CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION
Literary theory is a body of ideas and a practice of studying literature. Literary theory does not refer to the meaning of a literary work but to the theories that express what the work can mean. It is a tool or a canon by which one attempts to understand a literary work. One can interpret a work of art on the basis of literary theory. It is literary theory that helps the readers in examining the relationship between the author and the work. Critics often give the value of a particular work based on literary canons, tools and theories and make judgments through observation as a part of literary criticism. Thus:

Literary theory lays down principles of literature, its categories and criteria and describes the features and forms that make up a literary work. It is a systematic account of the nature of literature.¹

Apart from literature, literary theory touches various disciplines. It is due to the analysis of gender, class, race etc. that the genre of literary theory includes the work of
anthropology, art, history; gender studies, linguistics, philosophy, psychoanalysis, sociology etc. Thus, theory becomes an interdisciplinary area of study. Due to the increasing global exposure and more freedom of expression, literary theory became a kind of mixed genre in the nineteenth century. Learned scholars are yearning for inventing critical thoughts and coinage of new words. As a result, the reading of literature and construction of theories have raised lots of questions about meaning, ideology, realism, the death of the author, the birth of the reader and context of the text and so on. In this regard, Richard Rorthy writes:

Beginning in the days of Goethe and Macaulay and Carlyle and Emerson, a new kind of writing has developed which is neither the evaluation of the relative merits of literary productions, nor intellectual history, nor moral philosophy, nor social prophecy, but all of these mingled together in a new genre.²

This new genre is, thus, a wide assumption of literature and serves the function of criticism. This is the beginning of literary theory. For instance, when one analyses a text with the notion in mind that the female suppression, marginalization and male’s ill treatment towards female, he is making a theoretical declaration. To analyse any work from that approach is literary criticism. Such reading is known as feminist criticism that is literary criticism that has applied the feminist theory. This kind of reading is purposive reading with theory in mind. Literary theory provides several approaches in order to produce a logical interpretation of a literary work. Jonathan Culler writes:

The theory is intimidating one of the most dismaying features of theory today is that it is endless. It is something that you could
ever master, not a particular group of texts you could learn so as to ‘know theory’. It is an unbounded corpus of writings which is always being augmented as the young and restless, in critiques of the guiding conceptions of their elders, promote the contributions to theory of new thinkers and rediscover the work of older, neglected ones. Theory is thus a source of intimidation, a resource for constant upstagings. ³

Such constant upstaging is one of the important features of postmodernism. Postmodernism has been a significant intellectual movement that reflects and in turn reinforces great shifts in various disciplines such as art, literature, architecture, culture, philosophy and economy during the last two decades. Postmodernism rejects the existence of any ultimate goals or principles. It also denies the so called ‘modern’ that emphasizes on the scientific and the philosophical truth. Richard Tarnas aptly states:

Postmodernism cannot on its own principles ultimately justify itself any more than can the various metaphysical overviews against which the postmodern mind has defined itself. ⁴

So, Postmodernism is characterized by indeterminacy, delegitimation and decanonization. Postmodernism celebrates fragmentation, thereby breaks the subject like the text into fragmented and dispersed units. These dispersed units do not have exact and final conclusive meaning. In this sense the subject does not belong to the world. Thus:

Postmodernism typically strips away the possibility by concentrating upon the schizophrenic circumstances induced by fragmentation. ⁵
The celebration of fragmentation and multiple voices create the problem of 
communication and exercising power in a society. Postmodernists reveal interest of this 
ew possibility of information and knowledge.

According to Francis Lyotard, a French sociologist, the present changing 
conditions of a society can be studied as a sign system. Sign system includes 
advertising, fashion, entertainment and information. What is happening in real life is 
included under sign system. For him the function of literature is to have an unbreakable 
relationship with human beings. Lyotard sees:

Postmodernism is incredulity towards meta-narratives. It pays close 
attention to “other words” and “to other voices” as in their emphasis 
on women, gays, black, colonized peoples, ecology as habitat, and 
heritage.6

Lyotard further argues that the language used by man for communication as a 
social bond in not made by a single thread but by indefinite game of language. It has 
resulted that the existing concepts and phenomena are dispersed in this game of 
language. Therefore, interpretation becomes a complex phenomenon in contemporary 
literary theory. This concern for interpretation has become one of the important 
characteristics of postmodern literature. The movement of modernism emphasized on 
experimentation by means of different techniques of writing. But in postmodernism, the 
experimenters have started searching meanings in several ways.
Like other fashions, literary fashions are constantly changing, and sometimes they change for no better reason, it seems, than that people get tired of one mode and demand something novel.\(^7\)

As a part of this constant change, critics turn towards the subject of interpretation in postmodernism. Derrida’s deconstruction appears as a forceful stimulus to postmodernist ways of thought. He is, no doubt, one of the influential figures, who suggest that:

The inherent heterogeneity of discourse stimulates receives of text or image to produce a signification which could be neither univocal nor stable.\(^8\)

Jacques Derrida was born on 15th July, 1930 in El-Biar in French colonial Algeria. He was the third son among five siblings of his parents Aimé Derrida and Georgette Sultana Esther Safar. He belonged to a prosperous Jewish family. But his family was disturbed by a kind of environment where Jews were publicly discriminated. He suffered from discrimination, suppression and separation in his childhood days during the Second World War. There were incidents of violence at public places. Moreover, they were prevented from entering the law court or teaching professions. It was perhaps this experience of verbal and physical violence in his school days that developed his understanding of the idea of marginalization and centrality which would later become one of his philosophical principles. In 1941 he joined the *Lycée de Ben Aknoun*. But he was turned out on the first day of class because of the policy for limiting the numbers of Jews to only seven percent of the student population. Again in
1943, he joined Lycée Emile Maupas. However, there he could not continue his studies for being discriminated as a Jew and stop attending the course. Being a Jew there was unendurable pain and suffering created by anti-Jews. It was this experience of aggression, hatred and unfriendliness of his early life made him in the creation of central and marginal of two opposite things. These childhood disturbances certainly gave an impulse to Derrida’s interest in two contradictory ideas: one is privileged and other is marginalized. He secretly missed school for one year. But he attended the Jewish Lycée formed by expelled teachers and students. During this period he played football and participated in numerous tournaments. He also wished to become professional football player in future. Having failed in his last secondary exam he lost himself in reading Jean Jacques Rousseau, Friedrich Nietzsche and Albert Camus. Thus he developed keen interest in philosophy.

Then, he moved to Paris in 1950 for the Khâgne peculiar French institution. He began studies at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris after he failed twice in the entrance exam in 1951–52. There he met Louis Althussar and Michel Foucault who later became his friends. From 1953—54 he focused on the ‘phenomenology’ of Husserl in the Husserl Archives at the University of Louvain in Belgium. Phenomenology is the science of phenomena, as different from the science of being. It is our consciousness that creates everything in the world. That was the starting point of choosing philosophy as his career. After this he started his ventures in the world of philosophy by reading Rousseau, Camus, and Nietzsche. Derrida won a grant for studies at Harvard University. And in June 1957, he married psychoanalyst, Marguerite Ancouturieur in
Boston. They had two children Pierre and Jean. He served in the French army during Algerian war in 1957-59. He taught French and English in a school Kolea, near Algiers to children of soldiers. After the Algerian war of Independence he was associated with avant garde journal Tel Quel, a journal of literary and philosophical theorists in 1960. At this time he also taught philosophy at the Sorbornne. From 1964–1984, he taught philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure. His philosophical reputation spread far and wide throughout France and United States. Shortly after that he was invited to participate in a conference at Johns Hopkins University in the United States on ‘Structuralism’ where he delivered a lecture on “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” in 31st October, 1966. This lecture is the turning point of structuralist controversy which is elaborately discussed in the three seminal works published in 1967 – Of Grammatology, Writing and Difference and Speech and Phenomena.

But in 1981 he was arrested, imprisoned and turned out from the country for engaging in a seminar which was organized secretly. During this period he collaborated with Ken Mac. Mullen and appeared on the film Ghost Dance as an actor. Meanwhile he gave philosophical lectures in France and the United States. He became a Professor of the Humanities at the University of California, Irvine. He visited various American Universities like Johns Hopkins University, Yale University, New York University, Stony Brook University and The New School for Social Research as a visiting Professor. He was also awarded honorary doctorates by several Universities. Derrida died of pancreatic cancer at the age of 74 on 8th October, 2004 in Paris.
Derrida’s philosophical career started with the study of the phenomenology of Husserl which led him, to the writing of a dissertation at the very beginning of his academic career in 1954. He won first prize for his major debut publication, a translation of, and a long introduction to Husserl’s short essay, *The Origin of Geometry* in 1962. He made fantastic implication when he made with the basis of the path of philosophical thinking with his commentary on the introduction of Husserl’s essay. Derrida said in one of the interviews:

In this essay the problematic of writing was already in place as such, bound to the irreducible structure of “deferral” in its relationships to consciousness, presence, science, history and the history of science, the disappearance or delay of the origin, etc.9

He was known worldwide when he wrote papers for *Tel Quel*, with a group of literary and philosophical writers. He wrote reviews on history and nature of writing which he published in later half of the 1960’s journal “Critique”. He became to be known as one of the important philosophers when he participated in a conference at the Johns Hopkins University. He approved the arguments of structuralism but also exposed its internal weakness and limitations. Thus, Derrida deconstructs the concepts of structuralism as there are certain issues which are not clear in structuralism. In the very beginning of the essay, “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences” Derrida argues:

The entire history of the concept of structure, before the rupture of which we are speaking, must be thought of as a series of
substitutions of centre for center, as a linked chain of determinations of the centre. Successively, and in a regulated fashion, the centre receives different forms or names. The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history these metaphors, metonymies. Its matrix — is the determination of Being as presence in all senses of this word. It could be shown that all names related to fundamentals, to principles or to the center have always designated an invariable presence—eidos, archē, telos, energia, ousia (essence, existence, substance, subject) alētheia, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man and so forth.10

The effect of the paper is great and thereby published in 1970. This has become a bewildered subject to many philosophers. That is the turning point of the structuralist controversy. Thus, he puts the entire existing concepts that people consider as true into doubt.

Most of Derrida’s works touched all the disciplines. That was reflected in the three seminal works published in 1967 such as Of Grammatology, Writing and Difference, and Speech and Phenomena. He received international fame immediately after these publications. These three books are about his readings of the works of many well known writers and philosophers such as Edmund Husserl, Ferdinand de Saussure, Martin Heidegger, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emmanuel Lévinas, G.W.F. Hegel, Michel Foucault, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Sigmund Freud, Edmond Jabes and Antonin Artaud.

Derrida’s important book, Of Grammatology (1967) is about the centralization of speech and marginalization of writing. It is a book of essays on Rousseau’s views of
writing and language as well as Saussure and Lévi-Strauss. For Derrida all the Western thought including the ancient philosophy of Plato, Rousseau, Saussure and Lévi-Strauss are in favour of speech. Derrida calls this privileging attitude of speech over writing as logocentrism.

Logocentrism is Derrida’s neologism and refers to what is centred on ‘logos’. The ancient Greek word ‘logos’ can be translated in various ways that include: language, discourse, knowledge, the word. What Derrida means, in particular, is an approach at the heart of metaphysics according to which truth, knowledge or being are present at some particular moment. 11

One is logocentric when he believes that truth is the voice, the expression of a central and original thing. For example, in the Holy book, God is a logocentric word because of the presence of God which is considered as being ‘truth’. The whole world has been establishing in this notion of ‘truth’ through the centuries. Everything in the universe is seen due to a transcendent cause, and is considered as a transcendental signified. A transcendental signified is a signified or meaning that lies beyond all things in the entire universe. A fine example is ‘God-word’ that lies beyond everything else. It is also a belief that God creates everything. Even though he creates, he is beyond the universe and he is at the central position. For Derrida, words that express God word are central and always involve metaphysics of presence. With reference to Derrida’s concept of metaphysics, Barbara Johnson writes:

Not only the western philosophical tradition but “everyday” thought and language as well. Western thought, says Derrida, has
always been structured in terms of dichotomies or polarities: good vs. evil, being vs. nothingness, presence vs. absence, truth vs. error, identity vs. difference, mind vs. matter, man vs. woman, soul vs. body, life vs. death, nature vs. culture, speech vs. writing. These polar opposites do not, however, stand as independent and equal entities. The second term in each pair is considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first, a fall away from it. Hence, absence is the lack of presence, evil is the fall from the good, error is a distortion of truth, etc. In other words, the two terms are not simply opposed in their meanings, but are arranged in a hierarchical order which gives the first term priority, in both the temporal and the qualitative sense of the word. In general, what these hierarchical oppositions do is to privilege unity, identity, immediacy, and temporal and spatial presentness over distance, difference, dissimulation, and deferment. In its search for the answer to the question of Being, western philosophy has indeed always determined Being as presence.\(^\text{12}\)

Metaphysics is an important area of philosophy and comprising concepts, perceptions, attitudes and ideas. Metaphysics mainly deals with the study of nature of existence and ultimate truth of the being, the understanding of the ideas in terms of the binary opposite of presence and absence and naturally privileging the presence and marginalizing the absence. Any concept is made on the basis of its proximity to a presence which becomes ultimately the ‘logos’. Here Spivak reveals ‘Derrida uses the word metaphysics very simply as shorthand for any science of presence’.\(^\text{13}\) According to Derrida,
The formal essence of the signified is *presence*, and the privilege of its proximity to the logos as *phonè* is the privilege of presence. This is the inevitable response as soon as one asks: “what is the sign?,” that is to say, when one submits the sign to the question of essence, to the “ti esti.” The “formal essence” of the sign can only be determined in terms of presence. 14

In a sense, *Metaphysics of presence* is the belief that there is a *transcendental signified*, an unarguable meaning, utterance, text, and discourse etc. that guarantee all the meanings. According to Derrida, the entire western tradition, all history of *logocentrism* is an immense *metaphysics of presence*. Therefore, anything which is related to the center has an ever invariable presence.

The second important book is *Writing and Difference* (1967) translated by Alan Bass. It consists of a series of essays on G.W.F. Hegel, Michel Foucault, Sigmund Freud, George Betaille and Emmanuel Levinas. His interest of phenomenology is found in one of the essays titled “Genesis and Structure”. Later, in the essay “Form and meaning” he discovers the phenomenology of language. The essay “Genesis and Structure” discusses Derrida’s arguments about genesis and structure in phenomenology and its complete arguments with structuralism. Derrida explains aspects of structuralism that he found after reading Husserl in the very beginning of his philosophical career in the essay, “Genesis and structure”.

The first phase of phenomenology, in its style and its objects, is structuralist, because first and foremost it seeks to stay clear of
psychologism and historicism. But it is not genetic description in general which is disqualified, but only the genetic description which borrows its schemas from naturalism and causalism, and depends upon a science of “facts” and therefore on an empiricism; and therefore concludes Husserl, depends upon a relativism incapable of insuring its own truth; therefore, on a skepticism.15

His critique of structuralism is continued in the essay, “Force and Signification”. Here Derrida explains the structuralist analysis of literature. Derrida also writes a long critical essay on Foucault’s madness and civilization in “Cogito and the history of madness”. It is a eulogy on Foucault’s work. He also expresses disagreement on some points on the discussion of Descartes. In two essays “La Parole Soufflee” and “Ellipsis” Derrida took quotations from Edmond Jabes and gave comments on law, literature and religion. Then in another essay, “Freud and the Scene of writing” Derrida discusses the emphasis given to language as emerging from material psychic forces rather than immaterial mental space. In the essay, “Freud and the Scene of Writing” Derrida brings his views of writing into the study of mind. Derrida focuses on the status of writing as an activity of repetition that has no origin. It is specifically in the analysis of the mind in psychoanalysis and phenomenology that Derrida puts this in the concept of trace and deferral. Freud uses a word nachträglich for the way that the unconscious mind can be assessed in dreams. The fundamental constituents of the unconscious mind never show and they cannot assess in their original state because they always show themselves as an after work. In short, one is always looking the effect of the thought or the event or the incident in his memory after experiencing the event. In this way Freud’s nachträglich is
similar to Derrida’s additional or supplementary of something which is not complete in itself. Freud’s concept of after work in human mind can be translated as Derrida’s view of writing in which *signified* is always a repetition of an absent *signifier* which has no present origin. Derrida writes:

The conscious text is thus not a transcription, because there is no text *present elsewhere* as an unconscious one to be transposed or transported. For the value of presence can also dangerously affect the concept of the unconscious. There is then no unconscious truth to be rediscovered by virtue of having been written elsewhere. There is no text written and present elsewhere which would then be subjected, without being changed in the process, to an operation and a temporalization (the latter belonging to consciousness if we follow Freud literally) which would be external to it, floating on its surface. There is no present text in general, and there is not even a past present text, a text which is past as having been present. The text is not conceivable in an originary or modified form of presence. The unconscious text is already a weave of pure traces, differences in which meaning and force are united—a text nowhere present, consisting of archives which are *always already* transcriptions. Originary prints. Everything begins reproduction Always already: respositories of a meaning which was never present, whose signified presence is always reconstituted by deferral, *nachträglich*, belatedly *supplementarily*: for the *nachträglich* also means *supplementary*. The call of the supplement is primary, here, and it hollows out that which will be reconstituted by deferral as the present.¹⁶
No one can grasp the elements of the unconscious mind. Besides, writing cannot be considered as true because there is an unending chain of repetitions of the reprints of the *traces* without unidentifiable origin. Writing, a form of text which is a copy of unseen original; therefore, there is no presence of the truth of what is in the unconscious mind.

The much confused Derrida’s concept of ‘play’ appears as a central analysis in the essay, “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences.” This essay is considered to be the starting point of the idea of deconstruction. In this essay, Derrida states that there occurs an intellectual thing called “event”. Derrida writes:

> Perhaps something has occurred in the history of the concept of structure that could be called an “event”.17

This “event” breaks the idea of the great philosophers of the world such as Nietzsche, Heidegger and Freud. The “event” decenters our intellectual world. Before the advent of this “event” there existed center in the things of the world including our dress, behaviour, architecture, religion and laws. But the question of separation and marginalization do not rise in the centralization of an entity. The result of this “event” is in absolute, uncertain and no fixed point in everything. Instead of a center, there is free play in every field and there is loss of an absolute origin. The concept of the loss of an origin is the main idea in the development of deconstructive analysis. Derrida thus reveals:

> Turned towards the lost or impossible presence of the absent origin, this structuralist thematic of broken immediacy is therefore the
saddened, negative, nostalgic, guilty, Rousseauistic side of the thinking of play whose other side would be the Nietzschean affirmation, that is the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation.

This essay is thus very important in the analyses of deconstruction. It reveals the loss of the idea of the center.

In the same essay Derrida also discusses Lévi-Strauss who studies myth. He makes a clear distinction between the engineer and the *bricoleur* in anthropology. The engineer works according to a system based on fundamentals in which all empirical evidence can be put together. On the other hand, the *bricoleur* puts together a patchwork of indication, a *bricolage*. Lévi-Strauss further suggests that mythical thought serves as a kind of *bricolage*. The *bricoleur* uses signs and construct and adopt myths from the existing *signifieds* and *signifiers*. For Derrida both the meaning of the words engineer and *bricoleur* are not present. Each of them can be defined by its difference from its opposite word. They do not have definite meaning rather Derrida puts the word *bricolage* under *erasure* like all useful words. Derrida brings out the difficulties in establishing a complete description of myths. Lévi-Strauss fails to discuss totality of myths because any totality has a center, without center there will be no totality.
Next is *Speech and Phenomena* (1967) translated by David B. Allison, is also one of the important books of Derrida. It examines critically on Husserl’s phenomenology of signification. Derrida also illustrates a critique of his *phonocentrism* (view that speech is much closer to meaning than writing in language. It prefers speech to writing). In the book, *Positions* Derrida states ‘it is perhaps the essay which I like most.’

Husserl’s philosophy is based on conscious experience. Consciousness is the ultimate origin for all philosophy and science. Derrida deconstructs Husserl by declaring that consciousness is compromised by the structures. That structure too have center. For Derrida there is no center for any structure. Therefore, Husserl’s notion of phenomenology repeats the same notion of *metaphysics of presence*.

Another important essay is “Differance”, a lecture delivered in 1968. Derrida coined this term and elaborated it in the essay “Differance” and in the series of interviews collected in *Positions*. It is made by combining with the word difference. That means, to delay or postpone (deferral) and the idea of difference itself. This concept is also the basic element of deconstructive analysis. *Differance* is not only the differences between the words but also the differential between the concepts of the *signified*. Derrida says:

First, differance refers to the (active and passive) movement that consists in deferring by means of delay, delegation, reprieve, referral, detour, postponement, reserving. In this sense, differance
is not preceded by the originary and indivisible unity of a present possibility that I could reserve, like an expenditure that I would put off calculatedly or for reasons of economy. What defers presence, on the contrary, is the very basis on which presence is announced or desired in what represents it, its sign, its trace...

*Dissemination* (1972) translated by Barbara Johnson, is also an important book of essays that influenced the theorists in the United States. It includes essays on Stéphane Mallarmé, Philippe Sollers and an essay on the nature of writing in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. When Derrida wrote this book, he was much associated with *Tel Quel*. The members of this journal experimented with their own writing styles to show how a word can mean different things at one time. It is about the relationship and interplay between language, literature and philosophy. The essays in *Dissemination* are divided into two parts. They deal with the illusion of presence.

The first essay is Plato’s “Pharmacy” where Derrida suggests that one can examine the difference between philosophical knowledge and sophistic deception in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. Plato through Socrates argues that speech is superior to writing. The *Phaedrus* is an attack on writing and memorization of texts. Writing and memorization contaminate the pure thought of the human mind. One can have reality through dialogue between two persons in which the listener hears words immediately through spoken words. Speech is direct and immediate expression of the speaker and he does not face any uncertainties about meaning. On the contrary, writing is a kind of inscription and is always materially inscribed. Anyone who reads somebody’s inscription in his absence
has the chance of misinterpretation because he does not understand what the speaker really intends to express. For Plato writing and memorization of a text is a *pharmakon*, a poison. But in ancient Greek *pharmakon* means medicine and Plato used the word both poison and medicine. Derrida deconstructs Plato’s view of writing as he is repeating the same *logocentric* tradition like Saussure and Rousseau.

In the second essay, “Double Session” Derrida deconstructs the binary opposition between Stéphen Mallarmé, a nineteenth century French poet’s literature and Plato’s philosophy. But the dismantling of metaphysics of literature or philosophy would just be metaphysics again. Therefore, Derrida is concerned with what is between Mallarmé’s literature and Plato’s philosophy. According to Derrida,

Philosophy establishes its truth and priority through a certain mimetic understanding of literature, where writing is either the reflection or copy of truth, or where there are true appearances that are then belied by, doubled or mediated in textual appearance. Until Mallarmé literature has also been understood in relation to philosophy and philosophical truth, so that we read a text according to some ‘transcendent’ (or extra textual) truth which it represents. 21

Derrida highlights the analysis of the displacement of Plato’s philosophy around the ‘hymen’ in Mallarmé. Derrida’s use of the word ‘hymen’ is to show a moment of indeterminacy in language. ‘Hymen’ is a French word which means membrane at opening of vagina, usually broken at first sexual intercourse and it has that same
meaning in English. He also concerns with the contrary meanings of ‘hymen’ such as barrier to sexual relation, sign of female virginity and sexual intercourse. Mallarmé expresses through literature there is the syntactical possibility of indeterminacy in language. What Derrida points out in this essay is the possible contradiction of meanings inherent in language as a part of deconstructive strategies.

In the final essay, “Dissemination”, Derrida cites an example of dissemination from Philippe Sollers’ novel Numbers. It is composed of not only of numerous fragments such as quotations from other texts, Chinese ideograms, parenthetical asides and dashes and diagrams. The term dissemination is already introduced in Plato’s “Pharmacy” and “Double session”. He has already cited the essence of dissemination in the previous essays. In “Dissemination”, Derrida put forward into two types of texts. They are Original text i.e. Numbers and Commentary text i.e. Dissemination. The Original text is derived from several texts or references. The Commentary also repeats the same procedure as the Original text does. There is absence of an original and primary reference. In doing so, he deconstructs the binary opposition between the Original text and Commentary text. Derrida finds that these references are based on the metaphysics of presence. Dissemination occurs in between all texts. The Original text, Numbers includes that of Commentary text. In the same way, the Commentary text also constitutes the Original text, Numbers. There is an interaction of the text Numbers and Dissemination as well as works from other philosophers such as Plato, Mallarmé, Mao, Marx, Pascal, Nicholas of Cusa, Bourbaki and Wittgenstein. So, there is no really a definite text which comes to exist at present. The reader is engaged in the infinite play
of meanings. In order to give Commentary of a text, one has to stop the play of meanings. Moreover, when one tries to describe a text with proper explanation, he cannot find its present meaning. So, there always produce another kind of reading. There is possibility to exist a text with multiple meaning.

_Margins of Philosophy_ (1972) translated by Alan Bass, is a book of essays which comprises a number of essays on issues about language. “Differance” is an important essay which introduces neologism for the word _differance_ as difference and deferral in linguistics signs. “White Mythology” concerns with philosophical presuppositions incorporated within the difference between literal and metaphorical language. It is an analysis of metaphor which plays a very important role in philosophy in the works of Aristotle, Hegel and Heidegger. “Signature Event Context” is also an important essay where one can find the most explicit and most accessible argument of Derrida’s iterability. It also comprises a reading of J.L Austin’s _performative_ utterance (speech acts which perform an action) and _constative_ utterance (assertions, or statements of facts). While discussing J.L.Austin, Derrida notes that all the comments on language, being is not _constative_ features signifies the speech act as the primary form of language.

Another book that contains Derrida’s idea of deconstruction is _Signeponge/Singsponge_ (1984). Here Derrida deconstructs the law of the definite, complete, and exact and proper name. For Derrida a proper name ought to have no meaning. It refers to nothing but what it names. But names are words; therefore, they are included in a system of language.
Next, Derrida turns his writing to aesthetics in 1987. Derrida begins to work in painting with a broader palette in *The Truth in Painting* (1987). Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod translated this book. It is a series of essays on art: Kant’s aesthetics and problem of framing (the parergon) the painting of French artist, Valerio Adami, Gerard Titus-Carmel’s miniature sculpture of coffins and Heidegger. “Parergon” is the first essay in *The Truth in Painting* where Derrida explores the frame, the Paergon. The frame makes the border between the work of art and whatever lies outside it. It is quite important and necessary in order to make the work of art as an aesthetic object. However, deconstruction neither attempts to reframe art in order to make it perfect nor make up the absence value of the work. In deconstruction, the frame is neither the inside nor the outside of the work. But the painting is not complete without the frame. In this context, Derrida finds that the frame is somewhat similar to Derrida’s deconstructive strategies such as *differance*, *supplement*, *hymen*, *pharmakon*, *bricolage*, etc.

The next essay is entitled as “Restitutions of the Truth in Pointing” (pointure). It is a widely discussed essay where Derrida’s discussion centers around the social, political and economic issues always interfere in painting. Derrida teases out deconstructive idea through Van Goh’s painting ‘Old shoes with laces’. The painting is misrecognised by Meyer Shapiro and Heidegger. Shapiro recognizes that the shoes belong to a city dweller (perhaps Van Goh) whereas Heidegger sees the shoes for a peasant woman. Even though Shapiro and Heidegger presume that there is probably the owner of the old shoes. Derrida suggests that the title of the old shoes with laces neither
signify any pair nor the owner. Therefore, it does not belong to any person. It reveals the indeterminate of the old shoes, an important feature of Derrida’s deconstructive strategy.

Another interesting book of 1987 by Derrida is *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. Alan Bass translated this book. It consists of a series of postcard speaking to various people and it is supposedly written on the backs of the postcard. Some postcards are real and some are imaginary. It supposedly draws the same picture of thirteenth century art, illustrating Plato and Socrates. Plato stood behind Socrates who was writing on a table. Yet, anyone misrecognises the postcard because Socrates never writes. It does not signify definite meaning. The meaning lies in the eyes of the beholders. Henceforth, it can be misread and misrecognised. The postcard reveals the indeterminacy of deconstruction. One who engages in such activity is in *aporia* (a path that leads nowhere).

The final work of Derrida is *Specters of Marx* (1993). It is translated by Peggy Kamuf. His interest in politics is obvious in this book. It is based on a public address on problems of Marx and Marxism. With the fall of communist governments in Eastern Europe in 1989, Derrida coins a new term ‘*hauntology*’ which deals with somebody’s involvement in keeping company with non-reality with specters, ghosts etc. It is not with being and not reality but a kind of haunting between the space of being and non-being and life and death. It is derived from the French word *Ontology* which means reality or the study of being. In these perspectives, Derrida points out that joining
company with the specters between life and death is political. It is political because joining with the specter is joining to the ‘other’ which is marginalized. Whenever one attempts to join the specter he would be marginalized. In other words, Derrida also tells that the word ‘specter’ signifies haunting Europe, the specter of communism. What Derrida reveals in this book is that after the fall of communist governments in Eastern Europe, a specter of Marx continues to haunt so as to become a communist nation again. The word *hauntology* signifies Derrida’s undecidability of deconstruction. The specter or the ghost of Marxism is neither absent nor present. Like hymen, the specter of Marx situates in between the absence and presence of Marxism. In spite of his political and religious interest in his later writing, Derrida does not move away from literature and he has become a well known philosopher of contemporary times.

The above discussions of his different works enable us to understand that nothing is decidable because many meanings can exist at one time. In traditional mode of reading, a reader believes that language is capable of expressing ideas without changing the meaning. But for Derrida, any language has not provided definite and stable meaning, therefore, only text is the source of meaning. His deconstructive reading subverts the idea that text has a fixed and unified meaning.

Derrida’s later work influenced literary critics in American Universities and the members of *Yale School* including Paul de Man, Geoffrey Hartman, and J. Hillis. Miller. They became prominent figures in the contemporary literary theory.
The present thesis is an attempt to study the ways of Derrida’s deconstructive strategy. Derrida is mainly concerned with the problematic nature of all stable centers. Everything in this world is based on the idea of a center which is a truth, origin and God word etc. which generates all meaning. This desire of a center brings forth the binary opposites with one term of the opposition, central and the other marginal. Further the center wants to fix the play of binary opposites. According to Derrida, this centrality is not fixed because the hierarchy is reversible. There is always the possibility to subvert the central term so that the marginalized term can become central. The marginalized term temporarily overthrows the hierarchy. When we centralize on something, the same process will repeat. So, nothing is definite, exact and fixed. This is the basic essence of Derrida’s deconstructive strategy. The deconstructive approach of reading subverts the traditional mode of reading a text. After the arrival of this kind of reading, the critical theories in the past have become absolutely irrelevant.

The present thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter is devoted to an introduction dealing with what literary theory is. A brief account of development of Derrida’s life and his philosophical career is analysed as it is essential for a better understanding of his deconstructive ideas. This is followed by a second chapter dealing with the milieu of critical theories and a short history of literary theory. It is important to analyse the social background and the important philosophers who influence Derrida and help him in the growth and development of his deconstructive strategy. The social background which is important in shaping Derrida’s career is his realization of belonging to a marginalized and deprived culture or the Jews and their tradition. This
idea of marginalization has influenced him on his development of the philosophy of deconstruction. It is because of the influence of great philosophers like Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, and Husserl that Derrida has become one of the greatest contemporary philosophers.

The third chapter is devoted to ‘Structuralism: the roots of deconstruction’. Derrida has derived the philosophy of deconstruction from structuralism. It is the root of deconstruction. Structuralism emerged as a significant approach to critical analysis of literary texts in the later half of twentieth century. It studies the constituents of a text by examining the underlying variant structures which is based on the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure’s work on structural linguistics. His structural linguistics formed the basis of structuralism. However, the concepts of structuralism are deconstructed as there are certain issues which are not clear in structuralism. Structuralism depends on structures and structures depend on centers. No structure can be conceived without a center. However, Derrida argues that there is no stable center. And if there is no center, there cannot be any structure. So structuralism collapses by its own implications. This is Derrida’s deconstructive devices or strategy.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the analysis of ‘deconstruction’. Deconstruction means not to destruct the work of an author but to show different meanings at work in language. Therefore, it has created confusions and perplexities between literary work and its interpretation. Whenever any theory is created it contradicts itself and casts into difficult situation of interpretation or hermeneutics which is not definite. It has shown
that the meaning of a text is really infinite and has a number of conflicting possible meanings. The critical theories such as Marxism, Feminism, Gay and Lesbian studies and recent theory like New Historicism and Cultural Materialism are absolutely irrelevant after the application of deconstructive analysis. The fifth chapter discusses the irrelevances of these theories. The last or the sixth chapter of the thesis is the conclusion of the analysis of Derrida’s deconstruction and its implications on literary work. It analyses the various ramifications of Derrida’s deconstruction and afterwards of deconstructive theory. The new developing trends in literary theories are more related with cultural studies. In order to understand the development of deconstruction by Derrida, an analysis of the brief history of literary theory and the social and literary milieu where Derrida lived and worked is done in the next chapter.
NOTES


3 Culler, *Literary Theory: A very Short Introduction* 15.


15 Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 199.

16 Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 265.

17 Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 351.

18 Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 369.

