PREFACE

Nineteenth Century American literature is famous for masterpieces written by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, James Fenimore Cooper, Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, Henry James etc. I have concentrated my study on the fictional world of Henry James because his greatness looms larger with distance and time. The density and precision of his prose, duration of his career and volume of his productions, clarity of his characters, mixture of tragic and comic intuitions in his plots, humanity, wit and independence of his attitudes, together all these features left him above even his most distinguished contemporaries.

Henry James found a sort of restlessness in the particular cultures he knew, and the forms in which he represented it. His fictions are about the comforts of culture or about the discomforts with which they are inevitably backed. James represents these comforts and discomforts in his fictions by adopting varied themes, writing style, the techniques and also his unique way of characterization. In all his techniques, themes, style and characterization, he found himself alienated from a new generation which concerned itself with the nationalistic and material opening of life.
Henry James has written 20 novels, 112 stories, 12 plays and a number of literary criticisms. I have concentrated mainly on the 15 major fiction of Henry James that are listed below:

1) Watch and Ward (1871)
2) Roderick Hudson (1875)
3) The American (1876)
4) Washington Square (1880)
5) The Portrait of a Lady (1881)
6) The Bostonians (1884)
7) The Princess Casamassima (1886)
8) Daisy Miller (1888)
9) The Tragic Muse (1890)
10) The Spoils of Poynton (1895)
11) The Turn of the Screw (1896)
12) What Maisie Knew (1897)
13) The Wings of the Dove (1902)
14) The Golden Bowl (1904)
15) The Ambassadors (1905)

His fictions are the fiction of human nerves and the minds; his concern is with intellectual and emotional relations rather than with physical being. Thus the present thesis is a detailed study of the time and environment in which Henry James was born and started his literary career, the influences that he received from various
people and culture, the treatment that he gave to the themes that in turn created masterpieces, the introduction to the art of character painting and the language and style that he followed to shape his fiction and analysis of Henry James' contribution to fiction.

In the first chapter a detailed study of the various stages of Henry James' life and career is done. According to Leon Edel Henry James' life is divided into eight stages. The first stage being 'The Untried Years' that lasted from 1843 to 1870. Then began 'The Years of Saturation' from 1870 to 1875. The years from 1875 to 1881 marked the third stage of his life 'The Conquest of London'. Till this time William James, the elder brother of Henry, was married and the prevailing circumstances led him to think more on female sensibilities. Then began 'The Middle Years', the fourth stage of his life that extended from 1881 to 1889. Then came the' Dramatic Years ', the fifth stage of Henry's life that extended from 1890 to 1895. During this time William James completed 'The Principles of Psychology'. The years from 1895 to 1900 is described as the sixth stage in the life of the great Henry James. Leon Edel describes that along with so many health problems; Henry James entered the 20th century and thus this new century marked the seventh stage of his life that extended from 1900-1905 and was named as 'The Illusion of Freedom'. 'The Master' was the eighth and the final stage of his life that extended from 1905 to 1916. Similarly the career of Henry
James has been divided and named like a dynastic arrangement as James I, James II and the Old Pretender.

The second chapter deals with the major works and influences in Henry James’ life where with every stroke of his brush he paints a different observation that could be seen in the detailed study of his major works. Henry James, the largest literary figure of America during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, was alone among major American writers in never seeking any other employment. He was devoted to his art and his productivity. Henry James wrote so much and experimented so widely and was such a complex literary figure that critics found him difficult to be analyzed as a whole. This is the reason that his fellow novelists considered James a ‘master’ in their midst. The literary career of Henry James extended from the last days of the American civil war to the middle of the First World War. Henry James’ transatlantic sketches paid respect to England and at the same time also represented a great urban impulse in the new American literature.

James spent a great deal of his mature life in England and on the continent and his writing reflects his cosmopolitanism: for American magazine editors, James was an expert on English and European fiction; for English editors, he was called on for his expatriate American perspective. All James’ writings evolved as his dignified search for ‘truth’ and ‘life’. The effect of society in Jamesian novels could be actually felt while analyzing one of his
major theme which is the Americano-European impact or the 'International Theme'. Though this is the major theme that is reflected in Henry James' writings, he also worked upon many other related themes like 'Reality and Appearance', 'Evil versus Inexperience', 'Outward action versus Inward Meditation', 'Nature versus Urbanity' are few to be quoted. Not only this he also played with many experimental themes that created landmarks in his career.

The entire fictional work of James can be viewed as an organic statement on the complex nature of human characters. Henry James employs the term 'characterization' with an artistic insistence that invites its application as an important metaphor for the whole emergent vision of human life. Although the idea of characterization is not intentionally placed in his fictions yet James continuously places before the reader various situations and actions in the texture of which character portrayal runs like embroidery. There is an impressive range of women characters in James's fiction. James dragged our attention to the world of wealth and leisure and displayed his female characters there to find their own identity. Thus not only there is an impressive range of women characters in James but there is also a beautiful range of relationships shared by the characters. In most of his novels James had created incidents and situation where his character behaves in a unique way with a matured mind of James, which gives a new
twist to the story. At times it is very difficult to draw out the ins and outs of a single character from the complete novel because most of the Jamesian characters respond to the situation created by James in relation to various other characters of the story. Thus in the fourth chapter characters are studied by presenting a complete incident and their reaction towards the same.

Henry James was highly talented and displayed wonderful craftsmanship of writing during his time. In talking of James’ style particularly the style of his later novels and tales, critics have as often the peculiar mechanics and mannerisms of his story telling in mind as the verbal or idiomatic patterns of his prose. As far as James’ style is concerned it is safer to assume that there can be no thought without words. The style correspondingly reflects the values of ease and elegance, of culture and continuity, of irony and detachment. Of all the techniques used by Henry James to affect the significant form in fiction, none has that kind of central importance which the celebrated ‘Point of view technique’ has. The reader is continually aware of the artistic care which has gone into the selection of scenes, for highlighting the choice of characters, the control of information to be released and retained and the pinpointing of moments of entry, departure and re-entry for the perspective fictional consciousness. All these manipulations are very well done by James by his correct usage of style and technique. It is just the same as a film-director makes correct usage of camera with
techniques like cutting, zooming and planning to his visual world. James thus succeeded in presenting the modest patterns of life and society through his tactful use of style and techniques.

Henry James’ life though not exceptionally long, covered such a world of change that it is odd to realize that he was a grown man in the mid-Victorian period. He kept so abreast of his times that as a senior writer he was able to strike the modern note before modernism arrived and at the same time, it is also very true that this novelist grew up way back in the era of romanticism. Actually, when his first piece of fiction, “A Tragedy of Error”, was published in February 1864, Thackeray was just dead, Hawthorne still just alive, Dickens and George Eliot in full career and Hardy far from beginning. James’s novel, “Watch and Ward” precedes Hardy’s “Desperate Remedies” and George Eliot’s “Middle March”. James’s “Roderick Hudson” precedes Trollope’s, ‘The Prime Minister”. But James is somehow not their contemporary. He eludes the 19th century classification. He comes after the Victorians. James is thus not so much the child of his age as the father of the next. So as far as his contemporaries are concerned, they belong either to late nineteenth century or early twentieth century. Thus the close contemporaries of Henry James are Mark Twain (1835-1910) and William Dean Howells (1837-1920). Thus this new era of later nineteenth century differed from its predecessors in many ways. The literary aims of Howells, Henry James and Mark Twain were
During this era people cared much for the novels and tales of Henry James. In 1890's Howells stood higher in the opinion of the literary critics than either Henry James or Mark Twain. They, along with Melville, had to wait for the twentieth century to canonize them. The literary and cultural historians of America since the beginning of this century have been representing Mark Twain and Henry James as the idealized and somewhat oversimplified representative of two great opposing forces in American civilization. Another close contemporary of James is, William Dean Howells. The general substantive trend in Howell's novels is from simplicity to complexity, from external reportorial observation of international motivational analysis, from the relatively restricted boundaries of unconscious individuality, through awareness, to the breadth of social complicity and beyond to social judgments. Thus the literary pioneers of 19th century American fiction are Hawthorne, James Fennimore Cooper, Melville, Twain, Howells and Henry James. But Cooper, Hawthorne and Melville are close contemporaries to each other because, their major writings were published when all three of them were at the peak of their literary career and on the other hand Twain, Howells and Henry James wrote fiction that are quite similar in their presentation and their fictional career ran parallel to each other.

Henry James was not a born storyteller but he was also a known critic. He had a keen intelligence and great ambition and he
made himself a great writer of fiction. James had experience of many cities, from many different points of view. But there were four around which his imagination primarily revolved: London, New York, Paris and Rome and the reflection of these cities are greatly felt in many of his fiction. For James, fiction is more or less like a dance; more complicated the steps are, more lively the dance is; similarly more complicated the story of a fiction is, more interesting it becomes. James' major contribution to the modern novel deals with point of view on the relationship of the narrator to the material he writes. He believes that characters are interesting only in terms of their ability to feel their respective situations. James' reputation held up fairly well in the years immediately following his death in 1916 with the Anglo-American-French-Italian alliance at its peak. James' presence as a friend of all four national cultures was still felt. James' personality was still a living force evidently. In American literature, James may be out pointed in single work or parts of work by other Americans, but there is no one there to approach him in quantity of excellent work. In English literature he ranks below our very greatest writers; he is not as versatile as Shakespeare, not as poised as Jane Austen, not as funny as Dickens, nor as candid as D. H. Lawrence, but he kept his own importance because of his varied themes, sharpness of thoughts, a perfect balance between reality and morality and the truthfulness of the story presented. Thus the present thesis is a detailed study of Henry James' life and career,
the influences that made him think and write over on a varied range of themes, adopting different styles and techniques and the position that he occupied among his contemporaries.