

BOOK REVIEW ON HENRY FIELDING'S *TOM JONES*

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Title of the Book: *Tom Jones*, **Author of the Book:** Henry Fielding, **Reviewed By:** Santanu Panda, **Genre:** Fiction, **Publisher:** Penguin Classic, **Publication Year:** 14 Oct 2000, **Pages:** 864, **ISBN:** 978-0140620177, **Binding:** Paperback, **Price:** Rs.250 / \$8, **Language:** English

INTRODUCTION

One of the distinguish novelist and dramatist of 18th century was Henry Fielding. He is one of the leading novelists of his age. He was born on 22 April 1707. His most famous work is *Tom Jones* (1749). His famous works like *Joseph Andrews* (1740), *Miscellanies* (1743), *Amelia* (1751) provide his excellence. Sir Walter Scott coined a phrase on Fielding "the Father of English Novel". He also stated that "high notions of the dignity of art which he may be considered as having founded". G.K Chesterton humorously mentioned that "If Chaucer is the father of English poetry, he is the grandfather of English Novel".

This novel *Tom Jones* contains 18 chapters. The novel opens with the scene where Squire Allworthy, one of the affluent persons of his area comes back to his house from London. His wife died before five years and he has not a single son alive. He presently lives with his sister Miss Bridget Allworthy. When Mr Allworthy comes back to Somersetshire he found an infant on her bed. This infant is Tom. People suspected that the infant must belong to Mr. Allworthy. Mrs Deborah is given the charge to inquire about the parent of the child. Jenny Jones who was a servant of a school master Mr. Partridge is the mother and she has an affair with the school master. Theme of

primogeniture is also implied here. Captain Blifil who wants to marry with Miss Bridget sent his brother to provide the proposal to Mr. Allworthy but he fulfills his wish, he starts to ill treat and rudeness to his brother. That leads his separation from the family and his death. When Bridget gave birth a child and Mr. Allworthy gives the order that this child must be bred up with Tom. Captain Blifil tried a lot to remove Tom from the house but for Bridget's fondness towards Tom saves him from the danger. That follows unrestness between the husband and the wife. But it comes to an end by the sudden death of Blifil. Suddenly the story moves forward twelve years and we come to know that Tom was accused for three robberies. "It was the universal opinion of all Mr. Allworthy's family that he was certainly born to be hanged". He has a friend Black George who is a get keeper and belongs to non gentleman category. With whom he always neglects and breaks all the rules. Sophia the female protagonist is introduced in the chapter4. As Fielding describes her "Adorned with all the charms in which Nature can array her, bedecked with beauty, youth's sprightliness, innocence, modesty and tenderness, breathing sweetness from her rosy lips, and darting brightness from her sparking eyes, the lovely Sophia comes".

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Tom also has an affair with Molly and when she give birth a child Tom take the responsibility that he is father of the child. But when Tom saves Sophia and gets his leg broken he realizes that he loves Sophia also. It plays a dubious role inside him for his responsibility towards Molly and his love toward Sophia. He comes to know that Molly has many lovers and Will Barnes is the father of the child. When Mr. Allworthy recovered from his illness Tom celebrated by intoxication. And it produced a bad effect on Allworthy's mind.

A misunderstanding is happened there by Sphia's aunt Mrs. Western that Sophia has a deep liking towards Blifil. So both the family planned to get them marry. The problem appears when Sphia reveals her wish that he loves Tom, it blasts like a bomb and Tom is out from his home with £500. On the day Jones left the house both the squire planned to get marry their child. But Sophia and her maid escaped from her father's house. Tom also comes to an inn where he get in touch with and army and wishes to fight with them. But an accident put out his wish. In that inn he comes to touch wit Patridge who seems to be his own father, as he knows. He also meets with an old man whom he saved from two ruffians. He is the Man of the Hill. This man narrates his own history and his travel from a good scholar to a gambler. Another incident took place here where Jones saved a woman who is tried to seduce by a ruffian. He goes to the Upton town inn with the leady. The identity is disclosed by an army officer that she is the wife of Captain Water. The leady tries to melt the heart of Tom by her seductive looks and charming behavior. Jones is found in the same bed with Mrs. Water. Sophia and her maid Mrs. Honour also come to the same inn. From the servant of the inn Sophia comes to know that Tom who is her life spends a night with another woman. She left the muff with the words 'Sophia western'. Squire western also comes to the inn in search of her

daughter but she left the inn before two hours. Sophia during her journey meets with her cousin Harriet who described her maltreated husband and her life. Sophia lodged in an inn in London. Jones also reached London. He started to enquire Sophia but even her sister also refused to meet him. Lady Bellaston another prominent woman of London tries to seduce her like Mrs. Water. Jones and Sophia meet each other suddenly in Lady Bellaston's house. Lady Bellaston has a wish of frequent visit of Tom in her house especially in night. But none of the others like it. They informed him that this Lady has lots of suitors.

Another problematic love life is also there. The affair of Mr. Nightingale and Nancy is described and Tom promise to help them. By convincing Mr. Nightingale's father he settled the situation. Lady Bellaston played a trick upon Jones and Sophia so that Sophia is out of Jones life and there will be no one who can interfere between the relationship of Jones and her. She told Lord Fellamar that if he wants to united and married with Sophia, he had to ravish her first. So he tried to ravish and molest her but fortunately Squire Western came to this place and saved her. He also took her in his own lodging. Lady Bellaston was trying to convince him by her repeated letters.

Mr. Nightingale told him about her nature how she paid money to him foe her carnal desire. But as Tom proposed her to get marry she refused him as he is now out of the robe of his black magic. Master Blifil also came to the town to get marry with Sophia. Lady Bellaston again played another trick by the letter which was written by Jones to her and where he proposed her to marry. By this letter she tried to impose the idea to Mrs. Western that Tom is a faithless fellow. Tom suddenly engaged with a fight with Mr. Fitzpatrick and got arrested and sentenced in jail. Mrs. Miller tried several times to prove Jones as a gentleman. But every time her prayer was going to futile. Jones also wrote a

letter to Sophia to acquaint her that he loves her. The secret is revealed that Mrs. Water is the wife of Mr. Fitzpatrick. She informed him that Mr. Fitzpatrick is now out of danger and he will make him free. In the last chapter the story of Jones birth is revealed. Patridged informed him that Mrs. Water who is actually Jenny Jones with whom he went to the bed is actually his mother. But Jenny Jones confirms that Tom is the child of Mr. Allworthy's sister Mrs. Bridged. When Allworthy was in London a gentleman named Summer came to his house and stayed here.

Tom is the nephew of Mr. Allworthy. His sister also wrote a letter in her deathbed and revealed everything but Master Bilfil played the conspiracy to create a misunderstanding between Squire and Tom. As the birth history revealed Tom and Sophia got married and they are leading a happy conjugal life. Tom is the owner of squire's all property. The story ends with a happy ending.

A NEW TREAND OF NOVEL:

Fielding's *Tom Jones* is totally different from the literary genre. It is officially coined as 'Picaresque Novel'. The term picaresque is taken from Spanish 'pícaro' which refers to a rough. The main characteristic of a picaresque novel is to deals with the central character who represents the society as a miniature.

VISUALIZATION OF THE SOCIETY

Fielding is the leading novelist of 18th century. He vividly portrayed the society and the characters. The main hero of the novel is a faithless character. He has an affair with his fried Black George's sister. But he loves Sophia. He again went to the bed with Mrs. Water whom he met before couple of hours. Mrs. Bridged also has a child without any knowledge of his brother. Mr. Summer who came to stay in Allworthy's house made an affair with his sister. The teachers who are respectable persons of society also had illegal affairs. Patridged also had a relationship with his maid servant Jenny Jones. Lady Bellaston continuously played tricks for her carnal desire. This is the real picture of 18th century England where chastity, virtue have no value. It can be said the virtues of Jones are the vices of a gentleman. He does not have such kind of heroic manner.

At the end *Tom Jones* is one of the extraordinary novels of 18th century and itself is a masterpiece. Though it was not well accepted by some of Fielding's contemporaries but it has its own merit. It is an extraordinary achievement for richness and convolution: "The world of *Tom Jones* is dynamic, charged with the energy of sunshine and laughter and love. And it is at the same time a celebration of that rational design which gives meaning to vitality, and which alone, perhaps, makes it a source of joy and of wonder".