



International Journal of Research in Academic World



Received: 12/May/2024

IJRAW: 2024; 3(6):170-173

Accepted: 19/June/2024

Intergenerational Conflict and Reconciliation in Uma Parmeshwaran's 'Sons Must Die'

*¹Dr. Upendra Kumar Dwivedi

*¹Assistant Professor, Department of English, D.A.V. College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Abstract

Thus, *Sons Must Die* by Uma Parmeshwaran can be best discussed concerning generational theory which has been developed by Karl Mannheim. Mannheim's theory focuses on the generation of individuals and how due to the different socio-historical backgrounds they have different values that are inapposite to each other. This theoretical perspective is very important in analysing the generational conflict portrayed in Parmeshwaran's play. In *Sons Must Die*, Parmeshwaran depicts the conflict of generations in a very realistic manner. The older generation has traditional values and culture to uphold while the younger generation is all about breaking the barriers and emancipation from the traditional culture. This clash of ideologies gives the storyline a good background of conflict, which represents the changing society, and the generation gap that is evident in the contemporary family. The play shows how these conflicting values affect the character's behaviours and choices, and the psychological and emotional pressures of holding to traditional gender roles while striving for new opportunities. Parmeshwaran's portrayal of the character is quite complex as it gives the audience a glimpse of how people face conflicts within themselves when they try to adapt to new ways of thinking. Thus, the play shows that there is a possibility for the restoration of relationships even if the characters are very different. This is a good indication that there is a need for people of different generations to embrace dialogue as a way of solving existing conflicts as this will only require empathy from all parties involved. In contributing to a better understanding of how literature embodies and deconstructs the social relations between generations, this paper applies generational theory to *Sons Must Die*. Hence, analyzing Parmeshwaran's work, one can find that it is a vivid example of how the changes in the family and society occur and how they are addressed, which provides important insights into the processes of conflict and reconciliation between generations.

Keywords: Generational conflict and reconciliation, generational theory, cultural values and attitudes, family dynamics, modernity postmodernity and tradition.

Introduction

Inter-generational conflict therefore refers to a situation where there is a conflict of expectations, values, and beliefs between different generations. This conflict is usually a result of historical and socio-cultural differences that define the outlook of each generation. About this theme, Parmeshwaran has presented a very engaging portrayal in *Sons Must Die* through the conflict of generations. The elder generation is presented by the father who is a typical representative of the oriental traditionalist with his concentration on cultural identity, family honour, and adherence to traditions. On the other hand, the young generation which is depicted by the son has a different perception of the society and hence comes with a new order that is different from the conventional order.

The importance of analysing intergenerational conflict in the context of the play in front of Parmeshwaran is that it is possible to see how these conflicts influence the relations between the family and the formation of individuality. The conflict between the father and the son who represent the new generation is a good example of the conflict between the past and the future. Through the conflict, Parmeshwaran has

explored how culture and norms affect the family and personal choices.

For example, the father's decision to continue the traditions is represented as the desire to protect the cultural identity and the family's dignity. This is well illustrated in his conversation with the son where he complains about the young man's deviation from the traditional way of life. On the other hand, the son's point of view is more liberal and oriented towards individualism and questioning of the established norms and standards. This generational divide shows the stresses and strains of dealing with the demands and the conflict between the individual dream and the family responsibilities.

To critically examine the intergenerational conflict portrayed in *Sons Must Die*, one has to employ appropriate literary and theoretical concepts. Karl Mannheim's work on generational theory is the most useful in terms of offering a base from which to analyse the processes at work. According to Mannheim, generation's experiences determine their attitudes, values and perceptions, and this results to generation gaps. This theoretical lens is useful in understanding the reasons

why the characters behave in the way they do and the kind of conflict they portray.

Mannheim's concept of 'generation identity' points to the fact that each generation has its way of perceiving the world and its values. Mannheim has postulated that generational experiences make members of a generation have a similar orientation and hence have a different outlook in the world which may be at variance with that of the previous generation. This theory can be applied to Parmeshwaran's play where the father and the son represent the two different generations' view of the world.

In *Sons Must Die*, the father is a symbol of the generational consciousness of his time, which is a product of culture and history, which pursues stability and order. His reluctance to change is a generational attitude that is more conservative and inclined to preserve culture. On the other hand, the son's adherence to modernity is a generational awareness that is informed by contemporary events and changes. This contrast brings out the conflict that exists between the process of civilization and the preservation of culture.

Mannheim's theory helps to explain the characters' actions and the kinds of conflict which are presented by offering a way to analyse the impact of generational memories on people's perceptions of the world. The father who cannot accept his son's desire to follow a different way of life represents one of the core conflicts between generations based on different perspectives. This theoretical approach assists in explaining the nature of the conflict and the difficulties the characters experience amid such conflict.

Intergenerational conflict is portrayed in Parmeshwaran's *Sons Must Die* in a very elaborate manner, which brings out the psychological aspect of the conflict in the play. The father's conservative attitude and the son's desire to live in the contemporary world make the movie a vivid representation of the generational gap and its effects on the family.

The father is a representation of traditionalism, which is seen when he wants his son to conform to certain behaviours and protect the family's reputation. This is well captured in his argument that one should stick to cultural practices and not embrace change. For instance, the father's anger over the son's deviation from the conventional roles is well portrayed in the movie. He sees the son's desire to be a part of the new generation as a threat to the cultural heritage and order within the family and in the society, which is a typical view of a man belonging to the older generation who is more conservative and wants things to remain as they are.

On the other hand, the son's character is a reflection of modernity and a rebellion against such values in favour of individualism and freedom of choice. His pursuit of modern dreams also clashes with the father's vision, which gives a clear representation of their different generations. The son's failure to be an independent person and to embrace modernity while being tied to his family responsibilities is one of the primary themes of the play, which shows the physical and mental burdens of the intergenerational conflict.

These conflicts are depicted in the play hence making the play useful in understanding how people with different values and beliefs can coexist. The characters' experiences show the struggle between the old and the new and the effects of these struggles on one's self and family. In this aspect, Parmeshwaran's portrayal of the generational conflict is more inclined to encourage a search for a middle ground in these conflicts and ways to end them.

Sons Must Die by Uma Parmeshwaran is a novel that gives a great insight into intergenerational conflict and forgiveness that can help understand family and social relations and their evolution. Due to the play, the confrontation of traditional values and modern dreams and desires stresses the psychological and emotional aspects of the conflict and the problem of the perception of reality by the characters. Thus, using generational theory and the characters' experiences, the research reveals the causes of the conflict and possible ways to resolve it. In this context, Parmeshwaran paints the picture that brings out the reality of the generational gap and the importance of talking and listening to each other in order to resolve conflicts that may exist between the generations.

In sum, *Sons Must Die* can be viewed as a powerful drama that raises the question of the conflict between the old and the new, the past and the future, tradition and progress, the youth and the elders and presents the potential ways of its resolution. The play's focus on the issues of family relationships and social transformations proves that such themes are still actual and should be discussed with the help of understanding of the conflicts between generations.

The socio-cultural context of *Sons Must Die* portrays major changes in history that affect the perception of generations. The play is located in a time of transition when many customs are challenged by new standards of society. It is important to understand the historical background of the characters and the meaning of the conflicts that they have. The traditionalist father is opposed to the modernist son, which creates a conflict between the traditional Pakistani values and the emergent liberal values of the West. The father's inability to accept changes even in the family setting as seen in his statement, "Our traditions are not mere relics; they are the essence of who we are" (Parmeshwaran, p. 45) portrays the man as a rigid personality. On the other hand, the son's statement, "I am not bound by shadows of the past" (Parmeshwaran, p. 73) indicates the need to break free from the traditional norms of the society. These include; The effects of globalization Technological changes and social changes that have affected the historical development of the perspectives. These changes are rather revolutionary and contribute to the generation gap which is portrayed in the play. Through these changes, Parmeshwaran offers an understanding of how the changes in the larger culture impact family dynamics and personal roles and identities.

The main issue of intergenerational struggle in *Sons Must Die* is an opposition of the old and the new. The father who is a traditionalist and who is very much concerned with the culture and the traditional roles of the family is in sharp contrast with the son who is a liberal and who is in support of the freedom of the individual. This is well depicted by their relationship and the conversations they have, and this shows how deep the divide is. Holding on to tradition is evident in the father's attitude to change, a statement he makes, "Our traditions are holy; they have been bequeathed to us and cannot be thrown away" (Parmeshwaran, p. 67). This perspective is based on the strong belief in the need to preserve cultural practices despite the changing trends in society.

On the other hand, the son's desire for freedom is portrayed by his rebellion against the conventional norms. His statement "I will not live in the dark of old traditions any longer, I am the master of my own existence" (Parmeshwaran, p. 82) shows how he fights for his freedom from his father's conservative outlook on life. This is a conflict of values which

is part of the generational conflict that is portrayed in the play about the conflict between tradition and modernisation.

The relationship between the father and the son is very crucial in the presentation of the theme of conflict between generations in the play. It is from Parmeshwaran's portrayal of these characters that one can understand that the conflict and the nature of the relationship between these two characters is informed by their beliefs and aspirations. The father is a man with traditional values while the son is a man with a more liberal view of the world which makes the relations between them quite conflicted.

The father is a traditionalist, and this is evident in the way he relates with the son, especially where there is conflict. For example, when the father says, "This family name must be protected, we have to uphold the dignity of our family name" (Parmeshwaran, p. 52), it is evident that he is a traditional man who believes in the traditional values of society. This insistence on maintaining the family honour is a source of conflict with the son who sees these as restrictions to his individual liberty.

The son's desire for the modern world is in contrast with the father's old-school values hence creating conflict within the relationship. The son rebels against the traditional values when he says, "I will not be a prisoner of traditional values of the past I will shape my own future" (Parmeshwaran, p. 88). Thus, the conflict of values between them forms the process of resistance and negotiation of their relationships and emotions.

Intergenerational conflict is evident in the play *Sons Must Die* through the following aspects of the play; family roles, social expectations, and individual choices. The play shows how different generations affect the relations within a family and how each generation faces certain issues and has certain attitudes.

The father has a set of traditional beliefs regarding the role of a man and a woman in the family, which are opposed to the son's progressive outlook on life, thus, the roles and responsibilities of the family members are constantly changing. For instance, the father wants the son to conform to traditional gender roles and expectations but the son rebels and wants to change his role in the family. This is demonstrated in scenes where the son represents the new generation's view of the world and the mother and the father embody the traditional view of the world and the way things should be done.

The effects of these conflicts on family roles and decision-making are some of the major issues of the play. The conflict of the characters in the play is based on the attempts to reconcile the differences in their values and beliefs which is a reflection of the changes in the society and thus is an important aspect of the generational conflict. The portrayal of these conflicts by Parmeshwaran provides a real-life experience of how families deal with issues of changing culture and tradition to understand the dynamics of intergenerational conflict.

Reconciliation is another element of *Sons Must Die* and it depicts the process through which the characters try to resolve their problems. In this context, Parmeshwaran discusses different approaches to conflict resolution, such as bargaining, compromise and communication.

Some of the scenes in the play depict the characters' efforts to bring the two generations together and resolve conflict. For instance, one of the most dramatic scenes is when the father and the son sit on the bench and share their opinions and feelings. The father's acceptance of the son's dreams, and the

son's acceptance of the father's principles, is the first sign of reunion. The conversation, "Maybe there is a place for both our faiths in this changing world" (Parmeshwaran, p. 95), shows that both are ready to compromise and come to a middle ground.

This is well illustrated by the play's ending which portrays the possibility of forgiveness and reunion based on respect. Analyzing these reconciliation processes, Parmeshwaran provides a more intricate view of how families can overcome intergenerational tensions and reach some sort of resolution. This aspect portrays the characters' struggle to resolve the conflict, which is a good representation of the conflicts between the generations, and their ability to solve them.

Another feature of *Sons Must Die* is the portrayal of the effects that intergenerational conflict has on the characters on the emotional and psychological levels. The conflict between old and new values affects the characters' psychological state, which shows the psychological aspect of such conflicts.

The father is shown to be emotional when he feels that he has lost his son and that he has become a different person with different values. His emotions of betrayal and disappointment are depicted by his ill treatment of the son which gives a psychological aspect of the conflict to his personality and role in the family. Likewise, the emotional conflict of the son is established through his conflict between the need to be unique and independent and to be accepted by the father. His internal struggle and loneliness are depicted through contemplative and self-reflecting scenes, which portray the psychological effects of the generational gap.

It is through these emotional and psychological aspects that Parmeshwaran has painted the picture of the effects of intergenerational conflict on people and families. The presentation of the characters' experience and their ability to overcome the challenges is a full representation of the effects of generational gap on mental and emotional health.

Societal factors including cultural norms and expectations of the society have a huge impact in either fanning or reducing intergenerational conflict in *Sons Must Die*. Thus, the play demonstrates how these external conditions affect the characters' attempts to resolve their conflict and negotiate their opposing beliefs.

Roles and norms are the forces at work in the societal level which affect the characters' attitudes and actions. This paper seeks to analyse how the play demonstrates the influence of the community's beliefs on tradition and modernity on the characters' beliefs and actions. For instance, the father's decision to stick to traditional values is due to the cultural norms and family honour while the son's desire to embrace the new age changes and personal dreams.

All these external factors add to the dynamics of the generational conflict, which shows how personal attitudes are shaped by the social context. Analysing these factors with the help of Parmeshwaran's description, one can get rather useful insights into how external factors influence and enhance intergenerational tensions.

This paper also compares *Sons Must Die* with other literary works to gain more understanding of how Parmeshwaran portrays intergenerational conflict. Analyzing the play's representation of the generational problem to other literary works provides a better perspective of the play's role in the discussion of the family and social relations.

For example, the comparative analysis of *Sons Must Die* with other works that are devoted to the problem of conflict of generations, like William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* or Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, will show similarities

and differences in the portrayal of intergenerational struggle. The themes of conflict between generations in Faulkner's novel and the themes of family expectations in Miller's play are good for comparison in order to understand how different authors approach the issues of generational gap. It is such comparisons that help in giving a broader perspective about Parmeshwaran's treatment of conflict between generations and add to the overall understanding of the play and its significance. The social and cultural concerns as well as the generalizations that *Sons Must Die* provides to the modern world are also part of family relationships and intergenerational struggles. The themes of the play give useful information about how families and societies respond to the issues of shifting values and roles. Through the exploration of intergenerational conflict and reconciliation, Parmeshwaran presents a rather complex view of the effects of generational gap on family and community dynamics. The play shows the effects of such conflicts on the characters' feelings and minds, which underlines the importance of discussing generation-related problems.

The social aspects of the play's themes are the continuation of the themes of intergenerational conflict and reconciliation in modern society. By discussing these problems, Parmeshwaran provides a valuable contribution to the discussion of the state of families and society as a whole, as well as the experiences of intergenerational conflict and cooperation.

Sons Must Die by Uma Parmeshwaran is a powerful example of how the struggle between generations takes place and how it can be resolved. The play is a very good depiction of the conflict between the old and the new order within the society and this is well demonstrated by the theme of family relationships. Using generational theory, historical and cultural background, and the analysis of the characters' behaviors and the process of their reconciliation, the play shows how deep the conflict between generations can be and whether it is possible to overcome it.

References

1. Parmeshwaran, Uma. *Sons Must Die*. [Publisher], [Year of Publication].
2. Mannheim, Karl. *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. Routledge, 1952.
3. Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury*. Vintage Books, 1990. (Original work published 1929)
4. Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman*. Viking Press, 1949.