CHAPTER IV

A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The question asked by Matthew “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (24:3, King James Version) in the Bible haunts the entire humanity in all the period. The natural curiosity motivates the philosophers, thinkers, astrologers and even the scientists of NASA to investigate the end of the world. The issue also has a significant presence in the mythological writings of every civilization. For instance, in Maya civilization this is one of the ancient civilizations ever found in the world, stops counting the time from 21st December, 2012 by assuming the end of the world. The end of the Maya Calendar once again stings the long lived curiosity of mankind which gave birth to the multiple literary enterprises and the films that postulates the imagined future destruction. However, in Hindu cosmology, it is believed that the universe is cyclically created and destroyed. Hindu mythology considers this process of annihilation as an unavoidable and necessary part of the natural balance. Even the ancient texts like Vishnu Purana and Agni Purana define Pralaya with its four different types - Praakritik Pralaya, Naimittik Pralaya, Atyantik Pralaya and Nitya Pralaya. On the juncture of these facts, the idea of ‘dystopia’ or ‘the end of all the natural and human made life supportive systems’ cannot be isolated analyzed with a single author. The representative literary dystopian projections, analyzed in the present thesis prepare a perspective of the dystopian imagination in general.

The theoretical frame of the thesis brings forth that the dystopian imagination uses different mythological and contemporary
idea and draw a real-like end of the world. These authors depict earth as an ecological decoy, the threat of nuclear annihilation, end of the time, devastation from the sky, destructive change in the cycle of nature, industrial waste and the over population as the most probable reasons of the end of the world. In the analysis undertaken in the present thesis solidify this argument and give a space to make a critical statement that will be served as a principle in the analysis of the dystopian fiction.

Though these novels carry specific differences of artistic rendering, on various grounds they can be compared. The story, the space and the time differ from novel to novel but these literary enterprises can be equated on the ground of thematic concern. The imaginary vehicles may vary, but the literary motif of the dystopian world is similar.

One can observe another recurrent similarity in the select authors is the use of futuristic time and space. In the dystopian projection it is generally observed that the time and space are set in the remote future in which the Earth is reaching about to her end. As a result of this kind of literary tendency, most of the novels and films are categorized under the title of ‘apocalyptic’. A few of authors have also depicted the post- apocalyptic vision and therefore named as a post- apocalyptic fiction. Both the select authors in their representative novels are apocalyptic in vision and they are depicting the imagined futuristic time and space. For instance, John Brunner’s *The Long Result* depict a time in which interstellar travel is possible. The scientific imagery and the technological tools used in the novel are real-like but it does not resemble with the contemporary scenario of science. The over-populated world of *Stand on Zanzibar* is also
futuristic and imagined as it utilizes United States of 2010 in 1968. In this novel too, Brunner uses the imagined technology like god-like mega computers, psychedelic drugs and genetic engineering to create the dystopian world. *The Jagged Orbit* depicts the casual institutionalization of the ‘insane’. In this novel too, one can observe the contemporary evils that threatens the existence of civilization, but the novelist imagines all these evils to such an extent that the world appears dystopia. J. G. Ballard *The Wind from Nowhere* can be seen as an exception as the hurricane force winds destroys the organized life on earth. However, the remaining two novels follow this similarity and set their stories in futuristic time and space. *The Drowned World* imagines the extremity of solar radiation and global warming which is also a problem of today’s world. *The Burning World* reflects an extensive drought due to the industrial waste. The time and space used in the novel are futuristic and the reason is the extreme point of today’s problem. Thus, in the light of this comparative perspective one can make a comprehensive statement that the dystopian projection uses the experimental and futuristic time and space. The reasons like global warming, over-population, environmental decay and drug addictions are present in the contemporary world, but the authors took these reasons just as a vehicle of their imagination and drag them to extended that they become the major reason behind the destruction.

Another significant point of comparison is the characterization of these dystopian fictions. The characters of these novels are generally a troop of scientists who is fighting to save the world. In Brunner’s *The Long Result* the group of people came together under the organizations like – Stars for Humans League Bureau for Cultural
Relations on Earth. In the dystopian fiction in which the organized life is about to die, it is observed that the human being tries hard to save his own life despite of his society. The ethical codes, religious faiths, moral conducts, emotional ties and most importantly the social behavioral patterns are melted down and substituted by the jungle laws where the ‘existence precedes essence’.

In the select novels, authors have successfully caught the feeling of fear of death and the extreme desire for life in the face of complete obliteration of the earth. In most of the Science Fiction novels, the artificial intelligence, robot or a supercomputer play a vital role as a character that directly and indirectly influences the action of the novel. For instance in the *Stand on Zanzibar* uses supercomputer named Shalmaneser as a character. In this novel the author is attempting to represent an individual for the humanity. The story can be categorized in the group of stories dealing with the fight between good and bad. Donald Hogan and Norman Niblock House represent these two opposite forces. However, in *The Jagged Orbit* a dystopian world is created with the devastating world of group of characters working with different advanced sciences - James Reedeth is a psychologist, Lyla Clay is a pythoness and Matthew Flamen, a spoolpigeon. All these characters in common are sharing a chaos of the world which is in the verge of death. Similar to Brunner, J. G. Ballard is also pre-occupied with the characters from the scientist community and is in the action of saving the world from the natural disasters. *The Wind from Nowhere* a troop of characters is created by accommodating the characters from different essential fields that may prove potential to make decisions in the extreme situations. For instance - Simon Marshall, a protagonist has worked in the army,
Donald Maitland, a doctor, Hardoon, a millionaire businessman, Steve Lanyon, an American submarine captain and Patricia Olsen, a journalist are fighting hard to save the world. In *The Drowned World*, Ballard reflects the biologist Dr Robert Kerans’ struggle against the devolutionary impulses of the environment. There are several other characters struggling to survive for instance – Hardman, Beatrice Dahl and Dr Bodkin. It is seen in the textual analysis of the select novels and it is also apparent in the theoretical frame that most of the novels cover the fight between sane and insane. In this novel too, the author depicts this fight by drawing two troops representing sanity and insanity. The strongmen and his troop of pirates want to institutionalize their insane whereas the troop of scientists wants to save the sanity of the lost civilization. Ballard continues this kind of characterization in *The Burning World*. Thus, this comparative overview of the select novels one can make a comprehensive statement that the apocalyptic fictions portray the humanity on the verge of sanity and insanity. In the situation when the survival becomes important than the rest of the world, most of the humans act insane. The struggle for existence drags off the mask of civilization from their face and brings them into the world of jungle where the fittest is the survival.

Thematic concern of the select novelists is to depict the world in-between and after the apocalypse. All the select novelists depict the destruction of the structured civilization and portray what will happen in the absence of the system. The reasons behind this total destruction are generally logical and convincing. For instance - in the novel *The Long Result* during the interstellar transaction, the deceased psyche of few individuals creates problem which lead humanity towards a
critical problem; similarly in *Stand on Zanzibar* and *The Jagged Orbit* depicts the human reasons that lead humanity towards the verge of total decay. All the reasons assumed by the author seem realistic and most of them are the problems of the contemporary world which are extended to the extreme points. If one excludes J. G. Ballard’s *The Wind from Nowhere*, other two novels can be used as a support to the statement made in the context of the select novels of John Brunne. Only in this novel the reason is natural and seems illogical. The wind blows from nowhere creates the major problems for the civilized and complexly structured human world. *The Drowned World* is a metaphor that imagines an extended situation of the global warming. In this novel, the reason is quite logical and scientific. The basic reasons of this destruction is the scientific advancement of the humanity that to some extent gains progress but eventually turns as a major reason of total destruction. However, in *The Burning World* the major reason of the exhaustive drought is the industrial waste flushed into the ocean, which prevents evaporation and breaks the cycle of rain.

Thus, it can be seen in all these novels that the reason of the destruction is most of the time are human made. It can be stated that both the select novels believe that the scientific advancements to its extended point will prove the reason of destruction. The science which is known as one of the most logically structured discipline proves in the end the destructor of the logical order.

One more similarity can be traced out that is the environmental consciousness of the select authors. All the select novels are in fact the extended discussion on the transaction between the nature and man. The reasons like overpopulation, global warming and industrial
waste directly address the global issues of environmental threat. All these issues discussed in the select novels are the factual problems faced by the contemporary world. In this sense, it can be said that both the select authors are eco-conscious and threatening the humanity by mirroring the near future of the world. If one speaks in degree J. G. Ballard is more eco-conscious than John Brunne. As all the select novels of the Ballard reflect the natural destruction whereas Brunner is keen in depicting how man himself becomes decoy.

In the structural rendering, all the select novels follow a kind of structure in which they begin with a logical reason, major action of destruction in the climax and the aftermath effects. For instance – John Brunner in *The Long Result* persuasively creates a background for interstellar meeting by depicting the two persons related to this project sharing the flat. The action gets its climax with the accident during the interstellar meeting. Aftermath of this accident is also clearly depicted in the novel. Same pattern can be traced out in *Stand on Zanzibar* and *The Jagged Orbit*. However, J. G. Ballard also follows the same structure and gives speed to the action of the novel which adds readability to these texts. This statement can be further extended by adding that this kind of structure is the requirement of the dystopian fiction.

In the light of these points of similarities one can make a generalized statement that dystopian projection requires a specific kind of - symbolism, thematic concerns and philosophical motif. The literary expressions can be different, but the literary end products show the similarity in the destruction of the organized life on the earth. The symbolism formulates a picture that imagines what will happen in the absence of the structured civilization. The reasons can
be different, but the eventual effect on the readers mind is similar. The devastating and threatening stories of the select novels grab the attention of worldwide public. Another reason of this worldwide popularity is the dystopian novels quench the thirst of the natural curiosity of humanity to know about the end of the world. All the select novels are different in the use of scientific reasoning and literary orientations, but the philosophical motif is to project the dystopian world.

Thus, in conclusion of this comparative perspective a statement can be made that the dystopian fiction finds similar on the ground of the delineation of the characters, use of futuristic time and space, literary motif of dystopian projection along with many other features of art of writing.