INTRODUCTION

A study of Hermann Hesse as a philosophical novelist whose themes are embedded in moral and spiritual issues requires some acquaintance with the spirit of the age, the milieu that shaped his imagination and impelled him to write in a distinctive manner. Hesse has received considerable attention of late, especially among the youths in the U.S.A. and other countries where the barren spiritual landscapes have driven them in quest of hope and solace. A writer, it is said, is a part of the race, the moment and the milieu. This may not be true wholly of great writers but there is no denying the influence of these factors on an author's sensibility and attitude to life. An attempt is made here to have a bird's eye-view of the background, political, social and economic, in historical terms, against which Hesse emerged as a writer of major importance.

Germany, since 1871, began her new history under the leadership of Otto Von Bismarck. She got a distinct position with her rich art and cultural heritage in the map of the world. During Bismarck's regime, 1871-1890, Germany revealed a marked advance in many directions. It was his ambition to keep Germany aloof from the political and colonial aspirations of other western countries. All he
wanted, all he asked, was that Germany should have peace at
home and abroad, and be allowed henceforth to develop her
capacities to the full, free from outside meddling, and make
her own history in her own way. After his initial struggles
with the Roman Catholics which is known as Kultur Kampf, and
with the socialists, Bismarck devoted all his attention to
the upliftment of Germany’s economy and industry. As a
result of that Germany from 1890, when Bismarck was no more
the pilot of the ship, became one of the great industrial
powers of Europe. Her science developed rapidly, and by 1903
a host of scientists among whom was Einstein, were awarded
Nobel prizes for their valuable contribution to the world of
science and the progress of humanity. The world, especially
from 1900 to 1913, was becoming definitely aware of the
rising industrial and economic significance of Germany.
Great Britain and France were shaken by the rapid rise of
German industrial organisations. They apprehended this
enormous expansion of industry of Germany to be utilised as
a powerful fighting machine for the imperialistic aims of
the Germans. Her imports and exports increased by leaps
and bounds. They exceeded even those of the United States
and Britain. In finished products, for example, German
exports in 1913 were more than twice those of the United
States, and were moving up rapidly to the British level.
This industrial expansion from 1890 to 1913 did not coincide with the political decline of Germany. Since the dismissal of Bismarck in 1890, the political prestige of Germany had fallen steadily. With Kaiser William II at the helm of the affairs, Germany became more interested in the expansion of her territory, and joined in the colonial race with other countries. So from 1890 to 1913, Germany was engaged in signing treaties and forming alliances with different countries, but yielding no substantial gain for the country. Rather she lost her political prestige and was no more considered as a centre of balance of power. She was ultimately involved in the first world war, and the defeat in the war lowered the pride of the German race as being superior to other European states. It crippled her financial strength and economic stability. Political uncertainty and instability which were marked since 1890 continued, and after the defeat in the war, it turned worse. William II had to abdicate and the Weimar Republic was established. But the internal political turmoil did not abate as the Weimar Republic was not liked by many responsible people. Many people wanted to get back the lost prestige of Germany in 1871, and in this way they wanted a "Lesser Germany" -- and an authoritarian state. This political discontent was coupled with social unrest from the Communists, the working class and the church. The whole of Germany was
in a state of disquiet and the people became suspicious of
the efficiency of the Weimar Republic, the first democratic
form of state in Germany which had been born out of defeat,
and was yet dependent on those forces which had shared the
responsibility for the defeat. This state of uncertainty,
doubt and suspicion paved the way for Hitler who came to
power in 1933 and led Germany into the Second World War — an
unprecedented catastrophe that befell Germany. The Second
World War finally put an end to the progress of Germany's
industry, commerce, and above all, it divided the Fatherland
into East and West. The people who after the First World
War, had erected monuments with the inscription "was never
again", were frustrated in their hopes and lost faith in
themselves and in the world. Neither religion nor culture
could give them any guarantee about their existence, and
they felt alienated in the vast world, ruled by the war-
mongering politicians and gigantic machines.

Despite the socio-political unrest and
uncertainty, the literature of Germany since 1871, flourished
unabated. The writers with their roots firm in the cultural,
literary and philosophical traditions set by Goethe, Lessing,
Schiller, Novalis; thinkers like Leibniz, Kant, Fichte,
Schelling, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche;
and social scientists like Burckhardt, Marx, remained
concerned with the nature of human destiny and the problem of
man. Writers like Rilke, Hoffmann, Hofmannsthal, Mann, Dobbin, Broch, Kafka and Hesse, despite their concern with their time, always revealed in their works the eternal predicament of man: his place in the mighty universe and the meaning of his existence. German literature since Goethe has been preoccupied with this theme. And it is no surprise that in 1929, just after a decade of the first world war, a German writer, Thomas Mann, was honoured by the world and awarded the Nobel prize for literature. It is a still greater surprise when the Swedish academy decided to award the Nobel prize for literature to Hermann Hesse in 1946 with the following citation:

After weighing everything in the critical balance, poetry and prose alike, the academicians agreed to give the prize for 1946 to Hesse for his inspired writings, which, while growing in boldness and penetration, exemplify the classic humanitarian ideals and high qualities of style.

And Hesse replied in his "Message to the Nobel prize Banquet" (1946):

In honouring me with the Nobel prize you have at the same time honoured the German language and the German contribution to world culture. In this I see a gesture of conciliation and good will, a move to restore and enlarge cultural cooperation among peoples.

Hermann Hesse was born of a Protestant pietistic parents on July 2, 1877, in the little town of Claw on the Nagold river at the edge of the Blackforest. His literary career began
with the publication of Romantic Songs and An Hour Beyond Midnight in 1899. These romantic works were followed in 1901 by the Posthumous Writings and Poems of Hermann Lauscher and, in 1902, by a second volume of poems. While An Hour Beyond Midnight suggested a mood of aesthetic seclusion, The Posthumous Writings and Poems of Hermann Lauscher, despite its romantic fin de siècle melancholy, revealed a more positive attitude to reality. Commenting on these two works Joseph Millek, one of the renowned critics on Hesse, says:

The aestheticism of Eine Stunde hinter Mitternacht (An Hour Beyond Midnight) reflects the early stage of Hesse's first adult adjustment to life. Hermann Lauscher was his last reaffirmation of an approach to life he knew he had to give up if he was ever to escape a loneliness that was becoming progressively more painful. Hermann Lauscher was a finale to Eine Stunde hinter Mitternacht and not a prelude to Peter Camenzind, not Hesse's first attempt to win for himself 'a piece of the world and actuality' as he contended in 1941.

Of course An Hour Beyond Midnight was appreciated and recognised by no less a writer than Rilke, and through this work Hesse could become a member of the Petit ce'nacle. It was an association of typical German youths of the 1880's who were discontented with the political atmosphere of the time, and especially with the empire of Wilhelm II. The snobbery and sordid realities of their time were nauseating to the members of the petit ce'nacle, and they preferred to
withdraw themselves into a romantic past. Here Hesse met Ludwig Finkh. Hesse's association with this group inspired him to be acquainted with the works of Gottfried Keller, Jeremias Gotthelf, Edward Morike, Berthold Auerbach, Joseph von Eichendorff, Fritz Reuter and Theodor Storm. But Hesse came to lime light with the publication of his first novel Peter Camenzind in 1904. Since 1904 Hesse found his true vocation and engaged himself as a writer. Besides innumerable essays on war, politics, literature, philosophy and individual writers, Hesse also wrote ten more novels and reviewed some of the important books of the past as well as of his time. His last novel, The Glass Bead Game was published in 1943. Since 1943 till his death on August 9, 1962, Hesse engaged himself only with writing articles and poems for various journals. The last poem of his life was written on the evening of August 8, just before the night of his passing away. It was his last good night to the world. The poem as it is written:

Splittrig geknickter Ast,
Hangend schon Jahr um Jahr,
Trocken knarrt er im Wind sein Lied
Ohne Laub, ohne Rinde,
Kahl, fahl, zu langen Lebens,
Zu langen Sterbens müd.
Hart klingt und zäh sein Gesang,
Klingt trotzig, Klingt heimlich bang
Noch einen Sommer,
Noch einen Winter lang.

Branch, half splintered and bent,
Clinging Year after Year,
Drily you scrape your song in the wind,
Without bark, without foliage,
Bare, gray, and weary of
The long living, the long dying.

Spiteful it sounds and yet afraid,
Of another summer,
And another winter.

The poem was occasioned by his confrontation with a rotting branch of a robina while moving with his wife Minon Hesse in the neighboring forest on the morning of August 8, to gather dry wood for fire. Hesse had very often tried to tear loose the rotting branch but it would not come off. So Hesse's last words to the world are, "Of another summer/And another winter."

This long period of more than sixty years, from 1899-1962, of a writer's life who has been a witness to the waxing and waning of political, social and intellectual life of Europe and that of Germany in particular, is bound to be concerned with his time. Hermann Hesse's writings reveal the concern of a highly sensitive and thoughtful mind who could not be at ease with his time — who considered his time, "a leprous semireality and unreality, that, be clouded to the point of total alienation," ("Letter to Adele" in If the War Goes On, p.130), an "era of spooks" (Ibid, p.133); the present culture as "makeshift culture"; and music as the "music of decline." In his essay "The Reich", written in December 1918, Hesse writes about the gradual change of German life from
agriculture to a technotronic civilization and the rise of
the "expansionist wave" which made the country rich and
powerful, and at the same time, divided the society into "have" and "have-nots". It all resulted in fencing the border and
increasing the soldiers in the name of defence. Naturally
other countries grew alarmed and began piling up their forces,
and the result was the first great world war which ultimately
devastated not only Germany but the whole world. Hesse
gives the following account of the disastrous effects the war had on
Germany in his essay "The Reich", "Today we stand among its
ruins, still deafened by its noise, embittered by its
absurdity, and sickened by the streams of blood that haunt
all our dreams" (In If the War Goes On, p.64).

The two world wars and the authoritarian rule of
Hitler gave to Hesse a spiritual shock which he tried to
lessen through his writings. His book, If the War Goes On
(Krieg und Frieden: Betrachtungen Zu Krieg und Politik seit
dem Jahr 1914) which was published in 1946, contains his
essays on his reactions to the world from 1914 to 1946. The
first essay of this book is "O Friends, not these Tones!"
("O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!") written in September 1914,
and through this essay Hesse appealed to the sensitive minds
of Germany to refrain from singing the war song like the
chauvinistic politicians of their time. Hesse asks: "But
we writers, artists, and journalists -- can it be our function
to make things worse than they are? Is the situation not
already ugly and deplorable enough?" (In *If the War Goes On* p.14). To Hesse what these people, "who were more or less consciously at work on the supranational edifice of human culture", are doing is, "wrong and grotesquely unreasonable" (Ibid, p.11). Hesse bemoans:

But it is absurd and wrong that any man who ever, in a lucid hour, believed in the idea of humanity, in international thought, in an artistic beauty cutting across national boundaries, should now, frightened by the monstrous thing that has happened, throw down the banner and relegate what is best in him to the general ruin. Among our writers and men of letters, there are, I believe, few if any whose present utterances, spoken or written in the anger of the moment, will be counted among their best work. Nor is there any serious writer who at heart prefers Körner's patriotic songs to the poems of the Goethe who held so conspicuously aloof from the war of Liberation (Ibid, pp.15-16).

Hesse, thus, appealed to his fellow writers to emulate Goethe in their adjustment to war:

Goethe was never wanting as a patriot, though he wrote no national anthems in 1813. But his devotion to humanity meant more to him than his devotion to the German people, which he knew and loved better than any one else. He was a citizen and patriot in the international world of thought, of inner freedom, of intellectual conscience. In the moments of his best thinking, he saw the histories of nations no longer separate, independent destinies but as subordinate parts of a total movement (Ibid, p.16).

Impressed by this humanitarian effort, another pacifist, Romain Rolland, congratulated Hesse with these words: "But of
all German poets, he who has written the serenest, the loftyest of words, the only one who has maintained a truly Goethean attitude in this demonic war, is... Hermann Hesse. Besides "O Friends not these Tones!" Hesse also wrote many other essays like "To a Cabinet Minister" (August 1917); "If the War Goes On Another Two Years" (End of 1917); "Shall There Be Peace?" (December 1917); "If the War Goes On Another Five Years" (Early in 1918). These essays reveal his attitude to war and his love for suffering humanity. But his appeal had no effect on the people, hypnotised as they were by the fervour of narrow patriotism. His stand rather irritated the public and the press was openly hostile to him. He was described as a 'traitor', 'a wretch', and the situation became so uncomfortable that Hesse, in an article "Wieder in Deutschland" ("Again in Germany") which appeared in the Frankfurter Zeitung on October 10, 1915, had to clarify his stand:

I had not been home in Germany for a long while. Outer circumstances had first held me back, and then, when the war went on, I too became more liable for military service and was afraid that I would not be allowed back after a visit. By the time I too was called up for service I had long previously accepted a job in connection with the prisoners of war and in association with various Swiss organisations, and was not compelled to exchange this more attractive and more powerful work for military service.

Hesse, infact, was not against the war from the beginning, and was never against Germany. He himself had made it clear in his "O Friends not these Tones!": "I am a German, my
sympathies and aspirations belong to Germany; nevertheless, what I wish to say relates not to war and politics but to the position and tasks of neutrals (If the War Goes On pp.13-14). Mileck rightly says about Hesse's political stand: "He was nationalistic enough to sympathise with his fellow Germans, but he abhorred violence." But the Germany of 1914 was not prepared to hear anything from Hesse, and in an article, "Ein deutscher Dichter", published in a newspaper, called Kölner Tageblatt (October 24, 1915), Hesse became the butt of ridicule:

"Every decent German has to blush with shame when he hears that a hitherto 'Knight of the spirit' is boasting about his shirking of duty and sly cowardice, and is actually making fun of the fact that he has succeeded at this critical time in snapping his fingers at his fatherland and its laws . . . Nowhere does Hesse utter a word of sympathy and concern for his fatherland . . . glorious Swabia and its people can no longer be proud of such a son."

This misunderstanding about Hesse's mission persisted even during the 1930's, when Hitler was at the helm of affairs. While for his articles on Franz Kafka, Alfred Polgar, Ernst Bloch and Stefan Zweig, Hesse was accused of championing the cause of the Jews by the Nazi supporters, for 'emigre' German Jews like George Bernhard, editor of Pariser Tageblatt, he became a Nazi sympathiser.
Hesse was neither a pacifist (in the ordinary sense) nor a Nazi sympathiser. He had clearly stated his views on war and peace in his essay "War and Peace", written in summer 1918. In that essay he had mentioned that he did not want to be considered as pacifist since, "I no more believe that world peace can be brought about in rational ways, by preaching, organisation, and propaganda, than that the philosopher's stone can be invented by a congress of chemists" (If the War Goes On p.54). Hesse had very little faith in the world peace 'manufactured' by the politicians in the organisations like 'League of Nations' or 'United Nations'. When Max Brod, the friend of Kafka, requested him to intervene in the settlement of the Palestine issue in 1948, Hesse clearly stated: "The whole idea horrifies me, for I must confess that I have no faith whatever in the concerted action of intellectuals or in the good will of the 'civilized world'" (If the War Goes On p.152).

Hesse had different notions altogether about war and peace. To him while war is as real as life, true peace presupposes an ideal which could only be achieved with difficulty. He says in "War and Peace": "True peace is more difficult and unusual than any other ethical or intellectual achievement even for two persons who live together and need each other" (Ibid, p.54). It is as difficult as Shakespeare's 'true love', which needs 'a marriage of true minds'.
peace presupposes a knowledge of true self. Hesse says about this knowledge:

It is the knowledge of the living substance in us, in each of us, in you and me, of the secret magic, the godliness that each of us bears within him. It is the knowledge that, starting from this innermost point, we can at all times transcend all pairs of opposites, transforming white into black, evil into good, night into day. The Indians call it 'Atman', the Chinese 'Tao'; Christians call it 'grace'. Where that supreme knowledge is present (as in Jesus, Buddha, Plato, or Lao-tzu), a threshold is crossed beyond which miracles begin. There war and enmity cease (Ibid, p. 54).

This is also the message of the Gita and the Upanishads — the transcendence of the pair of opposites — 'Dwandatita'. Hesse aims at this, and when man achieves this he becomes aware of his greater Self in him. This awareness is what Hesse calls "supreme knowledge". This "supreme knowledge" is what could be termed as Hesse's 'ethics of evolution'. Hesse means to stress the truth that neither rejection of war nor a destruction of the world can ensure an eternal peace on earth. Such peace could only be brought about by an expansion of awareness in man. His level of consciousness must be enlarged to such an extent that he can feel the 'Kingdom of God' in him. He must know that God exists in him and man is the essence and at the same time existence. He must know that he is Tao and 'Atman'. This awareness alone can lead him to the threshold of perennial truth: 'tat tvam asi' or 'That art Thou'. When it is achieved in him he transcends the polarities of life. Love and religion, lust and violence appear on the same plane of
reality. So rational thinking cannot promise a lasting peace for the world. Reason is neither the highest power in man, nor the highest possibility. Reality is beyond the comprehending power of reason. It can serve man and society only if it is a mediator between life and something greater within him. That something greater within him can be known by turning inward, by expanding the frontiers of human awareness. It is the ethics of evolution. And it is also what is prescribed by Sri Aurobindo who believed that a millennium could be brought about in human society through the 'creative evolution' of human consciousness. By this 'creative evolution' man can be enlightened and can realise the enormous potentialities in him. A "Brave New World" can only be created with these enlightened souls and not with test-tube babies.

To Hesse such enlightenment seemed to be the need of the time. After 1918, he strongly felt this need and made it a mission in his life to help man by making him aware of his responsibility. Man must turn inward and know his own self. Hesse's Zarathustra said to the war-torn youths of Germany:

If you wish to hear a bell tone, you must not strike upon tin. And if you wish to play the flute, you must not set your lips to a wineskin. Do you understand me, my friends? Think back, my dear friends, think back and remember! what was it that you learned from your Zarathustra in
those hours of enthusiasm? What was it? Was it
wisdom for the counting house, or for the street,
or for the battle field? Did I give you advice
for kings, did I speak to you like a king, or a
citizen, or a politician, or a merchant? No, if
you recall, I spoke like Zarathustra, I spoke my
language, I stood before you like a mirror, in
which to see yourselves ("Zarathustra's Return", in If the War Goes On p. 81).

When a young man from Germany wrote to him for consolation
after the devastating experience of the first world war,
Hesse replied to him:

If you are now wondering where to look for
consolation, where to seek a new and better God,
a new and better faith, you will surely realise,
in your present loneliness and despair, that
this time you must not look to external, official
sources, to Bibles, pulpits, or thrones, for
enlightenment. Nor to me. You can find it only
in yourself. And there it is, there dwells the
God who is higher and more selfless than the
Patriots' God of 1914. The sages of all time
have proclaimed him, but he does not come to us
from books, he lives within us, and all our
knowledge of him is worthless unless he opens
our inner eye. This God is in you too. He is
most particularly in you, the dejected and
despairing. It is not the inferior man who sickens
with the affliction of the times, or who becomes
dissatisfied with the gods and idols of the
past (Ibid, pp. 102-103).

Not change from without but change from within is what the
crisis cried out for, and Hesse wanted not only the youth of
Germany but the whole of Europe to be aware of the
importance of the 'inner world'.
Hesse’s stress on the ‘turn inward’ was precipitated by the loss of faith in Christianity or in the established religion of the time. He found the Protestant faith and the pietism of his family inadequate to cope with the changing situation of his time. The feeling gets reflected in his Demian. He found the church corrupt and the priests acting as tools of the political authorities. So in the same letter to a young German, Hesse unleashed his attack on the church of Germany which during the war, instead of providing men with “a haven of humanity, a sanctuary for the orphaned soul, a perpetual admonition to moderation, wisdom, and brotherly love” preached hatred and became a tool in the hands of authority who paid them (Ibid, p.102).

The inefficiency of the church and the corruption of the priests were marked by the writers and thinkers even in the 19th century. The Danish philosopher, Kierkegaard, had raised his voice against the church-religion of his time. Towards the end of the 19th century Nietzsche’s Thus Spoke Zarathustra denounced the church as an institution of man’s faith. What Zarathustra saw towards the end of the 19th century, became more visible after the Great War. Many major writers of our age have been shocked by the helplessness of the church and the consequent loss of faith of man in established religion and God. Their works reflect
this loss of faith in God and in religion. Eliot's 

The Waste Land is a picture of a barren spiritual landscape. 

Stephen Dedalus knows he will not fit into any social or religious order. Not for him the wisdom of the priest — he must learn his own wisdom. He breaks with his friends: 

I will not serve that which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church; and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use — silence, exile, and cunning. 

The rebellious spirit in Stephen Dedalus not to fit into any age-old tradition which had become stale and obsolete, is also reflected in the works of André Gide. André Gide rejected the rigid orthodoxies of a protestant upbringing and tried to find out a new ethic, a new god for him which would make him understand his own existence and his relation to the world and God. But the loss of faith in God and the church and the death of God have been the concern of most of the novelists of the 20's and the 30's. André Malraux's novels depict the sad plight of a hopeless man in what may be described as the post-Christian world. Ling in La Tentation de l'Occident (1926) says: "For you the absolute reality was first God, then man; but man too, like God, had died". For Malraux the death of God also means the death of men. His Le Condition Humaine (1933) is not a
political novel although it takes its theme from the attempted coup d'etat in Shanghai in the spring of 1927. The novel rather depicts the condition of everyman of the post-war and post-Christian era — estranged from himself, from the world, and from God. The existential philosopher-novelist Sartre denies the existence of God, and feels around him everything nauseating. Albert Camus who refused to be considered as an existentialist found everything slipping in the absence of faith in God. He writes in The Fall: "Yes, we have lost track of the light, the mornings, the holy innocence of those who forgive themselves". The alienation of man in this post-war world from himself, the world and God, has made him an outsider. Colin Wilson's book The Outsider (1956) considers this outsider as a "social problem".

The western world is thus faced with an unprecedented challenge by the withering of all traditional sanctions like religion, morality and nature and the substitution for them of a mechanistic universe and behaviouristic image of man. Historians, sociologists and thinkers like Sorokin, Mumford, Hannah Arendt, Paul Goodman and Herbert Marcuse tried to probe deep into the roots of discontents of this civilization. These thinkers like Freud in his Civilization and Its Discontents have come to realise that the modern civilization with its excessive
preoccupation with secularism and materialism in life has lost its centrality and does not even feel the necessity of it. Yeats in his poem, "The Second Coming" fore-saw this: "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold". Modern man with his anxiety, alienation, loneliness and absurdity, has been described by the writers as "dangling", "invisible", "ginger" or "one-dimensional". These epithets reveal the split personality and complete atomisation of modern man.

This predicament was also visualised by quite a few artists and thinkers in the 19th century, among whom one could name Burekhart, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Durkheim or Proudhon. Durkheim spoke of a condition of 'anomie' which describes man's aimless and valueless existence in a meaningless structuralised society. Towards the end of the novel, Crime and Punishment, Dostoevsky's hero Rodin Raskolnikov dreams in Siberia where he is sentenced after the confession of his guilt that the whole of Europe is going to be confronted with a spiritual crisis. He dreams of a devastating plague infecting the whole of Europe, killing and destroying human lives. The dream presents a horrible picture:

All were excited and did not understand one another. Each thought that he alone had the truth as was wretched looking at the other, beat himself on the breast, wept, and wrung his hands. They did not know how to judge and
could not agree what to consider evil and what good; they didn't know whom to blame, whom to justify. The ethical question of 'good' and 'evil' which Europe was facing without the voice of a judge to decide it was again considered by Dostoevsky in his last novel, *The Brothers Karmazov* (1880). Hermann Hesse considers this novel to be a forecast for the decline of spiritual Europe. He finds the overwhelming influence of Dostoevsky among the youth of Europe, and specially the youth of Germany seems to be more at home with Dostoevsky than Goethe or Nietzsche. Even the creative minds of Germany are found to be under the spell of Dostoevsky. It is an overwhelming influence, and Hesse finds that, "the ideal of Karmazov, a primeval, occult, Asiatic ideal, begins to become European, begins to devour the spirit of Europe." This is what he calls "decline of Europe." "This return", writes Hesse, "is a turning back to Asia, a return to the mother, to the sources, to the Faustian "Mothers", and of course will lead like every earthly death to a new birth*" (*My Belief*, p.71). To a man who has crossed forty and not old enough, this new ideal appears as 'decline' whereas to a young mind it appears something new, something lying ahead. This 'new ideal' is a "turning away from every fixed morality and ethic in favor of a universal understanding, a universal validation" (*Ibid*, p.71). It is "an amoral way of thinking and feeling,
an ability to perceive the divine, the necessary, the fated, even in what is most wicked and ugly and also to pay it reverence and worship in this guise, yes, especially, in this guise" (Ibid., p.72).

When the entire vest is faced with an imminent cultural and spiritual crisis; when every positive virtue like love, courage, honesty and friendship, is replaced by perversity, cowardice, dishonesty and deception; when the very existence of man is threatened by Nothingness, Hesse comes with the panacea that a simultaneous existence in both the worlds, good, as well as evil, can only bring sanity and meaning to human existence. His "Russian man" is "at once murderer and judge, ruffian and sensitive soul, he is equally the complete egoist and a hero of total self-sacrifice" (Ibid., p.73). This "Russian man" cannot be comprehended from a "European standpoint," which is characterised by Hesse as "fixed, moralistic, ethical, dogmatic" (Ibid., p.73). In "Russian man," "good and evil, outer and inner, God and Satan are cheek and jowl" (Ibid., p.73). In order to make this "Russian man" comprehensive to the European mind Hesse uses a symbol, and that symbol is "Abraxas" who represents both good and evil. "Abraxas" is the name given to the supreme demiurge in certain gnostic cults.
Hesse's interest in Gnosticism is evident from his essays and letters. During Hesse's time Gnosticism was prevalent as a counteraction to the materialistic positivism of the 19th century. Like a Gnostic, Hesse believed in the redemption of the spirit from matter through spiritual knowledge and believed that creation is a process of emanation from the original essence or Godhead. It does not, however, mean that Hesse was a gnostic. Hesse's life reveals that since his boyhood he was exposed to different religious and philosophical thoughts of the world. From his Protestant pietistic parents he heard the stories of Christ: his sufferings, his sacrifice. From his maternal grandfather, Dr. Hermann Gundert, who was an Indologist and a man of vast erudition Hesse developed his interest in German classical culture and Orientalism. Hermann Gundert's library which contained among other things all of eighteenth century German literature and philosophy, had engaged the attention of the young Hesse. Further he was exposed to the literature and philosophy of the East by his parents and grandparents who were missionaries in India and other Eastern countries. Hesse has mentioned about these influences in "Life Story Briefly Told" (1925), and he has written about his grandfather in "About Grandfather" (1952), in whom he encounters,

an echo, a survival — somewhat obscured by piety and service to God but still very much alive — of that marvelous Swabian world compounded
of materials, stringency and intellectual grandeur which, in the Swabian Latin Schools, in the evangelical monastery seminaries, and in the famous Tübingen Training College, has persisted for almost two hundred years, constantly enriching and extending its precious tradition.

Hermann Gundert's deep sense of tradition and cosmopolitan outlook had shaped the young author's spirit to look at life and the world with a difference from that of his contemporaries. In his essay "Childhood of the Magician" (1923) Hesse refers to his Grandfather's library where "Everything was full of reality and everything was full of magic . . . ." (In Autobiographical Writings, p. 7). His grandfather appeared in the hall and the library as a "magician", "a wiseman and a sage," who "understood all the languages of mankind" (Ibid, p. 8). He with his vast erudition and wide experience only understood that "our city and our country were only a very small part of the earth, that a thousand million people had other beliefs than ours, other customs, languages, skin, colours, other gods, virtues, and vices" (Ibid, p. 8). This catholicity and internationalism of the old man had very significant influence on the young author's life. Hesse again mentions about his grandfather in the same essay "Childhood of the Magician":

This man, my mother's father was hidden in a forest of mysteries, just as his face was hidden in the white forest of his beard: from his
eyes there flowed sorrow for the world and there also flowed blithe wisdom, as the case might be, lonely wisdom and divine roguishness; people from many lands knew him, visited and honored him, talked to him in English, French, Indian, Italian, Malayalam and went off after long conversations leaving no clue to their identity, perhaps his friends, perhaps his emissaries, perhaps his servants, his agents. (Ibid, pp.8-9).

This old, "unfathomable" man had bequeathed his secrets and mystery to his daughter, Marie Gundert, the mother of Hesse, who had also significant influence on the young man's spiritual development. Hesse says about his mother: "And at times she possessed, like him, the stranger's smile, the veiled smile of wisdom" (Ibid, p.9). Although Hesse was full of admiration for his father's erudition and command over German language yet he had always felt his roots in his mother's soil. Hesse writes in "Childhood of the Magician" about his parents:

It was this German he used to attract and win me and instruct me; at times I strove to emulate him; full of admiration and zeal, all too much zeal, although I knew that my roots reached deeper into my mother's soil, into the dark-eyed and mysterious. My mother was full of music; my father was not, he could not sing (Ibid, p.9).

On the whole the world of his parents and grandparents had immense influence on the spiritual development of Hesse as a writer. In his letter to his sister Adele, Hesse mentioned
about the influence of his parents and grandparents on their childhood, Hesse wrote:

Everything that made our childhood beautiful and our later life fruitful, warm, and tender, comes from that home, from grandfather and our parents. Grandfather's kindly wisdom, our mother's inexhaustible imagination and loving heart, our father's sensitive conscience and keen sensibility moulded us. ("Letter to Adele," 1946. In If the War Goes On, p.131).

In the same letter Hesse described the cosmopolitan culture of his parents and grandparents. It was

a world that was both German and Christian, both Swabian and international, a world in which every soul, Christian or not, was held in equal worth and in which neither Jew nor Negro, Hindu nor Chinese was rejected as a stranger (Ibid, p.129).

In such a world-culture as represented by his parents and grandparents, Hesse not only grew up with his knowledge of Christian, Hindu or Buddhistic literature, he was well acquainted with Chinese thoughts. It was his father who created an interest in him to read Tao Te Ching of Lao-tse.

Since 1907 Hesse was an avid reader of Chinese classics which were translated by Alexander Ular, Julius Grill and Richard Wilhelm. In Tao Te Ching and I Ching or The Book of Changes Hesse found the positive affirmation of his belief in the polarities of life and the acceptance of life with its
physical and metaphysical reality. This vision of duality in Chinese thought appeared to Hesse as nearer to Christian ethic than Hindu-Buddhistic way. Hesse wrote in his essay on "Chinese Literature" (1911):

The Far East, between Buddha and Christ, possessed a philosophy that never became a popular religion, whose active, living, beautiful ethic stands decidedly closer to the Christian ethic than does the Hindu-Buddhistic (In My Belief, p.386).

However, the Chinese influence like all other influences, Hinduism, Buddhism, Gnosticism, on him is just a confirmation of his belief in the essential unity of things and totality of existence. For the West neither the Chinese, Buddha nor the Upanishads, is a substitute for the New Testament. "Know thy self" or "tat tvam asi" remains a perennial philosophy for everyman in every age. Hesse clearly stated this in his "Chinese Literature":

Lao-tse should not, of course, replace the New Testament for us, but knowing that something similar grew up under other skies and in even earlier times should strengthen our belief that mankind, however seriously it is divided into alien and hostile races and cultures, nevertheless is a unity and had common potentialities, ideals, and goals (Ibid, p.337).

Hesse remained a Christian till his death despite the influence of all other religions on him. He was a Christian in the sense Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky or even Eliot were Christians. To him Christ as a son of God is more real than
Christ as a mythical or historical figure. With him Christ's lonely suffering in the garden of Gethsemane and his sacrifice for the woes of mankind are more real than anything in the Bible. Hesse revealed this in his essay on "Thoughts on The Idiot by Dostoevsky" (1919):

Whenever an association calls up the image of Jesus or I hear or see the word "Jesus", what leaps into my mind first is not Jesus on the cross, or Jesus in the wilderness, or Jesus the miracle worker, or Jesus risen from the dead, but Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, tasting the last cup of loneliness, his soul torn by the woes of impending death and a higher rebirth (In My Belief, pp.86-87).

So he laughed at the people when they called him a Buddha. Hesse wrote in "Life Story Briefly Told":

Because all my life I had been much occupied with Indian and Chinese wisdom (this was an inheritance from my parents and grandparents), and also because I gave my new experiences expression in part in the picture language of the East, I was often called a 'Buddhist'. At this I could only laugh, for at bottom I knew of no religion from which I was further removed (Autobiographical Writings, p.55).

Hesse needed a religion which would embrace all existing faiths of the world and collect nectar from all religions. His religion would affirm existence with all its gruelling realities, and at the same time it would enhance the frontiers of human consciousness to see things beyond the
existing ethical codes. This enlightened awareness could perceive the 'fire' and the 'rose' on the same plane of reality. This religion of Hesse could be called a 'Universal religion' like Tagore's. His faith, as he described it in his letter to his sister Marula, could be called "World Faith". Hesse himself stated that if a man had to choose a religion at all he should choose either 'Confucianism', 'Brahmanism', or the 'Roman Church'. He said in "Life Story Briefly Told":

> If it were in any way thinkable that a person should choose a religion for himself, then I should certainly out of inner longing have joined a conservative religion: Confucianism, Brahmanism, or the Roman Church (Ibid, p. 55).

Hesse's choice of this conservative religion was not out of any "innate affinity", but out of longing for a polar opposite. So Hesse did not feel inclined to profess his faith like Eliot who said that he was an Anglo-Catholic. Hesse was born in a Protestant family and he remained a Protestant till his death. But to him Protestantism does not mean the separation of man from God, rather he saw God in man, and man must realise this by defying the existing codes of morality. He even evolved his personal interpretation of the stories of the Bible, and it is very much hinted in his novel Demian. To Hesse, "the true Protestant is in opposition to his own Church just as he is
to every other, since his nature constrains him to affirm becoming above being. And in this sense Buddha, too, was certainly a Protestant" (Ibid, p. 55).

However, Hesse cannot be confined to any particular religious faith. He is not a mouth-piece of any religious doctrine; rather his main concern is the upliftment of the individual by enlarging the frontiers of his being which would enable him to look beyond his own consciousness. The heightening of awareness in man would make him realise his own inner 'will', or what Hesse would call "Self-will". The "Self-will" is what Hesse would define as "having a will of one's own" ("Self-will", in If the War Goes On, p. 72). Hesse considers this Self-will as a great "virtue" and loves it. He says: "There is one virtue that I love, and only one. I call it Self-will" (Ibid, p. 72). But it surprises him how the human world is lacking in this virtue whereas in nature everything follows its own will:

Everything on earth every single thing, has its will. Every stone, every blade of grass, every flower, every shrub, every animal grows, lives, moves, and feels in accordance with its "self-will", and that is why the world is good, rich, and beautiful (Ibid, p. 72).

But man tries to exist by negating his 'self-will', and by succumbing to the demands of his herd-instinct, he always looks for adaptation and subordination. This sort of existence in the long run makes his life mechanistic and
monotonous. Life appears lustreless and man becomes a pathetic character. He cannot aspire to be tragic because he does not possess the potentiality of a tragic hero who according to Hesse "meets his doom because he follows his own star in opposition to the traditional laws" (Ibid. p. 72). The modern man with his loss of faith in himself and in God lacks the spirit of a tragic hero, and that is why, perhaps, in the story, "Tragic," Hesse gives vent to his feeling through the character of Johanne, the compositor, who vehemently protests against the use of the word "Tragic" for any trivial incident. For George Steiner the death of God is the main cause of the death of tragedy. He says: "But tragedy is that form of art which requires the intolerable burden of God's presence. It is now dead because His shadow no longer falls on us as it fell on Agamemnon or Macbeth or Athalie." For Nietzsche the predominance of the Apollonian spirit over the Dionysian is the cause of the death of the tragic spirit in modern civilisation. This predominance of the Apollonian spirit has stifled the life of the spirit, and hence tragedy has been deprived of the sense of mystery in human existence. Nietzsche found the German life and culture as a whole dull and lifeless because of the overwhelming influence of the Apollonian art of Italy and France. Hence he urged the German people to realise that their own instincts were
sounder than these decadent cultures. So the German people should make a Reformation in music as in religion, pouring the wild vigour of Luther again into art and life. Nietzsche wrote in his _The Birth of Tragedy_ (1872): "Out of the Dionysian root of the German spirit a power has arisen which has nothing in common with the primitive conditions of Socratic culture, namely, German music, in its vast solar orbit from Bach to Beethoven, from Beethoven to Wagner." For Hesse the death of tragedy is due to the death of "Self-will" in man. It has totally eclipsed the ideal of a tragic hero. The death of this ideal in man is the cause of his spiritual suffering. Hesse writes:

Through tragic heroes and through them alone man has time and time again gained insight into his inner being, his "self-will". Time and time again a tragic hero, a self-willed man, has shown the millions of common men, of cowards, that disobedience to the decrees of man is not gross irresponsibility, but a fidelity to a far higher, sacred law (Ibid, p.73).

The self-willed man is a hero who looks beyond his own world, and does not shirk to shoulder the responsibility of the world. He lives for others. Christ suffered for humanity. Prometheus had to suffer to bring fire to the world. Oedipus felt himself responsible for the plight of his country. This is the spirit which is lacking in the modern world for which it does not exhibit a tragic sense of life. Eliot's Prufrock proclaims, "No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be."
without Denmark. But Hesse firmly believed that the spirit of a tragic hero could alone make man's existence in this world meaningful. The immortal statement of the Bible "Love thy neighbour as thyself" will appear more meaningful to him than what he has been taught by the ministers of different religious faiths. According to Hesse this statement of the Bible reveals "the whole art of living and pursuit of happiness" ("A Guest At the Spa," in Autobiographical Writings, p.162). Hesse finds this immortal statement echoing the same truth as that of 'tat tvam asi.' He writes in "A Guest at the Spa":

The secret of all happiness, all blessedness is in this saying. And if one wishes, one can turn it to its Hindu side and give it the meaning: Love your neighbour, for he is yourself! A Christian translation of tat tvam asi (that art thou). Ah, all wisdom is so simple, has been so precisely and unambiguously expressed and formulated for so long! Why does it belong to us only at time, only on the good days, why not always (Ibid, p.162).

This is also the message of Srimad Bhagavatam: "Learn to look with equal eye upon all beings, seeing the One self in all." Life has a meaning for Hesse. World is not meaningless. It looks "apparently meaningless" since man does not want to see the world. Hesse says: "Everywhere life is waiting, everywhere the future holds promise, and we see so little, we trample so much. We kill at every step" ("Thou Shalt Not Kill" in If the War Goes On, p.108). Hesse's
experiences with various religious and philosophical thoughts have convinced him that mankind has a meaning, and "that human need and human searching at all times and throughout the whole world are a unity" ("A Bit of Theology in My Belief, p. 191). Hence life and the world look "apparently" meaningless. What man needs is only to look beyond his own self and learn to live for others. Hesse's thought thus moves from "Know thyself" to "Love thy neighbour as thyself." This is the ideal of true benevolence which is found in both Western and Eastern cultures and this ideal is ultimately spiritual.

Hesse as a writer is thus engaged with the metaphysical question of man's destiny and his meaning in this world. The search for a meaning to his existence, to his life and to his death is an eternal need of man. This need is what Hesse would call in his essay, "Our Age's yearning for a philosophy of life" as "religious or metaphysical need" (in My Belief, p. 137) of man. Such religious or metaphysical need of man has appeared more prominent when there is cultural collapse and the spiritual faith of man is at its lowest ebb. Hesse, like Mann and Kafka, has been preoccupied with this theme. According to him even the least spiritual man has the need to recognise some meaning in his life. He writes in the same essay,
"Our Age's Yearning for a Philosophy of Life"

For even the least spiritual man, the most superficial, the most averse to thought, still has that primal need to recognise some meaning in his life, and when he no longer finds any, morality disappears and private life is characterized by wildly heightened egotism and profound fear of death (My Belief, pp. 137-138).

Hesse's novels try to deal with man's search for his identity and a meaning to his existence. So Hesse's novels reveal a quest, and it is an eternal quest of man.

The experiences that the protagonists confront are the universal experiences of man. Their confrontation with evil as well as good, their struggle to go beyond the narrow self, to look for a greater reality by defying the established authority, bring to our unconscious response, the figure of either a Christ, the Son of God, or a Prometheus who fought with Zeus and brought fire to this world. These characters brought a millenium to the world at the cost of their lives. The death they died was a rewarding death. It was a sacrifice for the betterment of the world. It was a meaningful death and not a waste of breath. Hesse tries to achieve the something in his last novel, The Glass Bead Game where Joseph Knecht, like Christ or Prometheus, welcomes death with a happy smile for the betterment of life and the world. But The Glass Bead Game
is the final culmination of the long quest which begins with Peter Camenzind in Peter Camenzind. So this eternal quest is carried through an archetypal protagonist, the Hesse protagonist, who appears in different novels in different masks and goes through experiences till he reaches his final goal. Hesse himself has written in his "A Night's Work" (1928) about the presence of a single hero in his works:

For me a novel begins to take shape at the moment I see a figure forming, one that can for a while be the symbol and bearer of my experiences, my thoughts, my problems. The appearance of this mythical person (Peter Camenzind, Knulp, Demian, Siddhartha, Harry Haller, etc.) is the creative instant out of which everything else emerges. Almost all the prose works of fiction I have written are biographies of souls; in all of them the centre of interest was not in plot, complications, and suspense, but rather they are essentially monologues; that mythical figure, a single person, is examined in his relationship to the world and to himself (My Belief, p. 142).

So Hesse's novels from Peter Camenzind to The Glass Bead Game form a continuum and present us with a totality of man's experience.

II

The quest for meaning ultimately unravels the nature of relationship between man and his self, between man and the world, and between man and the spirit. This was previously a philosopher's arena of study, but the literature
late 19th and 20th century reveals that this arena is no more the monopoly of the philosopher's field of study. The works of some of the major novelists on both sides of the Atlantic reveal their preoccupation with this philosophical problem. Gustav E. Muller, an eminent critic of American literature, points out in his article, "Philosophy in the Twentieth Century American Novel," that "the twentieth century novel is a tremendously serious search for essential values in life. This search for values, the critique of their failures, and their mutual limitations is traditionally known by the name of philosophy." And he claims further that "there is more significant philosophy in the American novel than there is the output of our philosophy department." Even some of the French writers have been vociferous about their profession as writers. Malraux considers the novel as "an instrument of metaphysical consciousness." Bernanos calls the profession of writing as "spiritual adventure." In his The Myth of Sisyphus Albert Camus says: "The greatest novelists are philosophical novelists." Critics as well as writers have recognised the inadequacy of philosophy to give a plausible answer in concrete terms to the perennial questions that have arisen in man's mind: What is the meaning of his existence? How can man make his life meaningful in this chaotic and meaningless world? The
philosophers since Plato have tried to answer these questions, but the modern mind finds it difficult to be satisfied with the philosophers dealing with this problem through abstract concepts. Modern man demands of his writers to explain to him these questions through concrete images and human experiences. A novelist tries to answer these ever-disturbing questions of man through his "passionate thinking" which arises from the experiences of his soul. Herbert J. C. Grierson in his introduction to metaphysical poems writes: "Passionate thinking is always apt to become metaphysical probing and investigating the experience from which it takes its rise." 

Art has thus shouldered the onerous responsibility of spelling out the answer to these questions of man. William Barret in his Time of Need has remarked about this sacred role of art. He writes:

Art can bring before us the reality of individual characters who have lost or regained, or are in the process of losing or regaining, the meaning of life; and sometimes it brings before us the reality of the artist himself as he struggles at the edge of that meaning. The question here is no longer abstract but concrete. If philosophy is unable to state it formally, in art then the question is nevertheless revealed as it is lived. And in the end philosophy has to bow to life and take notice. Through the means of art the nihilistic question can come out into the open and stand in the light.

Art through its visual and concrete images can present a
more authentic record of an age than a factual history. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Hesse's *Demi an* present us with a more convincing account of the spiritual barrenness of our time than Spengler's *Decline of the West* or Toynbee's *Civilisation in Trial*. It is not for nothing that Aristotle said, "Poetry is more philosophical than history."  

An artist does not become philosophical by merely presenting us with a definite philosophic thought. As Eliot wrote about philosophical artists:

They are poets who have presented us with the emotional and sense equivalent for a definite philosophical system constructed by a philosopher—even though they may sometimes take little liberties with the system.

A novelist or a poet becomes philosophical when he begins to look at a problem from a wide perspective; when he takes a wide view of things. His canvas becomes larger than that of the philosopher, and he puts his protagonist into a larger scheme of things. His problem remains no more personal or national, it becomes universal. This universal consciousness is what could be called philosophical. In this sense Goethe, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Tagore, Eliot and Hesse are philosophical. These writers like metaphysical poets, as Grierson observes, are "inspired by a philosophical
conception of the universe and the role assigned to the spirit in the great drama of human existence." 29

Hesse as a writer has always disdained dogmas and systematic thought. To him no codified thought can comprehend the total experience of man. Hesse aims at the wholeness of man's experience which can be rolled into a ball. His heroes are found to be involved with the problem of 'Geist' and 'Natur,' 'Spirit' and 'Flesh.' But nowhere Hesse discusses these problems in the abstract like a philosopher to propound a system of thought. His main concerns are human character and human situation. In his novels he shows how a character reacts to this problem of 'Geist' and 'Natur,' and how a character can even transcend the polarities of life not by escaping but by living meaningfully in both the worlds.

III

A writer with such dimensions needs to be studied like any major author of our time as well as of the past. But unfortunately the fate of Hesse has been like the waxing and waning of the moon. Although Hesse was widely read and acclaimed as one of the major writers of Germany after the publication of Peter Camenzind (1904) and
Demian (1919), yet he was not recognised with any literary award of Germany until the second world war. It was because Hesse was a controversial writer in Germany since first world war. He could neither pacify the warring attitudes of the authority in power as well as of the writers who were blinded by their narrow national feeling, nor could he join the peace mission of the so-called pacifists of his time. He found all of them a pack of hypocrites who lacked confidence and faith in their own mission. He asked, through his essay "The Path of Love", (December 1918), the people of Germany not to take seriously those big words like 'Brotherhood of man', 'League of Nations', 'Friendly cooperation among people', 'disarmament.' He was even outspoken in his opinion regarding war. When a German youth after the first world war wrote to him for consolation, Hesse asked him to look to his own self and not to find fault with America or Kaiser William or with anybody. Hesse replied:

'It is childish and stupid to ask whether this one or that one is guilty. I propose that for one short hour we ask ourselves instead: 'What about myself? What has been my share of the guilt? When have I been too loud-mouthed, too arrogant, too credulous, too boastful? What is there in me that may have helped to foster the rabble-rousing press, the degenerate religion of the national Jehovah, and all the illusions that have so suddenly collapsed?' (If the War Goes On, p. 103).

Very few writers of Germany or any other country could have
been more outspoken and bolder than Hesse during his time. The only other man to do so was Bertrand Russell, who also came out open to attack his own country, England, for her responsibility for the war. Hesse and Russell seem to have the same mission in life. Both fought for the individual freedom — freedom from political, social, religious and ethical codes of morality. Both were crusaders with their attitudes towards war and peace. Both stood for internationalism and disdained narrow national feelings. Both raised their voices against conformism. Both seemed to believe that conformism was death, protest could give us some hope of survival. So the fate of such a writer is bound to be uncertain in a world which is run by conformists. Thus Hesse was not a very popular writer till he received the Nobel prize for literature in 1946. After more than two decades Hesse the writer of Peter Camenzind and Demian came to play an important role in the lives of German readers and it reached its peak when Martin Buber on the occasion of Hesse's eightieth birthday called him a "true servant in the service of the spirit." Buber wrote:

It is not just the Journeyers to the East and the Players of the Bead Game all over the world who salute you today, Hermann Hesse. All those who serve the spirit, throughout the
After 1957 the interest in Hesse started declining, and towards the end of the 60's it literally expired. While the pre-war generations still read Hesse, the post-war generation found Hesse romantic and of little relevance to their time. Mileck writes about the decline of Hesse's popularity in Germany after the 60's in these words:

Literary critics almost ceased to review his latest publications, established scholars and doctoral candidates no longer found him or his works to be a matter of serious concern, and the press relegated him to the level of occasional filler material.

But this declining interest at home was abundantly compensated by his enormous popularity abroad. During the 60's Hesse became a cult figure among the post-war youth of America. It was thought that Hesse 'mania' would supersede the Kafka obsession. The post-war youth of America seemed to have found in Hesse what they found missing from the life around them. Hesse became a spiritual guide, a confirmation of their faith. Towards the end of his recent important book, Hermann Hesse: Life and Art, Mileck writes about the Hesse-craze in America during the 60's in these words:

In the course of a decade, Hesse became a veritable byword on the American scene; a subject of avid discussion in the classroom,
It was only by chance that Hesse captured the American imagination in the 50's. Henry Miller, the famous novelist suggested to the frustrated youth of the 50's to read *Siddhartha* as translated by Hilda Rosner and published in 1951. Henry Miller wrote very highly about his favourite book, *Siddhartha*:

A book whose profundity is concealed in the artfully simple and clear language, a clarity that probably upsets the intellectual ossification of those literary philistines who always know so exactly what good and bad literature is. To create a Buddha who transcends the generally acknowledged Buddha is an unheard-of achievement, especially for a German. For me, *Siddhartha* is a more potent medicine than the New Testament.

The last sentence of Miller is really a bold statement by a novelist on another novelist of a country which was its enemy before 1945. The inquisitive minds of America began reading the works of Hesse, and all his works in translation became available to the readers and scholars. His *Steppenwolf* seemed to catch the imagination of the American youth who found it as a mirror of their own
"post-industrial" culture which is marked by its high accent on money and machine. This Hesse mania became more pronounced with the publication of Colin Wilson's *The Outsider* in 1956 where Hesse is called a "Romantic Outsider," and his book, *Steppenwolf*, "one of the most penetrating and exhaustive studies of the outsider ever written." Colin Wilson's book was read by a generation which had also read *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac. Hesse became a 'guru' of a generation who created a new "subterranean" culture by living outside the system. Hesse appeared to them as a mouth-piece of their culture showing an escape from a dull and drab life by taking to drugs and jazz music. In the late 50's and early 60's Hesse became a favourite author with the Beatnicks and Hippies. By 1963, when the Vietnam war took a serious turn *Steppenwolf* became a Bible for all. Timothy Leary considered this novel as a psychedelic journey and the last part of the *Steppenwolf*, the "magic theatre," is described as a "priceless text book." He wanted *Siddhartha* and *Steppenwolf* to be read before every L.S.D. trip.

Side by side this sudden enthusiasm for Hesse in the States there were other voices which could not feel very happy about this influence on the younger generation. Stephen Koch, despite his appreciation of the final part of *Steppenwolf*, wrote in *The New Republic* that "Hesse's thought
is irretrievably adolescent, so that in his chosen role of artist of ideas, he is inevitably second-rate.36

Koch disapproves of Hesse’s role as a spiritual guide to the younger generation. George Steiner, despite his high admiration for *Steppenwolf* and *The Glass Bead Game*, wrote in *The New Yorker*: “The young have read little and compared less. Stringency is not their forte. Like prayer bells and beads, like pot and love-ins, Hesse seems to offer ecstasy and transcendence on the easy-payment plan.”37

D. J. Enright in his survey of new translations of Hesse’s works for *The New York Review of Books* wrote: “A highly cultivated person, he is the ideal second-order writer for the sort of serious-minded reader desirous to believe that he is grappling successfully with intellectual and artistic profundities of the first order.”38 Although in his article “Notes on the Germanisation of American Youth” in *The Yale Review*, Jeffrey L. Sammons considers Hesse as “the nearest thing to a saint that modern German literature has produced,”39 yet he thinks of Hesse’s works as nothing more than “a child’s introduction to Nietzsche and Jung.”40 A young American, after reading seven volumes of Hesse’s collected works, wrote to Hesse in 1958: “Allow me to say that you have not invented anything; rather you play the role of a magician, you remind your readers of their own half-forgotten memories.”41 Eugene Timo
considers Hesse's works as "mind expanding" but agrees with the opinion of a student that Hesse, "writes about troubled people trying to maintain individuality in a society which forces conformity." 42

On the whole, there has been a gradual decline in the popularity of Hesse in America since the 70's. It is primarily because, to a reader of Burroughs and Pynchon, Hesse provides nothing spectacular and new. There is enough of sex, perversion and drug in Burroughs, Pynchon or Heller to satisfy a "disjuncted post-industrial society" of America. Hesse appears naturally tame, outdated, or something Americans need no more.

Hesse as a writer did not intend 'sex' and 'drug' of his books to be used as a panacea by the modern youths of America who were confronted with a "cultural contradiction" 43 of post-industrial civilization. Hesse clearly mentioned this in his reply to a reader in Dusseldorf:

Your question as to whether I was talking about something serious in Steppenwolf, or simply proposing a pleasant snooze induced by opium, was not only a disappointment to me personally, but also to my principles. 44

The expansion of awareness through a knowledge of the self which necessitates a knowledge of hell and heaven, good and evil, and not expansion of consciousness by means of drug
-induced illusions is the way of the Hesse—protagonist from
Peter Camenzind to The Glass Bead Game. Hesse's goal is
not achieved by a flight but by a positive commitment to
life and the world. So the American youth of the 60's
praised Hesse for something which Hesse had never expected.
So George Steiner has rightly pointed out that Hesse seems
to offer transcendence and ecstasy on "easy-payment plan"
to a generation which has read "little and compared less."
Of course, Hesse himself had predicted his own reception in
America. He feared that he would not be appreciated by
more than "three people" in America. But it is a great
irony that Hesse became popular outside the German-
speaking world because of America. Most of his books were
translated by American scholars with the result that Hesse
became a very popular writer, almost a house-hold author
in many Eastern and Western countries. His popularity
has also spread in Poland, Romania, and even in Russia, the
people have become interested in Hesse's works.

This is the ebb and flow of the fortune of a
writer whose imagination was awakened by a cosmic vision
of life. Joseph Mileck has rightly concluded his book:
Hermann Hesse: Life and Art:

It is this rhythmic ebb and flow of Hesse's fortunes that is likely to secure his place
in both German and world literature.
In this rhythmic ebb and flow of his fortune, Hesse has received considerable critical attention at home and abroad. Since 1950, many doctoral dissertations have been submitted to the universities of Germany and other countries, and critics have made booklength studies of his works. Most of these studies are centred either on the life of Hesse as it is revealed in his works, his ideal of education, romantic trends in his works, Indian influence on him or comparative studies of Hesse and other European writers. Joseph Mileck in his dissertation "Hermann Hesse: A Study," submitted to Harvard University in 1950, has tried to make a comprehensive study of Hesse and his works. He is also the first scholar of Hesse to bring about a comprehensive bibliography of Hesse since 1927 in his important book, Hermann Hesse and His Critics: The Criticism and Bibliography of Half a Century (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1958). This book is a landmark after Hugo Ball's, Hermann Hesse: Sein Leben und sein work (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1927). Ball's book on Hesse's life and art was an authentic document of Hesse's spiritual and intellectual development since his childhood up to the publication of Steppenwolf. Hesse himself had a very high opinion about Ball and praised his book as the work of a "master of true poetry," who had proved himself by finding "hieroglyphs and ideograms." Ball's book
served as a mirror for Hesse, and Hesse wrote about this in his letter to Ball:

Last night I had a dream in connection with your book: I dreamed of seeing myself sitting, not as in a mirror but as myself, as a second living figure, more alive than I was. Some moral prohibition forbade me to look at myself closely, that would have been a sin. So I twinkled for a moment through the slit of my eyes and I saw the living Hesse sitting there.

Ball's book tried to bring out something hidden in Hesse which was still unknown to Hesse. Mileck's book of 1973, *Hermann Hesse: Life and Art*, aims at achieving the same thing. Besides Mileck, there are a few other outstanding scholars of Hesse who have been painstaking researchers of Hesse's works and have made considerable contributions to Hesse-scholarship. Among them are

- Theodor Ziolkowski
- Ralph Freedman
- Mark Boulby
- Ernst Rose
- Bernhard Zeller

While Ralph Freedman's recent book, *Hermann Hesse: Pilgrim of Crisis: A Biography*, (1973), is mainly biographical in nature and tries to trace out the autobiographical elements of his novels, Ziolkowski and Mark Boulby attempt a structural analysis of his novels. Ernst Rose, in spite of his biographical overtones, tries to bring out the modernity of Hesse's works.
However, most of these writers have been more concerned with Hesse’s life than his works. In analysing his works, they have always fallen back on his life and in the process, they have tried to connect each and every incident of the novels with his life. This kind of biographical criticism of his works has been primarily due to the oft-repeated declaration of Hesse that his works are “attempts at self-expression by a soul that felt, suffered, and quested in our time” (A Poet’s Preface to His Selected Works, My Belief, p.111). It does not necessarily mean a writer’s personal life, his personal feelings. It is ‘a soul’ which does not necessarily always refer to Hesse’s own ‘soul,’ but to an artist’s soul who tries to experience through his own soul the joys and sufferings of the entire humanity.

Hesse himself has said about the ‘subject’ of a work of art in his essay on “About Good and Bad Critics.” He writes:

“The ‘subject,’ i.e., the principal figures and the characteristic problems of the novel, is never chosen by the author; instead the subject is really the primal subject of all poetry, it is the poet’s vision and the adventures of his soul” (My Belief, p.171).

A good critic, according to Hesse, should be concerned with the writer’s vision in his work of art. His work of art is the adventure of his soul which is capable of experiencing the experience of all time. It
should be capable of experiencing the existential angst of Dmitri, Ivan, Alyosha or Father Zossima of The Brothers Karmazov. The artist's soul must also be capable of visualising the inner turmoil of Smerdyakov. Through his "wide-vision," Hesse, in the novels, tries to reveal the inner turmoil, the inner schism in man's soul between good and evil, spirit and flesh. His mission has been to help man to find unity in diversity. This philosophical aspect of Hesse's novels has not yet been discussed in detail by the critics. Hesse like other major writers of the world, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Tagore, is primarily concerned with the human destiny and the role of the spirit in human life. The aim of the present study is, therefore, chiefly to reveal how Hesse tries to give a fictional representation to this aspect of man. So his novels are in the form of a quest, and the quest is for a meaning in life. The "essential being" that Hesse refers to in "A poet's preface to his Selected Works" (1921), is the "essential being" of the artist to which Hesse gives expression in his novels. Hesse was well aware of the fact that the mind that creates and the mind that suffers are two different entities. This is revealed in his "A Guest at the Spa." In this essay, Hesse describes very interestingly the meeting between the sciatica patient Hermann Hesse and the author Hermann Hesse. The author Hesse ridicules
the patient Hermann Hesse who tries to make much show of his suffering. The author Hesse minutely observes the gesture and posture of not only the patient Hermann Hesse but the whole Baden, which is but a world in miniature representing everything of this world: its joys, its sufferings, its love making, its jealousies and its gambling. The artist—Hesse says: "The Guest Hesse, however, was the principal object of my observing 'I.'" (Autobiographical Writings, p. 147). So this study does not take into account Hesse's personal life to elucidate his works; rather it extensively refers to other works of Hesse, like letters and essays for an intensive analysis of his novels. After all, a non-biographical approach will make us appreciate literature as literature, that follows its own aesthetic laws. Great literature has never really "copied" or "imitated" life. A reading of Hesse's novels from this angle is, in my view, a very rewarding task in our age, or for that matter of fact, in all ages. Its relevance for our age is much greater, for Hesse, as the analysis of the novels would show, succeeds in asking disturbing questions about life and its meaning and giving answers which are the outcome of a dramatic enactment, not a didactic theorising. The biographical evidence that has been adduced by scholars like Mileck and Ziolkowski make it evident that his answers to those
philosophical or metaphysical questions had been felt on his pulse, felt along the blood, and hence they are so convincing. Literature of this category makes us thoughtful because it enables us to distinguish between illusion and reality and to glimpse, if not perceive, that there are more things in heaven and earth than what is known by us through the usual doors of perception, as Aldous Huxley would say.

Literature, albeit great literature, humanizes our life. In our times, when we are moving towards the twenty first century impelled inexorably by the powers of science and technology, our essential humanity is being subjected to formidable challenges everyday. A new novelist like Thomas Pynchon, or William Burroughs reveals to us how we are being dehumanized continuously by phenomena like crime, violence, promiscuity, drug addiction, and various other kinds of moral aberration. Such revelations are apt to make us lose faith in the intrinsic beauty of human nature. The novels of Hesse help us in recovering that faith—a faith that is the end-product of a great mind impinging upon the panorama of human existence.
NOTES


6 As quoted by Mileck, *Hermann Hesse: Life and Art*, p. 77.

7 Ibid., pp. 73-74.

8 Ibid., p. 68.

9 Ibid., p. 74.


21 Ibid., p.185.

22 As quoted in The Novelist As Philosopher, p.7.

23 Ibid., p.6.


27 Ibid., p.9.


29 H.J.C. Greierson, Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems, p.xiii.


31 Mileck, Hermann Hesse: Life and Art, p.365.

32 Ibid., pp.365-366.


40 Ibid., p. 352.


43 Daniel Bell in his book, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (India: Arnold-Heinemann Publishers, Pvt. Ltd., 1974), finds in post-industrial western society a 'disjunction' between culture and the social structure, 'the one becoming increasingly anti-institutional and anomolous, the other oriented to functional rationality and meritocracy' (p.114). The 'disjunction' between culture and social structure will go on widening with the result that man will be deprived of a 'belief' which could only sustain him in a post-industrial society — a society where the emphasis is on the centrality of theoretical knowledge as the axis around which new technology, economic growth and the stratification of society will be organised' (p.112). To Bell, 'The lack of a rooted moral belief system is the cultural contradiction' of the society, the deepest challenge to its survival' (p.480). This theme has also been explored by Bell in his essay, "The cultural contradictions of capitalism," published in *The Public Interest* no.21 (Bell 1970); reprinted in Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol, eds. *Capitalism Today* (New York, 1971).


47 Ibid., p.308.

48 On the other hand there are critics who do not value Hesse as a philosophical writer. Ronald Gray in his book, *The German Tradition in Literature, 1871-1945* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1965), says, "Not so profound in his philosophical novels as Thomas Mann, and not so
deeply involved in the tragedy of existence as Kafka, 
Hesse is nevertheless a writer of stature because of his 
synthesis of ideas, his evocations of atmospheres and, 
above all, his highly charged prose" (p. 72).
Geoffrey Griegeon considers Hesse not as a philosophical 
ovelist but as a psychological novelist in The Concise 
Encyclopedia of Modern World Literature (New York: 
Heins Reiss does not include Hesse as a writer of importance 
in his book, The Writer's Task from Nietzsche to Brecht 
introduction, "Hesse had, admittedly, gained many 
English-speaking readers of late, but in range and nature 
his views appear less interesting and compelling than those 
of any of the seven" (p. 10). Reiss studies Nietzsche, 
Stefan George, Hugo Von Hofmannsthal, Rilke, Thomas Mann, 
Kafka and Brecht.