consequences of this continue to shape Britain and wider world. 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. There have been Black writers and Asian writers responding to their experience of Britain since, at least, the 1950s, but it is only in the last twenty years that novelists like Caryl Phillips and Hanif Kureishi have been able to stake their claims in the mainstream of British fiction. Both of these writers and others who have

appeared in the last few years, like Andrea Levy, Hari Kunzru, Monica Ali and Zadie Smith have given a voice to multicultural Britain.

A new generation of writers, responding to their literary antecedents, developed a newly focused literary consciousness. This was not matter of reflecting historical events or trends. In politics, the reality and myth of Margaret Thatcher and an attendant history were dominant. Novelists responded to both the contemporaneous political domain and their literary predecessors. 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 weaves a mythopoetic account of the rhythms of modern urban life to reveal that the present is integrated into our sense of an almost magic, often turbulent past. Peter Ackroyd in *Chatterton* and *Hawksmoor* has used his own versions of seventeenth and eighteenth-century prose with mimetic brilliance. Rose Tremain, the most celebrated novelist for historical fiction, takes court life in Charles IIs England and Seventeenth-century Denmark as the setting that explore very contemporary ideas about love and power and the value of art. Novels like Roberts Edric's *The Book of the Heathen* and Barry Unsworth's *Sacred Hunger* use events from colonial history to illuminate issues of oppression and exploitation. Jeanette Winterson invents her own idiosyncratic version of the past that can encompass both the real and the fantastic. Linda Hutcheon argues that,

“the reconstruction of material from the past in the light of present day issues typifies the genre of historiographic metafiction.”<sup>5</sup>

Graham Swift addresses the act of reading history when Thatcher's state appears to distort the communal values prized by an older generation. For many of these new generation of writers the perceived crisis of values in the present, conservative administrations, helped to



define their need for retrieving the human, the domestic and social patterns of the past. *Waterland* meanders through a social history of family intrigue and illicit sexuality in an attempt to search for some sense of personal identity in a world of flux as fluid as water and eels flowing through the fens of its settings.

In his rather hostile study of postwar British fiction, entitled *A Vain Conceit*, D.J. Taylor notes that in the early 1980s new writers and new concerns emerge in British novels. Although he damns these with faint praise, he insists that

“to dwell on the deficiencies of the literary scene is to ignore the existence of a new strain in English writing whose effects have been profoundly felt, and resented, over the last ten years .The names are familiar : Martin Amis, Graham Swift, Timothy To, Peter Ackroyd, James Kelman.”<sup>6</sup>

Positive assessments of the changes wrought in early 1980s British fiction can be found in more balanced essays by Valentine Cunningham and Peter Kemp, while Malcolm Bradbury celebrates the emergence of something new in British novel after 1980. The decade, he argues, was

“not a period of traditionalism but of considerable exploration and much new and original talent.” <sup>7</sup>

Such new and original can be found in the novels of Graham Swift and his contemporaries.

### **1.3 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND LITERARY WORKS OF GRAHAM SWIFT:**

#### **1.3.1 Biographical Sketch:**

Graham Swift is one of the most successful and highly regarded novelists writing in contemporary Britain. He was born on May 4, 1949, in

Catford in South London. He was the son of Allan Stanley and Sheila Irne (Bourne) Swift. His father was a civil servant who served as a naval pilot during the Second World War (perhaps unsurprisingly, many of Swift's novels take the war as their chronological point of departure and chief point of reference). Graham Swift has described his childhood as "a very ordinary suburban existence" and as "really quite happy". He was educated at prestigious institutions. He studied English literature at Queens College, Cambridge University, graduating in 1970. He completed an M.A. thesis on the city in nineteenth century English literature in 1973 from York University. At York Swift devoted increasing amounts of time to his creative writing.

"he claims at this time to have been "pretending to be a student" while in fact he was "teaching himself to write" (fiction)".<sup>8</sup>

After his studies Swift worked as a teacher in Greece and in London, but with the success of his first three novels he decided to become a full-time-writer. He was nominated as one of the twenty 'Best of Young British Novelists' in the book marketing council promotion in 1983. His home is in London, where he has lived "with the same lady friend for about twenty years". They have no children. In *Who's Who 2000*, he gives fishing as his sole recreation and his agent's address as his own.

"He is clearly a writer who values privacy in his personal life".<sup>9</sup>

Despite the lack of details in Swift's biography, certain elements in it are of interest to the readers of his fiction. It should be noted that although he frequently turns to a South London setting for his novels, many aspects of those novels are not directly drawn from his personal experience. His immediate family background is not that of the shopkeeper, William Chapman, in *The Sweet Shop Owner*, nor that of the wealthy arms

manufacturing family, the Beeches, in *Out of This World*; it is not that of the working-class and lower-middle class characters of *Last Orders*. He is not also from the East Anglian Fens country described so closely in *Waterland*.

The discrepancies between depicted worlds and authorial background are striking.

“Swift is an author whose biography, does not particularly illuminate his work, nor does it seem to give rise to it in any straightforward way”.<sup>10</sup>

Swift's career has been very successful one. He now produces novels at relatively long intervals –usually, since 1983, every four to five years–but these novels are respectfully, and sometimes even rapturously, received by professional critics, scholars and other writers in major journals and periodicals. His novels are published by major British and U.S. publishers, and they win prizes in the United Kingdom and abroad. His works have been translated into many languages. His first novel, *The Sweet Shop Owner*, was first published in 1980. *Shuttlecock* followed in 1981, and a volume of mostly previously published short stories, *Learning to Swim and Other Stories*, appeared in 1982. His most celebrated novel, *Waterland*, was brought out to great acclaim in 1983. Since then he has published– *Out of this World* (1988), *Ever After* (1992), *Last orders* (1996), and *The Light of Day* (2003), *Tomorrow*(2007), *Wish You Were Here*(2011). He wins different awards for his fiction. *Shuttlecock* took the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize in 1983. Although *Waterland* was shortlisted for 1983 Booker Prize (Britain's most prestigious award for fiction), it did not win the prize. *Waterland* was, however, awarded the Winifred Holtby Award of the Royal Society of Literature and the Guardian Fiction Prize in 1983. Swift has also own highly regarded foreign prizes for his fiction receiving the Italian Premio Grinzane Cavour for *Waterland* in 1987 and the French

Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger for *Ever After* in 1994. In 1996 *Last Orders* took the important and remunerative Booker Prize, as well as the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. In 1984 Swift was elected as a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and he has received honorary degrees from the University of East Anglia and the University of York. Films have been made of *Shuttlecock* (in 1991), *Waterland* (in 1992), and *Last Orders* (in 2002). Apart from novels Swift has published an anthology on fishing entitled *The Magic Wheel*, which he edited with David Prufomo in 1985. His career is a single minded dedication to the novel.

### **1.3.2 Critical Perspectives of Graham Swift's Work:**

Graham Swift was awarded the Booker Prize for fiction for his sixth novel *Last Orders* in 1996. Then he was accepted as a contemporary British novelist. The reception of Swift's works by scholars and critics has always been respectful, and often more than that, but it has on occasion been somewhat negative. His novels are all ambitious in their own ways in their thematic and narrative scope. The different features of his works are as follows.

#### **1) Characterization :**

Hostile commentary of the critics focuses on four qualities of his novels: a deployment of one-dimensional, uninteresting and unconventional character; an overschematic, insistently intellectual organization of his texts; excessive ambition and the use of melodramatic story material that makes too great demands on the reader's emotions. Such criticism emerges very strongly after 1983. For example, with regard to Swift's skill in character construction Michael Gorra insists that,

“*Waterland* lacks passion; or rather its passion is all for history itself and not for the people who are affected by it”.<sup>11</sup>

In a review of *Waterland*, Derwent May complains that characters are only presented “in two or three arresting postures” and that the reader is not provided with enough detail about central figures. In an intemperate review J.L. Carr accuses the characters of *Out of This world* of being limited, coarse, and boring, while Lynne Truss sees them as simply the author’s mouthpieces. Hilary Mantel describes *Ever After* as fatally flawed by the choice of a tedious, over reflective narrator, too persistently the porte-parole of Swift’s thematic concerns. The same problem applies to the other characters: they are “afloat, barely, in a pale sea of abstraction”. Oliver Reynold’s praise for *Last Orders* is set against the critic’s uneasiness about Swift’s characters in earlier novels.

“Occasionally... in Swift’s previous books one is aware of the novelist attending to the nuts and bolts of the plot or buffing up his themes to the detriment of the independent life of his characters”.<sup>12</sup>

## 2) Intertextuality:

Swift’s fiction is always full of intertextual echoes of other major texts. As William H. Pritchard notes regarding *Waterland*,

“Mr. Swift has some strong writers behind him as precursors”.<sup>13</sup>

The experienced reader can see a wide range of local echoes of other writers in Swift’s fiction: poets like Thomas Gray and Philip Larkin in *The Sweet-Shop Owner*, Wordsworth in the epiphany that concludes *Shuttlecock*, John Bowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* in *Ever After*, and Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* in *Last Orders*. *Ever After* is the Swift’s novel that is most full of references to other texts, particularly to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. The Substantial and general use of references to other literary works mainly involves two kinds of text and one particular

author-classical literature, Victorian fiction and the novels of William Faulkner. References to classical literature run through much of Swift's fiction. He says in the Salon interview,

"I've always had a fondness for the classics".<sup>14</sup>

There are some classical references in *The Sweet Shop Owner*. In addition the oedipal echoes in Prentis's pursuit of his father's past, and his own elder son's hostility toward him, are very clear, in *shuttlecock*.

### **3) His Novels Constantly Refer to the Tradition of the Canonical British Nineteenth Century Novel:**

Swift's scholarship has frequently shown that his novels constantly refer to the tradition of the Canonical British nineteenth century novel.

"His novels, it is argued, echo and engage with those of Dickens, Trollope, George Eliot, and Hardy."<sup>15</sup>

Swift has used modest lower-middle-class characters in *Last Orders*, working-class milieu that is the staff of Dickens' and Hardy's fiction. It is also part of George Eliot's subject matter in *Adam Bede* and *The Mill On The Floss*. Both Hardy and Eliot are precursors of the detailed evocation of rural and small town settings in *Waterland*, while the characters in *Last Orders* travel through a world replete with Dickensian associations. Swift's fascination with the family and the disrupted family in particular, has its antecedents in Dickens's *Bleak House* and Eliot's *The Mill On The Floss*. The dark secrets hidden within these families (insanity, illegitimacy, misplaced parents) echo Dickens and Wilkie Collins.

It is, however, to the novels of William Faulkner that Swift's texts most consistently refer. Swift has acknowledged his admiration for the work of Faulkner, and critics have always stressed how much Swift draws from the great novelist of the Southern United States. Landow in a review argues,

“Waterland, as we have seen, is a book that winds back upon other books, for it is a descendent, an echo, and a qualification of Dickens’s *Great Expectation* and Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*”<sup>16</sup>

Thus, one can see that Swift’s novels are deeply and consistently intertextual, both on a local and a more general level.

#### **4) Genre Mixture:**

Genre Mixture is also a prominent feature of all Swift’s novels, and this is something he shares with many of his contemporary authors in the 1980s and 1990s. Few novels by any author are generically pure, but Swift’s fiction is particularly variegated in the range of genres that individual texts include. *Waterland* is most striking in this respect. It juxtaposes folktale and legend with history textbook and encyclopedia entry, and the novel of psychological development with a nonfiction essay on the breeding cycle of the eel. *Shuttlecock* is a psychological social novel with strong elements of war fiction and the espionage novel. *Out Of This World* is part family saga, part psychological study, and part essay on British history, photography and the possibilities of knowledge. *Ever After* is a campus novel, psychological study, and historical novel rolled into one. Genre mixture has several functions in individual texts. It functions to draw the reader’s attention to the text’s own narrative procedures, reminding him/her that what one encounters in any text is an account of a particular kind (folktale or historical narrative in this case), and that reality and truth can be captured only through a variety of different genres, and often only provisionally.

#### **5) Narrative Techniques:**

Narrative technique of Swift is remarkably consistent throughout his novels. All of his novels, except for parts of *The Sweet-Shop Owner*, are

first-person narrations (almost all the short stories are as well); many of his novels also have more than one narrator. There are elements of multiple narrations in *Shuttlecock*, *Out of This world*, *Ever After*, and in *Last orders*. Even *The Sweet-Shop Owner* has a brief passage in which the speaker/narrator is surely Irne. The major narrators usually deliver their monologues to no one in particular. *Waterland* is in some measure the exception here, as several of Crick's monologues are given to his class is another matter. In *Out Of This World*, too, Sophie is addressing her psychiatrist. But William in *The Sweet -Shop Owner*, Prentis in *Shuttlecock*, Harry in *Out Of This World*, Unwin in *Ever After*, and all the speakers-in *Last Orders* ultimately speak to no one, apart from themselves. No one hears them; their monologues pass each other. Swift very rarely chooses female narrators although he does so in *Out Of This World* and in *Last Orders*. It is also a striking feature of his choice of narrators that at some points in certain novels the dead speak. Matthew Pearce does so through his journal in *Ever After*, but Anna speaks directly to the reader after her death in *Out of this world*, as does Jack in *Last order*. Even William Chapman is dead by the time he completes his narration in *The Sweet-Skop Owner*.

## 6) Use of the Language:

There is a certain degree of uniformity in the language used by Swift's narrators. Although they employ a spectrum of stylistic levels, they are all relatively articulate and sophisticated in their vocabulary and syntax. 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. Even characters of much less formal education, such as William Chapman in *The Sweet-Shop Owner*, and Ray and Vic in *Last Orders*, achieve a rather



formal style on occasion, perhaps at times stretching the reader's sense of probability. Most of Swift's major narrators use language very skillfully; however, their speech is also marked by severe breakdowns of language. The Swiftian narrator's speech is distinguished by incomplete utterances. Usually the reader is well able to complete the unfinished sentences. The reader can understand that some characters are unwilling to say certain words, or to look at certain issues directly. This is true of Tom Crick in *Waterland*, who seems reluctant to speak in detail of his mother or his wife. It is also the case with Harry Beech and Sophie in *Out of This World* who delay in revealing what it is that Harry did when his father was blown up by the Irish Republican Army (IRA). *Ever After*, it can be argued, circles round Bill Unwin's avoidance of his wife's possible adultery. In *Last Orders*, Ray constantly postpones certain revelations about what he has done for Vince and for Jack in both the recent and the distant past and why he did those things. Swift's narrators talk constantly, but they do not always reveal everything.

## **7) Chronology in Narrative.**

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. This is as true of *The Sweet Shop Owner* as it is of *Last Orders*. There is always a movement backward and forward between the narrator's present and the past events recounted. In addition the events recounted are frequently not given in their chronological sequence. Thus, in *The Sweet Shop Owner*, Willy's crucial race as a schoolboy is not related until chapter 34. The interweaving of past and present scarcely follows a more chronological order in *Shuttlecock*, and in *Waterland* the dislocations of linear narrative are quite radical. The narrator moves freely among the various time levels,

and the last four chapters reverse chronology, moving back from the late 1970s through 1947 to 1943, where the novel stops. The same is true of *Out Of This World*, which like *Waterland* ends at an earlier point than it began. Like *Out Of This World*, *Ever After* follows its own associative chronology starting in the 1980s and ending in 1957. The four travelers in *Last Orders* make their way from Bermondsey in South London, to Margate in the course of a few hours, but during their journey they recount events from the 1930s to 1990 in a succession that bears little relation to the traditional sequence of years.

Such narration and narrative organization are very important features of Swifts' fiction. They embody a particular vision of the world, in which the past weighs heavily on the present. His narrators are all badly wounded by history, compelled by their own desire to understand, to retrace the past, to seek out some patterns in its destructive flux, to work out why and how they got where they are.

#### **8) Centrality of the Family in Swift's Novels:**

The battlefields from which these narrators bring back their accounts are, above all, those of family life.

"Critics point quite rightly to the centrality of the family in Swift's novels".<sup>17</sup>

From *The Sweet Shop Owner* to *Last Orders* fathers, mothers, daughters, and sons are engaged in conflict and hostility. Willy Chapman waits in vain for his estranged daughter Dorry to come to him; Prentis pursues his father's heroism or lies through the years, while his own son struggles against his authority; in *Waterland*, Tom and Dick Crick compete for Mary Metcalf; Bill Unwin's relationship to his mother and stepfather is hostile; daughters and sons (Vince, Mandy, Sue, Sally) usually turn against their fathers in *Last Orders*, relationships between mothers and daughters

(for example, Amy and June, Carol and Sue) are scarcely better. Adultery runs like a scarlet thread through Swift's story materials: Prentis's father is an adulterer, as is Anna in *Out Of This World* and her daughter Sophie has sexual relation with workmen, Sylvia Unwin and Sam Ellison are adulterers in *Ever After*, as are Ray and Amy in *Last Orders*; in *The Light of Day* Kristina's and Dr. Nash's affair is central to the novel's action. Prentis has turned his wife into a quasi prostitute; Tom Crick's mother has an incestuous relationship with her father; wives betray their husbands throughout *Even After*; Vince pimps his own daughter in *Last Orders*. The only traditionally stable family in Swift's fiction is Vic's in *Last Orders*, although the Prentis do seem to have come to some kind of accommodation at the end of *Shuttlecock*.

#### **9) Theme of Insanity:**

Insanity, too, runs through Swift's families. Irene is pathologically afraid of life in *The Sweet Shop Owners*; her illnesses are a kind of self destruction. Similarly, Prentis's father has withdrawn into silences and is confined to a mental institution. Sarah Atkinson and Earnest Atkinson become deranged in *Waterland*, and Mary Crick is in a psychiatric hospital at the novel's end. Sophie delivers her monologues to her analyst in *Out of This World*. The institution for the insane or for the mentally handicapped looms large in Swift's novels-in *Waterland* and in *Last Orders* for example and mental handicap affects two major characters: Dick Crick in *Waterland* and June Dodds in *Last Orders*. June spends almost fifty years in an asylum.

#### **10) Swift's Choice of Characters:**

Swift's characters are drawn from a wide social range, from working-class figures like Lenny in *Last Orders* or Mr. Crick in *Waterland*, to the lower-middle-class shopkeepers and businessman like Willy Chapman in *The Sweet Shop Owner*, Jack Dodds, Vic Tucker, and Vince Dodds in *Last Orders*, or Frank Webb in *The Light of Day*. Swift's social

range also includes professional middle-class figures like Tom Crick in *Waterland* or Prentis in *shuttlecock*, the glamorous actress Ruth Unwin in *Ever After*, and the very wealthy Beeches in *Out of This World*. At both the beginning and the most recent points in his career as a novelist, Swift has focused on an unglamorous, drab South London world of small businessman, while in between the social scope of his work has been quite broad.

Swift's choice of character, however, has been criticized on two accounts. It is clear that female characters play lesser and often quite specific roles in his texts. Very few of Swift's narrators are female. The principal exceptions are Sophie and Anna in *Out Of This World*, and Amy and Mandy in *Last Orders*. They are given extremely strong voices and very important roles in their respective novels. Those roles are very traditional female ones. They are all, in Amy's words,

"hardnosed little tricksies", sexually unreliable and sometimes quite calculating women who cause (usually for very good reasons) their husbands and fathers a great deal of grief".<sup>18</sup>

This is the role that many female characters play in Swift's novels- Mary Metcalf, Helen Atkinson, Sylvia Unwin, Ruth Unwin, Sally Tate, and Carol Johnson. Another similar criticism that has been leveled against Swift's choice of characters in *Last Orders* is that it is not ethnically inclusive enough. Kate Flint notes that in this novel,

"Swift's South London, or at least the South London of his characters, seems self protectingly free of all possible multiculturalism ".<sup>19</sup>

The only nonwhite character in the Landon parts of *Last Orders* is a rich Arab client of Vince, whom he heartily dislikes. The gender and ethnic

selectivity of Swift's range of characters is striking. Like any serious author, Swift does have a particular vision of the world, and women play specific roles within that vision. It should be noted, however, that men are scarcely viewed more positively in it.

### 11) History in Swift's fiction:

"This is a commonplace of Swift's criticism and even a cursory glance at the novels will show to what degree they are fascinated with historical events and processes".<sup>20</sup>

For example, 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. In addition, these dates and character's experiences are constantly related to grand, national occurrences and development: wars especially, but also technological, social, and cultural change.

William Chapman viewing the altered face of his high street and the new demands and behavior of his customers, or Vince Dodds reflecting on the motor car and social attitudes in the 1960s are representative of the way in which historical processes impinge on characters' lives. The rise of the Atkinson family in *Waterland* – based on the technological, social, and economic changes of the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions in Britain, and Britain's subsequent imperial expansion – is also a clear example. At one point in Swift's novel *Waterland*, a character asserts that.

"The only important thing about history... it is that it's got to the point where it's probably about to end".<sup>21</sup>

Swift questions the nature of narrative through questioning the reality of history, a theme that is central to *Shuttlecock*, *Waterland*, *Out Of This World*, and *Ever After*. In all these novels of Swift considers the nature

of the relationship between personal and public histories, between self-created and orderly narratives and the disorderly nature of actuality.

In *Shuttlecock* the protagonist Prentis struggles to identity how much reality there is in his father's self declared World War II heroism. In a similar fashion in *Ever After* the central character, Bill Unwin, becomes aware that his own vision is coloring his allegedly factual reconstruction of the life of his great-great grandfather from his ancestors nineteenth century notebooks. In *Waterland* Crick the history teacher interlaces an account of the seminal events of his own life with an account of events and personalities from the Industrial Revolution to the present. Crick interweaves the personal, the regional, and the national and sets all these against the historical perspective of the natural world and the landscape of the Fens. In *Out Of This World* different generations look back from differing stances on the professional activities of their parents in wartime situation, creating narratives memory and personal resentments so that they have no objective existence.

## **12) The Second World War: As a Background of Swift's novels.**

Grand events impinge, too, above all in the shape of war. Almost all major characters in Swift's novels are affected in some way by twentieth century warfare, especially by the Second World War. Willy Chapman is unusual in his detachment from armed conflict, but even he thinks a lot about the war during its course, although it scarcely touches him directly. The heroic fathers of *Shuttlecock* and *Ever After* are men whose lives (and therefore their son's lives) have been shaped by the Second World War. Jack Dodds meets Ray Johnson while serving with the British Army in Egypt in the 1940s; Lenny Tate's career as a boxer is destroyed by his six years in the Army; Vic Tucker's view of the world is partially shaped by his experiences in the Royal Navy. In *Waterland*, many of the events in the Fens are set against a backdrop of the wars in Europe: flights of U.S.

bombers take off from the Fenland to bomb Hamburg. Tom gains a sense of the importance and fragility of civilization in-bombed out German cities. Other twentieth-century conflicts alter characters lives too. Robert Beech is badly wounded during the First World War and is killed by an IRA bomb, while his son Harry makes his career out of photographing the wars of the later twentieth century. Vince Dodds learns his trade and some of his attitudes in the British Army as it fights to hold on to and then withdraws from Aden in the 1960s. In *The Light Of Day* Kristina is a Croation refugee from the Balkan wars of the 1990s. Swift's constantly interweaves the personal and the historical. Characters lives are deformed and formed by their involvement in the events and processes of their particular time and place. Swift's emphasis on war is because wars with their enormous upheavals and savage destruction-show the brute force of history in clear terms.

Like his contemporary fellow authors – Ian McEwan Martin Amis, Rose Tremain, Kazuo Ishiguro, Pat Barker and others – Swift's career is far from over and may develop in at present unexpected ways. The pattern that is observable in his fiction to date is, however, clear. He writes, deeply intertextual and metafictional novels, with self-questioning narrators who tell their stories in far from linear fashion. He deals with the theme, like history, generational conflict, heroism, the place of an individual in a large scale of events. His novels involve disrupted families whose experiences are embedded in the destructive flux of history. But such a summation does not do justice to the richness and variety of the individual novels. The short stories may be, to some extent, apprentice work. Swift's all novels are fascinating and complex, and for many readers, profoundly moving. *Waterland* will perhaps always be valued above his other novels, but the outstanding quality of all his fiction should be emphasized and celebrated.

### 1.3.3 Literary Works of Graham Swift:

#### Novels:

#### 1. "The Sweet-Shop Owner" (1980)

Graham Swift's first published novel, *The Sweet Shop Owner*, is narrated by disillusioned shopkeeper Willy Chapman, and unfolds over the course of a single day in June. It narrates the last day in the life of Willy. The narrative focuses on Willy's memories, recalling four decades of family history, presented mainly in interior monologue. The event that motivates Willy's recollections is a letter by his daughter Dorothy, in which she tells him that she intends to break off all contact with him. The letter states that she has received her inheritance after her mother's death. Willy's confrontation with his life's story, with his own past and the people involved in it, is significantly linked with the letter that shocks him into awareness.

#### 2. "Shuttlecock" (1981)

*Shuttlecock* is Swift's second novel. It is a wonderful combination of a Swiftian novel with a detective novel. Prentis is the central character of the novel. He is the narrator of this nightmarish masterpiece. He catalogs "dead crimes" for a branch of the London Police Department and suspects that he is going crazy. He is resentful with his job and his overbearing supervisor. His files keep vanishing. His boss subjects him to cryptic taunts. In a whole story, he struggles to identify how much reality there is in his father's self declared World War of heroism. It also depicts the story of his father's adventures as a world war second spy. This second tale comes in the form of an autobiography written by Prentis's father entitled "*Shuttlecock: The Story of a Secret Agent*". It is brilliantly accomplished work of fiction.



### **3. “Waterland” (1983)**

It is his acclaimed third novel, was published in 1983. The story is narrated by history teacher Tom Crick. It describes his youth spent in the Norfolk Fens during the Second World War. These personal memories are woven into a greater history of the area, slowly revealing the seeds of a family legacy that threatens his marriage. Tom Crick, the secondary school teacher of history, seeks an explanation of how his life has turned out, he tells his story, but as he does, so he finds that he must also tell the stories of the fens and of his ancestors who lived there. It is a fascinating story, involving the entire history of Fenlands of East Anglia, but most particularly concerning the Atkinson family- farmers, brewers and shippers in the Fens over four generations and their humble neighbors, the Cricks.

### **4. “Out of This World” (1988)**

It is Swift's fourth major novel. Swift is careful to relate his fiction to reality. He weaves the lives and events of his characters into the framework of actual history. The protagonist Harry Beech is a photojournalist who has been a bystander to every major human conflict from World War II onward. Harry's entire career is a reaction to his dead father's munitions business. Robert Beech, Harry's father, was killed by a terrorist bomb blast ten years before the novel takes place, ironically while Harry is on his way to photography the IRA in Belfast. Harry is haunted by his father and the heroic image that was created around him after he lost in arm in World War I.

### **5. “Ever After” (1992)**

*Ever After* tells the story of a bumbling, prematurely aged 52 years old Cambridge don who is looking back on his own life. It reveals his father's brutal and tragic suicide in Paris; his mother's death; his wife's

death; his own attempted suicide. The ageing don develops an obsession with the notebooks of his distant Victorian ancestors whose discovery of an ichthyosaur skeleton led to a profound crisis of faith. Graham Swift's *Ever After* sets a contemporary life in opposition with a life from Victorian times and uses the resonance between them.

## **6. "Last Orders" (1996)**

*Last Orders* is about the ordinary lives of ordinary people, and the mixture of accidents and circumstances which shapes such lives. The story begins in an East London pub. Jack Dodds, dead and alive, presents from the start to the final movement of the novel. It is Jack's boxed ashes which his family and friends together in their favorite Bermondsy pub. It is this heavy box and its contents which prompt their reminiscences on the car ride to the South Coast town of Margate. They share their memories as the trip progresses. Finally Jack's "last orders" for the disposal of his ashes are carried out more or less as he directed.

## **7. "The Light of Day" (2003)**

The narrator of this novel is George Webb. The story covers the single day in his life, but in reminiscing and wondering about what might have been and what the future might hold, George repeatedly loops forward and back and offers a much larger tale. He is a former policeman who loses his job – a small disgrace and also his wife. For several years now he has worked as a private investigator. One case, in particular got to him. The weight of it on him is especially clear on this day, but eventually it becomes obvious that Webb carries it with him every day.

## **8. "Tomorrow" (2007)**

Tomorrow is the imaginary monologue of Paula Hook. Paula Campbell Hook is lying awake in bed on the eve of a dramatic family announcement which she and her husband Mike plan to make to their

sixteen year old twins. They have delayed this life changing occasion for several years, having decided to wait until after the twins, Nick and Kate have celebrated their sixteen birthday, fearful that they might be, “wrenching (them) forever from (their) childhood.” Sleepless, Paula is planning what she will say to the twins, though Mike will be the person who actually makes the big announcement.

## **9. “Wish You Were Here” (2011)**

Swift’s *Wish You Were Here* begins with his protagonist, Jack Luxton, in a state of extreme distress. From his internal monologue we gather that Jack grew up on a cattle farm in Devon and his mother died when he was twenty one and his younger brother Tom was thirteen, after which the farm went into a decline that proved terminal when the cows were affected by BSE. Now married, but childless, he runs a caravan site on the Isle of Wight with his wife Ellie. But something has evidently gone wrong.

### **Non Fiction:**

## **“Making an Elephant: Writing from Within” (2009)**

In this first ever work of nonfiction, Swift delivers a warm, generous account of what has influenced and inspired him over the years. As a novelist, Graham Swift delights in the possibilities of the human voice, imagining his way into the minds and hearts of an extraordinary range of characters. In this book, the voice is his own. As generous in its scope as it is acute in its observations, this highly personal book is a singular and open spirited account of writer’s life.

### **Short Stories:**

## **1. “Learning to Swim” (1982)**

The title of the story of the collection, “*Learning to Swim*” sets the tone of the book, two individuals, a man and a woman, are tied to each

other by habit and need. They search to free themselves using their child as the vehicle. The child evades them both with a simple decision to strike out for himself, a choice as universal as the situation portrayed.

Through sensitivity, ingenuity, and eye for the details of everyday life, the author transforms ostensibly colorless setting and ordinary people into situations and characters with which one can easily identify

## **2. “Chemistry” (2008)**

In the short story ‘*Chemistry*’ the author, Graham Swift, describes complicated relationships between a grandfather, his daughter, her new partner and her son. Swift uses effectual symbolism to shape the stories meaning; the main one being chemistry. Chemistry, scientifically, is the practice of mixing of chemicals; however, if you get one measurement wrong, for example there can be catastrophic results. This is a metaphor of the relationship between a long lasting trios, the entrance of the daughter’s new partner, Ralph, upsets the balance between the existing relationships.

### **1.4 THE THEME OF ‘HEROISM’**

#### **1.4.1. Introduction**

Each individual has his own personal definition of heroism or more specifically the characteristics of a true hero. Some may believe that a hero must be a person of high morale, while others may believe that a hero must be a brave person, and yet others may believe that a hero can conceivably be a hero by chance and must not possess any specific qualities. An ordinary person is more or less an everyday hero. He faces the troubles, probably not by his or her own choosing, takes the decision, and gets the solution. Even this ordinary hero may fight for social welfare. In every era, society has developed its own concept of heroism. Heroism is presented differently in myths and legends also.

### 1.4.2 Heroism in Myths

Joseph Campbell explains the concept of myth in his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* that myths have been there always in the history of mankind and they have served as a source of inspiration. He interprets myths as

“the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestations”.<sup>22</sup>

The earliest source of literature can be found in myth, legends, folklore and tales. The mythical literature deals with the heroism of Jesus Christ, Gautam Buddha, Mahavira, Lord Krishna, Rama, Mohammad, Hercules etc. Their heroic traits are sacrifice, love, mercy, non-violence, truth, devotion, worship, bravery, meditation, human welfare.

The twentieth century novelists and critics say goodbye to heroism. It is accepted that the heroism is died with the hero. Modern man is not ready to accept the mythological traits of heroism. But Joseph Campbell remarks as,

“eternal man perfected, unspecific universal man, he (hero) has been reborn. His second solemn task and deed, therefore, is to return them, to us, transfigured, and teach the lesson he has learned of life renewed.”<sup>23</sup>

The modern critic or a novelist may bid adieu to hero and heroism overtly, but this concept is very much there in one form or another. It seems that the changing eras in the cultural and literary history of mankind have seen various figurations of the hero from the divine and superhuman to the disillusioned and the dying hero. Yet, there has always been the existence of the concept of heroism. There are heroism and the heroic ideals in mythology. Mythology treasures innumerable secrets of intangible importance to mankind.

### **1.4.3 An Ancient Concept of Heroism**

A person's act was defined as heroic or not-based upon one's religious or philosophic approach to life. In the western tradition that approach changed over the centuries of ancient civilization: from the primal heroism of ancient Greeks, as exemplified in Homer's epic poem *The Iliad*

### **1.4.4. Ideas of Heroism in "Iliad".**

*Iliad* is a great epic written by Homer. Homer has described here a royal world of king and queens. They are represented as superior to the common man. They are men of enormous physical strength and never fail to display their prowess and heroism in the battlefield. C. M. Bowra Says:

"their manhood is tried in battle, which is not only the main field of heroic endeavor but the ordeal which tests the full range of man's abilities, physical, moral and intellectual".<sup>24</sup>

They are men of courage. Odysseus, king of Ithaca and the husband of Penelope shows his heroism while fighting with the suitors of Penelope.

### **1.4.5. Ideas of Heroism in "Odyssey"**

It is also a great epic written by Homer. The concept of heroism in Greek epic has acquired an ambiguous status. It has become central to the modern day conceptions of heroism. While strong women are presented in ancient texts, they would not have been elevated, to a heroic status in the same way as men. In the *Odyssey* Penelope herself is heroic. Some merely call her a temptress, but it is her loyalty and wisdom with cunningness that bring her closer to the status of heroine. She displays her heroic use of metis in the form of trickery with the loom for Laertes. Though, the suitors complain, Penelope tricked them out of the necessity to survive or preserve herself. Sewing by day unsewing by night, Penelope kept up the trick until one of the maids betrayed her. Marrying off to another family

seems like the better choice for her, but her love for Odysseus as persists and calls her to stay faithful to Odysseus. The endurance and faith, she has in her husband enables Penelope to continue fighting with society and with suitors. Odysseus is an ambiguous hero. The tremendous struggle posed by Odysseus' journey also suggests heroism. 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.

#### **1.4.6 Aristotle's concept of Heroism:**

The Greek philosopher Aristotle defined heroism in his book titled 'Poetics'. Aristotle says.

“The tragic hero will most effectively evoke both our pity and terror if he is neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly bad but a mixture of both; and also that this tragic effect will be stronger if the hero is “better than we are, in a sense that he is of higher than ordinary moral worth. Such a man is exhibited as suffering a change in fortune from happiness to misery because of his mistaken choice of an action, to which he is led by his hamartia his “error of judgment” or, as it is often though less literally translated his tragic flaw”<sup>25</sup>

In fact Aristotelian tragic hero must have four characteristics: goodness, superiority, tragic flaw and a realization of both his flaw and his inevitable demise e.g. the tragic hero Oedipus in Sophocles. Aristotle says that the plot effectively evoke “tragic pity and fear” through catastrophic events in hero's life which leads to disaster.

### 1.4.7 Heroism in Indian Epics

In the great Indian epics '*Mahabharata*' and '*Ramayana*' there are examples of unusual birth of hero. The hero of *Mahabharata*, Karna was born of Kunti who was kept as a virgin. Lord Rama, the hero of *Ramayana* was conceived as a result of the consumption of blessed sweet rice by his mother. Hero is exposed shortly after their birth in preparation to be a hero. Hero is taught by supernatural or wild being. In *Mahabharata* both Pandwas and Kaurawas are taught by the krushimuni. Without physical fitness a man cannot show his heroism. In an Indian tradition only the Kshatriya can get the knowledge of principles of war, so Karna who does not know his true identity is regarded by others as a son of horseman. But when he shows his heroism to the whole Sabah, no one is ready to accept him as son of horseman. It means that heroic qualities of heroes are regarded as inherited by noble birth.

Self sacrifice is an important trait of heroism in an Indian epic. Lord Rama obeyed his step mother Kaykayi and left the kingdom for twelve years and passed it in forest with his wife Seeta and brother Laxman. In *Mahabharata*, on the battlefield when Karna knows his true identity by Lord Krishna, he is ready to be honest with Kaurawas and fights against his own brothers Pandawas.

Another trait of heroism in an Indian epic is devotion. In *Ramayana* Hanuman shows devotion to Lord Rama by taking risk while bringing the whole mountain to save Laxman and also by saving Seeta from the capture of Ravana.

Welfare of the society is the central aim of epic hero. Both in *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* the heroes show their heroism in the battle through physical prowess, different divine weapons, and tricks. Hero's great actions, sacrifices, unbelievable courage, wit and intelligence distinguish his life. Every great hero is struggler. Their life is marked by



greater troubles and obstacles. Through his heroism he overcomes it and eventually he proves his quality.

#### **1.4.8 Definitions of Heroism :**

The ancient Indian aesthetic theorists described certain patterns of heroism which become the basis for the traditional hero in the world of literature.

“Dhirodatta (firm and strong-minded), dhirodhata (brave, noble minded but haughty), dhirsanta (brave and calm), and dhirlalita (positive and reckless) that was the characteristic categorization of the Indian Classical Hero.”<sup>26</sup>

The Oxford English Dictionary discusses the term Hero as.

“A name given to men of superhuman strength, courage, ability favoured by gods; a man distinguished by extraordinary valour and marital achievements, one who does brave or noble deeds, an illustrious warrior; and a man who exhibits extraordinary bravery, firmness, fortitude or greatness”.<sup>27</sup>

The Ransom House Dictionary of the English language specifies the characteristics of Hero as

“a man of distinguished courage or ability, admired for his brave deeds and noble qualities; a person in the opinion of others has heroic qualities or performed a heroic act and is regarded as a model or ideal and the principle male character in a story, a play, film etc”.<sup>28</sup>

Will Rogers, American entertainer, famous for his pithy and homespun humour (1879-1935) quotes:

“True Heroism is remarkably sober, very unromantic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost”.<sup>29</sup>

Ralph Waldo Emerson defines heroism as

“a sort of military attitude towards everything evil in the world”.<sup>30</sup>

A hero is an individual of elevated moral stature and superior ability who pursues his goal in the face of powerful antagonist. Because of his unbreached devotion, the good, no matter the opposition, a hero attains spiritual grandeur; even if he fails to achieve practical victory. Here we notice the four components of heroism: moral greatness, ability or prowess, action in the face of opposition and triumph in at least a spiritual if not a physical form.

Of these, the hero's moral stature is unquestionably the most fundamental. An uncompromising commitment to morality is the foundation of Heroism

A Dictionary of Literary Terms defines hero as

“traditionally, a character who has such admirable traits as courage, idealism and fortitude; and states, the hero embodied the cultural values of his time and functioned as defender of his society”.<sup>31</sup>

According to Mayne,

"Heroism is a quality of being slightly larger than life. But more than being slightly larger than life, a hero has to be slightly larger than death".<sup>32</sup>

It means a hero has an ability even to win death. His heroism brings him success, popularity and gifts. Greeks defined hero as;

“One who has special suvaues or power so in all country, as he has an abundant, overflowing, assistive force which expresses itself in action, especially in violent action and enables him to do what is beyond ordinary mortals”.<sup>33</sup>

It means that heroism is found on the battlefield, because battle provides the most searching tests not merely of strength and courage but a resource and decision making power and risk.

Melissa Bushman in *A Discussion of Heroism in Literature and Film* says;

“a hero or heroine is a person who performs a legal or ethical act that is of benefit to another entity without first considering any personal gain or harm that may be received due to said act”.<sup>34</sup>

It means a fighter is a hero, a man who rescues abused animals is a hero and a pimp who happens to catch a stumbling man and prevents him from falling in front of a moving bus is a hero. For example,

“Robin Hood who has appeared in countless novels written by various authors is often considered the first hero of the common people of England”.<sup>35</sup>

According to Roush:

“The tales of Robin Hood endorse the old fashioned virtues of altruism and swashbuckling heroism”.<sup>36</sup>

Hero's power can be felt in their mere presence. A hero's appearance reveals his essential superiority and difference from other

men. It is found that when a country is under foreign domination, there is tendency for everyman to become a hero who resists the conquerors by showing his heroism. Sydney Hook defines hero as

“event-making individual who predetermines the course of history; and adds further, ‘it follows at once that a democratic country must be eternally guard against him’”.<sup>37</sup>

According to Alexander Welsh,

“Hero stands committed to prudence and the superiority of civil society”.<sup>38</sup>

Prudence and superiority are traits of heroism. Without it, physical prowess is insufficient. Heroism requires both wisdom and knowledge.

Sean O Faolain defines hero as:

“A purely a social creation, as he represent a socially approved norm, for representing which to the satisfaction of society; he is decorated with a title”.<sup>39</sup>

Such kind of hero is familiar and realistic. He is positive and inspiring through his familiarity and through the description of a gradual personal development that may provide one with clear ideas about steps to take in order to become heroic, to realize one’s possibilities. In realistic fiction the hero is often the person with whom one identifies one’s self. The realistic novel describes an everyday heroism. We easily identify ourselves with them because their adventures and experiences are just the ones we would like to have ourselves.

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 tastes in heroes; one fact is abundantly clear; the great men and women whose achievements provide inspiration for millions come with an assortment of specific characteristics. Some are excellent examples of mind-body integration; some are grand-scale characters towering through a work of fiction, whether on printed page, stage or screen-while some perform their great and notable deeds in actual existence.

#### **1.4.9 Quest is the Heart of Heroism**

From ancient age every hero has quest of something. All his actions are centered on his quest. He devotedly involves himself in search of his aim. It may be the quest of power, money, social welfare, reformation, love, peace, God, so his journey starts from the knowledge of what he actually wants to the gain of what he wants. Dreams, actions, flight, swimming, running, walking, driving, day-dreaming, imagining, singing, fighting symbolize his quest. According to Bill Butler his quest is

“Paradigmatic of life”.<sup>40</sup>

Karna in *Mahabharata* is in search of his true identity. It is this quest marks his heroism. The quest of the Satan is to defeat the God and grab his position which makes him to show his heroism in the battle with God. The quest of Hanuman is to see Lord Ram. It is the quest which influences hero for his heroic actions. However Christ, Buddha, Mahavira are in search of peace of mind. Some quests are of the worldly pleasure e.g. the quest of Achilles, Alexander and Napoleon. The hero completes his journey and proves his heroism. To the present day the hero's journey from entertainment to salvation is very fruitful-in various fields.

#### **1.4.10 Heroism in Fiction:**

From the great epics to the Renaissance and then in the arena of the human mind, dominated by the early works of Richardson, Rousseau and

Goethe, the portrayal of Hero changed a great deal; so much so, that Richardson created a new fictional world by rejecting the heroes and shifting to the heroines. Morality, prudence, wisdom are the traits of his heroine. There were atmosphere of changing economic and social forces which created the hero of Walter Scott who are neither very bad nor very good. In *Waverly* (1814) he represents the English society and its development. *Waverly* stands as socio-historical figure which explores the actual conditions of life.

The changing forces created atmosphere for the Romantic Hero. The changing forces are active from the mythological characterization to the seventeenth and the nineteenth century heroism. There is conflict between inner and the outer selves of the Romantic Hero. He suffers from moral isolation and his quest is spiritual freedom. As Frederick Garber remarks,

“Romantic rebels demand recognition and believe in the recognition of value system of the society. Hyperion and Gotz and Karl Moor point out the tensions of self, society and value”.<sup>41</sup>

The Romantic heroes oppose society for the sake of love, sex, friendship and passions. His rebellious nature proves his heroism. Because of social changes there are clashes between romanticism and realism which results in the emergence of unheroic hero.

The Heroes of Stendhal, Balzac and Flaubert follow the social norms but directly accuse the society. They do not strictly carry the stigma of revolutionary hero. Stendhal, Balzac and Flaubert conceived the nineteenth century French hero, a representative of the French bourgeois; so such hero is incapable of heroism. Edith Kern observes:

“When he looks back upon the long journey of the Hero from the mythological tales to the modern times, he has been found

wanting, disintegrating, 'demolished' over since the seventeenth century and vanishing in the contemporary novel.'<sup>42</sup>

Thus the concept of heroism is changing in each period. The revolutionary heroism in modern literature deals with the dilemma of hero's relationship with the group of society. His acts of heroism are against the social order for establishing a new society. He shows his heroism by rejecting the political and cosmic order and stresses on the psychological concept of search of his own personality. This psychological hero has both spiritual and material aspects. His quest of the identity leads to the traditional problems of salvation, redemption and survival. The modern hero's tale is a tragedy of unrest, possession and destruction. According to Victor Brombert,

"The great lover heroes of literature are victims of destruction and degradation".<sup>43</sup>

The concept of heroism is changed in the light of new socio-ethical interpretations. The unheroic hero is a representative of the bourgeois culture and ashamed of his own heritage. He entails the modern clash between the realism and heroic ideal. The hero becomes an artist himself in the process of responding to various creative processes. His art and innovations are part of his heroism.

After modernism postmodern fiction is dominated by the anti-hero that developed under modernism. Unlike the traditional hero anti heroes are not as fabulous as the traditional ones. They are generally corrupt oppressive etc. They are not villains but not necessarily heroes. They may do bad things but are not evil. They usually fight villains, but not for the reason of justice. Their actions are motivated by their own personal desires; such as revenge. For example an antihero may steal, vandalize and perform other "bad" acts but may do so for a good cause.

## **1.5 THE THEME OF 'INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT'**

### **1.5.1 Introduction**

An intergenerational conflict is a conflict between people of different generations or different ages. For example conflict between people of different age in community. Older generations openly criticize young people and make generalizations based on fiction not fact. There is a lack of understanding of how times may have changed. Ageism is a result of symptom of this conflict- discrimination against older or younger people. Such kind of conflicts occurs in society.

### **1.5.2 History of Intergenerational Conflict:**

The term "generation gap" was commonly used to describe the condition of intergenerational conflict in early literature. The concept of generation gap was much scrutinized during the latter part of the 1960 and early 1970s. A research made on whether or not generation gap existed. Early theorists have opined that an intergenerational conflict as an unfortunate but inevitable byproduct of adolescence. Arnett claimed that.

"Prior to the 1970, theorists advised parents to expect rebelliousness, defiance and conflict in dealing with their adolescent children".<sup>44</sup>

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, some analysts argued that the generation gap was an illusion created by media sensationalism and distorted generalization. Bengston summarized their positions on the generation gap issue:

"the Great Gap", "Gap is an Illusion" and "Selective Continuity and Difference".<sup>45</sup>

According to Bengston The Great Gap position suggests that youth and adults have vast differences in their value system, orientations toward social institutions, interpersonal relations and communications and locus



of control and authority. This position views youth culture as being distinct from and in opposition to adult culture.

The Gap is an Illusion position assumes that there are more continuities than discontinuities in the behaviors and values of youth and adults. This notion argues that intergenerational conflicts are related to

“the means employed on actualizing similarly accepted values, rather, than the acceptance of different values”.<sup>46</sup>

In other words intergenerational conflict is not the outcome of different values; it is rather the means to help generations realize how much they share similar values.

The Selective Continuity and Difference position suggests that there is a continuity of values across generations, along with inevitable behavioural differences. Age and conflict are related to each other. The conflict increases in early adolescence and decreases after mid-adolescence.

Prior to the 1970s, child development experts advised parents to expect intense with their adolescent children. Moreover, the absence of such conflict in relation to adolescent development was considered abnormal. However the contemporary studies have shown mixed results concerning the seriousness of intergenerational conflict in the lives of adolescent.

Some researchers deny the negative effects of intergenerational conflict. They claim that conflict between parents and their adolescent children is not serious. The conflict is about minor issues like cleaning or clothing. They do not present a serious treat to the parent child relationship. In addition, these studies claim that;

“most parents and adolescents generally agree on significant issues, share similar values, generally respect, trust and show affection for each other throughout adolescence”.<sup>47</sup>

Opposing studies stress that conflict between parents and adolescents generally increases during adolescence and that such conflict may have harmful effect on adolescence. Most of the research indicates that most children become quite distant from their parents during adolescence, and that this differs from their closer relations in pre-adolescence, and they remain distant until late adolescence.

“In fact, the intensity of conflict with parents tends to increase during the stage of mid-adolescence to late adolescence”.<sup>48</sup>

The conflict is a sign of change in the parent child relationship. Parents may indirectly express their serious concerns for their child's safety and well-being by arguing over seeming trivial issues around curfews or clothing. e. g. parents may insist on a strict curfew as an indirect way of protecting their children from drug use or potential automobile accidents. Ultimately it is true that an intergenerational conflict is a serious matter and it has a long lasting effect on children's life.

### **1.5.3 Definitions:**

Generational conflict arises whenever the interests or ideals of one generation differ from those of another.

“A generation is defined here as a “cohort group” that is born over a span of years-typically about twenty-and shares-characteristics, including some shared childhood and coming-of-age, experiences, a set of common behavioural and attitudinal traits and a sense of common identity”.<sup>49</sup>

Each generation has its own interests, choice, attitudes which are totally different from another generation. So when the two or more

generation comes together conflict occurs there. They are not ready to accept each other's values, interests, choice etc.

Another definition of intergenerational conflict focuses on cause of the conflict.

"Intergenerational conflict is either a conflict situation between teenagers and adults or a more abstract conflict between two generations, which often involves all inclusive prejudices against another generation".<sup>50</sup>

It describes cultural, social or economic discrepancies between generations. These can be caused by value shift or conflict of interest between younger and older generations. For different reasons an intergenerational conflict takes place between parents and children. In each age group the conflict occurs for different reasons. An intergenerational conflict between parents and different age groups children is as follow:

#### **1.5.4 Conflict with Young Children:**

Much of the research on parent child conflict has focused on conflicts between toddlers and their parents. Conflict with parents becomes a significant feature of family interactions. It begins at eighteen months and continues over the life span. Both parents' and children's conflict behaviors evolve over time. For example, before children reach the age of sixteen months, mothers are more likely to use simple labels such as "naughty" or "nice" during conflict episodes.

"As the child ages, mothers are more likely to reference social rules, use bargaining and provide justifications to the child during conflict episode".<sup>51</sup>

Learning from these experiences with their mother, children begin to develop their own abilities to use reasoning and justifications as early as age of three. The mother most frequently acts as the primary caregiver. As such, mothers participate much more in parent child conflicts than do fathers.

As mother does greater number of interactions with children, she strongly influences her Children's development of conflict management behaviors.

"Additionally, fathers achieve child compliance slightly more frequently than do mothers".<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, children rarely follow a father's simple "no" with a bold opposition, but they would boldly oppose a mother's "no".

Traditionally conflict occurs because of parental discipline and parental attempt at compliance gaining with their children. Research focused on observing conflict interactions between mothers and their small children illustrates some key to successful parental compliance gaining. The researchers argued that parental flexibility during interactions with toddlers leads to more child compliance. In general if parents are positive and flexible before and during interactions, child becomes obedient to them. Although much of early parent-child conflict research focused on parental control and child's disobedience, more recent-research has emphasized the bidirectionality of parent-child conflict. Bidirectional means that just as parents' behaviors influence children, children's behavior influence parents.

For example, Gerald Patterson's theory of coercive control suggests that parents adapt their conflict management behaviors to children's coercive behaviors, e.g. hitting, yelling and ignoring the parent, rather the reverse. This bidirectionality approach to parent-child conflict broadens

the focus from just compliance gaining to a wider variety of conflict topics. For instance, conflict between parents and toddlers in the two-to-four-year-old range largely reflects the child's attempt to gain social control.

“Consequently, disagreements about rights of possession are particularly salient for children in this age group”.<sup>53</sup>

Other common conflict issues involve caretaking, manners, destructive or hurtful actions, rules of the house, physical space and independence.

“Between the ages of four and seven, children becomes less concerned with possessions and the rightful use of objects, and more concerned with controlling the actions of others”.<sup>54</sup>

For instance, five-year-olds can become quite distressed when mother will not pay in a preferred manner. Such struggles to gain the compliance of others are integral to the child's development of interpersonal competence. The child learns that co-operation with others is an important part of control and achieving one's own goals. Such kind of conflict occurs between parents and young children.

### **1.5.5 Conflict with Adolescents**

By the time children reach adolescents, their communication with others has gained greater sophistication. The idea that adolescence is one long fight between teenagers and their parents is not accurate. In fact, the majority of teenagers say that they like their parents and get along well with them.

However, it is true that arguing and bickering increase in the teen years. Research has shown that conflict increases in the 12-13 year age group. This generally reduces as the teenager gets older. Researchers have found that most disputes between parents and teenagers are typically about everyday issues, such as: fighting with brothers and sisters, cleaning

up bedroom, possessions, their own space, time, helping out around the house, doing homework, bedtime, time to come home, household chores, Friends and responsibilities. Issues that tend to generate more heat, but occur less frequently, include: talking back to parents, lying, getting poor results at school, getting in trouble at school.

The researchers also found that it was rare for either parents or teenagers to raise issues such as alcohol, dating, sex, smoking and politics. However, when these were the topics of discussion, they were more likely to involve angry exchanges. Parents and teenagers generally agree on what issues cause arguments. However, they don't always see an issue in the same way. Think about household chores as an example. 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. What parents and teenagers argue about depends on the teenager's age. In early adolescence, arguments are around matters such as personal grooming (e.g., hairstyles, clothes, etc.); in middle adolescence, social activities are the main cause of disagreements; and in late adolescence, personal beliefs, values and politics are common sources of disputes. Parents tend to dispute different things with boys and girls. They are more likely to argue about not being told things, drinking alcohol, driving, swearing and drug taking with their sons than with their daughters.

In conflict situation, they no longer express hostility as a small child does. In addition; they exhibit greater flexibility in conflicts with their parents. Nonetheless, adolescents still express more hostility and show more rigidity than do adults. Even with their increased maturity, adolescents are still developing their conflict management skill. For example, when observing interactions between mothers and teenagers, researchers have found that mothers more consistently respond to their

child in a flexible and positive manner regardless of the child's comment. However, the researchers also found that, unlike the mothers, the teenagers tended to parallel the mother's comments in terms of following a negative comment with a negative reply. Given the broad range of what qualifies as a teenager, adolescence consists of multiple stages rather than one. Traditional perspective hold that due to parallel hormonal and physiological changes during puberty, conflict behavior first increases from the early stages of adolescence to the middle stages and then decreases again by late adolescence. However, other researchers have found that conflict simply decreases from early to late adolescence with no peak during middle adolescence. In attempting to resolve this controversy researchers have found that

"Conflict increases in hostile and coercive families but decreases in warm and supportive families".<sup>55</sup>

Mothers and fathers take on different roles during conflict than they had with their younger children. In particular, adolescent boys begin to act more assertive and forceful with their mothers but not their fathers. Researcher states that

"Mothers complement their son's behaviors by being less dominant, whereas, fathers become more dominant".<sup>56</sup>

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. Adolescents and parents often disagree about the extent to which parental martinet control supervision over the adolescent are legitimate. Specifically, parents and adolescents have conflict about such routine, day-to-day issues as responsibility for chores,

doing schoolwork, observing a curfew, and respecting the adolescents' right to privacy.

The issues of parent adolescent conflict persist across generations. "Thus, today's "rebellious" adolescents mature into tomorrow's "controlling parents".<sup>57</sup>

Although conflict between parent and teens may be inevitable, effective management does not always occur. The potential costs of poorly managed parent-adolescent conflict are great. For example, adolescent may become ungovernable, use drugs, and or run away from home.

"Certain communication behaviors during conflict have been linked with such teenage misbehaviors".<sup>58</sup>

Specifically, the researcher found that when parents and adolescents do not reciprocate each other's supportive communication behavior e.g. showing empathy and equality and do reciprocate each other's defensive behaviors e.g. showing indifference and superiority the child appears more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors.

#### **1.5.6 Conflict with Adult Children :**

Although conflict between parents and children persist after the child becomes an adult, little research examines these relationships. The frequency of conflict likely drops off significantly for most parents and their adult children. However 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. Karen Fingerman's (1996) research illustrates that conflicts with parents continue even as the



child reaches middle-age and the parent becomes elderly. Again, development appears to play an important role in understanding difficulties between middle-aged daughters and their elderly mothers. Due to their different stages in life, the mothers and daughters held different opinions regarding the salience of the relationship. In addition, mothers and daughters tend to disagree the mother's needs. These studies illustrate both that parent child-conflict endures and the link between development and conflict persists.

Although conflict may be inevitable in families, the consequences of parent-child conflict tend to be positive rather than negative. For example, oppositions between parents, usually mothers and their small children are brief in duration and not emotionally charged. Although such conflicts can test the patience of both child and parent, they do not seriously affect the relationship between parent and child. Though some research has been undertaken to understand the nature of conflict between parents and their adult children, however, more research is needed to understand it, also the influence of culture on conflict managements has not sufficiently examined.

“However, the management of conflict between parents and children's likely varies by culture”.<sup>59</sup>

Researches have not explored conflict management differences due to cultural norms in parent-child interactions. Min-sun Kim and Truman Leunge (2000) argued that the dimensions (concern for self and concern for others) that underlie the various styles of conflict management do not have the same meaning in conflict situations across cultures. For example U. S. Society values assertiveness in conflict and perceives avoidance behaviors in showing a lack of concern for others. However, in Chinese Society, avoidance of confrontation is perceived as showing high concern for others. Future research needs to resolve such methodological and

conceptual issues to examine how culture likely plays an important role in the development of conflict management behaviors from early childhood.

#### **1.5.7 Different Reasons of Intergenerational Conflicts:**

1. An intergenerational conflict results when there is a lack of understanding of a different age group and a lack of respect for this group. This can result in intimidation, a break down in the community, threatening behavior or in the worse cases, violence.
2. Intensity of the relationship is also one of the causes of an intergenerational conflict. The bonds between adult partners, between parents and children, or between siblings involve the highest level of attachment, affection and commitment. There is typically daily contact for many years that bonds individual together. When serious problems emerge in these relationships, the intense positive emotional investment can be transformed into intense negative emotion. A betrayal of a relationship, such as an extramarital affair or child abuse, can produce hate as intense as the love that existed prior to betrayal. It is well known that a high percentage of murders are committed within family groups. Family conflicts are typically more intense than conflict in other groups. This intensity means that managing conflicts may be more difficult in families, and that their consequences can be more damaging.
3. Another reason of an intergenerational conflict is that younger generations may find it hard to identify with older people to understand that they were young once too, that they have contributed to society and that even though they may be less active due to the onset of age, they are still highly intelligent with a wealth of experience to share with others.
4. Older generations may find it hard to tolerate the behavior of same young people. They may find it hard to accept that they have many

more opportunities these days and may not face the same struggles. They may not recognize that the young people of today face different challenges related to modern society. They may not understand these challenges that young people face. This conflict can occur within family units. Some people may feel resentment towards an older relative that they have to look after. They may dearly love this person, but have to make many sacrifices in their lives to care for them. Alternatively, the older relative may feel guilty and angry about being in this situation and may think themselves a burden on their family. This could lead to anger, sadness and a break down in relationships.

5. Complexity of the relationship is also the cause of an intergenerational conflict. Complexity is especially important for understanding their sometimes baffling characteristics. Why do most abused children want to stay with the abusive parent rather than be placed elsewhere? One answer is that positive emotional bonds are important than the pain involved with the conflicts. The person is loved, but they do things that produce hate well. The web of family relationships includes dimensions such as love, respect, friendship, hate, resentment, jealousy, rivalry, and disapproval. If the positive bond exists between relationship, conflict does not destroy it.
6. Duration of the relationship is the cause of an intergenerational conflict. Family relationships last for a lifetime. A person's parents and siblings will always be there with him. Thus serious conflictual relationships within family can continue for longer period. Such extended exposure increases the risk of harm from the conflict. It is possible to escape such relationships through running away from home, or estrangement from family ties.

7. Ageism discrimination or prejudice against people of particular ages, particular in employment is linked to intergenerational conflict. People who are discriminated against because of their age may find it hard to identify with and respect those from another generation who are perhaps promoted above them or treated more favorably.
8. Some common reasons of parent child conflicts are carrying weapon, being involved in physical fights, including gang fights, starting a fire where you should not burn anything, damaging a parked car, trespassing anywhere; where not supposed to go like private property , smoking, watching T.V. excessively, using illegal drugs, drinking alcohol, chewing tobacco, getting detention at school. There are some other reasons also like being suspended or sent home for bad behaviors, skipping school; using threats to get money from people, snuck into movies, bus, metro without paying for them, hitting others, taking money from home without permission, lying teacher or parents.

Parents have developed their own concept of heroism regarding their children. Parents think that their son or daughter should be an ideal person. They compare their children with the children of others. They develop their own ambition about their children. They like to impose it on their children. For parents their children are not less than a day-to-day-hero. They take all kinds of effort for children's entire 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 children fail to achieve these things, there is a conflict between them.

Children also have their own concept of heroic father. Now the two generations have developed their own concepts of heroism which are

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

#### **1.5.8 Resolution of Intergenerational Conflicts:**

Parent and child conflicts can occur for many reasons. When conflict occurs, the entire family can be thrown into emotional turmoil. Resolving a parent and child conflict requires the participation of everyone involved. Communication is a very beneficial tool in resolving conflict. When parenting, we need to listen to our children and consider their will. Understanding why does conflict occurs and how to resolve it can help to bring harmony back to the entire family. It will create healthy atmosphere in home. It is also important for children's mental, physical, and emotional development. Although there is not one single cause for parent and child conflicts, Psychology today lists a few common reasons. Some conflicts occur when parents cannot give as much attention or support to their children as is desired. If a family has multiple children, the middle children may feel lost and act out. As a child grows up, they begin to insert their own independence into their lives. Sometimes conflict occurs due to generational clashes. Parents' morals and views of life can be very different from their children.

First key to resolve conflict is communication. A child can resolve conflict with a parent by using some communication tactics. Communication gap is the main reason of an intergenerational conflict. A child is discouraged by parent's complaining about something. A child should ask the parent to explain further. Open discussions when conflict arises are more beneficial than demanding a parent sees things the child's way. Discussion between them about their misunderstanding helps them to resolve conflict.

Parent should be conscious about the problems between them. They should talk often with children, encouraging them to remain open and

honest. If this is started early enough, children may be more inclined to talk with parents when they are experiencing problems. A parent should be empathetic and try to understand what a child is doing through instead of criticizing or reacting with anger. Save serious reactions for important issues like sex or drugs. Parents should respect their children's privacy. It is important to know what a child is doing and where they are going, but if there are no warning signals of trouble, it is alright to allow a child a little freedom. Thoughts, their bedroom and telephone calls should remain private. Rules should be appropriate and fair to avoid conflict. If a child has proved trustworthy, life does not have to be as strict.

Adolescents and their parents have conflict. To manage this conflict is critical. If these conflicts are not managed constructively, families divide. It will spoil adolescents. Criminal conduct may follow. The teen years are confusing for both the adolescent and the parent. The teen is no longer a child, yet not quite an adult. Teens are struggling for their independence, yet sometimes unwilling to assume the accompanying responsibility. They often want to make their own rules yet have difficulty following family rules. Sometimes parents do not allow their teens to have the freedom teens think they deserve. This is all part of the parent - teen growing up together, conflict system. Because parents and teens care about each other, emotions exaggerate their differences. Openly acknowledging and managing these emotions is the key to managing parent - adolescent conflicts constructively.

Parents and their teens have more things in common than they think. Both share: frustration, stress, time pressures, disappointment, financial stress, and fear of failure. They both want the best for each other. How they deal with these feelings and desires can create disconnects. It can also be a basis for managing conflict constructively. When they stop communication, emotional tension increases. Communication becomes more difficult and conflict resolution more difficult. Conflict can spin out of

control. The key of such conflict management is “understanding”. Feeling that you are understood and understanding the situation from the other perspective can help to resolve the conflict. Knowing that you are understood creates respect for you and your position. Understanding a situation from the other perspective creates an environment that fosters mutually beneficial solutions. Anything that creates common understanding contributes positively to conflict management. Asking open-ended questions that begin with: how, when, where, do, what or is, is a great place to start. Tensions ease and the shift to problem solving come naturally.

Not all conflicts are resolved this easily. Tougher situations require a mechanism that keeps underlying emotional tension in control. Some conflict cannot be managed constructively by those involved. Conflicts that keep recurring are highly emotional, or where resolution isn't reachable by the disputants themselves, are candidates for mediation. Mediation, very simply is a confidential discussion with a neutral third party for the purpose of managing conflict constructively. It should be confidential. As a neutral third party the mediator does not take sides, give advice or offer solutions. Mediators establish and maintain a discussion environment that is safe, balanced, constructive and focused.

These are the various ways of conflict resolution.

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