CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION
America was an immense and largely unexplored continent across the Atlantic in contrast to the densely populated, historically rooted nations of Europe with all their traditions. Americans concern themselves with the distinctiveness of American experience. The writers and artists sought a declaration of intellectual, artistic and cultural independence. It was around 1840 that there were signs of American Renaissance of the Arts, as revealed in the works of Poe, Emerson, Hawthorn, Melville, Walt Whitman and others, providing a firm foundation to American literature. At the same time the United States remained a romantic ideal in itself to which, reformers in other parts of the world looked for guidance. As the 19th century progressed, the images represented by the United States, became more complex. America itself was becoming more diverse. These processes of change continued in the 20th century which was steeped in wars and revolutions. America had long been regarded as a land of opportunity because of the open-endedness of its society and the possibilities it afforded for individual advancement. In 1890 as the frontier line was closing, America achieved primacy as an industrial producer. In fact by the beginning of the 20th century the image America presented to the world was an image of modernisation. America
came to be seen in writing, painting and thought, generally as a modern technological wonderland. Van Wyck Brooks declared, in 1915, that America had come of age (Bradbury. 13). This was the background which provided material for the writers writing in the second half of the 20th century. There emerged ethnic writers, especially Jewish and Blacks who soon made their mark on American literary scene.

Like the various ethnic groups of India who presented their unique culture and tradition, the Blacks who trace their origin to Africa, were like the native Red Indians, who were forced to live a segregated existence. Their remarkable trials and tribulations serve as an important document, that reveals the conflict, underlined the fabric of American society of the 20th century.

The Black-American writers are aware of the anguish revealed in literary creation. This anguish is often blended by special despair and unique anger, with the complex of racial ambiguities which affected their art and also their very existence. The situation had its pitfalls and its compensations. It can leave the novelist with a repository of bitterness that results in humourless social tracts. It can endow the art with emotional depth and social significance.
The dilemma of the black novelist, traditionally, had been the reconciliation of these possibilities. The tension between the craft and the condition has produced an important body of fiction. By articulating the black-experience the black-American novelist has frequently served the highest purpose of art. He has protested against the forced limitations of human life. This fact has been too often ignored in the American literary subculture. It is probably because of the wilful tradition of ignorance about black culture, maintained by the proprietors of white institutions. And also the New criticism, the label applied to that entire body of contemporary criticism which examined the work of literature as an object in itself with a special language and process of its own, criticised the Black-American literature. But Henry Nash Smith has complained that "the effect of the New Criticism in practice has been to establish an apparently impossible chasm between the facts of our existence in contemporary society and the values of art" (Bradbury 20). The methods of New Critics have caused the biographical and cultural matrix of that artefact to be slighted or ignored. The effect of this in modern appraisals of the black novelist has been to cause his work to be judged by a critical standard which assumes a violent disjunctive between the body and the spirit, reality and fiction. So black-American has had to reclaim first body and then spirit from
the tyranny of American racism, and the art which expresses this must be understood in the context of American social reality. Operating from a belief that the task of the critic is to evaluate the critical reality of the novel almost entirely from within the self-contained fictive world, the New Criticism has frequently condemned novels by black writers as 'protest novels'. That is, black protest novelists permit their novels' reality to correspond almost precisely with the social reality of being black in America, and thus they fail to create a viable and a plausible fictional existence from within. The black novelist has been urged to forget race - forget his reality - in order to create universal art. That is, there are no universal values in black experience. Even a writer like Richard Wright and his achievement has suffered from such censure.

Some black critics argue that the New Critics are a representative phenomenon of Western culture; they point out that Western ethics always assume a separation between social attitudes and the artist's creation, a disconnection between man's art and his actions. Hence the black writer is frequently misunderstood. Such a critical stance, growing out of the cultural nationalism which has become a dominant force in the Black Arts Movement, has a degree of validity. The novelists who standout in this formative period
are Sutton Griggs, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Charles Waddell Chestnutt, W E B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson.

W.E.B Du Bois, a professor of sociology, published his classical collection of historical, socio-economic, political, mystical and fictional essays, titled The Souls of Black Folk. It contains a famous passage which expressed the idea that the Negro is blessed and cursed with a double consciousness. Du Bois writes,

The Negro is a sort of seventh son born with a veil and gifted with second sight in this American world - a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two ness-an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two irreconcilable strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

(Bradbury 192)

The Negro in America is always made to feel that he is different from white Americans. It makes him conscious of his African origin and all that goes with it-racial memories which are naturally deeply embedded in his
consciousness. The Negro is an individual suspended between two civilizations, unable to relate fully with either, making him always feel uneasy and uncertain.

The real rise of the black American novelist comes during the period of the Twenties called “The Harlem Renaissance” or “The Negro Renaissance.” A fortuitous set of circumstances combined to make Harlem the cultural capital of black America, chiefly emanating from New York, proclaimed the coming of age for black American fiction. Swelled by the ‘great migration’, that flood of rural immigrants from the South, Harlem was the focal point, ‘The New Negro’ movement. At this time it represented cultural opportunity, racial pride and economic promise. It became the Mecca for writers of all kinds and talents, encouraging interracial friendships which helped the black writer find publishers for his works. Many writers like Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Jessie Fausel, Walter White published their novels. The stock market crash of 1929 had dashed the high hopes of many young black authors. This depression era was largely a time of regrouping and rethinking for black novelists, a consolidation of the insights and methods that had given such impetus to Negro authorship during the twenties. It was a Chicago and New York Federal Writers Project employee named Richard
Wright whose 1940 novel *Native Son* really built on the base of the twenties and thirties to herald the modern era of black American fiction.

From the middle of the Twentieth century a growing number of novels by black Americans have generated widespread interest. Writers like Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin have captured nationwide attention. Along with these writers were many others such as William Demby, Julian Mayfield, Owen Dodson, Paule Marshall, Gordon Parks, Henry Van Dyke and Ronald Fair, who wrote memorable novels. All these writers were naturally affected by the turbulent times. Further there were far-reaching changes taking place in America. In 1917, East St. Louis suffered a terrifying outburst of racial violence: thirty nine blacks were killed by rampaging white mobs, five hundred were injured and three hundred and twelve buildings were destroyed. The year 1919 was, in James Weldon Johnson's words, the bloody 'Red Summer', with a major four-day race-riot in Chicago which killed twenty three Negroes and injured three hundred and forty two and outbreaks of racial tension in a dozen other cities. The twenties was not to be considered a tolerant decade, but a period of a changed social situation, where black migration, had some advantages. Compared with scattered Negro settlements in the rural South, the ghetto created a black community homogenized by
shared suffering. This had quickly established its own institutions and began to recognize its own potential strength. Urbanised, the black was near to national cultural activity. He began to be celebrated, in some white literature too, in the fiction of Sherwood Anderson, Carl Van Vechten, William Faulkner and Du Bois so on. Black writers and black singers gained importance. Fashionable whites invaded Harlem night clubs, catering to exclusively the white clientele. The white playwrights like Eugene O’Neill and Paul Green wrote on Negro themes. And many artists found inspiration in not-so-primitive African primitive art. Thus there emerged a new breed of writers who wrote ‘as Negroes’ rather than necessarily ‘for the Negro’. That is, cultural identity was no longer problematic. But political lessons were not yet drawn, and Garvey’s predominantly working-class movement was hardly reflected in the largely middle-class black writing of the period.

The 1929 Stock Market crash and the Great Depression of the Thirties were an unparalleled disaster for the great masses of the coloured people. In the South, a further fall in cotton prices deepened the persistent agrarian depression of the 1920s. In the cities, North and South, Negro unemployment rose to more than fifty percent. There was a near-revolutionary situation. The American Communist Party fostered Negro unionization among miners
and textile workers and the Tenants' Leagues among ghetto-dwellers. The difficulty was that the party itself was undecided about the nature of the Negro's dilemma. Hence it tried simultaneously to present black as colonial people: fighting for freedom, seeking independence in their own socialist republic in the black belt, and as simple victims of class warfare with common interests with the white working class. The first great spokesman for Negro labour emerged in A. Philip Randolph. The Federal Theatre Project encouraged black playwrights and expressed Negro problems. Black Americans made progress toward their goal. They responded with massive support for the Democratic party. Their growing importance was reflected in federal appointments.

To underscore the extreme violence and moral squalor of mid-twentieth century America, Martin Luther King Jr. with his voice and vision and moral leadership, opened a new era to point out the American dilemma, the racial conflict and the dignity of man. With a sustaining spiritual conviction, King reacted strongly to the reality of the impersonal universe. He gave a positive direction to the rising tide of Black-American protest that followed World War II and reached its heights in the early 1960s. Martin Luther King believed in human dignity, reason, freedom and moral responsibility. His ever present
desire was to be optimistic about human nature. He believed that every man is an image of God. He affirms that an absolute commitment to the Lord overpowers reason and helps one to accept everything with a sense of faith. In his pilgrimage of faith there were fleeting moments of despair, especially during the violence that broke out on his march through the streets of Memphis. But he wrestled against this and clung to his native faith and looked forward. He continually risked his life, and his family for the Christian faith. Knowing that the contradictions of life are neither final nor ultimate.

In his speech delivered at Nashville, Tennessee in 1962 at a church conference Martin Luther King refers to segregation as 'social leprosy'. Segregation stands diametrically opposite to the principle of the sacredness of human personality. He feels that if the 'Negro' is regarded as anything less than a person of sacred being, then the image of God is defiled in him. Only by establishing a truly integrated society can we return to the state of Negro the quality of oneness, which is his due. Martin Luther King refers to St. Paul's declaration that God 'hath made of one blood', all nations of the world and so there is no superior or inferior race. The life of all is interrelated. All men are brothers and that love is mankind's most potent weapon for personal and social transformation. He speaks of the Gandhian concept of non-violence,
non-injury, which parallels the Christian teaching of sacredness of every human being. The impact of non-violent discipline has done a great deal toward creating a positive image in the black American mind. King’s voice breaks open the hatred of the black American towards the whites. In a seemingly hopeless situation King injects creative optimism into the veins of the black Americans. Their bottomless vitality transformed the darkness of frustration into the light of hope.

According to Martin Luther King suffering is more powerful than the law of the jungle. Since the white man’s personality is greatly distorted by segregation and his soul is greatly scarred, he needs the love of the black American. He must love the Whiteman, because the white man needs his love to remove his tensions, insecurities and fears. Thus King transforms suffering into a creative force. He feels that the existing social environment itself is a sphere hostile to true morality. He sees the painful contradictions of American society, of the capitalist system as a whole. The modern world is in a state of deep crisis. He says that the American racial relations have reached a dangerous proportion. He says that black Americans have waited for more than three hundred and forty years for their constitutional and God-given rights. He considers the world situation as a rendezvous with chaos and
steeped in moral blindness. He views moral blindness as a dilemma which man
inflicts upon himself by his tragic misuse of freedom and his failure to use his
reasoning power in proper direction.

In his famous speech `I Have a Dream', his metaphor of dream sustains
a hope beyond the painful plight of the black American. He vehemently
articulates that the struggle to win freedom should be conducted on the high
plane of dignity and discipline, with a faith that is able to hew out of the
mountain of despair, a stone of hope. From the beginning to the end, his grand
vision, his magnificent obsession with America's disinherited and his
audacious hope never left him. His speech, on December 5, 1955, at the
public meeting that launched the Montgomery bus boycott, is a proof. King
believed in the saving mission of the black American to rejuvenate and
spiritualise America. In King's thought, the cardinal role of the black
American is to infuse a sense of love, thereby decreasing the power of
materialism and opening up of the emergence of the beloved community.

The vision of King was unique. He stressed the impersonal nature of the
universe and sacredness of the human being, created in the image of God. His
non-violent discipline was a remarkable creation. It used suffering as a
creative force to strike against, American society and its capital system. His
dream of a struggle for freedom was conceived on a high plateau. He saw in
the black American, a mission, of saving America from its materialistic trap.
These are King's important pre-occupations which are found reflected in James!
Baldwin's writings; for we must remember the great influence King exerted on
the mind of Baldwin.

James Baldwin was born in Harlem, New York city on August 2, 1924.
He distinguished himself as a novelist, an essayist, a dramatist, a non-fiction
and short story writer, juvenile fiction writer, poet and script writer.

As a child, Baldwin was not happy. The very atmosphere of Harlem
ghetto was striking. The sensitive young Baldwin had to summon every
available ounce of stamina and courage to escape the sordid world of pimps,
junkies, prostitutes, racketeers and conmen. Moreover he was not happy at
home. There was the grim, religious fanaticism of a stepfather Gabriel, who
was an evangelical preacher. Gabriella hated the bastard son Baldwin, born to
his wife Elizabeth, prior to their marriage. And there was the elder Baldwin's
repressive dominance. There was the environmental abyss of liquor, drugs,
sex and crime.
Baldwin managed to join Frederick Douglas Junior High School. There he composed the lyrics of the farewell songs and published short stories, editorials and sketches in school newspaper. In 1938, when he was fourteen, he began to preach at the Fireside Pentecostal Assembly. He attended De Wit Clinton High School. There he published three stories with religious overtones in school newspaper. He renounced the ministry in 1942 and joined as a railroad helper in New Jersey.

Baldwin met Richard Wright and he recommended Baldwin's case and got him the Eugene Saxton Fellowship. Baldwin slowly entered into writing career by publishing book reviews. He received Rosenwald Fellowship also. Slowly Baldwin started feeling that he could not survive the institution of segregation in the United States, which would reduce him to merely a Negro writer. He wanted to discover how the uniqueness of his experience might be used to establish a common bond among humanity. This quest ended in his self-imposed exile to Paris in 1948. There he spent nine years among a literary coterie of established writers which included Chester Himes, James Jones, Philip Roth, William Styron, Norman Mailor and Richard Wright. Baldwin wrote two novels, many essays and considerable amount of non-fiction.
Baldwin returned to U.S.A in 1957. He proved himself an eloquent voice of the Civil Rights Movement. The storm of social change began to lash and whip the shores of America in 1960. As a result the literary winds began to shift their course, signalling the emergence of Imamu Amiri Baraka (Le Roi Jones) as the chief exponent of the Black Arts Movement. Jones and his circle of writers issued the call for artists who would accept the term 'black writer' and actively seek to create an 'aesthetic based' on the idea of a black man talking to other Blackman, not talking simply to an audience of middle-class, credit card carrying whites. Baldwin, however, refused to align himself with this new artistic stance, because he continued to insist upon recognition as an 'American writer'.

Baldwin's writings are by their very nature iconoclastic. While Black Arts Movement focuses on a black-oriented artistry, Baldwin is concerned with the destructive fantasies and delusions of a contented audience which is determined to avoid reality. In his review of Going to Meet the Man, Seymour Krim assesses Baldwin's chief strength as his unusual adeptness with the "common experience uncommonly probed": "He has almost always tried to dig into the humbling soil of the experience of the Negro, the expatriate, the homosexual, and came out with uneasy, disturbing truths . . ." when asked
about his models in a conference on “The Negro writer’s vision of America”, Baldwin said, “My models-my private models - are not Hemingway, not Faulkner, not Dos Passos, or indeed any American writer. I model myself on Jazz musicians, dancers, a couple of whores and a few junkies :...” (Bradbury 201). Baldwin’s concern is with an acknowledgement of the grass roots original, a recognition of the blood, sweat, pain, suffering and tears of the past, and an awareness that the writer must tap the source, if he is to survive.

Baldwin with the help of his art tries to establish that the entire mankind is united by virtue of their humanity. It is this connecting power that Baldwin holds out to us as the only hope for Western civilization. Having lost faith in the practice of Christianity, he continues to cling to the theoretical basis of morality upon which Christianity was founded: love. Having failed to find this power within the Christian church, Baldwin has renounced his ministry to seek it in the world among his fellow men; it is . . .” something more like fire, like the wind, something which can change you, I mean energy. I mean a passionate belief, a passionate knowledge of what a human being can do, and become, what a human being can do to change the world in which he finds himself”. Baldwin explains that the implications of love are vast. Loving means removing the mask, exposing our psyche to the stark, cold reality
which has long been buried in the vault of our subconscious. This is the great threat to our security which we seem determined at all costs to avoid. If we attempt to gain an understanding of ourselves ignoring the rest of humanity we will have to face the consequences of terrible revelations that will cast a shadow of terror into our hearts.

Apart from his plays and essays Baldwin has written six novels:

1. Go Tell It on the Mountain (1953)
2. Giovanni's Room (1956)
3. Another Country (1962)
4. Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone (1968)
6. Just Above My Head (1979)

The writer's attempt in this study is to explore the theme of moral vision in the novels James Baldwin with reference to the three major novels, namely, Go Tell It on the Mountain, Giovanni's Room and Another Country. These three novels are his most important and representative of his vision. When he was sixty three years old, Baldwin died of stomach cancer at his home in St. Paul De Vence in South France.
James Baldwin's first novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953) is an account of a young man's initiation into the realities of the racial, sexual and religious life. In *Giovanni's Room* (1956), Baldwin links the theme of black identity with homosexual love. In *Another Country* (1962) is a depiction of a place far removed completely from the chaos of modern life. Baldwin uses sex to explore the failure of love in our society.

The writer's aim in this dissertation is to examine the novels of James Baldwin in the light of the theme of moral vision, as it has been not explored much by the research scholar. So it is necessary to dwell upon this theme as conceived by John Gardner in his work *On Moral Fiction*.

At the centre of our experience in life, in the modern context, is found a spiritual dis-order. Modern man is subjected to threefold estrangement. He is alienated from himself. In other words, he is divided within himself. He is alienated from other human beings, from society and also from other individuals. Apart from this, man is alienated from the ground of his own being. Invariably we find modern man rising up in revolt. He revolts against aspects of himself against aspects of other people in society and against what seems to emerge in literary writings as a universal moral law. In times of
chaos and transition when the old order is breaking down and men are groping for new points of reference, older pattern of life may reassert themselves in the literary works of the period. The heroes of the novels of the age, embody the eternal dialectic of the primary `yes' and everlasting `No'. His function is to create those values whose absence in culture is the cause of his predicament. His morality seems largely existential. Defined by his actions and even more by his passions, a self-made morality, full of ironies and ambiguities.

In the literatures of the world we can come across many instances of a moral view. A writer's moral stance may vary from person to person. The moral view of Ben Jonson reveals itself mainly in the sympathy for delighting roguery especially when it is unhypocritical and frank. So, when we study Ben Jonson's plays we can see the realistic comedy of everyday life. He is of the view that an artist should have a high and serious purpose. An art should not be merely "a tickling of thoughtless laughter". It must hold a mirror up to the society. It should teach a moral to the audience.

It is interesting at this point to go to Dr. Samuel Johnson who voiced his interest in making judgements. Dr. Johnson's critical writing exhibits his characteristic wisdom, force and human centrality. Dr. Johnson is always a
great moralist. We find in him a powerful mind operating upon literature. Dr. Johnson knows what he means and says it with great directness. This gives Dr. Johnson's writings a distinct value. His criticism has stood, for, his work is original and lasting. He possessed the gift of looking at essentials and he presented his thoughts in a meaningful manner. What he looked for in a poet was the universal that survives the changes of tastes and manners and the ravages of time.

Mathew Arnold, too, among the moderns was a self-conscious writer. Here are some of his themes:

... Thus in all his political success, it is easy to distinguish two direct stand: first, the clean recognition (with Goethe) of our spiritual unrest and the manful effort to control it; next, the clear recognition (with Wordsworth) of the balm to be found in sincere communion with Nature. To the treatment of both these elements again he has given a certain freshness and individuality of his own. [Hutton 4-5]

Mathew Arnold is highly moralising in his observations while he is writing on the works of the poets. In his essay on William Wordsworth, he observes that poetry at bottom is criticism of life and his statement smacks of moral fervour in his criticism.
To give more examples in this regard Milton’s views can be cited. One can see how Milton presents the conflict between good and evil - a morality pattern, in almost all his works. It is the riddle of the universe that a never ending war between virtue and vice is present in the world. The subjects that John Milton chooses for his compositions are stately and dignified. His grand theme for *Paradise Lost* is to “justify the ways of God to man”. The “high seriousness”, the moral fervour of Milton’s poetry, goes well with his high conception of the calling of a poet.

T.S.Eliot is of the view that drama must take its themes from life, but they must be artistically treated. In his *Murder in the Cathedral*, Eliot presents the conflict between good and evil. The good is represented by Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the evil forces are represented by the king and his followers.

During these days there seems to be a doubt as to whether the old words of the Good, the True and the Beautiful have any meaning. These three values do not exist as concrete entities. But they exist as something embodied. They are values by definition. They are absolute values and not relative values. John Gardner writes that “the ideal state of well-being for the human
body and spirit is approximately absolute at any given point of time but relative with respect to the total history of Mankind” [MF 134]

Such health cannot be found in environments such as Amin’s Uganda or Hitler’s Germany, where free choice and available options are severely limited. Therefore true health of this kind is partly a product of lucky circumstances, which means a product of civilization. John Gardner defines morality in the following lines,

The good for man, which rightly understood cannot be divorced from what is good for his society and environment, is by another formulation (Whenever action is called for) the moral. Morality is the body, or engine, of the Good. The Good is form” morality is function; and form is function, or at any rate form can no more exist independent of function than time can exist without a natural or man-made clock. [MF 134]

John Gardner goes on to describe how morality describes actions. “... But because the possible number of action in the universe is unlimited, morality is finitely complex, thus making it an ideal subject for fiction, which actually deals with understanding and not knowledge. Today we find that healthy society is pluralistic. It allows every man his opinion as long as the opinion does not infringe on the rights of the others. This kind of morality is
called ethics, to distinguish it from true morality. We must understand that healthy relationships between adults are characterised by sympathy and trust and are supported on both sides by maturity. In such a manner the goal being the goal of the moral which in Frye's words, "does not take us into a world of higher belief, a view of the human condition so broad that the whole of literature would illustrate it" (MF 136). It presents to us a conceptual attraction of an actual experience of moments of good in human life. This, in fact, is the essential subject of all literature.

Let us try and understand the manner in which art is related to the Good. The concept of the Good comes from outside us as well as from within. There is a distinction between knowledge and understanding. For example, we can understand a person, but we may not really know him, his name, his features, age etc. Although knowledge may not lead to belief, understanding always does. In fiction, containing life like characters, we come to understand these characters in the process of reading. While reading a work of fiction with the characters acting in one way and not another, bringing about happiness and moral satisfaction, instead of misery and shame, then fiction is concerned with the Good. We can intuitively apprehend the Good. But we have to approach absolute Truth through reason. We need imagination to
understand the Good. It is different in the case of Truth and Beauty. Truth can become an object of reason and analysis. Truth in this sense is not the concern of fiction. It is an accurate imitation of the world which gives us intense pleasure. At the same time a world's indifference to actual Truth can be quite offensive. So no story or novel can dispense entirely with Truth. In fact Truth is useful in realistic art. Just like the Truth and the Good, the Beautiful exists. Beauty does not involve the intellect or moral feeling. It is seen primarily as a quality of the mind-opened an exalted form of pleasure, the comforting satisfaction of expectation. Such satisfaction makes us feel a relaxation and provides us comfort. Beauty is therefore the Truth of feeling. Beauty in itself has nothing to do with the True or the Good. A truth, Goodness and Beauty as seen to be the fundamental concerns of art and therefore of the criticism too. True criticism in the words of John Gardner is “morally judgemental” (M.F 145). A writer is seen to write a novel to find out what he can maintain not only with his head but with all his nature. He delights his readers, instructs them and also supports them. Art is seen to be our way of keeping track of what we know and have known, for we see that art affirms values.

Moral arts holds up models of decent behaviour. We shall find characters in fiction, drama and film who struggle against conclusion, give
firm intellectual and emotional support to our own struggle. A brilliantly imagined novel can be more easy to comprehend than a psychological study. Sometimes a moral model may be indirect as in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. But it is a fact that life's imitation of art is quite direct and not necessarily intelligent. If you look at fiction from the point of view of a critic, we may get the idea that fiction is serious. This is because some writers of fiction are intelligent thinkers who express their profound ideas, through stories, like Henry James. Works such as *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Gulliver's Travels* have a doctrine communicated in a pleasant way. This is dogmatic fiction. But such fiction is closer to the sermon than to the true novel. It is moralistic. Moral fiction is different because it communicates meanings discovered by the process of the fiction's creation. When fiction becomes thought the writer makes discoveries which he communicates to the reader. John Gardner maintains that “working at art is a moral act; that work of art is a moral example” (MF 126).

Moral art holds up in its height form models of virtue like Homer's Achilles. John Gardner goes on to explain how “great art celebrates life's potential, offering a vision unmistakably and unsentimentally rooted in love” (M.F. 83). It is self-evident to any one; that it is for the pleasure of exercising
our capacity to love that we pick up a book at all. In fact accepting in the school class-room, Gardner describes how

we read or listen to or look at works of art in the hope of experiencing our highest, most selfless emotion, either to reach a sublime communication with the maker of the work, sharing his affirmations as common covers do, on to find, in works of literature, characters we as we do real people (MF 84).

We shall find that in art morality and love are firmly bound to one another; and we affirm what is good. We shall find that true art clarifies life, establishes models of human action, celebrates and mourns. The artist lights up the darkness with a lightning flash and protects his friends and all humanity without exception and then moves on. When we read Homer’s Iliad, Dante’s Commedia and the plays of Shakespeare, we may come to the conclusion that the true art is moral. The works mentioned above entered their civilising influence across centuries long after the cultures that produce them, have decayed.

James Baldwin, a black American writer is quite concerned with a writer’s responsibility in trying to save the world from the impending crisis of degradation. Man has forgotten his individuality, has forgotten to live as a
good human being which alone will constitute the corner stone of a society that helps a person to live a life fully and meaningfully. This would mean loving his neighbour as though he were himself. We have to remind ourselves to these basic values needed to transform the world. This in effect forms the guiding spirit of James Baldwin's moral vision to be found in a study of his works.

George E-Kent in his essay *Baldwin and the Problem of Being* makes the following observation:

"The moral vision that emerges is one primarily concern of man as he relates to good and evil and to society. For there is evil in human nature and evil abroad in the world to be confronted, ...but through the love and volvement available from those able to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and Live”. (Kent 202)

What is meant here is that Black-Americans who have eaten the fruit of the tree of life will be able to redeem American society from spiritual darkness.

A similar vision can be discovered in the works of great writers such as Dante and T.S. Eliot. Dante's idea of moral art in the *Divine Comedy* appears more modern than Tolstoy. Dante reached a period in his life when he realised
he had utterly lost his way in a spiritual dark wood. In fact, he had lost all sense of right and wrong and had no idea, where to turn for help. In his despair he had hardly any strength to fight for survival much less than salvation. This despair began with the death of Beatrice. He sank into a deep and lasting depression, almost madness and found no consolation within or without. Only the image, memory and interior sensation of Beatrice was still real for him, still implied meaning in the world and beauty. He hunted through his life and accidentally found a liberating feeling. For Beatrice he felt he would willingly live or die. This was a new mode of thought where the imagination was liberated from the rule of logic/rationalism. This was his discovery. It is the crucial finding dramatised in the closing cantos of the *Purgatorio* and through much of *Paradiso*. John Gardner describes how *The Commedia*, "is Dante's construction of a complete universe, a total metaphysic presented as events and images ..." (MF 34). Dante's friend Beatrice by her innate goodness and intelligence makes us uncomfortably conscious of her lies when we lie. Literature contains such figures like Chaucer's Knight or Shakespeare's Ophelia and heroes and heroines in the novels of Henry James. These people are capable of almost divine goodness or at least sensitive to goodness in others. John Gardner observes:
"His assumption is not the platonic notion . . . that his loved one can start him on the journey step by step up the ladder towards the good. He assumes that she is good an incarnation of the divine principle. Love is a form of knowledge" (MF 35).

Leo Tolstoy also knew about Dante's universe of despair. Tolstoy endured a similar spiritual crisis and found it profound and transforming. He came out of this experience with his theory which emphasized freedom but argued that what a man ought to do with his freedom is to be quiet, look and listen, and try to feel in his heart what God requires of him. He conceived of a transcendent goal for humanity as a whole. John Gardner explains that Tolstoy "envisioned a world ruled not by policemen but by moral choice, a world where every man's chief ambition was to be Christlike." (MF 26). Tolstoy argued that such a world can be brought forth into existence only through moral art. He held that the ideal in the proper work of art comes from God. He felt that this could be seen reflected in the lives of those who in his view most closely followed Christ's model. This is passed on to all humanity by artists. It is first recorded in The Bible and then by the framers of folk-tale. So the standard comes from God, is enacted by hero and recorded by a poet. The hero's proper function is to provide a noble image for men to be inspired and guided by in their own actions.
An attempt has been made in the second chapter to examine in detail Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. In this first novel there begins a quest for love carried on through the other two novels. The first novel presents Negro experience, autobiographical in style. Here a young Negro boy John Grimes under the influence of a woman evangelist is converted. The church was a refuge to him from the constant clashes in the street. For him the church is a place of safety leading him towards Christ. Safety representing a fact of love.

The third chapter deals with *Giovanni's Room*. This novel is about homosexuality dealing with whites set in Paris. The simple plots delineates the failure of love and the destruction of conventional ties of relationship. Giovanni, a bisexual, has the homosexual relationship with David. When David's girl friend Hella finds out about their relationship she bids goodbye to David. Through this theme of homosexuality Baldwin brings out the best and the worst of human nature linked with the theme of friendship and love.

Baldwin's *Another Country* is examined in the fourth chapter. This novel has a larger scope and greater focus than the other two novels. Baldwin presents the conflict between black and white. The whiteman refuses to
confront the dark side of human experience. The white American denies the reality of pain and suffering. Baldwin describes the effects of racial prejudice in American life, especially the effect it had on the blacks. They try and escape their anger through the attainment of intimacy and love with another person. This love is healing and is not self destructing - it is a redeeming love.

The last chapter deals with the conclusion. The spiritual quest of Baldwin transcends the limitations of the social problem of blacks and whites and raises the vital questions of brotherhood and love. Although the racial conflict may be considered as the immediate background of the novels, they throw light on the universal problems of the oppressor and the oppressed. We are asked to become more human, a message to be broadcast today to every quarter of the world.