

# Life Dilemmas of the Male Characters in *A Dream of Red Mansions*

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## ABSTRACT

If *A Dream of Red Mansions* is an elegy for female, it is not a hymn for men, either. Under the traditional patriarchal culture of feudal society, women have no initiatives, and men also inevitably become victims of various feudal systems and social cultures. Men are faced with various dilemmas in their lives, such as bad paternal education, poor prospects of career, confusion in works, constraints in marriage and plight of lust, etc. In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the life dilemmas faced by the male characters of the Jia's family clan are also the dilemmas presented by the dying feudal ruling class under the impact of new forces and new thoughts. The interpretation of their life existence helps to better reveal the male world of the red chamber, and to further analyze the reasons for the decline of the feudal society.

**Keywords:** *A Dream of Red Mansions*, Male, Dilemma, The last feudal dynasty.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*A Dream of Red Mansions* is called "the great work of the universe" by Wang Guowei and Feng Qiyong, which indicates that it is broad and profound and has far-reaching research significance. Up to now, the research on the characters in *A Dream of Red Mansions* has achieved a lot because of its strong readability and popularity. [1]<sup>67</sup> In particular, the analysis of individual characters in *A Dream of Red Mansions* and their enlightenment on modern and contemporary society have attracted great attention, such as Jia Baoyu, Lin Daiyu, Xue Baochai, Wang Xifeng and other main characters. There is no doubt that *A Dream of Red Mansions* highly praises women, and scholars have written a lot of researches on women. However, men, as the dominant force in the feudal traditional family ethics, often become the object of criticism and negation. *A Dream of Red Mansions* not only reveals the harm of male-dominated culture on women, describes the great tragedy of female, but also depicts the life dilemma of male under the male-dominated culture. The main figures of the male group of the Jia family take Jia Baoyu as the core. Upward there are the parental roles such as Jia Jing, Jia She and Jia Zheng, as peers there are Jia

Zhen, Jia Lian and Jia Huan, and downward there are younger generations such as Jia Rong, Jia Lan and Jia Qin, etc. The social culture of feudal society, codes of ethics and social systems such as bureaucrats, imperial examinations and marriage, makes men bound and destroyed in individual life, and plunge them into various life difficulties.

## 2. CULTURE AND SYSTEM OF THE FEUDAL SOCIETY

The essence of traditional ethics and morality in feudal society is "three cardinal guides" and "five constant virtues". Three cardinal guides: ruler guides subject, father guides son, husband guides wife. Five constant virtues: benevolence (humanity), righteousness, propriety, wisdom and fidelity. Feudal social culture paid attention to family ethics. Therefore, in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, a typical family theme novel, the relationship between rule and obedience revealed by "three cardinal guides" and "five constant virtues" has been deeply reflected. Duan Jiangli's "A Dream of Red Mansions and Chinese Traditional Family Ethics" expounds the negative impact and positive quality of Chinese traditional family ethics, and points out two modifications of traditional family ethics. [2]<sup>72</sup>

In Chapter 13 Men's World Outside the Grand View Garden of Li Jie's "Holographic Image of History and Culture: on 'A Dream of Red Mansions'", he focuses on men's life state and image, and reveals the ubiquitous tyranny and desire in the end of feudalism. [3]<sup>212</sup> Li Pengfei's "Theory of Historical Degradation, Eschatology and the Eschatological Picture in 'A Dream of Red Mansions'" analyzes the deep reasons for the decline of the Jia family and reveals the degradation and eschatological picture of economy, morality and living ability. [4]<sup>67</sup> Duan Jiangli's article "Jia Zhen and Jia Lian from the Perspective of Family Culture" makes a dialectical analysis of the men in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, and partially affirms Jia Zhen and Jia Lian. [5]<sup>59</sup> The existing research usually criticizes the traditional male-dominated culture, and expresses humanistic concern for the life of women and people at the bottom who belong to vulnerable groups. There is a relative lack of discussion on the shackles of men under the code of ethics and the difficulties faced by men.

### 3. LIFE DILEMMAS OF THE MALE CHARACTERS

As the "spokesperson" of the end of feudalism, the male protagonists in *A Dream of Red Mansions* law people with ethics and ignore them for their own sake. This novel takes family life as the main line, within which Jia Jing abandons the duties of the head of the family and ignores his duties. He only practices Taoism and alchemy and only cares about himself; Jiashe is not enterprising, indulges in lust and violently tutors the children. Although Jia Zheng is diligent in self-cultivation, he has no wish for serving the country, is incompetent in running the family, and goes with the tide in the workplace. Baoyu, Jia Lian and others have no intentions for official career and are obsessed with the relationship between women and beauties. These parents are the first generation to indulge in debauchery and music, and their peers and younger generation are either going in for cockfighting and horse-racing, or visiting prostitutes. They care little about their jobs, and their morality decay. The existence of this male group is faced with various difficulties, which shows that men will inevitably become victims to the feudal system under the traditional male-dominant culture of feudal society. At the same time, it also indicates that there is a huge crisis behind the apparent prosperity of feudal society.

#### 3.1 Failure of Fatherhood

Under the family ethics and morality, the failure of the two Jias of Rong and Ning households in *A Dream of Red Mansions* can be seen everywhere, and the family is facing the educational dilemma of no successors. "They are not able to turn out good sons, those stately houses, for all their pomp and show. The males in the family get more degenerate from one generation to the next." (Chapter 2) [6] In the Jia family's education, the harm of patriarchy to their children is mainly reflected in the violent family education, which can be confirmed by the words of the servant mammy Lai. "The master was beaten by your grandfather when he was young. Everyone saw it... And the big master... also beaten every day. And the grandfather of your brother Jia Zhen in the east mansion is in terribly bad temper. When he was angry, he treated sons as thieves!" (Chapter 45) Although the Jia family is a rich family, they are not good at teaching their children. Violent tutoring is common.

As a father, Jia Zhen and his son Jia Rong, gather together to make a mockery. What's more, Jia Zhen and her daughter-in-law Qin Keqing have inappropriate sexual affairs in Tianxiang Mansion. It can be said that the father does not behave like a father and the son not like a son, which has broken through the bottom line of human morality. [5]<sup>62</sup> Jia Zhen himself fails to be an upright model for his son and still forces his son to adhere to the moral code of "father guides son". Once a time Jia Rong was lazy, he let the servants spit at Jia Rong and asked, "I'm not afraid of the heat. Why do you go to enjoy the cool first?" Jia Rong's was unhappy, said, "What are you doing at earlier time? Why looking for me now?" (Chapter 29). The father and son are harmonious, decent and concentric on the surface; in fact, they have their own axe to grind.

Jia She is obsessed with women, never cares about the education of his children, and even beats his son for his own benefit. Jia She has no paternal demeanor towards his son in daily life. He is always beating children. He wanted to get the ancient fans from Shi Daizi (a common person), but his son Jia Lian failed to get them although he made great efforts. As a result, Jia Yucun framed Shi Daizi and forcibly took the ancient fan for Jia She. Jia She suspected that Jia Lian hadn't tried his best and was incompetent in this. Jia Lian disagreed and said, "It doesn't make any sense to make people lose their homes and businesses for such trivial things" (Chapter 48). As a result, he was beaten by his father. Jia Lian's unwillingness to oppress others

with power shows that his conscience is not lost, he still retains a kind heart and shows compassion for vulnerable groups. This is particularly valuable among the aristocrats in the feudal society, but it is not affirmed in Jia She's notion. Thus, Jia Lian got domestic violence.

Jia Zheng is pedantic and mediocre. Although he is a strict father in teaching children, he doesn't know how to guide. Jia Zheng himself always likes reading and playing chess, but he is cautious in action. He does not understand the essence of education. He is not good at teaching his children and grandchildren to achieve the purpose of unifying the family. He doesn't know how to appreciate the virtues of Baoyu. He can't bear to see Baoyu's deviant behaviors. He wants Baoyu to be strictly disciplined, but Jia's great grandmother addicts Baoyu too much, so he lets it go. Jia Huan's talent is not high, so Jia Zheng has no intention to cultivate him. Later, Jia Huan follows Jia Qiang all the way and conducts many bad things like visiting prostitutes and gambling. It's a great irony that Jia Huan, a bad guy with much evil intentions, is cultivated under the guidance of Jia Zheng, a disciplined and decent aristocrat. Jia Zheng's grandson, Jia Lan, studies hard under the guidance of his mother, Li Wan who is always quiet and devoted to teaching her child (Chapter 117). Later, Jia Lan took part in the imperial examination and achieved success. Besides pedantry, Jia Zheng also used violence. He always blamed Baoyu for his "foolishness and fear of reading articles" (Chapter 3). Later, when he heard of Baoyu's affairs with the actor Jiang Yuhan and flirting with the maid of Baoyu's mother, he couldn't help getting angry. Without asking for anything, he beat Baoyu with sticks violently and almost killed Baoyu. This kind of tutoring under the guidance of tyrannical morality stifles the nature of children. The result is not to inspire education, but to cause greater rebellion.

The principle of "father guides son" in Chinese traditional ethics authorizes parents to discipline their children with a condescending attitude in family education, which contributes to the violence and tyranny of parents. Under such tutoring, children and grandchildren are submissive and dare not to disobey their elders. They usually lose their independent personality. The degradation and decline of Jia family is inseparable from the failure of future generations, and their failure is closely related to the failure of education. [4]<sup>82</sup>

### 3.2 *Falling of Career*

In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, although the men of the Jia family had pioneers in their official career and left a solid foundation, most of the present generation's sons and grandchildren are greedy for pleasure and do not seek progress. Finally, the rich family ended up with no successors just like the trees fell and the monkeys scattered. The male protagonists of Ning and Rong's family, as Leng Zixing recounts in detail in the second chapter of the book, either inherit or buy the positions officials because they don't like studying hard. None of them really rank in the important position of the imperial court because of their hard working. This parasitic state makes it difficult for the Jia family to continue on the road of official career. Jia Jing of the Ning mansion inherited the official position, but he pursued the way of cultivating immortality, researched on the golden elixir quite hard, and put aside everything. He also let his son Jia Zhen inherit the official. After Qin Keqing's death, in order to make the funeral decent, Jia Rong spent money to buy an official position. On the side of Rong mansion, Jia She inherited an official position, and his son Jia Lian bought a position of Tongzhi through donation. Jia Zheng always liked to study and wanted to take the imperial examination. Later, the emperor was compassionate about him and entitled him the title of chancellor. Later, he was promoted to ministry councillor. Therefore, he had no chance to obtain greater achievement through imperial examination. Jia Zhu, the eldest son of Jia Zheng, was eager to make progress in learning, but he died young after he married and had child. The second son Baoyu is naughty in nature. He hates studying and only hangs out with domestic girls. The third son Jia Huan is a person with common looking and careless behavior. He has no talent for studying. And Jia Zhu's young son, Jia Lan, is still young and has not yet grown up. The Jia family has been prosperous and brilliant for several generations, but there are too many people who are enjoying being rich and honourable without anyone who can manage the whole things. Although the empress Yuanchun worked hard on her own to support Jia family, Jia family could not escape the fate of toppling and breaking into pieces in the feudal society which focused on male rights since it lacked support of upper positions of men.

### 3.3 *Chaos in Works*

*A Dream of Red Mansions* focuses on the life stories of the trivial things in noble families. From

the perspective of working competence, almost none of the main male figures in Jia's family can manage things quite well. They are all muddling along without any aim.

Jia Jing is an isolated person. He is neither an official nor a housekeeper of the family, not to mention an expert in working. Jia Zhen has the status of patriarch. He is negligent in managing family affairs. He is only wandering around every day, which makes the family of Ning mansion a mess. Jia Rong, Jia Zhen's son, is an idle in daily life. Apart from helping Jia Zhen take care of some daily family affairs, his concerns are all about flirting. The father and son do not qualify in their jobs. One inherited an official position and the other bought one through donation. They do nothing in their official career and earning money, but have the same taste in flirting with women. Jia She relaxes all day, and does not work hard in career. He only knows how to drink for fun and lives an extravagant life like a parasite. He is not a chief executive in Rong mansion, but just a puppet as a master. Jia Lian is not good at studying. He is sophisticated in communication, and is flexible and capable of handling family affairs, which can be seen in accompanying Daiyu back to Yangzhou to deal with Lin Ruhai's funeral and in management of the matters about the palace. However, due to Wang Xifeng's cleverness and aggressiveness, Jia Lian has no chance to show his competence in dealing with affairs, which is quite a pity. In terms of lifestyle, Jia Lian also belongs to the frivolous generation. Although Jia Baoyu has talent in study, but he is stubborn sometimes and sober at the other times. He doesn't care about good official positions and earning money. He is criticized for being a pity to live in a good time and doing nothing for the home and the country.

Although Jia Zheng does not live extravagantly like Jia She, Jia Lian and Jia Rong, he is also incompetent in governing the country and managing the family affairs. Jia Zheng adheres to the traditional tenets of Confucianism and lives a regular life, just as he wrote in the lantern riddle "the body is square and hard" (Chapter 22, the answer is inkstone). When he was an official, he was not "experienced" enough and was incompatible with other officials. He did not accept bribes and acted impartially. As a result, all his men protested with strikes. There are no drums in the lobby of the government; the staff don't stand on duty; they stay backwards, and they are all in low spirits. Li Shier, a staff member, told the truth, "Since the master came to office, there were many

complaints. Those civilians didn't say that the master was good, on the contrary, they said the master didn't care about people's life." At first, Jia Zheng didn't want to degenerate himself to the vulgar generations, but he finally let Li Shier take control of all the things. By doing this, he found that everything was considerate and satisfactory. It can be seen that it's dark in the official field. Jia Zheng could not resist the corruption of feudal society, and finally drifted with the tide. In terms of family affairs, Jia Zheng ignores and is not good at it. In Chapter 4 it is mentioned that Jia Zheng was "not used to worldly affairs". Jia Lian and his wife dominated and did whatever they wanted in their family. The Jia family was in deficit day by day, and he still did not know anything. The Confucian moral codes of self-cultivation, family harmony, governing the country and pacifying the world are spiritual shackles for mediocre gentlemen like Jia Zheng. This kind of male as 'myth' ideology makes him exhausted and overwhelmed" [2]<sup>67</sup>.

### **3.4 Bondage of Marriage**

The marriage system in the feudal society adhered to the principle of "husband guides wife" in the traditional family ethics, insisted that men were superior to women, and required women to obey men's interests, which resulted in the phenomena of indulgence and degeneration, contradiction between wives and concubines, and arrangement by parents in marriage life.

The feudal ritual system allowed men to have many wives and concubines, which made men indulge their desires and degenerate. Jia She doesn't do a good job as an official. He only enjoys drinking and having fun. His life is licentious and full of material desires. Seeing the beautiful maid Yuanyang, he ignored his old mother and tried every means to marry Yuanyang as a concubine. His wife, Mrs. Xing, did not interfere with Jia She's misdeeds and complied with them in order to protect herself. After being refused by Yuanyang, he implemented authority intimidation, which eventually led to Yuanyang's desperate committing suicide after Jia's mother's death. As a son, Jia She despises filial piety; as an elder, he is careless about shame; as a master, he oppresses a maid. His marriage with Mrs. Xing is like a decoration, and there is no true love between them. There is no spiritual communication and only sexual interaction with his beautiful concubines. This depravity represents the animalization and materialism of

men and reduces the dignity and self-respect of men as human beings.

Although Jia Lian is a man of both being good and evil, he is also amorous. In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the author writes most about desire in men. Jia Lian has a beautiful wife at home named Wang Xifeng and a good-looking concubine, Ping'er who is gentle and kind. However, he is still not satisfied. He secretly married a girl named Sister You during the period of mourning of Qin Keqing. When his daughter Qiaojie had a pox, he fooled around with a girl named Duo. When others are celebrating Xifeng's birthday party, he called the wife of his servant Bao'er to make love in the house. Later, he took Qitong as his concubine. Because Jia Lian is always looking for new and neglects the old, Sister You chooses to commit suicide under the neglect of her husband and the pressure of Xifeng and Qitong step by step. The wife of the servant Bao'er hung herself in shame after the disclosure of the love affairs with Jia Lian. Jia Lian's story truly reflects that one of the consequences of the indulgence of male's desire in ancient Chinese society is to make people easily degenerate into animals driven by instinct. [5]<sup>65</sup> If this depravity is harmful to women, it is no better for men. Jia Lian was born an aristocrat family and treated women with good manners. Under the permission of the feudal marriage system, he connived at his degeneration into a sexual slave. There are constant contradictions between wives and concubines in Jia Lian's family. They are victims and hurt each other at the same time. In this marriage environment, women either destroy themselves or persecute others, which is a great tragedy for families, marriages and men.

An important aspect of feudal ethics and feudal order is also reflected in the system of arranged marriage by parents. Parents don't care about their children's marriage. They only care about the relationship of interests. In this case, family marriage and marriage trading have become a common phenomenon. Although Baoyu and Daiyu had a "wood and stone alliance", they finally achieved love but without marriage. Baochai got married with Baoyu, but she didn't get happiness and ended up in tears. In addition to the tragedy of Baoyu, Daiyu and Baochai's triangle love and marriage, the most lamentable thing in *A Dream of Red Mansions* is Jia Yingchun's marriage based on interest of parents. As parents, Jia She and Mrs. Xing, promised their daughter to Sun Shaozu, a terrible and violent man, regardless of her happiness for 250kg silver. Sun is always lusty and

doesn't treat Yingchun as a wife at all because he thinks that he spent 250kg silver for buying the wife. As a result, Yingchun was abused to death after only one year of marriage. Parents' arrangement of marriage stifles the initiative of young men and women to pursue their own love. Even men are difficult to achieve marital happiness under this arranged marriage system.

If women in feudal society could not get happiness because of arranged marriage and the feudal moral bondage of "three cardinal guides" and "five constant virtues", the dominant men in feudal society represented by Jia She, Jia Zhen, Jia Lian and Baoyu should have become the beneficiaries of the marriage system. However, marriage is an activity in which both men and women participate together. Only when both sides are happy can we achieve harmony and win-win results. Otherwise, while the patriarchal culture and feudal marriage system connive at men's indulgence and degeneration and self dwarfing, they also make men deeply trapped in marriage and family contradictions and can't get out.

### 3.5 *Obsession in Lust*

*A Dream of Red Mansions* is a tragic novel shared by men and women. In women's emotional tragedy, men also face the dilemma of lust. Jia She, Jia Zhen, Jia Lian and Jia Rong are deeply involved in the sexual desire, while Jia Baoyu is lost in the emotional dilemma.

Jia She is always surrounded by many concubines. He drinks and flirts at home all day and doesn't do business. This has been mentioned in the previous elaboration. Jia Zhen has a wife, Ms. You, and still has four concubines. In addition to these legal wives and concubines, he also flirts around. As a father-in-law, he couldn't resist the temptation of his charming daughter-in-law Qin Keqing, and even started to have love affairs with her. His father Jia Jing died suddenly. Jia Zhen and his son rushed back overnight. When they heard that the two Sister You are coming, they looked at each other and smiled. Later, during the mourning period, they tried to have chance to access the two sisters for flirting. During the period of national mourning and family mourning period, Jia Zhen and his son helped Jia Lian secretly marry sister You Erjie and tried to conceal the fact. Later, Jia Zhen was reluctant to give up Sister You Sanjie and kept pestering her. Sister You Sanjie ridiculed them in every way and made fun of them. Jia Zhen spent a lot of money in vain and still couldn't let her go. Jia

Zhen forced her daughter-in-law to commit adultery, resulting in her final death in Tianxiang building. He entangled his two sisters-in-law with Jia Lian and Jia Rong. The erotic world is in chaos. This incest relationship and moral corruption is the real vulgar face under the appearance of the loyal officials and filial sons of the Jia family.

Jia Lian is rich and polite, but he is driven and troubled by lust. Due to the hegemony of Sister Xifeng who is jealous, Jia Lian's abuse of lust is even encouraged. You Erjie is "gentle and obedient. She doesn't dare to make decisions and always discusses with Jia Lian about everything. She is ten times better than Sister Xifeng" (Chapter 65). The "ten times better" here is Jia Lian's high evaluation of the moral ethics of sister You Erjie's "husband guides wife". Because he lost his male dignity under the strength and dictatorship of Sister Xifeng, he got the power and self-esteem given from sister You Erjie. As for other flirting affairs, they are considered to be the products derived from the background of patriarchal culture and family repression. For his fooling around with Baoer's wife, Jia's mother commented that "men always do like this" (Chapter 44). It can be seen that this phenomenon is taken for granted in the society. Most men "legally" degenerate and become slaves to carnal desire. Driven by desire, they become parasites of society, losing their personal dignity and are not respected by the world.

Jia Baoyu is called "the most lustful person in the world in ancient and modern times" (Chapter 5), but he is different from the sex abuse of Jia She, Jia Zhen and Jia Lian. Instead, he has special love for girls. He regards women as rare treasures and men as dirty things. Just as the "love list" mentions "loving for objects" and "loving for sentiments". Baoyu and Daiyu "have an infatuation to be considerate of all sentient and ruthless things in the world" [7]<sup>3</sup>. He has a strange temperament, seeks sorrow for no reason, and often does crazy and foolish things. The tragedy of Baoyu can be seen from the "not good enough for mending the sky" (Chapter 1) in the stone verse. He hated the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius, official career and making money, and pursued equality between men and women and freedom of marriage and love. Baoyu was disappointed in the official career, so he tried in seeking emotional comfort. [8]<sup>16</sup> However, this human nature cannot be appreciated in the dirty world. Baoyu can't realize himself. Finally, he escapes into the Buddhism and returns to his own heart.

#### 4. FEUDAL ESCHATOLOGY

Feudal society was a highly hierarchical society, which adhered to the principles of men being superior to women, masters being noble and servants being humble, and legitimate and illegitimate being different. [9]<sup>047</sup> Under such social norms, men monopolize power and indulge themselves in degeneration. The contradiction between wives and concubines and the contradiction between legitimate and illegitimate in the family continue endlessly, which resulted in various tragedies of men playing with women and women destroying women. As a wealthy family, Jia's ancestors laid a foundation through struggling on the battlefield. However, future generations had no grand plans, acted recklessly and made no progress until the family ran out of money and the mansions collapsed. Jia Jing pursues detachment from life, not surpassing in thought, but eager for quick success and instant benefit in body, which is counterproductive. Jia She, Jia Zhen, Jia Lian and Jia Rong are careless about their official career, indulge extravagantly and lose their morality. Jia Zheng was obstinate and pedantic with the dead and decadent moral shackles exposed under the decent appearance. Only Jia Baoyu questioned the rules and regulations of the imperial examination system, marriage system and ethics in the feudal society, and showed a strong rebellious spirit. Although Baoyu did not break through the barriers of the feudal system in the end, this new idea of pursuing freedom of love and equality between men and women began to have a certain impact on the decadent and crumbling feudal end, which indicates the coming of a new era.

Feudal official domain was gloomy and corrupted. Even Royal relatives and nobles like Jia's family can not help but become the objects of bribes demanded by imperial eunuchs. Jia Zhen bought an official for Jia Rong through donation. Eunuch Dai Quan clearly marked the price and said that someone else's family took 7.5kg silver for that, "As for our children... It's okay to send only 6.0kg silver to my house" (Chapter 13). In addition, an official Xia sent a small eunuch to borrow money, which was actually blackmail. It can be seen that the eunuch extorted bribes either openly or secretly from time to time through his identity which endows his working in the palace. Eunuch Zhou came to ask for 5kg silver and was not satisfied with Jia Lian's postponed response. As an official, Jia Zheng could not take care of himself. He allowed the evil staff Li Shi'er to collect money

illegally and was eventually demoted three levels in position for the crime of illegal collection of money. It can be seen that the dignitaries were ignorant of civil things and the people were dissatisfied with the government.

The family in feudal society was decadent and there were exploitation everywhere. During Tanchun's management period, she clearly pointed out the phenomenon of exploitation within the family. When sending Poria cocos cream, Elder Sister Liu said that "your brother was on duty yesterday ... and got these" (Chapter 60). This shows that the servants and maids within the Jia family are all involved in sharing interest, which erodes Jia family, "a centipede". Jia Yun borrowed money to bribe Sister Xifeng in order to be in charge of the project of planting flower and trees in the Grand View Garden. He got the job, earned money, paid back the loan and kept the rest for his own. Jia Qin asked Sister Xifeng for a good job which is in charge of the monks and Taoists in the Tiekuan Temple outside the city. Thereafter, he has been gambling and whoring and dominates all. Such villains can be found everywhere in *A Dream of Red Mansions*. It can be seen that corruption and bribery from top to bottom in Jia's house are shocking. Although the mayfly cannot shake the tree, the tree withers because of the mayfly. With such various layers of parasites, Jia family killed themselves from the inside.

In the late feudal society, there were many malpractices in society, officials and family. The forces of reform surged. Although the feudal society maintained prosperity on the surface, in fact, as Leng Zixing said, "outwardly they may look as grand as ever, but their purses are nearly empty" (Chapter 2), which shows the family has come to an end.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The life existence of the main male characters of the Jia family presents a parasitic appearance. Jia She and Jia Zhen are not enterprising in his official career and care nothing about the family management. Jia Lian and Jia Rong are dismissive in the career and busy with socializing with women. Jia Zheng did not dare to take actions of his own in the official career and let himself under the control of the subordinates, which caused great pains for common people. In terms of self-cultivation, some indulge in self-degeneration; some stay out and hang up; some are stubborn and pedantic like walking corpses. Jia Baoyu has no intention for

official career. He hangs around with girls and cherishes all lives. As a clear stream, he represents new forces and vitality, but he is also faced with the dilemma of being unable to turn the world around. In family education, the Jia family's parents use tyrannical violence and neglect guidance. As the masters of the patriarchal society, they are incompetent in society, family and workplace, and can not take the rights and responsibilities entrusted to men by the feudal society. The male group in *A Dream of Red Mansions* is plagued by material desires, erotic desires, marriage bondage, falling career and other life problems. The life dilemma they face is also the doomsday dilemma presented by the feudal ruling class under the impact of new forces and new ideological trends.

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This paper is independently completed by Xiujin Qian.

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