PREFACE

Henry James's career was one of the longest and most productive — and of course influential — in American literature. He was a master of prose fiction and in about half a century had written novels, tales, plays, several volumes of travel and criticism and a great deal of literary journalism. He had recognized, very early in his life, the myth of the American abroad — the encounter of the New World with the Old — and incorporated this myth in the "international novel" of which he was the master. W.D. Howells himself had praised him for inventing the novel of international contrasts which formed the basis of his fiction.

The international theme implying confrontation and contrast between the two worlds assumes major importance in James's fiction. The present thesis studies the different aspects of the international theme through the successive phases of his career as a novelist. I have referred to James's international novels and tales as a whole but my focus is mainly on his six major novels: 'Roderick Hudson', 'The American', 'The Portrait of a Lady',
'The Ambassadors', 'The Wings of the Dove' and 'The Golden Bowl'. My emphasis has been on the evidence of James's letters, notebooks, prefaces, reviews and finally on an analysis of the novels themselves.

James was a great artist and had received acclaim from his contemporaries like W.D. Howells, Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford. He had received recognition during his lifetime but more criticism was to follow after his death. There are many critical studies on him but an exhaustive exploration of his subtle and multifaceted treatment of the international theme is yet to be undertaken in India. My attempt, therefore, has been to make a comprehensive study and evaluation of Henry James as an explorer of the international theme in all its complex and diverse aspects.

I argue that given his initial predilection for realism, the social and cultural reality of America, and the peculiar circumstances of his upbringing, James's choice of the international subject as his major preoccupation was inevitable. His first tale 'A Tragedy of Error' was in the romance mode, and in a few subsequent stories he experimented with American themes before turning to the international theme in his first really successful novel ('The American') and tale
'Daisy Miller'. He felt that the 'international' was his best medium and had once again returned to it, after his dramatic debacle, in his later novels like 'The Ambassadors', 'The Wings of the Dove' and 'The Golden Bowl'.

He was a realist and though his novels portray the contrast between innocent and democratic Americans and experienced and aristocratic Europeans, he does not fail to highlight the flaws of both the worlds. His realism prevents him from idealizing either the Americans or the Europeans. He also had a symbolic vision and his later novels indicate that he was able to analyse the whole situation objectively. The background of his fiction also has an impact on the international theme and his American characters feel the change as soon as they enter the precincts of France, Italy or England. He emerges as a novelist of manners and the international theme with which he was so concerned comes to an end on a note of reconciliation and harmony.

James is undoubtedly a great writer and there can be no question of anything like a final appreciation of his work. The richness and beauty of his novels and stories can only be appreciated by endless readings.
and he will definitely be remembered in the times to come. I hope that my humble contribution will be able to arouse a deep interest in the works of Henry James who had become a great artist by abandoning his country and making use of his talents not in Boston or New York but in Paris and Florence.

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