CHAPTER SEVEN
TWO HUMANISTS

Richard Wright and Jayakānta responded to the social demands of their time creatively by writing fiction highlighting the unequal treatment and the injustices done to the racially inferior, economically poor, socially low caste people of their respective societies. They are, in short, the unacknowledged legislators of their people. They have achieved this because of their socio-politico-historical-cultural and literary commitment on the one hand and a matching creativity on the other.

During the twentieth century, the world witnessed and underwent remarkable changes in all spheres of life. Social life was affected by the political systems and vice versa. Science played a vital role in transforming the very social life of the whole world. The world society in general has gained enormously from science and technology. At the same time greedy and power hungry leaders have tried to subjugate other countries and this has culminated in conflicts engulfing the entire world twice. The world wars have demonstrated that science could be a creator as well as destroyer. As an aftermath of the war, science has been instrumental in helping and abetting the social tensions and class conflicts more intensely. The bourgeois and the power
brokers have sophisticated means to keep some societies or some segments of any society under their control. So wealth and power have been shared by countries and people unevenly. Those countries which have garnered more power and wealth naturally have been at the helm of world affairs. The weak, third world countries are made to seek stronger allies for their support. Thus the world in mid-fifties has been found to be divided into two distinct blocks: One that is led by the United States of America and the other by the Soviet Union.

In the societies of different countries also the conflicts have widened and deepened on class, colour, race, caste and religious lines. The advancement of science and technology has almost tilted the balance in favour of the stronger and better socio-politico-religious groups. Thus in the American society the blacks are kept at a distance and they are denied freedom and equality. In India the society has a compartmentalised caste system that almost prevents social unity because most of the people are treated as inferior and even a part of the society as untouchable by a powerful class of the Indian society.

The spread of education, and the teachings of political as well as social scientists, and the contributions of the psychologists have had a great impact
on the world community as a whole. As a result of these awakenings there are wide ranging ramifications creating new and powerful voices from the oppressed people all over the world. The blacks in American society and the socially weaker people of the Indian society have started realising their 'plight' in real earnest. The writers of the oppressed have started exposing the atrocities of the dominant segments of the American as well as the Indian societies.

Seen against this context, the role of writers like Richard Wright assumes great significance. Richard Wright has almost succeeded in presenting the inner feelings, the shame and the violent emotions of racially harassed, debased and disgraced black men. In his writings he focuses on the human qualities of blacks, their love and desire of leading a peaceful, equal and free life in a racially oppressed society. In a starkly realistic manner, he depicts the cruelty, the violence and the purposeless drifting in the black lives. His subtle advocacy of the policy of making the blacks on a par with the whites has had greater influence in shaping white-black relations in America than any other.

In the same way, Indian society has been under attack for its rigid, inhuman casteist practices.
Especially writers of the mid-fifties made a scathing attack on such disgraceful conventions in their writings. Jayakāntaṉ, a Tamil writer of brilliance, has emerged as the champion of the under-privileged, low caste people of the Indian Society. Very movingly he brings out the agonizing and traumatic life of the marginalised people. He has succeeded in making these 'invisible' people visible to the society. Thus his fiction speaks of various types of atrocities on mankind especially the poor and weak people of the Indian society. His writings celebrate the brighter side of the social life focusing simultaneously on the darker side more humanely. The presentation of social divisions in various segments of the society underlines the necessity of achieving equality and freedom and making the society a meaningful entity.

Comparatively speaking, Wright has no solid literary tradition in black writing. The American literature itself is rather young, only two hundred years old. Most of its early literatures are imitations of the British literature. Though the settlers had started a new life in the new world, they reflected their experiences only through the British or European tradition of writings. Only in course of time a truly American literature has emerged highlighting the successes and failures of the members of
the new society and the tensions and the conflicts of the 'melting pot' situation. Against such a literary background, the black writer has to master European tradition as well as the American literary tradition, while creating anything worthy on black life. Thus the evolution of black literary tradition is the result of Euro-American hybridization and especially the black novel has emerged distinctly as a result of this.

The black novel, in its complexity of expression and elusiveness of meaning, is on a par with the modern fiction. But in opposing the establishment, and in portraying the protagonists as underdogs, it differs entirely from the mainstream American novel. It presents forcefully the plight of the blacks' suffering from colour prejudice and racial hatred.

On the other hand, Jayakāntan has a comparatively settled society with an ancient and rich Tamil literature as his inherited tradition. The Tamil Novel too in the beginning has been written on the British models. Only during the forties and fifties it has achieved an individuality of its own. In its history, the Tamil novel has reflected the political as well as social situations of its society. Wright has tried to evolve a tradition that is
meaningful to his life, but in vain. Jayakāntan has begun his life as an angry young man and blossomed into a fine humanist identifying with sinners and sufferers irrespective of their caste, creed and ideology. Not class, but individuals, situations do matter as far as he is concerned.

In Wright's and Jayakāntan's writings, the social environment plays a dominant role in controlling the life of their protagonists. The social situations are much different from America to India and their presentation in focusing the vital factors influencing the life of the protagonist is definitely at variance with each other. While Wright portrays the degrading effect of the racial conventions debasing the black life and subsequent sufferings, in Jayakāntan the caste factor is very deep and subtle and the customs and codes of a very ancient society's creation of an inferior and untouchable segment get submerged in the obvious economic/class situations.

Invariably in all of Wright's fiction there is violence. But in Jayakāntan violence is shown discreetly that too only in political novels. In the rest of the novels only conflicts, situations, ideas and taboos are shown. Wright's characters are of three types: victims: Women and Older men; non-violent people: Reverend Taylor and Fishbelly; rebels: most of the protagonists.
In Jayakãntan's fiction the poor and women are passive victims; there are revolutionary activists in political novels; and there are women's liberationists and radical thinkers. In Wright most of the characters are simple, uneducated folk, tenant farmers, manual labourers and domestics. In Jayakãntan they variously range from marginal, illiterate, poverty-stricken people to educated middle class people. While Wright's poor, black males want some place and happiness and move towards that direction, Jayakãntan's poor people and women are tormented by poverty and exploitation. None seems to wage a conscious battle against the atrocities. Only the middle class characters make some attempt to modify and solve their problems.

Owing to the reason that they live in an oppressive environment both Wright's black and Jayakãntan's marginal people have only limited opportunities. And these people are treated either as animals or as invisible in their societies. But the rebels in Wright make a valiant individual attempt to destroy the system. In Jayakãntan the political radicals collectively make such attempts. Though role playing is a safety measure to escape the racial violence in Wright, Jayakãntan's characters do not conceal their emotions. In some of the cases their expressing of their feelings trigger the breaking up of relations.
Wright’s protagonists are caught between racially oppressive whites and slavish blacks, the rebels become truly outsiders who are inevitably forced to resort to violence. On the other hand Jayakānta’s characters are not confronted by the dominant society directly and if at all they encounter the police they submit them passively. Their own class of people neither support them nor the establishment. But in the middle class families, conflicts between mother and son, father and son, wife and husband lead to alienation of the protagonist. In political novels the oppressive system lead some of the protagonists to become radicals.

Wright’s rebels achieve freedom at the cost of their life. But Jayakānta’s protagonists achieve neither freedom nor victory. Most of them are left to struggle with their problems.

Both in Wright and Jayakānta, the society is held responsible for the sufferings of the poor and downtrodden. While in Wright the white society is held as the criminal, in Jayakānta, it is shown as a rigid and uncompromising destructive force that makes individuals suffer.

Wright in Savage Holiday, and Jayakānta in Risi Mūlam, (The Origin of the Saint) "Cāḷaram", (Window) "Tarkkam", ( Debate) "Irulai Tēti" (Seeking the Darkness)
attempt issues that are too narrow, very uncharacteristic and diametrically different from their entire works. In these works they fail to highlight socially burning issues. Perhaps, they would have thought that these works have added variety to their writings, but one has to admit that they are sheer aberrations.

Unlike Wright, Jayakāntan makes use of myths, archetypes in stories such as "Tamilacci", "A Knippravēsam", "Pattinipparamparai", "Cuntrakāntam", Cila Nērānkaśīl Cila Manītarkaśīl. It requires a detailed analysis to study Jayakāntan's use of myths and archetypes and neither the scope of this thesis nor space permit us to delve into that subject here.

Wright's individuals react violently and Jayakāntan's individuals suffer mutely. Both Wright and Jayakāntan subtly raise the question of the survival of the poor and powerless in modern society. They portray in their writings the three dimensions of their characters/societies: historical, sociological and psychological. Most of their characters are well acquainted with hunger, disease and poverty. Unlike Jayakāntan, who takes the city and its slum as the background, Wright uses in most of his fiction, the Southern rural and the Northern urban locals as the
background of his fiction. Thus Wright portrays both the poor peasants of the South and the poor blacks of the Northern ghetto. In Jayakantā most of the characters are from urban society including types of beggar, the prostitute, the leper, the artist, the writer, and the politician etc. Only a few are from rural background. In Wright the victims have only broken homes and battered families. In Jayakantā the relationships are conditioned by poverty and the victims suffer betrayal and distrust from their relatives. While Wright's rebels become lonely and alienated and seek affirmation in action, Jayakantā's rebels in his political novels are united with fellow human beings with a commitment to achieve freedom and equality and seek affirmation in joint action.

Most of Wright's characters are illiterate, poor and they are unable to articulate and invariably non-reflective. But Jayakantā's characters, irrespective of economic status and educational standard are reflective even beyond their intellectual capacity and articulate and hence at times their voices are construed as the voice of the author. Wright's victims/characters seek escape in sex, alcohol and violence. In Jayakantā's later novels this trend of seeking sex and alcohol not to forget the sufferings but to enjoy life is evident. Though we see in
Wright's fiction a large scale migration of his protagonists from one place to another especially urban-oriented, in Jayakānta not much movement takes place. His protagonists are made to face the situations in their respective places. Unlike in Jayakānta, Wright's protagonists move from one job to another and there is disenchantment which leads to violence. In Jayakānta taking up or moving from job is not prominent but disenchantment springs up in social relations when social conventions and codes are violated but it does not lead to any violence. The poor are left to suffer their fate. Only their sufferings are highlighted. In the fiction of Wright the past has no meaning but only the present has a validity and his protagonists seem to seize it instantly. In Jayakānta the present is depicted as meaningless in most of the short stories, yet in a few stories, a new future is implied and in the rest of the stories the problems of the present are discussed/depicted.

While Wright portrays the plight of his protagonists for some better place from South to North and from America to Europe, Jayakānta gives no such movement or journey of his protagonists. The drama of life takes place either in the city slums or somewhere else. No importance is given to the place of action since every where the social situation is more or less the same. In Wright's South the
black community is united and the strongest, but in the urban North even family is not a unified one. As in the case of Jayakántaŋ's fiction, not much is portrayed about the rural life except Oru Manitan Oru Vīṭu Oru Ulakam. In his fiction the life in Madras city is shown: poverty and degradation in slum life; in the middle class family; the problems of marriage, love and sex; and in political novels places are not adequately described.

Wright shows in his fiction how the White American society deliberately adopts the policy of repression towards black rebels. But in Jayakántaŋ no particular race or caste is shown as repressive. Instead, he depicts the various types of oppression: social, political, economic, religious class, caste and sexual, which almost destroy the life of the oppressed.

The more common feature of their early writings is the excessive use of dialect. While Wright employs the dialect indiscriminately in his short stories. Jayakántaŋ uses it judiciously and it is always appropriate to the situation. "Wright uses a great deal of dialect in these stories - a dialect that relies heavily on the most superficial of pronunciation features - dropping the last letter of a word for example, or excessive eye dialect to suggest black English speech. Grammatical features,
however, are sparse" says Sylvia Holton (Holton 137). Jayakānta skillfully employs Madras dialect in his early short stories; and in some of his later novels adequately and artistically uses the brahmin dialect especially in stories like "Yukacanti" and "Cuyataricanam".

But, they achieve a style "largely dictated by the nature of the author himself. It is the expression of his personality" (Hough 3). Of course their personalities are moulded by the society itself. About their style critics never have high opinion. "Wright has never been a master of polished prose" (Hicks 324). In the same way Jayakānta's style also receives negative criticism. "The complex syntax of his sentence while probably structured to convey his complex mental pictures, sometimes distress the reader from an identification with the spirit of narration" (A.V. Subramanian Qted. in Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature Vol.II 1817).

Wright in his autobiographical piece "The Man who went to Chicago" writes thus: "Hated by whites and being an organic part of the culture that hated him, the black man grew in turn to hate in himself that which others hated in him. But pride would make him hate his self-hate, for he would not want whites to know that he was so thoroughly
conquered by them that his total life was conditioned by their attitude; but in the act of hiding his self-hate, he could not help but hate those who evoked his self-hate in him" (Eight Men 173). In the same vein Jayakanta writes as the feelings of Ammäcikkilavâ in his short story. "Oru Pakal Nerappācañcar Vaṇṭiyil" thus: "—yes to think (the feeling) that the lost one is still there, and still losing it without knowing the losing of it and at the same time withstanding the loss, then losing it completely, whatever it may be then the (feeling) that we lost it makes the lost thing a great one." (Putiyavārppukâ 125).

While Wright's fiction emphasizes racial violence and black rage, Jayakanta's fiction invariably focuses on compassionate and humanistic approach to life and social interaction. Of course, some of his political novels centre around violence but it is not as intense as in Wright's novels. The discriminatory treatment makes Wright's protagonists resentful of the white society and their reaction to this is rebellious. On the other hand most of the characters in Jayakanta's fiction bubble with compassion and celebrate life. While Wright is considered to be the father of the violent black protest tradition, Jayakanta is rated as the champion of the downtrodden and one of the male feminist writers of Tamil fiction. Both of
them show how the individuals suffer in a cruel and indifferent environment.

Wright's protagonist encounters two very important factors that play a major role in shaping his very life. One is his being restricted to a certain place that is a sort of spatial confinement and the second is the sexual taboo of meeting/facing a white woman. These two factors have a devastating effect on most of his protagonists. A black is ruthlessly hunted when he trespasses the white territory and, out of ignorance confronts a white woman; he cannot dream of trespassing into the white territory when his family is in dire trouble caused by a natural calamity. He is not supposed to nourish simple and natural desires such as owning some property. Here territory is an elusive meaning for a black. He can neither be happy on the ground with the society or under the ground being left alone.

Similarly Jayakantam shows in his fiction how the socially weaker section is found to struggle with the hopeless caste and class environment. Such people are marginal and they are unable to withstand the pressures of life. So there are unwed mothers who find it extremely difficult to lead a decent life. This environmental oppression in some of their fictions lead to confrontations, tensions and conflicts. In Richard Wright's fiction it is
always racial conflict and gender conflict; in Jayakāntan besides the gender conflict, there are caste, political, class and religious conflicts. These conflicts are the inevitable consequences of the reactions of protagonists to these oppressions. Unlike in Wright's fiction, certain conflicts lead to some resolutions in Jayakāntan.

Surprisingly, the social disjunctions in their respective societies also reveal a similar/identical focus on relationships such as the ones between son and parent and man and woman. The black family is the most vulnerable for racial or economic distress that it easily crumbles under pressure. Most of Wright's protagonists have no fathers. Such a portrayal may have an autobiographical element in it because of Wright's antipathy to his father.

As in Richard Wright, in Jayakāntan's fiction also most of the protagonists have no fathers. The protagonists are often pitted against their unwed mothers and suffer from a socially disgraceful situation of fatherless bastards. The inability of their mothers to give an answer is indicative of their social status.

Thus both the writers have shown in their fiction that the family life too is affected when the societal forces like race, caste, class and religion exert their
pressure on individuals. When these individuals happen to be sensitive, young people, the result is discontent and disjunction in family.

When the relationship between the parents and their protagonists lead to disintegration of the family itself, the strained relationship between man and woman - husband-wife, lover - love also is equally responsible for the breaking up of the family. Both Wright and Jayakant portray how the misunderstanding or the exploitation or the infidelity of the spouses contribute to the tragic ends of family life.

Wright's black males' relationship with their female counterparts is one of exploitation. While the black women are comparatively obedient, loyal and truthful, the black men are selfish and disobedient and at times they never hesitate to eliminate the black women if they feel them as their stumbling blocks. Wright also makes explicit the devastating effect the woman's betrayal has on a black family. When a black woman is seduced by a white man, the husband of the black woman is driven to destroy the whites and himself. Though the black woman seems to be loving and kind, her action ignites fury and the hurt of his pride and honour by her betrayal almost destroys the family. Cross
Damon and Jake are examples of selfish and callous husbands who ultimately destroy the happiness of their family members and finally themselves.

While Wright's protagonists seek physical/sexual relationship with prostitutes, in Jayakantam the protagonist takes a second woman in addition to his wife. The triangular relationship - husband-wife-the other woman - always ends in the disintegration of the settled family life. A loving wife's innocence is taken for granted by the husband and he betrays her. Some men try to sell their wives for some material gains and in the process they are rejected by their women. Thus the family life in Jayakantam's fiction is in serious conflict when either husband or wife goes against each other.

In Wright's fiction religion acts as a negative force in subjugating the blacks into blind servility. But in Jayakantam religion is not directly made as a negative force for the social ills, only its defects and shortcomings are depicted through some characters. Religious conflicts are there but only with other religions, against conversion. In Wright, Christianity is either ineffective in alleviating the sufferings of the poor blacks or destructive in making them to cling to it as a last resort. In Jayakantam though Hindu religion has a major role to play in keeping the
society in segments, it is not seen directly responsible for
the sufferings of the poor. Wright condemns black church as
white society's invention to subjugate the blacks. But in
Jayakānta there is no such attack on either the temples or
the priests. Instead, he calls for honesty and sincerity in
following the Vedas. Wright considers Christianity as a
negative force helping and abetting self-hatred and shame
and at the same time denying blacks of their cultural
inheritance. Surprisingly, Jayakānta's attack on Hindu
religion is presented as being mounted, not other castes,
non-brahmins, but from the brahmin radicals themselves.
Wright's black Christianity gives importance only to
humility, submission, and otherworldliness. In Jayakānta no
such indepth analysis of the Hindu religion is made. Though
some practitioners of Hindu religion keep certain segments
of the society under their control, advocating in the name
of god and religion, Jayakānta has not focused his
attention on it. At the same time he concentrates on the
purity of brahminism as espoused in the Vedas.

Perhaps Wright's ire on christianity as a
subjugating force of the blacks, stems from his own
experience in his early childhood. That's why he repeatedly
focuses on Christianity and portrays the black priests as
selfish and the black Church as indifferent to black life;
instead of promising something in the present life it supposedly assures salvation in the next life. Wright in his later writings condemns communism as a new white religion, intent on ruling the blacks. Party and communist officials rule instead of the Church and the ministers. On the other hand, in Jayakantha there is no detailed account of the impact of the Hindu religion on the Indian masses. He simply highlights the shortcomings in some brahmin protagonists' lives and as far as communism is concerned he glorifies it as a new Veda and proudly champions its salient features.

While most of Wright's protagonists reject the church and view god as an alien and repressive force, in Jayakantha no such picture is depicted. He neither rejects God nor accepts Him. His stand on religion, God and caste are ambiguous. Wright's protagonists defend themselves by rejecting the church, its values and its symbols. In Jayakantha there is no such rejection, because his rebels do not perceive religion as a destructive force of the social relationships.

As for family situations, both writers reflect some common but global trends in their respective societies. They depict how the rapidly changing and highly competitive,
materialistic society challenges/affects the traditional male-female relationships and family allegiances. This, they portray how man-woman, in general, and husband-wife in particular, betray each other and escape punishment alienating the children. Further the parents' self-indulgence almost destroys loyalty, respect, and responsibility, which are all supposed to be the cornerstones of stable families. They also portray in their writings the loss of love, the failure of marriage and the destruction of families. In both the writers most of the male protagonists dominate the women. While Wright advocates and identifies the male cause at the expense of the submissive black women, Jayakāntan supports and focuses the sufferings of the women. Wright has not given any prominence to black woman in his fiction, it may be because of his childhood experience in which he has been controlled by strong-willed women - mother, grandmother and aunts. As a critic puts it "Neither women characters nor 'women's questions' figure centrally in Wright's fiction; when they appear at all, they are subsumed under larger political or philosophical life" (Williams 395). They play only supportive roles; they either become obstacles to the blacks' achieving freedom or in one or two cases supporters of the protagonists. On the other hand, Jayakāntan's women characters are fully developed ones. Many of his works are concerned with the
women and her problem of struggle for freedom from the male dominated society. This he does because he has said, "I feel that the woman is a socially oppressed class" ("I am Angry For Others" 104).

In Wright, the white male's sexual assault of the black woman destroys the black family and the trust between black man and woman is also broken. In Jayakāntan no such thing happens on the basis of colour, even if it happens, as in "Aṣṇippravēsam", it does not destroy the relationships. Wright also exposes the folly of the white society in whitemen freely exploiting the black women whereas the black men are castrated even for looking at the white women. In Jayakāntan the sexual exploitation of women is not portrayed overtly but it is implied that women are sexually abused and there are unwed mothers; and in some cases the widows are the victims of sexual abuse.

An America, the social conventions, values and the man-woman relationships are almost the same in both the white and black societies/communities. The blacks more or less follow the same white conventions in love and marriage. But in India, the conventions and codes differ vastly from the dominant bourgeois society to the low class and low caste society in love and marriage. That's why when a story
depicting a woman from the lowest segment - an unwed mother - takes a man as her lover/man and becomes pregnant, the society has nothing to object to this sort of portrayal as immoral or unethical, but when the portrayal of a brahmin girl's seduction and her being "forgiven" by her mother have been portrayed, it was objected by the custodians of conventions and codes; they have made a hue and cry over it saying that it advocates immorality. This double standard of the society itself is indicative of its character in preserving and protecting its 'virtues' and its "purity", but at the same time simply shut its eyes to the plight of the lower segment of the society. Another instance of injustice is that a man can have relations with more than one woman but a woman should be wedded to one man only; any violation of this convention will lead to complications. For many of Wright's protagonists sex is a substitute for love. In Jayakântan sex is a kind of exploitation and for Pirapu and Çârañkañ it is never a substitute for love. Love in Jayakântan means absolute love which expects nothing but gives all. Wright surprisingly gives two positive stories celebrating life: "A Man of All work" and "The Big Black Man". Jayakântan on the other hand ends only two stories with a pessimistic note: "Camukam Êppatu Nâlupêr" and "Iñnum Oru Peññin Katai" in which the protagonists commit suicide.
Wright's protagonists expect maternal care as well as sex from their women because they are neglected by their weak fathers and are nurtured by their strong mothers. In Jayakāntaṇ's later fiction, the protagonists are very forthright in their affairs with women and they always opt for a second woman and they even share liquor with them which is considered to be unethical in the Indian society. Wright's women are abused by society, by their lovers, and husbands and they emerge as victims who tolerate much pain. In Jayakāntaṇ also the women are abused by society and by their husbands and they become victims. Though Wright's women desire for love and devotion their inferiority complex and few options make them settle for less. Unlike in Wright, women in Jayakāntaṇ give love and have absolute devotion to their lovers and husbands. They sometimes transform their male counterparts with their unconditional love.

Thus as products of their society, Wright and Jayakāntaṇ explore their society, and their writings speak of relationships among different sections of the society. As socially conscious writers they identify themselves with the victims of social injustices like racism and casteism, gender and religious prejudices. In their writings, they deal with a world which is in a meaningless state. Thus their writings naturally focus on "the definition of that
state, the tragedy of it" (Fuller 17). They have illuminated their respective contemporary societies by employing the common currency of language, understanding the common course of history and showing the nature of order and structure of their societies. Their writings give greater importance to cultural values, the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed, than to artistic excellence. Thus they explore and expose the given detail and event; deal with individual and personal lives in particular environments. In short, their writings focus on atrocities of the society and as criticisms of them, their writings are laden with revolutionary ideas. As ardent followers of Marxism they always consciously expose the social evils in accordance with Marxian belief that "literature can speak to us of the society within which it came into being, its organization, institutions, modes or production, and modes of thinking and feeling" (Prawer 410).

More than fifty years have elapsed since the publication of their writings. Now the present day environment is different from theirs. In America, as Malcolm Bradbury and Ruland observe,

For the fifty years following the second world war America has been a world shaping super power. Its
citizens are thought by many in the world to lead typically Post-Modern lives and to represent the essential principles and life-styles of late Modern capitalism. American culture, aided by possession both of the English language, the main world language, and the newer languages of communications technology, reaches everywhere, whether it is popular, serious, serio popular or any mixture of both. American writing has reflected this position of power, growing more open to history to the global proliferation of styles and forms, to the sometimes exhilarating and sometimes depressing new span of human activity, (Bradbury and Ruland 370).

Thus a different scenario has emerged all over the world. In India too the situation is different from what it was some fifty years ago. There is vast improvement in all spheres of life. After the Independence the forty-seven year self-rule has proved that India is the largest democracy in the world, making rapid strides in science and technology, in the fields of agriculture and higher education. Indian writing after celebrating the Gandhian ideals during the freedom struggle and in the early days of Independence has turned to many directions highlighting social, political, feminist and personal problems. The
spread of education to all citizens of India has made it possible to have a wide range of writers making appearance on the literary horizon.

In America, there is a growing competition for jobs, housing, and political powers among the different races. Particularly the blacks are no longer willing to accept their status as second class citizens. They demand control over their schools their organizations, and their communities. The black males and females have started sharing power and position in public as well as private sectors. But at the same time there the black militant voice is heard; ghetto riots leading to black crimes at an alarming rate is seen.

In India, though slums multiply every year in every city and people rot there, the awareness they have about their equal rights and equal opportunities to live in the society is tremendous. The media, especially the cinema which is the poor man's staple diet, has almost succeeded in educating their rights. Their right to franchise also has a far reaching impact on the society as a whole.

The changes in the societies are reflected in respective literatures too. Richard Wright has bequeathed a powerful, solid and articulate protest novel tradition to
his talented successors. Taking the same problems for their writings, writers like Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin give idiosyncratic treatment to their material.

Bradbury and Ruland observe thus; "Richard Wright had been the leading figure of the 1930s, but he bred many successors in the 1950s. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) added to Wright's increasingly existential vision a Kafka-like absurdity by telling the story of a black whose colour has rendered him invisible as a moral agent" (Bradbury and Ruland 380). And a host of talented young black writers have contributed to and enriched the black novel tradition in various ways from black separatism to protest and detective novels; from surreal, experimental to self-reflective post modern works; from the central issues of the historical identity of blacks to the black feminist fiction. In Tamil, Jayakānta also has a host of successors continuing the trend set by him. Writers such as Vittal Rāo, Vācanti, G. Nākarāja, Tēvārāti, Jayanta and Bālakumāran have contributed significantly to the enrichment of the Tamil fiction simultaneously adopting Jayakānta's themes and making variations appropriately in their individual way. Thus they focus variously from socio-economic to psychological; from family, marriage, love and sex to feminist issues.
After breaking new grounds in their respective literary traditions and setting new trends and making it possible for a host of their successors to explore and diversify the social as well as literary fields, they remain as prominent writers in their respective literatures. As far as Wright is concerned, he has become one of the front rank American Writers of the modern era. Likewise, Jayakăntan also makes an imposing presence in the Tamil novel history. With his emergence, Tamil short story and novel have attained a new dimension in presenting social problems logically and condemning social injustices with a Marxian temper and probing the psyche of the victims as well as the oppressed, with psychological insight.

One area to be explored in Wright and Jayakăntan is the other writers’ influence on their writings. This area is to be dealt with more deeply. Jayakăntan claims that he has not read much but a closer scrutiny will reveal the truth. Art is after all on one level imitation of nature and on another level art itself. Such a study will bring out their originality to the fore and put them in proper perspective in their respective literary traditions.

As artists they may not be great but as humanist writers in sharing and exposing the agonies of the oppressed
the persecuted black men and twice oppressed black women of Wright, and the poverty-stricken, the beggars, the prostitutes, the lepers, the thieves, the socially conscious radicals, the unwed mothers, the fallen women and the bullies as well as the bullied of Jayakantā - they have awakened their respective societies with their vision of life. In their fiction, they do not create scheming villains, valiant heroes and virtuous heroines but only highlight the sufferings of the weak, depict the struggle they wage for their survival and portray their aspirations, ambitions, failures and successes. And all of their characters in one way or another strive for love and freedom and in their endeavour they radiate humanism; Wright and Jayakantā make us recognise this and reflect the same.