CHAPTER SIX
Art may be said to embody beauty and truth. Truth may be equated with commitment and this may in turn spring from the involvement with and embracing of an ideology. Though some may feel that commitment of a writer to a certain ideology leads definitely to propaganda yet some others view "ideology as a means for structuring and organizing human experience" (Girgus 4). As far as the Wright and Jayakānta are concerned their writings comprise both types: works that are perfectly blended with beauty and truth and others which are not integrated neatly with beauty and truth. An examination of their works reveals surprising similarities in the quality of their writings.

Wright's best writings are those written before his leaving for Paris and they deal with the problems of lower class Southern as well as Northern blacks. In the same way Jayakānta's best writings are those written during his early phase of writing career which focus on the sufferings of the lower class, city slum dwellers and the middle class family problems.

Admittedly, Wright's later writings, writings done in Paris, have traces of influences of some 'foreign' ideas and philosophies and though they are about blacks in
America, they are twice removed from reality; space and time. Hence critics value them as inferior in quality. Surprisingly, Jayakāntan's writings also bear the same pattern as far as their artistic merit is concerned. His achieving a tremendous success and attainment of fame confine/elevate him to a bourgeois status and due to his involvement with different political ideologies other than communism was also responsible for this; his reading of Western writers has influenced him to write about sex and marriage and these writings are packed with ideas and in some cases even newspaper reports are made into stories making his writings suffer artistically.

To some readers and critics, however, the place of both the writers in their respective literatures remains controversial. Some critics of Wright accord only sociological and historical value to his writings. In the same way Jayakāntan's critics observe that he gives importance to message and in such an endeavour he loses control over the techniques of the fiction as a result his novels and short novels comparatively suffer artistically. But many critics consider many of the short stories, Vilutukal (The Roots) a short novel, and the novel Oru Manitan Oru Vītu Oru Ulakam as the best among his fiction.
As writers, Wright and Jayakánta employ the moment by moment plot, the ladder like structure in most of their novels but at the same time they probe the concealed emotions of their characters. Whereas Wright resorts to third person point of view in most of his fiction, Jayakánta in some short stories and in a few novels presents first person narration also. While Wright has better achievement in executing a very different novel Native Son, Jayakánta's fiction tend to become 'truths' sans 'beauty'. So they lack artistic merit.

As there is ample evidence of similarities in both the writers' writings, there is an astonishing similarity in the quality of their writings too. There is a clear demarcation of two phases in their writing career. Critics judge that Wright's fiction in his Parisian period is inferior in artistic merit to his American period writing. In the same way Jayakánta's writings during the late seventies, that is, after his break with the Communist party, is inferior to his early writings. Though all of their works have readability and literary style, the works of their second phase of writing lack the degree of truth they embody in characterization, scene and setting.

In Wright's case, he is unsure of his living place, he had been under a sense of insecurity and he also
focused his attention on new ideas and philosophies like existentialism. Jayakānta too shifted or extended his attention on Vedas, Hindu religion and Bertrand Russell's ideas on marriage. The result is their fabricating fiction not from their experiences but out of the ideas they had gained from their reading of books.

Jayakānta discusses logically how two different characters living in the same situation react to a problem. In the stories of the first period character, incident and background all mingle perfectly and the stories have a neat structure. In the second period, ideas dominate and characters are pushed to the second place. "I put ... ideas in the form of characters. There are ideas and ideas, countering each other. Number one idea gets a character and the number two idea gets another character" ("I am Angry For Others" 101). In this method the author pours out his ideas through his characters. He uses his characters as his mouthpieces and finally the story becomes dull and the structure of the story is also weakened, resulting in aesthetic dissatisfaction.

In the short novels of Jayakānta also we find these two types as we have found in the short stories: one, that is perfectly constructed with the blending of structure
and substance in a harmonious way. The other type is where ideas dominate and discussions form many parts of the writing. Vilutukal (1965) stands for the first type and Esvara Allā Tērē Nām (1983) for the second one. In Vilutukal, situation, background, characters, dialogue, technique, style all merge with one another and the structure emerges flawlessly. But in Esvara Allā Tērē Nām and some other short novels, though situations are realistic, instead of incidents, ideas or discussions try to propel the movement of the story without much success. So the structure becomes weak.

Of all the writings by Wright, Native Son is rated as the best for its pure exteriority and its intense power of description. Wright skillfully employs every aspect of the novel. The background, point of view, characterization, language, dialogues, incidents, all these join together and the novel achieves a structural unity. "The intensity of the novel comes from Wright's masterful handling of language, the adroit synthesis he achieves between his message and the form that shapes the message" asserts Ann Joyce (Joyce 23).

Native Son is an impressive novel wherein Wright has shown a great command of the techniques and resources of the novel art. In narrating the story in a captivating
manner and in developing his true-to-life characters including the influences that play on those characters, Wright has performed quite efficiently, "Reflection blends into action.... Ideas are dramatized with concrete and inescapable images, and dialogue goes crackling down the page", observes Charles Poore (Poore 45).

Many critics attacked the Book III of Native Son describing it as a propaganda piece. The length of a speech by lawyer Max drew more negative criticism than any other aspect of Native Son. But, there is also a view that, "Illuminating Max's failure to perceive Bigger's humanity, the speech proves to be a dramatization of Max's character" (Joyce 27). Wright adroitly employs symbols and makes a beautiful foreshadowing in the rat scene and skillfully handles the third person point of view. This novel sets a new trend in black fiction by its choice of situation, contemporary setting and placing the characters in the context of modern problems. It also extends our imagination and our sympathies beyond our personal experience. Though most of the characters are life-like, Bigger emerges as a living character, who at the end of the novel exhibits an inner core of his personality. The plot and character complement each other. The content and form merge perfectly. As the content exists in the form and form
embodies the content, the novel emerges as a unified whole. Wright exemplifies Mark Schorer's theory of fiction in which technique discovers the theme. He achieves the synthesization of experience and technique and the result is a perfect blending of beauty and truth, the important feature of novel art. And not surprisingly, Ralph Ellison feels "that Native Son was one of the major literary events in the history of American literature" (Ellison 210).

Among Jayakantan's novels Oru Manitan Oru Vītu Oru Ulakam is considered to be the best. There is no authorial intrusion, nor the dominance of ideas and message, and with realistic incidents and characters, the novel emerges as a well constructed one. In this novel Jayakántan gives freedom to his characters to choose their own path. Says Gnani, "If we see as achievements in Tamil novels during the Seventies, these two novels, Apitā and Oru Manitan Oru Vītu Oru Ulakam will stand proudly along with the earlier outstanding works" (Gnani 151).

Oru Manitan Oru Vītu Oru Ulakam portrays village life, its simplicity, beauty and uniqueness. The village Krishnarājapuram and its surroundings are presented neatly and the setting of the novel emerges solidly. As soon as Henry the hero of the novel, enters the village, the
atmosphere of the village and the conduct of the other characters go through a sea change. Henry's love pervades the entire populace of the village. This message controls, directs and conducts the characters of the novel Jayakantan has stated it himself.

This is the story of an orphan who has no father or mother. He was brought up by a man and a woman who are not husband and wife as they were not married. I wanted to bring out a universal man from our religions... This universal man Henry has brotherly affection for all. He built a house meant for all. These ideas make our village people free from narrow-mindedness and they become universal. Thus, the main theme is to show the universality still existing in our villages" ("I am Angry For Others" 106).

All the characters in Oru Manitan Oru Vītu Oru Ulakam are created with the right to live their own lives; this also enhances its artistic quality. They are complex, fully rounded characters.

An examination of the novels of both these writers reveals the surprising fact that both began their careers on an exceptionally good note, but after sometime the great hopes they raised among the reading public were dashed by
the decline in the quality of their writings. What added solidity and glow to their earlier writings was their commitment to a cause, the Communist ideals. But, when they were disenchanted with their ideology, both Wright and Jayakāntaṇ lost their grip with the art of novel writing, too. The novels of their later period bear out testimony to this fact.

As for Richard Wright, the lack of commitment almost made him unproductive and he wrote only one non-fiction work, *Black Boy* in 1945, and he could write another work of fiction *The Outsider* much later, only in 1953. This sterility was coupled with the less satisfying artistic aspects of *The Outsider*. In the case of Jayakāntaṇ, there is a perceptible decline in the quality of his artistic achievement in works such as *Karikōtukal*, *Āyuta Pūcai*, *O America!* and many others. These novels, like *Jaya* *Jaya Cāṅkarā*, lacked in integrating elements such as background, narrative technique, characterization and above all in plot construction. In these works his characters lack the fully rounded quality, act as mere caricatures and mouth-pieces of the author.

"*The Outsider* expressed Wright's criticism, of Western Society, and though the protagonist is a black, his hostility is significantly different from that of Bigger
thomas in *Native Son*. Whereas Bigger resents his exclusion from the middle class of the white man, Cross Damon the central figure of *The Outsider* - rejects completely all middle class values in America" (Emanuel and Cross 225). And Wright attempted a novel in modern mode but what he achieved was an old fashioned melodrama: "Playing through *The Outsider* are modern elements, none of them, unfortunately, integrated" (Karl 247) he further elaborated and there is a hastiness, not to the writing, but to the conception ... he demonstrates insufficient ground plan, lack of distance on ideas that took hold of him very rapidly in his French Stay" (Karl 248). Wright has failed in his ambition to weld the novel of ideas with the novel of violence. At times, he stops the action and allows his character to deliver lectures, which at times run into thirty four pages. this "essay" intrudes into the action of the novel. It is also filled with improbable incidents and coincidences. The unrealistic passages are at odds with the realistic frame work.

Thus *The Outsider* marks a clear deterioration in Richard Wright's art. In the later novels of Jayakāntan also we trace the same types as we found in his short stories and short novels. Further we do not find the tight construction and precision of narration in the novels that
we found in the short stories. It may be because of his writing of all of his novels as serials in magazines and they are invariably based on newspaper stories. So the structure of the novel becomes loose and in the process it mars the artistic quality of the novel. And also as Totātri puts

The Writer's weakness in his attitude towards society may not be very much evident in the short stories since it revolves around a small and short circuit, but when he enters into novel writing, the writer's whole perception of life is thrown open to us. Since the novelist has to comprehend and think life in its full range and its inner relationships, Jayakānta who achieved success to some extent in short stories failed in novel writing often (Totātri 39).

After a lapse of some years, Jayakānta published Jaya Jaya Caṅkarā. He published it in four parts from October 1976 to July 1977. In his introduction to this novel he says, "This Jaya Jaya Caṅkarā is a story; a work of imagination: a dream; but not a lie; it is the truth" (Jaya Jaya Caṅkarā 2). This novel provoked a lively controversy and received bitter and hostile reviews. Many critics condemned it for they found in it an attempt to propagate
brahminism and thrust it on the other community at the end of the 20th century. As a novel it is a failure, because the four parts of the novel do not join perfectly (Kalpanāndāsan Qtd. in Jayakānta Aīvāṭaṅkal, 294). The background of the story, its time, incidents and the movements of the characters do not move in one direction, so the vision is blurred and the novel loses its artistic quality.

The novel is packed with discussions, lectures and arguments. There is no central character to lead the action of the novel. Since this was written in four separate parts, they were not united by any integrating theme or character. Each part speaks of two or more problems. In the first part, Jaya Jaya Caṅkarā, it is religion, freedom struggle and the problem of untouchability. In the second part, Maṇavēji, Manitarkal, it is about freedom struggle, revolution and politics. The focus is on Ciṅkarāyar, a freedom fighter. In the third part, Entayum Tāyum, the concern is about organising an ashram; equal attention is given to Catyamūrti an extremist, in jail; and the life in jail. The discussion rests chiefly on atrocities in the jail and the issue of capital punishment. In the fourth part, Waha Yakṣam, the author tries to unite all the characters and their discussions. In short, it is a sort of summing up of the previous three parts.
Jayakānta started his writing career depicting the social reality; then from social reality to the problems of women, and of marriage; then proceeded to religion and politics. When thus he turns to the later themes, his writings are devoid of artistic merits.

Both Wright and Jayakānta started their literary careers as Communist party members. At the peak of their writing career, they left the party. Their leaving the party would have had some impact on the quality of their writings since they have moved away from commitment. The word commitment itself means leaning towards one ideology and at the same time to oppose the other. It's natural that writings, with commitment become propaganda. "Commitment, when used nowadays in a literary-political context, is generally taken to mean active adherence to left wing or 'progressive' values. Indeed, it is possible to go to the other extreme and to argue that practically all literature is 'committed' — in the sense that writers have always possessed basic values and assumptions that underly their work and shape it in ways of which they may be largely unaware" (Bartram 82). Richard Wright and Jayakānta wrote their early works in this way, with a social awareness, as "The writer — any writer — is inevitably committed because he cannot soar above history, whatever his pretensions to
doing so. Willy-Nilly he is involved in his own time, impartiality is impossible" (David Caute "Introduction" in What is Literature? lix). Jayakant declared later that "The author should be committed to ideas I can say that I am committed to science, a scientific socialism" ("I am Angry For Others" 105)

The question of the quality of art in relation to commitment may be an interesting subject. Art is defined thus: "That which shows the inner self of man to the heart of the other men is Art" (Sankar Roy 11). The novel will do this work very effectively and competently. "The value of Art has three stages. One: its own; two: it depends upon the artist; finally it depends upon the milieu" (Sankar Roy 15). If we approach Richard Wright's and Jayakant's writings from this angle, that is, work-writer-milieu, the worthiness or worthlessness of their writings will become clear. The evolution of art is a complex process. It "evolves from the best of man's needs; it transcends physical and economic compulsions; at the same time as it meets the best of man's needs, it creates and strengthens the needs" (Caccitantan 17). When Richard Wright and Jayakant wrote out of this compulsion they were artistically brilliant; when they tried to go outside these
compulsions and bring something from the outside and thrust it through their writings, it became dull and monotonous.

"These three functions, intensification, clarification and interpretation of experience the arts fulfil in various degrees" (Edman 30). According to Tolstoy in a work of art, sincerity is the aesthetic virtue" (Tolstoy 21). If there is no sincerity on the part of the author in executing his work, it suffers artistically. Moreover, novel art has a direct relationship with life more than any other art. "Experience, soulful understanding, examination, form are the four constituent parts that make a novel" (Mokan 57).

The quality of a novel depends how far these four parts merge one with the other. In the later writings of Richard Wright and Jayakanthan there comes a stage when the quality of their writings takes a nosedive. It reaches a new low in its artistic quality, since the four constituents listed above are not adequately joined together.

One may go deep into what happened to these two writers. Richard Wright and Jayakanthan began their literary career as committed Communists, in the middle or at the peak of their literary career they came out of the Communist
party. This would have made them feel lonely and they ascended to a bourgoise life style. In the case of Richard Wright not only his life style but his living place itself became uncertain. He lived in Paris on invitation. Ralph Ellision recalls how Wright felt his loneliness: "He said to me, "Really, Ralph, after I broke with the Communist party I had nowhere else to go ...." (Ellision 212).

In Jayakāntan too we may trace the dilution and degeneration of quality to his shifting stands in politics and sociological issues. Caught up in the murky politics of the day and trying to vouschafe for indefensible values and theories, equating Vedas on a par with Marxism and advocating new-Hinduism and Pseudo-revolution, Jayakāntan could not instil the same energy and depth to his later writings. Both writers in consequence have lost their solid basis in life. They took up in their later writings the outmoded and too distant problems; their later works were filled up with ideas, not with experiences. In the later works they were insincere in treating the message and careless in executing the work. This carelessness may be due to their growing old and writing on the same themes. A critic observes thus: "Where injustice governs where those who might reason have no faith in fair-mindedness or intelligence - propaganda replaces thought and art becomes
impossible" (Gardner 76). And in such a situation their tone becomes louder and it sounds like a plea for the freedom of their characters.

Though they have exposed the injustices of society in their earlier writings with a deep sense of commitment to a certain ideology, later they have started writing about new ideas and different political beliefs and this shift affected the quality of their works. This does not mean that only a committed writer could become a better artist. With regard to Wright and Jayakant, they were uncertain of their grounds. They try to identify with every other idea or philosophy. This naturally led them to nowhere. This is because they were unsure of their social relationships and could not realize the conditions of existence. In the final analysis we could only say that their commitment to a certain truth enables them to write good works embodying beauty but later they give 'truths' only.