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# Research Chronicler

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A detailed still-life composition featuring a quill pen as the central element. The quill is positioned diagonally, with its tip resting on a scroll of aged parchment. The scroll is secured with a red wax seal and a red ribbon. In the background, a lit candle in a brass holder provides a warm, ambient light. In the foreground, a glass inkwell with a quill inside sits on a wooden surface, alongside a red wax seal and a small wooden object. The overall scene evokes a sense of traditional scholarship and historical research.

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**Dysfunctional family and Marriages in Anne Tyler's Novel****A. Anbuselvi***Assistant Professor, Surya Engineering College, Vikiravandi, Villupuram, (T.N.) India***Abstract**

Anne Tyler is one of the best novelists in contemporary American literature. She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1997 for her novel 'Breathing Lessons'. All her novels pay close attention to the family plot. She depicts how people manage to experience and cope with prolonged pain or difficulty and how they feel irritated among the family members. Her novels explore complex dysfunctional family relationships and individual search for meaning and identity. Her characters in her novels are mostly constructed in a negative way. Her novels focus on loneliness, isolation, human interactions of eccentric middle – class people living in disunited families. She demonstrates the tenacity of family ties, writing about husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, daughters and daughters in law, sons and grand children's. The unhappy characters in her novel escape from familial relationships in order to get a better personal life. The characters confront problems in marital life.

Tyler's novels deal with familial relationships. Through her novels she displays the fact that people in this world are only human and are hence bound to make mistakes, yet the struggle to survive with the attempt to work out the problems to face in relationships and communication. In addition to escaping from strained families and marriages to seek better personal lives, some of Tyler's characters involved in unpleasant and unstable friendships search for a break away from them and a better life without them. Life presents situations all the time with either terrible problems to overcome or exciting challenges to meet in difficult situations. This paper examines the dysfunctional relationships among the family members.

**Key Words:** dysfunctional family, isolation, marital issues, familial relationships, prolonged pain

A family becomes dysfunctional when they no longer care and love each other. Dysfunctional family is a burden to everyone in it and as soon as the individual members get a chance to leave, they do so without ever looking back in the hope that they can change the face of things. A dysfunctional family is a family in which conflict, misbehavior and even abuse on the part of individual members of the family occur continually, leading other members to

accommodate actions. Children sometimes grow up in such families with the understanding that such an arrangement is normal.

Typically a dysfunctional family is one where the relationships between parents and children are strained and unnatural. Although there may be many different root causes, such families usually involve one or more family member with a serious problem that impacts every other member of the family. In turn, the other family members



adopt atypical roles and behavior that allow the family to function on a basic level.

The issue of family relationship is one of the major concerns in Anne Tyler's novels. Family relationships portrayed in Tyler's work are characteristically discomfiting and, therefore, become sources of frustration and loveliness for her characters. Tyler often reveals the unsettling experiences in their early childhood or youth, especially their relationships with their parents or siblings. Most of her characters are experienced with difficult or uneasy childhoods due to parental negligence or parental domination. Such experiences inevitably give rise to their emotional vulnerability and troublesome personalities, which unfortunately become an impetus to rising conflicts and problems in the subsequent relationships with their families as well as others.

All of Tyler's novels involve runaway wives, husbands, fathers, mothers, and children. Although emotional forces motivating her runaways are less clearly defined in her first two novels, variations on Ira's lesson draw all of Tyler's runaways home again, if only briefly. The power of familial affection becomes increasing convincing in her later words. This conviction grows out of Tyler's own fondness for her characters.

Anne Tyler has been writing about dysfunctional marriages and families since her first novel, *If Morning Ever Comes* (1964). Tyler is immensely popular writer. She tells lucid stories about complicated middle class families. Tyler's love and deep interest in her family is often reflected in the themes of her works. In most of her novels

protagonist often has to deal with the internal struggle in the family and at the same time they how two recreate their family. In her novels she portrays all kinds of problems through her characters.

In many of Tyler's novels, the characters escape from a family situation, especially they escape from a distressful marital situation. In addition they escape from strained families and marriages to seek better personal life. An example for an unhappy character is Delia Grinstead in "Ladder of years" distress in her marriage motivates her to escape to lead a better personal life. Delia Grinstead in "Ladder of years" suffers in her marriage. She characterizes herself as a sad, tired, anxious, fifty- year old woman. She wonders if her husband, her father's medical associate married her merely to guarantee his professional future. A grown woman who still wears "Baby doll" dresses, she realizes that, she had leaved out her married life like a little girl playing in the house, and always there had been her grown standing ready to takeover - her sister, or her husband or her father (127).

The relationship Delia shares with her husband Sam Grinstead who is 15 years to her senior is much like the one that she shared with her father. She continues her work at the reception desk and accompanies him on house calls. Because of the age disparity, this marriage approximates a parent - child relationship. The reason for leaving her house is that her family won't even listen to her account of the adventure. Thus in her house she feels like a tiny gnat, whirring around her family ages. She questions herself whether Sam married her

just for her father's medical practice. She at last, decides to leave the family, during an annual vacation at a beach. She walks away from the beach and grabs a ride to a strange town where she begins a new ascetic life. Then she feels free from responsibilities to anyone. She takes on a new identity as Ms. Grinstead works as a Secretary, living in a boarding house.

In her room she falls into a routine works of eating, sleeping and reading serious novels instead of the romances. She sits on her bed staring into space in the evening time. After leaving her own family she finds a new life in the new place. At first she is alone, without the conversational padding of father, sisters, husband and children but soon her isolation is compromised. The people she meets, so different in manners and background from those in her usual milieu. So, she feels better staying in the place where she gets new people and new office.

Delia is the youngest of sisters in her family. Her father was a Doctor Sam Grinstead came to be his assistant later he chose Delia to marry. After her father death, her house has been invaded by workmen suddenly obsessed with renovation. She fancied she could hear the house groaning in distress such as modest, miled house, so unprepared for change. At last she is herself prepared for change. Yet it waits for her around every corner. Her response is to turn and simply work away. On her yearly holiday at the beach with her husband, Delia sits on the sand feeling more and more distant. After year and a half, she returns home for a visit as a guest at a wedding at her own house. There she discovers many changes but few discussions. Delia's actions results in a

radical change in both her daughter and her husband. After more than a year of Delia's absence, a phone call from her home reveals many changes. So a changed daughter and husband signify the success of Delia's journey. Tyler stated that suffering occurs in every family as well as in the family members. Living is not necessary growing. However, families cannot grow without some sort of suffering. Thus Tyler portrays the problems related to marriage in her novel "Ladder of years".

In this novel, Tyler depicts the problems in the family life. The protagonist of this novel suffers because of her husband and children .Her husband and her children never have a conversation with her. So feels lonely in her house. She expects her children and her husband love her very much but her wish is not fulfilled. Finally she leaves her house and led a better personal life.

In "The Amateur Marriage" Tyler portrays the dysfunctional families and marriages. Anne Tyler is a skilful story teller. Michael Anton, who is the central figure in the novel *The Amateur Marriage*, is impressed by a girl Pauline. At first he is madly in love with her. He joins the military service before his marriage. Due to the accident in the army he returns back to his native place and he marries Pauline. After marriage they had been quarreled without any reason .He left the army after he marries Pauline then he owned the grocery shop which is run by his mother before the marriage . Before marriage they spend their time happily but after their marriage they quarrel for silly things . They can't even find the reasons for their quarrel. There raise a

problem in the family because of misunderstanding with each other.

Tyler shows the problem in the marriage of Pauline and Michael. In this novel she portrays the problem between husband and wife. Before marriage Pauline is talkative and sociable after her marriage her character is changed permanently. The reason for their dispute in the family is marriage in the early age. Despite the dispute in the family Pauline and Michael have three children namely-Linnet (Lindy), George, and Karen. The couple manages to maintain their marriage after the birth of their children. Michael runs his business successfully and they never even have a conversation with his family members.

The acquaintances may think that Pauline and Michael have been the perfect couple but the fact is that they are sulking and fighting at home. And only they have a controversial relationship on their children. After their children have grown up there is a change in Michael and Pauline's character. They never even know about their children's like and dislikes. . "You were ice and she was glass," Lindy tells her father later. "Two oddly similar substances, come to think of it -- and both of them hell on your children. As a result their daughter Lindy ran away from home, joined the San Francisco counterculture and developed a drug problem and gave birth in her young age.

Many painful matters are narrated by Anne Tyler in this novel. Lindy runs away from home and becomes a hippie in California, fuelling her body with drink and drugs and neglecting her son, Pagan, whom she dumps on a fellow dropout. If there are subtle,

confused reasons for Lindy's wild behaviour, the author doesn't even begin to explore them. She rests content with the facts, and it is not enough. After few some years Michael and Pauline get divorced then Marries Anna, who is a childhood friend of Pauline.

In "The Amateur Marriage", we can see the problems in the life of husband and wife because of their early marriage. Due to the family dispute they can't even spend time with their children and they never ask their problems. The husband and wife in this novel always quarrelled for silly things in their family they never understand each other .As a result, Lindy, who has always been a stubborn, wilful child, becomes increasingly defiant as a teenager, and one day, she just leaves home -- and doesn't return and gave a birth in her young age and they also get divorced because of the misunderstanding. So the problems in the family may lead a bitter experience in everyone's life.

Tyler's eleventh novel Breathing Lessons won the Pulitzer Prize award in 1988.It's heroine Maggie Moran is facing all the kinds of life changes that at some point or other confront most middle-aged people: her daughter Daisy is leaving for college; her son Jesse is having problems with his wife Fiona; and Max Gill, the husband of her childhood friend Serena Palemore, has died unexpectedly. The novel essentially traces what happens on the day of Max's funeral, as Maggie and her husband Ira, a professional picture framer, are forced to spend several hours together during this period of extreme change and the sudden awareness of mortality.

Tyler's family members huddle together, driven to seek some kind of wholeness or integration of their unloved, fragmented selves by means of mere physical proximity. They do not communicate clearly with each other and are unresponsive to each other's need, but they need each other's presence to reassure themselves that they have not been abandoned. Tyler's families have only a half-life, perhaps because their members do not love or hate each other with enough intensity. Tyler's compassion for her gentle, long-suffering characters has endeared them to her readers, and rightly so, but Freud would have expected them to implode at any moment.

"Breathing Lessons" is the story of a marriage told, with the aid of flashbacks, in the course of a single day's drive. Ira and Maggie Moran, in their late forties, have reached a turning point. Their son has grown up and left home, their daughter is about to go away to college, and they are suddenly confronted with the fact that they will spend the rest of their lives alone together. During the day in question they drive to an old friend's funeral, where they see for the first time in many years all the friends of their youth and, on the way home, they visit their son's estranged wife and try to re-establish relations with her and with the granddaughter they are never allowed to see.

In "Breathing Lessons" Tyler explores the issue by focusing on marriage. One that, young Jesse Moran and Fiona Stuckey failed at the outset. The other two involve middle-aged contemporaries: Max and Serena Gill, and Ira and Maggie Moran. Each relationship is unique based on particular needs and expectations and each succeeds or

fails as the result of different internal and external pressures. They offer a sensitive and complex portrait of what is wrong and right – with marriage as an institution in late twentieth century America.

All the characters in 'Breathing Lessons', like those in Tyler's earlier novels, anxiously rebel against parental influence. Maggie's daughter Daisy, single-mindedly, remorselessly heading for an Ivy League college, rejects her mother's bourgeois tastes. Maggie remembers her daughter's response to a tuna Casserole Maggie offered at supper:

**Daisy just sat there and studied me for the longest time,... with this kind of ... fascinated expression on her face, and then she said, "Mom? Was there a certain conscious point in your life when you decided to settle for being ordinary?"**

But Ira does not think Maggie is either ordinary or disappointing. After many years of marriage, he looks back on her arrival in his life as "a wonderful gift". He is jealous of the expense of spirit Maggie offers to strangers, resentful even of their own children:

Far weren't Jesse and Daisy also outsiders-interrupting their most private moments, wedging between the two of them? (Hard to believe that some people had children to hold a marriage together.)

The marriage of Jesse and Fiona arguably the saddest of the three as it was based upon misunderstanding. Fiona seems to have fallen in love not with Jesse Moran but rather with his Persona as the handsome lead singer of a hard – rock band. She realizes his character until their daughter Leoroy is



born. She knows later that he is nothing more than the usually unpaid singer of a failed local band. After few months Fiona could understand the real character Jesse Moran that is associating with other women, drinking too much and leaving baby Leoroy in the sole care of Fiona. She had agreed to marry him at first because she thought he was a genuinely domestic type. "I married you for the cradle" he supposedly building for their unborn child (278, 269), when in fact he had never even begun the project. It doesn't occur to Fiona that the quality she admired in his rock - star persona is precisely those which render him poor material as a husband and father. These are domestic rolls that Jesse would have liked to pursue, but could not.

Maggie, who is the mother of Jesse Moran recognizes that there is a spark of something serious between Jesse and Fiona the failure to connect which is the powerful recurring element in Tyler's novels is perhaps most dramatic in breathing lessons in which Jesse and Fiona can literally connect in just one way. Beyond that, they cannot even talk to one another. Maggie serves as a frantic go – between who falsely attributes statements and motivates to each. She reports to Fiano that Jesse had said to her, "I will be there after work", "I would not miss it for the world" (223, 215). But the spark can be ignited only by themselves, and with just a doubtful nurturing of Maggie and Mrs. Stocky behind them. Jesse and Fiona are incapable of staying together in a strong, mutually supportive marriage.

Maggie made a conscious decision to raise her own children differently. She preferred to hear what it was they had to say. But the

distress of this realization nevertheless fails to prevent her from encouraging her son in his doomed career as a rock star, as she persistently calls him a 'musician' while her husband Ira had ever thought of Jesse as a musician. He had thought him as a high – school dropout in need of permanent employment (160-155). Like Jesse Maggie meant well, like him she ultimately ended up doing more harm than good, unwittingly instilling standards and expectations in her son that could bode only ill for any kind of permanent adult relationship.

Ira and Maggie are surely not enjoying the kind of relationship the fact is that Ira loves Maggie dearly, and one of the saddest aspect of their marriage is that she does not comprehend this. In one of their many arguments throughout the novel, Maggie accuses him of believing she is "a Whifflehead" (35, 33) although there is ample evidence to support this impression: the wide ride in the nursing home, laundry cart etc, there really is nothing to suggest that Ira feels his wife is a mindless clown. He is annoyed that she tells her personal whose two strangers, and he is understandably miffed that she leaved the road map at home. But in general he is patient and even tempered, expressing his feelings eloquently.

Maggie's husband, Ira, "was just as sad as Maggie was, and for just the same reasons. He was lonely and tired and lacking in hope and his son had not turned out well and his daughter didn't think much of him, and he still couldn't figure where he had gone wrong" [Lessons, 280]. Ira turns on his son Jesse, that boy who was so golden in his youth, and coldly cities the failure: never

husband material, Jesse drifts from girlfriend to girlfriend, unable to keep any job more than a few months, “Everyone in Jesse’s acquaintance, “according to Ira,” by some magical coincidence ends up being a jerk” (Lessons, 310). Tyler ends the scene with Jesse leaning his parent’s house, and one detail lingers to haunt. Jesse does not storm away from his accusing father and slam the front door but instead leaves without a word, letting the door” click very gently behind him” (Lessons, 310). That final and unexpectedly gentle click is powerful. Throughout the novel Maggie has tried and failed to reconcile her family members; now Jesse’s departure signals a loss that probably is final.

Maggie Moran in ‘Breathing Lessons’, feels a strong urge to rescue her own family members through direct manipulation and mythologizing. Like Pearl Tull; who makes each new house” airtight and rustproof and waterproof (DHR 16) and Pamela Emerson, who frets that her house may not be sealed against invading locusts, Maggie uses her own tools to insulate and protect her home. In this novel, however, in which much of the action occurs on a trip, home is much more abstract and takes considerably more work to hold together. For example, although the narrator states in the first chapter that “Maggie couldn’t care less what made an ideal marriage” (BL7). Labeled by one reviewer as a meddler, an “incorrigible Prompter,” Maggie frenetically pulls together her family in response to her fears of society, aging and change.

Her concern is not only to protect those she loves but also to preserve a sense of herself that is somehow incomplete. After the

accident in which she has accelerated instead of braked-symbolic of a much deeper instinct – She explains this fear to Ira: “I feel like we are just flying apart! All my friends and relatives just flying off from me like the .... Expanding universe or something!” (BL10). To hold her kin together, Maggie becomes fiercely devoted to people she seems not even to like. She defunds Jesse but actually feels exasperation with him through most of the work. She wants to keep Daisy away from “Mrs. Perfect” but actually feels more pain than joy when her daughter is home. She is devoted to the idea of Leory but is disappointed that “there wasn’t a trace of Jesse in child’s appearance’ (BL188). Her brief attempt at conversation with the Seven-year-old-leaves Maggie” spent, wondering where to go from there” (BL190).

In “Breathing Lessons” Tyler portrays the problems in the family life and in the marriages through the characters. This novel shows the problem in the father-son and husband-wife relationship. The son in this novel never bothers the words of his father and so he suffers in his life and began to cheat everyone in his family. He has no any permanent jobs because he discontinued his studies and so he continues his job as a singer in the local band. After the marriage he cheats his wife and the baby. As a result his wife and baby were separated and they lead a better life. It is proved that the characters in her novel always face the problems with the family members and in their marriages. In conclusion, we can see the problems in the marriages as well as in the parent-child relationship in many of

Anne Tyler's novels. Thus this paper examines the dysfunctional family life and marriages in Anne Tyler's novels.

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