

TRANSITION OF FAMILY SYSTEM AND THE IMPACT ON CHILD'S LIFE WITH REFERNCE TO THE WORK OF WASTWATER BY SIMON STEPHENS

R. Mohana

Ph.D. Research Scholar of English, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore.

Dr.K. Thiyagarajan

Research Supervisor, Bharathiyar University, Coimbatore.

H.O.D. Dept. Of English, Sir Theagaraya College, Washermenpet, Chennai.

ABSTRACT

The paper penetrates the value of family life and the transitions over the period of time. Wastwater is one of the finest plays by Simon Stephens and an elliptical triptych. The play deals with the stories of three different couples. One among the three stories of Wastwater is the love bond between mother and the son. Furthermore the play reveals the emotional struggle between the mother and the son when Harry has to take the decision to depart himself from his mother for the future development and the emotional balance of Frieda who as a mother manages the situation in a motherly matured manner.

Key words: Family transition, Simon Stephens, Wastwater, Frieda, Harry.

Introduction:

"A family," as defined by Ernest W. Burgess is "a group of two or more persons joined by ties of marriage, blood, or adoption who constitute a single household who interact with each other in their respective familiar roles, and who create and maintain a common culture." As prototypes of all social institutions it is through the family units that most societies maintain their cultural continuity. It is indeed the most remarkable institution wherein its members act according to the culturally prescribed roles. The family, based on the relationship of the sexes brought together in permanent union, creates social bonds by connecting the individual to the society.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century industrialization and urbanization effected separation and alienation among the family members. Corresponding to the change in views on marriage and the social comfort it offers the roles and responsibilities of the husband and wife were also altered. The house-wives working outside the home brought about changes in marital relationships and parent-progeny relationship. The working woman became economically independent and less submissive, demanding more from the family, more freedom and more respect for her position. Traditional roles slowly tended to shift and the marriages often collapsed when the husband and wife realized that they had not lived their marital life up to their hopes and expectations. Even in choosing partners personal qualities were valued more than ancestry

and inherited social status and emotional satisfaction became the main forces that held marriages together. In the contemporary age changing moral economic, and social values, as well as the varying outlooks on life and marriage tend to affect the family structure. Promiscuous sexual relations, clash of ideas and personalities between husband and wife, and stress on money contribute to the disintegration of the family. The free attitude toward sex at the turn of the twentieth century had a drastic effect on modern family life. The works of Rich Von Kraft-Ebbing and Havelock Ellis in the late nineteenth century and the writings of Sigmund Freud published in the beginning of the twentieth century attracted the attention of the intellectuals and the educated middle class effecting a change in their attitude toward sex. The much talked about Sexual Revolution which affected a great increase in the premarital and extramarital sex occurred in America in the Twenties. Though the same revolution took place in European countries like France and England included and it was less widespread when compared to the United States. In this study explored how leaving home was related to young adults' relationships with their parents during the year after their departure. Using 8 years of longitudinal data we charted the developmental trajectories of youth's family relationships from early adolescence into early adulthood. Using a multi-level modeling approach, we examined the trajectories of conflict and warmth in mother-child and father-child relationships across adolescence and into early adulthood and explored how home leaving altered these trajectories. Given recent work (e.g., Aquilino, 1997, 2006; Leftkowitz, 2005), we expected that firstborns would report improvements in their relationships with their parents following their transition out of the home.

Nuclear family & the humans using the family only as a shelter:

Since days of year the joint family has been one of the remarkable highlights of the Indian society. In any case, the twentieth century brought gigantic changes in the family system. Changes in the conventional family system have been enormous to the point that it is consistently on disappear from the urban scene. There is positively no way of inversion of this trend. In villages the span of joint family has been considerably decreased or is found in its divided structure. Some have part into several nuclear families, while others have appeared as extended or stem families. Extended family is in fact a short lived stage among joint and nuclear family system. The accessible information proposes that the joint family is en route out in provincial territories as well.

The joint family or extended family in rustic territories is getting by in its skeleton or ostensible structure as a kinship group. The grown-ups have moved to urban areas either to seek after advanced education or to verify increasingly worthwhile jobs or to squeeze out their living outside their customary purposes for living, following from the accessibility of better open doors somewhere else just as the rising weight of populace on the limited land base.

Huge numbers of the urban households are really branches of country extended or joint families. A joint family in the local village is the wellspring of nuclear families in towns. Nowadays much of the time two siblings tend to frame two independent households even inside a similar city attributable to the rising spirit of independence, paying little mind to comparability in occupation, notwithstanding when the tribal

property isn't formally partitioned at their local spot. The nuclear family, same as somewhere else, is presently the characteristic component of the Indian society. As per the Census of India information, of the considerable number of household's nuclear family established 70 percent and single part or more than one part households without mate contained around 11 percent. The extended and joint family or households together case simply 20 percent all things considered. This is the overall picture about the whole country, though on account of urban zones the extent of nuclear family is fairly even higher.

An extended family, which incorporates a couple with wedded children or girls and their life partners just as household head without companion however with something like two wedded children, little girls and their life partners, establish somewhat less than one fifth of the all-out households. With further modern improvement, rustic to urban relocation, nuclearization of families and ascent of separation rate and the extent of single part households are probably going to increment relentlessly hanging in the balance of mechanical West. This is accepted to be so because the states, which have a larger amount of urbanization, tend to have a higher extent of single part households. Likewise, about two or three decades prior very nearly 20 percent households contained just a single individual in the USA. Pretty much, a comparative circumstance exists in other developed nations also, and most importantly, not a solitary country has recorded decrease in the extent of single part household amid the most recent three decades.

In fact, the tendency is more towards increment in the extent of single part households. As the procedure of family development and disintegration has turned out to be generally quicker now than previously, households are continuously progressively headed by moderately younger individuals. Evaluation information from 1971 onward have obviously borne out that at the national dimension more than three-fifths of the households are headed by people aged under 50. There is each motivation to trust that extent of households headed by younger people is probably going to establish a bigger extent than this in urban zones where the extent of extended family, not to discuss joint family, is a lot littler than that of rustic zones. The development of monetarily independent, profession arranged people, who are certain of taking their own decisions and hunger for to have a feeling of individual accomplishment, has enormously added to the deterioration of joint family. Breaking down of joint family has prompted nearer bonds between mates, yet the invert is additionally valid in certain cases. For some, nuclear family is a more secure marital home to a lady. In bygone days individuals generally lived in joint families, yet familial strife never swelled into extraordinary physical viciousness or demise, as we so frequently run over such occurrences in our day-to-day life and additionally know through national dailies, both electronic and print media.

Wastwater:

Simon Stephens through his plays has portrayed the family culture, its dreams and hopes, the defeats, dilemmas and values of contemporary society as he has observed them. He who believes that human relationships have lost their significance in the contemporary family presents strained marital relationships, teen violence, extra marital affairs and sexual betrayals in his plays. In his play *Wastwater*, an elliptical triptych that unfolds the life of three couples, who are on the verge of taking life altering decisions, which

would disrupt their family and their values, by some extent. But it is hard to see what Stephens is telling us beyond the fact we inhabit a heartless, dehumanised world where sex is commodified and children are subject to various forms of abuse (Wastwater-review, Royal court, London). The story begins with Frieda and Harry, Frieda being Harry's mother. Frieda is anxious and happy about the fact that her son is leaving her for his future. However, it can be seen that she is a bit discontent about the fact that her son is leaving, knowing he would never return.

Frieda: Will you do me a favour?

Harry: Go on.

Frieda: It's a bit silly. Will you go back to the house and turn the lights in the living room out and come back out here and stay with me for a bit before you leave. Just for a bit.

Harry: It's twenty past nine. The bus is leaving in half an hour.

And then Harry leaves, without showing any respite or concern for Frieda. However, Frieda continues to be caring, questioning him about his plans. They are seen counting the stars and having random conversation. This is so beautiful, reason being, Frieda is pretty sure she is never going to see her son, ever again, yet she does not show her gut wrenching sadness and continues to lift the spirits of Harry high. However, she continues to ask him to stay, showing her unrequited love towards him.

She understands that expectations hurt and the need to show love does not need to have any string attached to it. The play signifies the importance of letting your loved ones off the hook yet showing them utmost care. A delicate balance of love and the art of letting people off hook are exhibited by Frieda. She is well aware that her son will not visit her and yet she is making sure about his financial security. A mother being selfless is timeless. Simon understands the importance of a family's love towards a teen and how it helps in shaping a person's character.

Frieda advises him for the one last time, telling him to behave well.

Frieda: That's all I've got.

Don't die. Will you?

Harry: No, all right.

Frieda: I mean never. Don't ever die.

Harry: Okay.

Frieda: Or do any crimes or take far too many drugs or drink yourself stupid or things like that. You have the potential to achieve anything you want. Don't waste that. And there'll be times in the future when you'll think of me and you'll think, probably, what an old cunt. Everybody thinks that about their parents eventually. Normally when they get to be about twenty-eight. But try to remember too that I do love you and I did love you and I will carry on loving you. And I hope one day you'll forgive me for everything I did wrong which I know was a lot but I did try my best. Honestly.

Thus, the scene enlightens on the importance of parental love and how hard and beautiful it is to love with no strings attached. Such a love reduces disappointment and makes the kids stronger, emotionally and mentally. Simon has brilliantly woven a mixture of maturity and love in the character of Frieda which woos the readers as such trait is very required in modern parenting.

The play "Wastwater" is awash in adult content. And oddly it feels all the more perverse and twisted because it is language and psychological brutality- more than explicit sex or violence – that leaves you feeling violated and dirty (Hedy Weiss,2016).

Conclusion:

Simon has basic respect and regard for the family and family values. He mirrors the contemporary European and British families in his plays. He values the monogamous family unit as of great importance. He holds the traditional belief that a family based on mutual understanding, love devotion and sacrifice is a blessing to couples. Simon through his plays suggests the ways to save the conflicts of interest that arises in humans through differences of opinions. Wastwater is the valid example for the transition happened in family life and it helps the child's growth in a positive way to the mother for her son. However, Simon stresses his readers to understand the importance of family, its nature and dynamics and how it can shape a guy, especially teenagers.

References:

1. Wastwater by Simon Stephens
2. Aquilino WS. From adolescent to young adult: A prospective study of parent-child relations during the transition to adulthood. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 1997;59:670–686.
3. Cherlin AJ, Scabini E, Rossi G. Still in the nest: Delayed home leaving in Europe and the United States. *Journal of Family Issues*. 1997;18:572–575.
4. Eisenberg, N., & Fabes, R. A. (1994). Mothers reactions to children's negative emotions; Relations to children's temperament and angry behaviour. *Merrill Palmer Quarterly*, 40, 138-156.
5. Barber, B. K., & Thomas, D. L. (1986). Dimensions of father's and mothers supportive behaviour the case for physical affection. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 48, 783-794.

Links:

6. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3134368/>
7. <https://europepmc.org/article/med/21765625>
8. <https://europepmc.org/article/MED/30759152>
9. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2011/apr/06/wastwater-review>
10. <https://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/wastwater-rev>
11. [https://chicago.suntimes.com/2016/7/17/18345658/in-simon-stephens-wastwater-
tales-from-the-very-dark-side](https://chicago.suntimes.com/2016/7/17/18345658/in-simon-stephens-wastwater-
tales-from-the-very-dark-side)

