CHAPTER – I
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

“Man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but from inner problem .... a conviction of isolation, randomness, (and) meaninglessness in his way of existence.”

-- Edmund Fuller

I

Alienation may be traced back to human history. In our times it has become a serious social problem. It has affected all walks of modern life. Man’s head and heart work in different directions, resulting often in man’s self-alienation. Modern man’s disregard of others has severed him from them. As a result he suffers from social isolation.

Modern science and technology and research in several other fields have adversely affected man’s attitude to God, Society, Nature, Family, politics, government and themselves. In the new social set up we have new value systems pseudo-dreams and ideals which take us away from the basic realities of life, ending ultimately in our total isolation from everybody and everything. Some critical comments clearly show how alienation is effective in modern society. Feuerlicht quotes, Alain Touraine who states that we are leaving a society of exploitation and entering a (postindustrial) society of alienation; Glazer who thinks that the very fact that theories proclaiming eternal alienation have a “widespread appeal might indicate that alienation is peculiarly modern problem”; Etzioni who does not restrict alienation to the present century but does not go very far back. “The early industrial society is the archetype of an alienating society”, he declares; for the early Lukas (1923), alienation begins with “our age”, the age of modern capitalism. The old Lukas (1967) still calls alienation “a crucial problem of the age in which we live” (18). Domenach, the editor of the French
magazine *Esprit* who thinks that alienation is a “recent sickness. It seems to be unknown before the nineteenth century” (1058). C. Wright Mills speaks of alienation as a “major theme of the human condition in the contemporary epoch” (171). Edmund Fuller remarks that in our age “man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but from inner problem---a conviction of isolation, randomness, (and) meaninglessness in his way of existence” (3). The present century has seen the dissolution of old certainties and dogmas and, as Paul Brunton points out, “never before were so many people plunged in so much uncertainty, so much perplexity and unsettlement” (7).

Before we discuss alienation, it is essential to know what is alienation and what are the meanings of other synonymous terms.

The term has linguistic and intellectual background. Richard Schacht describes the term ‘alienation’, in his book *Alienation*, “The Latin origin of “alienation” is ‘alienatio’. This noun derives its meaning from the verb ‘alienare’ (to make something another’s, to take away, remove). ‘Alienare’ in turn, derives from alienus (belonging or pertaining to another). And alienus derives ultimately from alius (meaning “other” as an adjective, or “another” as a noun)” (1). The Second Edition of *The Oxford English Dictionary* gives the meaning of alienation,

i) “The action of estranging or state of estrangement in feeling or affection.

ii) The action of transferring the ownership of anything to another.

iii) The state of being alienated, or held by other than the proper owner

iv) Mental alienation withdrawal, loss, or derangement of mental faculties; insanity

v) Alteration, change
vi) Alienation coefficient or coefficient of alienation in statistics: a ratio expressing the degree of lack of correlation of two variables” (Simpson 316).

*A Concise Psychological Dictionary* describes the term alienation, “Alienation (in psychology), the display of such life, relationship of a subject with the surrounding world in which the products of the subject’s activity, the subject himself, as well as other individuals and social groups are conceived as opposite to the subject, this opposition ranging from difference to rejection and hostility. This is expressed in corresponding emotional experiences, viz. feelings of isolation, solitude, rejection, loss of one’s ego, etc. The notion of A. should not be confused with the alienation of the personality in an antagonistic class society. As a social process, A. is characterised by the transformation of man’s activity and also of man’s properties and capabilities into something independent of and dominant over the person in question” (Petrovsky16-17). A number of writers have attempted to generalize the term ‘alienation’ about the way it functions. Richard Schacht quotes, Arnold Kaufman offers the following general analysis: “To claim that a person is alienated is to claim that his relation of something else has certain features which result in avoidable discontent or loss of satisfaction”; Lewis Feuer suggests that “the word ‘alienation’ (is) used to describe the subjective tone of self-destructive experience”, and states: “‘Alienation’ is used to convey the emotional tone which accompanies any behaviour in which the person is compelled to act self-destructively”; And Kenneth Keniston contends that “Most usages of ‘alienation’ share the assumption that some relationship or connection that once existed that is ‘natural’, desirable, or good, has been lost” (Schacht, “Introduction”. *Alienation* lxiii). Some writers have used the case of the term Entfremdung, as in the case of the term ‘alienation’ in English. Grimms *Worterbuch* writes, “the meaning of entfremden is given as: “fremd machen, berauben, nehmen,
entledigen”; that is: “to make alien, to rob, to take, to strip of.” The German ‘fremd’ is much like the Latin alienus and the English “alien”, meaning: “belonging or pertaining to another.” Fremd originally was used to refer to things literally foreign; but it very early came to be applied in connection with virtually any kind of strangeness or otherness. The literal meanings of the German Entfremdung and the English “alienation” – “to make fremd” and “to make alien” – are therefore very similar” (Schacht 5).

Now a days, words like ‘loneliness’, ‘alienation’, ‘isolation’ are synonymously used in our modern routine life, but they are in fact, different from each other. Peter Townsend makes the difference between loneliness and isolation thus: “to be socially isolated is to have few contacts with family and community; to be lonely is to have an unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. The one is objective, the other subjective”(325). Though the term ‘alienation’ is the synonym of loneliness and isolation, it has a wider scope and a wider application. It is used to identify feelings of estrangement; in law it means the act of transferring property or ownership to another person. It also means insanity and implies several mental disorders. Eric and Mary Josephson’s following comments bring out the breadth and width of alienation in this way:

In modern terms however, “alienation” has been used by philosophers, psychologists and sociologists to refer to an extraordinary variety of psycho-social disorders, including loss of self, anxiety states, anomie, despair, depersonalization, rootlessness, apathy, social disorganization, loneliness, atomization, powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, pessimism and the loss of beliefs or values. Among the social groups who have been described as alienated in varying degree some of whom we have already mentioned—are women, industrial workers,
white-collar workers, migrant workers, artists suicides, the mentally disturbed, addicts, the aged, the young generation as a whole, juvenile delinquents in particular, voters, non-voters, consumers, the audiences of mass media, sex deviants, victims of prejudice and discrimination, the prejudiced, bureaucrats, political radicals, the physically handicapped, immigrants exiles, vegabonds and recluses. (12-13)

The philosopher F. H. Heinemann’s views on alienation are given here to put the term in its proper perspective. He says: “The facts to which the term ‘alienation’ refers are, objectively, different kinds of dissociation, break or rupture between human beings and their objects, whether the latter be other persons, or the natural world, or their own creations in art, science and society, and subjectively, the corresponding states of disequilibrium, disturbance, strangeness and anxiety” (Josephson13). After Eric and Mary Josephson’s comments on ‘alienation’, Roy S. Bryce-Laporte and Claudewell S. Thomas also give some synonyms for alienation, “In French and German there are a number of interchangeable terms for alienation, each having subtly distinctive meanings. In English the list of synonyms for alienation is endless; for example, separation, objectivization, exteriorization, reification, rationalization, ritualization, isolation, detachment, distancing, estrangement, bifurcation, disorganization, and marginality” (xv).

The slow but steady rise of individualism since the European Renaissance has also aggravated man’s alienation. The increase of freedom and independence have made people lonely creatures cut off from every thing, even themselves. Industrialization, the Great Wars, mechanical revolution have aggravated man’s sense of loneliness, isolation and alienation. The Wars have led men to believe that life is meaningless and absurd. This has enhanced man’s sense of alienation.
In the nineteenth century the word alienation was used by great philosophers like Hegel and Marx. Hegel has used the term in two different ways. At times he uses it to refer to a separation or discordant relation, such as might obtain between the individual and the social substance, or (as “self alienation”) between one’s actual condition and essential nature. I shall use the subscript “1” to indicate that the term is to be understood in this sense (“alienation₁”). He also uses it to refer to a surrender or sacrifice of particularity and willfulness, in connection with the overcoming of alienation₁ and the reattainment of unity. When it is to be understood in this sense I shall employ the subscript “2” (“alienation₂”) (Schacht 35). Hegel’s first sense derives use of “alien” in connection with strangeness, foreignness, difference non-identity. Alienation₁ involves something “becoming alien.” His second sense derives from the notion—frequently met in social contract theory—of the surrender or transfer of a right to another.

After Hegel’s use of the term ‘alienation’, Marx has also used the term “alienation”. Richard Schacht writes about Marx “In Marx, Hegel’s two senses of ‘alienation’ come together, and a single general sense emerges, which may be characterized as “separation through surrender.” He gives the term many different applications. In each case, however, it is used to suggest the existence of a separation of some sort. And in each case, the separation to which the term “alienation” refers is related in some way to a certain surrender: namely the surrender of one’s control over one’s product and labour. This affords a contrast with Hegel’s two sense of “alienation”. In Marx, the separation is the result of the surrender, whereas in Hegel’s discussion of the relation of the individual to the social substance the separation (alienation₁) is overcome through the surrender (alienation₂)” (83).

After the discussion of the definitions of various terms synonymous with alienation and of the concept of it, the researcher will
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In this section the researcher will disuses the five facets of alienation and its reflection in society and literature at various historical periods.

A. Man’s Alienation from God.

We will first discuss the concept of man’s alienation from God. In the long past a primitive man lived in small groups which worshipped several gods. As he was ignorant of the world around him, his faith in God saved him from dangers and shaped his life. His prayers and rituals were meant to please Him and relate himself to Him. Prayers and worship brought man very closer to God. But in course of time man realized that every time God does not help him. This gave rise to doubt in his mind. And here began man’s alienation from God. Sometimes man loved his God. Sometimes he feared Him.

Man’s alienation from God is powerfully reflected in the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, and it gives the general impression that men are merely puppets in the hands of a God. This mighty God breaks all proposed (prepared) things of man.

In the middle Ages, man had still faith in God but the religious authorities created a wall between man and God. Thus man was kept away from God, his Creator.

In the Renaissance the literature produced by men like Shakespeare, Marlowe, Racine and Corneille presented the conflict between man and his fate in a way reminiscent of Sophoclean and Euripidean thought.

In the later centuries industrialization, mechanization and modernization have changed man’s mentality to such a grievous extent that modern man has no time to think of God and religion seriously,
though many light attempts of worship and prayer have been made by man for his selfish and evil purposes. Man’s neglect of God and religion has been expressed in the major writers of modern times like T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, Joyce and so on.

B. Man’s Alienation from Nature.

The second type of alienation is man’s alienation from Nature. The primitive man’s views about Nature were superstitious. He found her elements to be both helpful and harmful forces. Man constantly depended on nature to satisfy his daily needs. So he was always in close association with nature. Nature provided him food and water and such other things and he was always grateful to her.

But sometimes man was held spellbound and wonderstruck by the strange behaviour of mysterious Nature. The fury of the natural forces must have estranged the primitive man from her; but as he was powerless and helpless, he made adjustments to her.

Man’s idea of nature underwent changes under the pressure of the scientific discoveries and inventions. Man came to know nature’s secrets and attempted to conquer and invade her. She was looked upon as both kind and cruel. The cruel and destructive forces of nature such as pestilence, thunderbolts and earthquakes embarrassed man and in this light he came to think that Nature is enimical to him.

As man gradually began to know the world around him by means of reason, the gap between man and Nature became wider and wider over the centuries. It is expressed to a smaller extent in the Renaissance literature. Greville has asked the question, “What meaneth nature by these diverse Laws?” The poet laments the “Wearisome Condition of Humanity! ------/Created sicke, commanded to be sound” (Chougule 34). Man and Nature became antagonists in the period of the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century which made mobility easy and necessary. In his selfishness and greed man
dug up the earth for coal, ore and gold and in turn defaced and disfigured it. Hence the cry of Rousseau: ‘Return to Nature’, which itself is indicative of man’s separation from her. William Wordsworth’s poetic attempt to restore man to Nature could not just last in the sweep and speed of the mechanic, technological and scientific progress. His sense of alienation is reflected in some of his poems. His contemporaries and Victorian poets also felt the loss of communion between man and nature.

C. Man’s Alienation from Society.

Man’s alienation from Society, the third type of alienation, is also age-old. In the nomadic stage, man lived in small groups which guaranteed him security. The group life helped him face savage nature, wild animals and other groups. Food was their urgent need. One group attacked the other for it. Thus man’s enmity with man began there and went on over the ages assuming different forms in different circumstances until nation states came into existence.

Now battles between kings and wars between nations magnified man’s enmity with the other man on a large scale. In the period of industrialization a large section of humans in the person of a labourer or worker came into conflict with the Capitalist. As a result human relationship changed topsy-turvy and the brotherly bond between man and man became loose and it gave way to his social isolation.

In modern times we witness that human relationship is on the point of extinction everywhere. The pages of modern literature are all filled with men and women as wanderers in this world, having no rest, no residence and no social contacts. They are all isolated entities single, separate and solitary.
D. Man’s Alienation from Family.

The fourth type constitutes man’s alienation from Family. Family is a small but significant social group. Family as a social institution is a recent phenomenon. It is based on matrimony and kinship. It has exercised a great influence on and contributed to the growth and development of society through its individual members. Man’s unwavering faith in God and in social institutions has helped over the ages to maintain family unity and solidarity.

Man’s family life was safe and secure up to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution which disrupted family life greatly as men from village shifted to the cities in search of jobs and of means of livelihood. In modern times we see that people prefer to live as a small family consisting of three members, husband, wife and child. This condition of family life, in its broken form, is reflected in modern literature where husbands, wives and children have their different ways, different office times and different pursuits. Many times they come together at weekends and that time also what is seen prominently is their separation from each other and not the union as in T.S. Eliot’s, The Family Reunion.

E. Man’s Alienation from his own Self.

The last facet of alienation to be discussed here is man’s alienation from his own self. The foregoing discussion of the four types of alienation logically leads us on to the discussion of self-alienation, for the man who fails to relate himself to the external world also fails to discover his own self and its worth and meaning. Self-alienation occurs when man feels that he is cut off from the part or parts of his own self, that is from the elements that constitute it, from cognitive (rational), affective (emotional) and contative (active) faculties. When man fails to identify himself as the subject of his physical and mental acts, he plunges into the condition of self-alienation. Before we take the
historical survey of the phenomenon of self-alienation, we will first discuss the nature of self.

Philosophers and psychologists agree on the point that it is very difficult to define self adequately. Self is a substance of a special and unique kind and it is non-material. It can be thought of as the centre of personal identity. It is through his self or self-hood that man grasps, measures and manipulates the objective world. Such terms as self, ego, agent, mind, knower, spirit and person are synonymously used. Such related concepts as identity, personality, self-awareness, self-consciousness, self-love, self-esteem are also associated with self. Such terms as self-denial, self-sacrifice, self-abnegation, auto criticism, self-deprecation, self-deprivation, the loss of identity or personality, are negative ramifications of self. Other terms like doubt, suspicion, envy, jealousy, self-debasement, self-division, split personality, crisis of identity, the feeling of being ashamed, pride, egoism are also connected with self. A Concise Psychological Dictionary says, “Self-concept the cause and effect of social interaction is determined by social experience and its components are as follows the real self (the idea about oneself in the present time), the ideal self (what the subject thinks he should be proceeding from moral principles); the dynamic self (what the subject intends to be), and the imagined-self (what the subject would wish to be that were possible) (Petrovsky 277). The ‘ideal self’, the ‘dynamic self’ and ‘the imagined self’ if not achieved by the subject lead him to self-alienation.

Many writers who deal with the problem of alienation assume that in each of us there is a ‘genuine’ ‘real’ or ‘spontaneous’ self which we are prevented from knowing or achieving. Man has always been faced with such a question as “who am I?” This question can be answered only when man comes to know the reality of his inner life and his relationship with others in society. As a matter of fact man acquires a self or identity through interaction with others. Charles it Cooley
calls this process of acquiring a self “a looking glass self” and George H. Mead terms it as “taking the role of the other.” If self is achieved by communicating with others, especially, through language, then anxiety about or the loss of selfhood becomes a personal as well as a social problem.

In his article “On Alienated Concepts of Identity” Ernest G. Schachtel discusses concepts like ‘paper-identity’, ‘definite, fixed identity’, ‘negative identity’ and ‘positive identity’ and points out that they all take man away from the centre of his actual, growing, developing, changing identity. In such identities man experiences that he is cut off from the real “I.” As far as the paper-identity is concerned, it is the ‘paper’ that count and not the ‘person’. The second term ‘definite-fixed identity is used by Schachtel to refer to the patients suffering from anxiety; the lack of confidence and so on. Such patients are in search of a definite, fixed identity as they think that it will solve the problem of their alienation from themselves, knowing not that their search for a definite, fixed identity is actually, “the continuation of their alienation.” About the ‘negative identity’, Schachtel says:

Very often real or imagined physical attributes, parts of the body image or the entire body image, become focal points of identity. Many people build around such a negative identity the feeling that this particular feature unalterably determines the course of their lives, and that they are there by doomed to unhappiness. Usually, in these cases, qualities such as attractiveness and beauty are no longer felt to be based on the alive expression and flux of human feelings, but have become fixed and dead features, or a series of poses, as in so many Hollywood stars or fashion models. These features are cut off from the centre of the person and worn like a mask. Unattractiveness is experienced as not possessing this mask. (77)
And further continues that,

In the same way, other real or imagined attributes, or the lack of them, become focal points for a reified, alienated, negative identity. For example: feeling not sufficiently masculine or feminine, being born on the wrong side of the tracks, being a member of a minority group against which racial or religious prejudices are directed, and in the most general form, feeling intrinsically inadequate or “bad”. (77-78)

In the course of his discussion and by way of summing up he says this about the positive alienated identity:

So far I have discussed mainly negative self-images. However, alienated identity concepts may be positive as well as negative. Alienated identity of the positive variety occurs in vanity, conceit and—in its more pathological form in delusions of grandeur, just as in its negative counterpart the “I” of the vain person is severed from a fixed attribute on which the vanity is based. The person feels that he possesses this quality. It becomes the focal point of his identity and serves as its prop. Beauty, masculinity or femininity, being born on the right side of the tracks, success, money, prestige, or “being good” may serve as such a prop. While in the negative identity feeling a refined attribute haunts the person, such an attribute serves the positive self-image as a support. Yet it is equally alienated from the living person. This is expressed nicely in the phrase “a stuffed shirt”. It is not the person in the shirt but some dead matter, some stuffing that is used to bolster and aggrandize the self-feeling. It often becomes apparent in
the behaviour of the person that he leans on this real or imagined attribute, just as it often is apparent that a person feels pulled down by the weight of some alienated negative attribute.

The reliance on an identity, on a self-image based on the prop of some reified attribute remains precarious even where it seems to work, after a fashion, as it does in the self satisfaction of the vain. This precariousness is inevitable, since the positive self-evaluation of such a person does not rest on a feeling of wholeness and meaningfulness in life, in thought, feeling, and deed. He is always threatened with the danger of losing this “thing”, this possession, on which his self-esteem is based. (81-82)

After having seen the nature of self and its types, we will now put it in its historical perspective. The primitive man, struck by the wonderful and mysterious events and happenings, attributed everything to God and Natural elements. The universe in which he lived was beyond his intellect and imagination. So he came, in fear to revere and worship various gods and even the natural forces. His act of worship itself was the fact of his self-alienation.

As man began to get the knowledge of things around him, he began to think of himself as a little creature amidst the heaps of Knowledge. His social life demanded a certain set of values and ideals from him. He could not always cope up with the demands of society. Sometimes there was the clash between the ‘I’ of the individual and society. Most of the times he had to yield to society, leaving himself to suffer the intense pains of self-alienation.

The Christian idea of the ‘original sin’ which is supposed to be inherited by all Christians, is now beyond understanding of modern secular people. This idea of the ‘original sin’ itself is the evidence of man’s alienation from himself.
In the Renaissance new ideals of democracy such as freedom, equality and individualism made people lonely towers, cut off from each other, and then from their selves.

In the eighteenth century Industrial Revolution changed the social structure so drastically that the individual began to smother in the haps of goods. Workers in big factories produced goods of which they were creators but not masters. Things produced by them were sold under somebody elses name. The profit on production went to the capitalists and the workers became poorer and poorer, ultimately losing faith in everything. They felt alienated from their selves because they were devalued and deceived by their masters. The concept of labour in its alienated form was first discussed by Hegel and later on was developed by Marx. Hegel speaks of the ‘alienation of personality’ and sees it in slavery, serfdom, disqualification from holding property, encumbrances on property etc. According to him, “Alienation of intelligence and rationality, of morality, ethical life, and religion, is exemplified in superstition, in ceding to someone else full power and authority to fix and prescribe what actions are to be done or what duties are binding on one’s conscience or what religions truth is, etc” (29).

Marx took the Hegelian concept of alienation and related it to social conditions of man. In the process he discovered other forms of it. He looked upon capital as a lifeless, independent active force that employs (and thus exploits) human beings. According to Marx, though “private property appears to be the basis and cause of alienated labour, it is rather a consequence of the latter, just as the gods are fundamentally not the cause but the product of confusions of human reason. At a later stage there is, however, a reciprocal influence.” Marks also sees alienation in the process of production. He says:
However, alienation shows itself not merely in the result but also in the process, of production, within productive activity itself...

In what does this alienation of labour consist? First, that the work is external to the worker, that it is not a part of his nature, that consequently he does not fulfil himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery, not of well-being, does not develop freely a physical and mental energy, but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker therefore feels himself at home only during his leisure, whereas at work he feels homeless. His work is not voluntary but imposed, forced labour. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means for satisfying other needs. It’s alien character is clearly shown by the fact that as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion it is avoided like the plague. Finally, the alienated character of work for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his work but work for someone else, that in work he does not belong to himself but to another person. (177-178)

Even money, for Marx, becomes a factor that alienates man from his own self, as it can do what the holder of it can not.

Modern psychological research has awakened us to several psychic realities hitherto unknown to us. Freud’s psychological theories, in particular, have been greatly useful in understanding various recesses of human mind. His three layered theory of human mind-the conscious, the pre-conscious and the Unconscious does speak for the division of mind. Freud believes that man is pulled by two opposite instincts- the life-instincts and death-instincts, ‘Eros’ and ‘Thanatos’ respectively. Freud says:

The manifestations of Eros were conspicuous and audible enough; one might assume that the death instinct worked
silently within the organism towards its disintegration, but that of course, was no proof. The idea that the part of the instinct became directed towards the outer world and then showed itself as an instinct of aggression and destruction carried us a step further. This instinct would thus itself have been pressed into the service of Eros, in that the organism would be destroying something animate or inanimate outside itself instead of itself. Conversely, any cessation of this flow outwards must have the effect of intensifying the self-destruction which in any case would always be going on within. (790)

In the light of this passage we can conclude that man’s being pulled in two different directions by two opposite instincts and his consequent aggressive nature cause his self-alienation, though Freud has not said so directly.

Modern literature has several examples of self-alienation. T. S. Eliot’s plays and poems give us ample testimony of it. For want of space we cannot go into the details of modern literature.

After the foregoing comments on the concept of alienation and five facets of alienation, the researcher will discuss the theme of alienation as reflected in Yeats’s major plays in the chapters to come.