CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The First World War brought a terrible shock to the minds of the people who led a very peaceful life. Scientific inventions and great medical achievements seemed to guarantee a better, a safer and a more comfortable existence. But the world war shattered all the hopes of men. Problems began to crop up in the lives of the people. Peace had gone and worries and anxieties began to create a tension in the minds of men. Lust for power of a few men smashed peace and tranquility of the people of society. Poverty and other crises have raised heads affecting literature, art and culture. The war ended and a political truce was brought. But it did not wash out the fears from the minds of the people. The inner current of political conflicts started and confused the minds of the people. All the joys and charm of life vanished.

Revolution in Russia, Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany brought a threat to the western democracies. Between 1928 and 1938, the Europeans lived in a nightmare. From 1935 the events took rapid shape: Spanish War, Russo-
German pact, invasion of Poland - everywhere the ideologies clashed and a deep anxiety manifested itself everywhere. And in 1939 the Second World War started creating confusion and shattering Europe altogether. The whole Europe was overcast with dark clouds and there was no light within sight. The European social life plunged into deep despair, horror and gloom. In such an atmosphere of society, the new generation faced a tremendous shock in the minds and lost sensibility and balance of mind. Frustration of life and gloom filled the minds. Writers of the age began to think in the new directions in this atmosphere of social life. They began to deal with the problems of recording the breakdown of a settled and established order of society.

They began to visualize the different aspects of aesthetic problems and formulate doctrines. In both French and English literature Andre Malraux, Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Samuel Beckett, George Orwell and others have brought the idea of absurdity.

France has been very much tormented by war. Almost all the writers took part in the Resistance Movement. They had gained experience in the political movement and felt in their minds and hearts the problems of the country and the sufferings of the people of war-torn society.

In the atmosphere of violent political conflicts,
Andre Malraux expresses in his novels deep despair and anguish. The evil attacks man from all sides: fortune, prison, humiliations, death—all these define his condition. He thinks that man is an absurd human being. The mystery around the man remains unsolved. The glimmer of consciousness appears to reflect nothing beyond and he is ultimately the plaything of every contingency that an indifferently hostile universe throws up as fatality. In the absence of a transcendence to turn darkness into light, man's life becomes absurd and the human lot becomes intolerable. The modern world carries within itself its lack of soul. Malraux has consistently felt this absurdity of man. Man is torn by an inner conflict—a conflict between his subjective and his objective reality, between his self-awareness and his mind. He cannot know himself objectively since self analysis discovers only the absurdity.

Jean Paul Sartre sponsored the doctrine of existentialism in literature, but he also believed in the idea of absurdity—an irrational nature of man's experience of the world. The idea which he thought out was the result of the condition of life of man, created in his society. An acute feeling of his solitary, isolated position facing the finality of death in a universe without God. Sartre thought that the physical universe itself is absurd in the sense
that it can be given no a priori philosophical justification.

Albert Camus became an ardent pioneer of the idea of absurdity in man's life. He was brought up in a society where he felt the misery of life and realised the pain and suffering of men. He saw the effect of war in the lives of the people and brought to light the problems of the days which were posing heavily on the conscience of men. In a society where there is no security of life, where there is no scope of cherishing a bright and a prosperous life, where gloom and darkness is prevailing making life uncertain, man is brought up with an idea of absurd feeling - a feeling which nourishes nihilism and a negative attitude to life. Man lives in a society without any definite goal, he works in the face of an adverse condition of life. The regular, monotonous daily life he is pulling on without feeling any joy, any pleasure and any love for life. But still he is not willing to die but death will ultimately come to bring a sudden end of his life.

This mathematical certainty of death and man's desperate and unconscious efforts to find deliverance from the idea of the finality of death is the predominant factor of the feeling of absurdity. This acute awareness of death, experienced against a background of physical
plenitude offers no spiritual consolations. Individual experience of the absurd takes its most dramatic form in the horror of dying and the zealous love of living contrast.

The senseless repetition of life repeated day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year brings a fatal monotony of life making a life mechanical and senseless. In this tense situation of society the feeling of love, the very emotion and passion of the mind is sealed off and finds no charm no joy, no pleasure in life. And such a life is to be fulfilled on aimlessly like a machine. This kind of pessimistic feeling in the minds of the people has been culminated because of the atmosphere created in the insecure wartorn society.

This idea of absurdity is manifested in the works of Albert Camus. He has created his characters who by the adverse situation of life are nourished with the absurd feeling. This feeling of life is innate in him and is nurtured in the social atmosphere, in some extraordinary events and situations created in society.

In his first novel, L'Étranger, Camus has shown that Mersault is born with the feeling of absurdity. He is very much tired of his own life. He does not knows the very reason of his boredom. He is well accustomed to his daily
routine work. And perhaps he does not like to think that there is a world beyond this kind of mechanical life. He does not feel any attraction for family life. He does not even bear any love and respect for his own mother who is dying. The death of his old mother does not affect his mind. He goes to attend the funeral of his mother for the sake of duty and not from an urge of his own conscience. He is unable to shed any tears and cannot feel any emotion. His meeting with Marie, going to movies with her and lying on bed wish her do not provoke any feeling of love and emotion in him. His passive attraction for physical love is a sign of his attitude to life. He is a man deprived of all the delicate feelings of passion, emotion and love. He is born with his kind of passive attitude to life. On the seashore, Mersault kills an Arab for no reason except the glare of the sun which he misunderstands for a knife. He is never serious of his own life and knows that he has to embrace death which is the ultimate certainty. It is because of some impulse he has killed the Arab without having any thought of its consequences. He has been arrested and put to jail. He is found guilty and has been guillotined for his crime of murdering.

Mersault does not show any interest in all that happens in the world. Family affection, love, friendship have no meaning for him. He is totally indifferent to the world.
His indifference is not towards life itself but only towards those emotions to which society attributes an arbitrary importance. Lack of coherent significance in the world is a distinct point of the feeling of the absurd. This motion of the absurd is incarnated in Mersault's apathy and attitude towards life. And his feeling of absurdity in Mersault prevents him from continuing to be happy.

Man wishes to live happily and uninterruptedly but the desire of living is always frustrated by the certainty of death. Man fights for it but he fails to achieve the goal plunging him in deep despair and filling his mind with an acute feeling of absurdity and helplessness. This idea of the struggle of life and death has been depicted in the second novel, La Peste.

The plague-stricken town of Oran has been cut off from the rest of the world and the people of the town have become the victims of an unexpected catastrophe. The plague takes a vast toll of lives.

The suffering and dying in the epidemic is a picture of cosmic alienation of metaphysical absurdity of man's condition. The feature of the absurd which is particularly emphasized in La Peste is the problem of evil. The plague represents the power of death and destruction in the universe. The people of Oran are haunted by the fear of death.
and the condition of the town has been warning of the death at every moment. The people are feeling deep distress and anguish for the certainty of death. As such life has become to them absurd and meaningless. They see nothingness and void in their lives. During this terror stricken days people queue for food and try to fight for living from the clutches of the certain death. The volunteers fight the plague to save men not with certain rigid determination but with the faint hope. They see deaths around them and their minds become shaky. They think the lives of men have no value. Men are born to die—death is the only certainty and nothing else. They grow in them a feeling of absurdity only. The volunteers have been deprived of their love and their family life. They have to work most mechanically for the service of these plague-stricken people.

Dr. Rieux had been very much tired of his life and when plague descended on the town of Oran he started serving the people. He lost his wife who died in a sanatorium thus sealing his life of happiness and love. Tarrou does not feel any love for his own life but serves the people of Oran in the most mechanical way. And Rambert has been forced to serve the people being caught in the circumstances and he has been separated from his lady love. His service to people has not been urged from
his mind but it is almost mechanical and circumstantial.

Both victims of the plague and the volunteers find the world absurd rendering no hope and meaning to life. None can enjoy a life of hope, happiness and peace. The minds are always haunted with fear of death, despair, anguish and gloom. No activity can change the reality with which man is confronted. The people only increase their own consciousness of absurdity. In La Peste, the absurd abolished all belief in the future and all the possibility of living in the immediate present. When the absurd assumes the form of the plague it holds man prisoner in the immediate present. The absurd is no longer a purely intellectual and individual experience but a symbol of the universal fate of man in the twentieth century.

The feeling of absurdity comes to the life of a man in such critical circumstances which he is unable to control and in such cases life becomes almost helpless and utterly miserable. Deep despair and the feeling of failure in life become too much poignant and life becomes absurd. He finds no charm, no joy in life. Life becomes all the more a burden to him. The whole life becomes a source of misery and penitence. The happy and successful life takes a turn towards mental torture, deep distress and unhappiness. Clamence in La Chute held a dignified position in society. One day while he was crossing the bridge of the
river scene a woman jumped into the water and cried for help. But he did not try to rescue her. After some days when he was crossing the Pont des Arts, he heard a laugh of derision. All of a sudden he felt that the whole world was laughing at him. At once, his facade of happiness crumbled down. He began to feel that his life has failed in doing good to society and he became a criminal in his mind and spirit. And he became aware of life's absurdity. Prior to this incident Clamence had a belief that he would live happily in this world but suddenly he lost confidence in himself and he felt that a hostile universe has started laughing at him. He lost peace and tranquility of his mind. He began to pull on his life. He thought himself guilty. He began to see this earlier life in the mirror of his mind which has become guilty conscious. His life has been shattered. Psychologically and morally he is a doomed man. He has changed his way of life and he has started to live formally and mechanically. The absurdity of life has been revealed to him. The world does not convey any sense, any meaning, any charm, any joy, any beauty to him. The world now brings to him bitterness, despair, gloom and failure in life. He has become a frustrated man in the world with a prick of conscience which devours all his happiness. He feels acutely the absurdity of life.

Caligula is a drama of Camus written to focus his
idea of absurdity of life. Man is utterly helpless and powerless before the limitless power of death. Man tries to exercise his power but cannot attain success to overcome the power of death and has to surrender before death. Death is the ultimate end of life. And this very feeling of the tragic defeat of man fills man's mind with the feeling of absurdity. The sudden death of Drusilla makes Caligula very much conscious of the absurd. Death and despair of human beings constitute his discovery of the absurd. In this absurd world love has no value. It cannot bring any change in life. Man cannot enjoy life freely. He is chained by the power of death and destruction. His life becomes void of happiness and joy when he becomes very much conscious that death is the ultimate goal of life. He has to pull on his life in a melancholy and monotonous way. Life becomes as such mechanical and absurd. Despair and gloom fills his mind. Caligula becomes desperate and made protest against it by trying to overcome the power of the hostile universe. But ultimately he has realised that he has failed to reach the goal. All human beings are condemned to death. This is the truth, that Caligula has understood at the end of his life. And this is the very essence of the feeling of absurdity in man's life.

Like Caligula, Le Malentendu is a drama of the absurdity of life. Le Malentendu is a portrait of several
characters caught up in the absurdity of existence. After twenty five years making a good fortune in a foreign country Jane was returning to his village. But for the sake of fun he kept his wife and son in a different inn and he himself came in disguise to the inn run by his mother and sister. But in the night his mother and sister without recognising him killed him and threw his body into the river. In the next morning when his wife revealed his identity both the mother and sister were plunged in deep despair and gloom. They cannot escape from the remorse for the horrible crime committed by them. They know that death would be the only goal before them. The mother and sister took their own lives. They know that life is absurd; existence of men in the earth is meaningless. Crime is a form of solitude and this awareness of solitude is another aspect of the feeling of the absurd. It has been revealed to them that the absurdity is an essential fact of existence.

Camus in his works has discussed the different aspects of absurdity. This feeling of absurdity has been dominant in the lives of men in the face of tumultuous problems created by the horrible atmosphere in the wartorn society. People have lost faith in everything, have been bewildered and confused in the uncertain condition of life, in the drudgery and misery of a lifeless mechanical society. Life has no joy, no happiness, no hope but only despair, gloom and anxiety. People do not feel any emotion and passion in
mind but have to pull on life mechanically. Even the existence of men in the earth is uncertain but only certainty is death. All these conditions of men fill the minds with the ideas and feelings of absurdity. Life does not bring any meaning to man. This pessimistic and nihilistic note has come to the minds of men in society formed by the tragic situation of war. The destructive war has destroyed the instincts of man's mind and rendered them soulless human beings. The characters in the novels and dramas of Camus have accepted their conditions in the different situations of their lives. They have been placed and situated in society not by some human pressure or conspiracy. The feeling of absurdity arise in them not out of the circumstances directly controlled by men, but by the circumstances created in society out of the environment and the effect of war.

During the same period under the same social and political circumstances. English literature was intensely affected. Political crisis began to dominate social environment. Peace and tranquility has been fully shattered.

Men began to live in awe and despair. They have been living in utter confusion and bewilderment. Writers have been vitalizing the new ideas. In France, they have been introducing new philosophical and moral ideas in literature dealing in human condition in such terrible war torn society
whereas in English literature, the writers have been more realistic dealing in human condition in the progress of scientific thoughts as well as political domination of a few people over the general mass. The disillusionment, cynicism, despair and bewilderment have been affecting the novels of the period.

The novelists of this period have a concern with man's tragic and absurd experience of the existence in a Godless universe. The strength of their novels lies in the tension which exists in the individual's anguished attempt both to create some meaning for his life and to seek fulfilment in a historical situation. He exists both as an individual and within a social framework, and wrestles with political problems.

During this period there was already a notion of the absurd, not as an elaborate philosophic position but as a kind of intense intuition that the world no longer made sense. Man seemed to have lost density and stability. The mood was one of bafflement and confusion as was natural in the face of rapid technical and social change and the breakdown of traditional political systems. The sense of being victims which was engendered by war and economic crisis was reinforced by man's estrangement from the machines his ingenuity had created. The notion of the impending collapse of European civilization, the decline of the west seemed
increasingly to be borne out by the systematic terror practised by the totalitarian states of Italy, Germany and Soviet Union and by the prospect of global destruction made possible through the invention of nuclear weapons.

The interplay of these forces gives birth to a vision of the world marked by violence, incoherence and desolation and it is to this vision lacking in ultimate revelation of meaning and magnifying the loneliness, despair and inhumanity of men that writers like Orwell, Beckett and others respond. These writers invent imaginary forms for expressing fears, doubts and anxieties which may well be rooted in private obsessions but which transcend the experience of the individual and speak of the common lot, of the situation of society. The image of man which is embodied in their writings is that of a victim in an ambiguous world deprived of acceptable system of value and belief. This figure experiences suffering and knows the anxiety which comes from the fear of losing personal identity and human dignity.

Orwell suffered from humiliation and injustice in society. Poverty had sucked all the sources of happiness. In his early writings he has shown that man who is cursed with poverty has to suffer untold misery and has no status in society. His life is simply a burden and will have to shoulder all sorts of sufferings and mental torture. He
cannot enjoy his life but he has to pull on life. The daily monotonous life brings only deep distress, despair and gloom. All the inner instincts of love and affection are doomed. He remains simply a void human figure bereft of all feelings; He finds life meaningless. He does not find any charm, any joy, any hope. It is simply a mechanical entity, living only for the sake of living. In such a condition of life he finds only the absurdity of life. The poor coal miners in The Road to Wigan Pier, the poor hotel boys in Down and Out in Paris and Londo, Flory in Burmese Days, Dorothy Hare in A Clergyman's Daughter, George Bowling in Coming up for Air are all the victims of a lifeless society where they have been suffering in different ways. They could not fulfil the hopes and aspirations of their life. Poverty, human conspiracy and political circumstances have stood on their way. They have simply understood that life does not convey any sense, any meaning to them. Life is only absurd. They have to bear all the burdens of life silently and mechanically. This is the ultimate condition of life in the present society.

In the novel, Burmese Days, Flory's struggle is as much with the material as with the social environment. Life in Burma is full of moral horror, boredom and brutality of Anglo-Indian life. Throughout his life Flory is ill at ease socially. The novel is an account of human aspiration
gradually destroyed by the force of circumstances. Flory's hopes have been thwarted by social conspiracy. He faces deep despair, gloom and hopelessness. He finds life meaningless and absurd.

In *A Clergyman's Daughter*, Orwell conveys the sensation of despair as it is experienced by the starving people. The people are poor and indifferent and do not find any interest in anything. Reverend Charles Hare unable to reconcile himself to poverty and social isolation withdraws from the unfriendly world. His daughter, Dorothy Hare takes the charge but gradually finds that she has failed to achieve the goal. Her life has become hopeless, meaningless and absurd.

In *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, Gordon Comstock struggles to free himself from the despised life around him. He is disillusioned about his social surroundings. He finds that the life is futile and meaningless. But this young intellectual cannot free himself from the destiny of every human being. Moneyless existence to which he had condemned himself had thrust him ruthlessly out of the stream of life. And his last novel of the thirties, *Coming up for Air* exemplifies Orwell's sympathy for the ordinary life and the simple pleasures. But the approaching war deranged his individual attitudes and expectations. Power worship
and the cult of violence are invading society. Bowling is very much politically conscious and thoughtful. The horror of war and the distressing effect of the war have vitiated his mind. He becomes very much frustrated to the effect of war. All his hopes are shattered. The fear of losing a job and the raving ideologies preach hatred which stems from the all pervasive fear symbolised by the dive bombers sweeping over London as Bowling moves around the city. Human emotions are suppressed by propaganda machines. Mind is sealed off and life becomes meaningless and absurd. In the modern glass and concrete world even the free are captives. The ordinary citizen has no more chance of enjoying himself in a quiet, uncomplicated personal way than a convict in a prison.

Bowling is thinking of a world where peace is lost for ever. There is no feeling of any safety nor of any freedom. There men live under the dictates of the political lords. Men have to follow their directions silently. Life has no freedom, no meaning. It is a machine to be switched on by the dictators.

Before George Orwell started writing political novels, he stressed on the simple socialistic life. But in this life he has depicted the sad plight of man under the different social crises. Poverty, social injustice have created acute problems in the lives of men.
Orwell went to Spain to fight for the Loyalists and was wounded in action. He returned to London. But the impression that he carried from there about the Russian suppression horrified him about the possible future state of mankind.

The victory of fascism in Spain, the growing power of Nazi Germany were very much discouraging Orwell. As the Second World War approached Orwell's vision of the future became more despairing. Everyone can foresee that fascism will be imposed on men as soon as the war starts. The short stay at the front of Spain provided Orwell with the inside knowledge. The Russian pact with Germany prompted him to visualize the dangerous outcome of the political manoeuvre in the lives of society. In Animal Farm Orwell took the plot and characters from situations and persons he had come in contact and observed in his own eyes. The Animal Farm is a fable and a satire. This story reminds people what Soviet political methods would be. The animal kingdom becomes a reflection of human society. The pigs are the representatives of the political lords who control the actions of the ordinary people who must surrender to them in every sphere of life.

Napoleon is a silent leader and Squalor is his prompt propaganda minister. Under his silent direction Squalor
gets his every order "executed. If any animal dares make
any protest against any order he is silently prosecuted.
The animals have no freedom of speech but they have to
accept whatever the order comes from the highest authority.
The animals live in terror. The leaders are destroying
freedom and truth. They cannot understand what is true
and false and they are very much perplexed. They are
tired, over worked and do not remember anything clearly
and the lies are so persuasively put across that at every
state they believe it. They talk about democracy, liberty,
equality, fraternity, the classless society which are all
humbug covering the ambitions of some new class which is
elbowing its way into power.

By a combination of hypocrisy and ruthlessness the
leaders establish a tyranny and they themselves enjoy all
the privileges and the other animals are as pathetic as
they were before.

In Animal Farm, the poor animals live in great agony
and in an atmosphere of hypnoticism. The pigs (leaders)
throttle down their inner feelings and sentiments. Orwell
has described the conditions of the people under the regime
of the Communist lords who slowly and slowly are dominating
the working class people and are making them tools of
their supreme desires. They have to abide by their
orders and they have no power to ignore them. Under the
authoritarian government the working class people are groaning. They live like machines bereft of any feelings and sentiments. Their life has no meaning, no object and no goal. It is a life of absurdity. Death is the only punishment in case the people raise head against any order of the government. Such is the rule of the law in the totalitarian government.

1984 is Orwell's last and the best novel. He has conceived the novel to elucidate what kind of life would there be in the state which will be controlled by the totalitarian government. George Orwell has been the Spanish war and observed the situations and has understood the political implications. He has observed the totalitarian moves of the Russians in Spain against the democratic Spanish Government.

Totalitarianism tries to make people less conscious. The totalitarians deprive men of their own freedom and their way of living is being disrupted by their interference. They forcibly suppress all their inner instincts - they cannot express their inner feelings. The political dictators control their living, their expression and their movement. They have no freedom of thought.

Orwell thinks that the state of future will establish its power by destroying souls. He believes that men will
be coerced into soullessness. They will be dehumanized by a marginal life of deprivation, dullness and fear of pain.

Winston Smith, a civil servant and Party Member in the English totalitarian state conceives political doubts, drifts into tacit rebellion is detected after a short and touching period of happiness with a girl member of the Party and is horribly rehabilitated.

O'Brien tries to destroy Smith's moral and intellectual autonomy. The Party works to control and to reduce human consciousness. In the world, there will be no emotions except fear, rage, triumph and self-abasement. In 1984, we find Winston Smith manipulated physically and mentally by an omnipotent and unchallengeable social system. Deprived of all physical privacy by the two way telescreen and the hovering aircraft of the Thought Police and of his mental freedom by unrelenting propaganda he is a completely ruined man. The party has a device of the totalitarian thought control. It dictates the thoughts, governs the emotional life and isolates from the outside world.

In this totalitarian state personal identity, truth and love are totally denied. It is not simply that truth and love do not exist in Oceania, it is that they did exist.
but have been destroyed.

In the totalitarian world mind is totally controlled. There is no scope of any freedom of thought, there will be no feelings, no instincts, no passions. Man will have to pull on a life like a machine bereft of all finer sentiments. When Smith and Julia are arrested, the dictators smashed their spirit and soul. They understand that their life has no sense, no meaning and it is totally absurd. It is a dull, monotonous life. It is a life of a slave controlled by the dictators.

The concept of absurdity as suggested by Camus is an experience which a man gets in the world in the most conflicting situation. Man is born with hopes and aspirations but they are frustrated by the nature of existence and these desires cannot be satisfied in a human life. Camus approaches the absurd from an existential standpoint. For him, the absurd arises from the relation between man and the world, between man's rational demands and the world's irrationality. The wartorn world which has brought deep distress, anxiety, anguish and hopelessness has made the lives of men absurd. Men are puzzled, baffled and bewildered. Awe and fear has made life uncertain and the only certainty is death. In such circumstances the situations and characters of the novels of Camus clearly
indicate the notion of absurdity. Absurdity is a passion, the most heart rending of all. To Camus, life will be lived all the better for its being devoid of meaning. In the novels of Camus, the situations and characters are created in an absurd world. The feeling of absurdity is almost innate.

Mersault, the hero of L'Etranger is born with the absurd feeling. And the world which he finds around him is absurd. It does not convey any sense to him nor does it bring any source of happiness. In all the works of Albert Camus it is found that the situations and characters are having a natural setting and feeling of absurdity is either formed in the natural way or under the provocation of natural circumstances. But in the works of George Orwell particularly in Animal Farm and 1984 we find that the setting is a political one and the victims of absurdity are made to feel absurdity by the political pressure. The animals are conspired to feel the meaninglessness of life as all their feelings and understandings are suppressed. They have become only mechanical entities and the party members Winston and Julia are forced to subdue to the political lords destroying all their finer elements and living on mechanically under the dictatorship of the political lords. The world around them is a political world and the world is made absurd by political pressure.
Albert Camus is a philosopher and a moralist. He has sponsored the concept of absurdity in literature and has brought a revolution in literary thoughts and ideas. In Orwell we also find the traces of absurdity in the characters of his novels. We have tried to analyse the works of Orwell to show that the notion of absurdity is there with a difference of setting. The feelings of absurdity in Camus's characters are innate in the minds of the characters and the setting is a realistic world, but the feelings of absurdity in the characters of Orwell are politically inserted and the setting is a political world.