CHAPTER VII

THE NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE
OF ARNOLD BENNETT
Above all the other things Bennett is an artist pure and simple. As every other artist he maintained in himself a rare creative passion to tell the tales of men and women, how they prefer to enjoy the life’s movement and how they incidentally fall into trouble. Bennett is a story-teller. At the same time he creates his characters in such a real and naturalistic manner that they become absolutely in keeping with the world he creates in his fiction. If God created the world of everyday existence, Bennett created an exact parallel to it, as though he would challenge the creation of God. As a narrative artist he maintained the highest ideals of achieving stark realism for his characters, situations and ways of life. Bennett appears, as a matter of fact, as a craftsman where he writes his Five Towns’ novels as his trilogy (Clayhanger, Hilda Lessways, These Awain). When he called it a trilogy his classical intentions are obvious. Bennett very often wrote for various other considerations like grabbing money rather than making his creative faculties explicit. On such occasions he proved himself to be an utter failure. Some of his novels are absolutely unreadable. Out of the innumerable novels he has written only five to six of them are likely to stand as permanent luminaries in the firmament of British fiction.
(1) **Well-made novel and the role of Arnold Bennett**

The concept of well-made novel is the Edwardian formula. The purpose behind this set of composition lies in the art of acquainting the reader with more and more properties of experience, and finally balancing the thoughts and actions of the readers in accordance with the life's potentialities and limitations.

It goes without saying that the well-made novel concept maintains in itself a sort of message for the livability of life. The idea of message should not be misconstrued as the idea of regulating the sensibility of the readers towards any purpose. Novel is not a moral lesson or a philosophical advice. It is a chip of life as lived or hoped to believe by a particular people in a particular time. The broad purpose of life do not change or vary very much in the course of a short time. But in the plain of a long period, say centuries, the styles of life change. One such great change occurred during the second half of the 19th century. The causes for this change are many. But the manner in which life-styles executed by themselves with this change in operation struck the minds of the thinking alive. For a while it appeared that the old world was crumbling and the new world was impoverished in being a place of occupation for man. It is this changing mode
modalities of human life in operation that required a sort of guidance and regulation from the novelist. The Victorian novelist did not concern such of these regulations. The Edwardians felt the necessity acutely. But the Edwardian feeling of this necessity was primarily based upon the great historic events like the advent of the industrial revolution and the publication of Darwin's 'Origin of species'. Therefore the Edwardians characterised their novels with the recapitulated stuff of the post-industrial revolution operations. Bennett is not an exception here. In spite of the fact that he was publishing his novels, during the first two decades of the 20th century, the life they breathed smacks off the last of the few decades of the 19th century. It is with this life-stuff that Arnold Bennett launched on his well-made novels.

Innumerable novelists influenced Bennett. But the influence of the French naturalists is very important. But when it comes to the question of the technique of his novel Flaubert Moos and Anton Chekov are most important. It is these writers that gave him the secret of the new principle of composition. The new principle of composition lies in the art of forcing the human nature in to the mould of fiction. It should not be mistaken here as interpreting the human nature. The
whole of the formula lies in forcing the human nature
in its totality of actions and reactions, without con-
descending to interpretative operations. In so far as
Bennett is concerned, he even exceeds the formula of
well-made novel as given by Wells and Galsworthy. In
its original sense, the well-made novel is expected to
be a perfect and certain character in a period of time
which substantiates their purpose of living. According
to Joseph Warren Beach Arnold Bennett, while consigning
his art to "the 'panoramic' method of Thackeray and
Dickens", Bennett further enlivens the picture of
life in the series of exhaustive incidents. Therefore
Warren Beach says:

\[
\text{In \ his \ best known novels, } "\text{The Old Wives' Tale}" \text{ and the Clayhanger series, he covers a very long space of years, and gives us that sense of intimacy with the characters which results from our living through their whole lives with them.}\]

In a sense, Bennett's novels are not mere imposing
facts of life maintain in themselves a possible growth,
development and culmination, in accordance with the arti-
static genre of his novels. It meets no re-affirmation here
that Bennett is a realist, and his chief purpose as a
novelist lies in giving a depth analytical experience of
the lives and performances of his characters.
(ii) The art of story-telling:  

Any novelist to be worth to the salt he claims must be a good story-teller. Story-telling as an art is as old as the mythical granny; and the literary artist from generation to generation effected innumerable improvements; and by the 20th century it achieved for itself a rare finish and provis. Referring to the art of story-telling of our times John Alcorn said as follows:

Between Thomas Hardy and D.H.Lawrence there arose in English literature a new story-telling convention, a convention which involved new themes, descriptive techniques, plot devices, methods of characterisation, and new ways of relating character to landscape; and that these changes far from being gratuitous or accidental reflect a single basic insight about human experience, an insight which continues to make its force felt in English and American fiction in our times.3

Arnold Bennett started his career in the 1890's perceiving French Naturalism as a beacon light for his future literary pursuit. He made minor amendments later to his perception on their technique. His increasing insight and experience necessitated this. For Bennett French naturalism was a technical reality. It was not that his predecessors totally failed in their perception of this technical reality. They were handicapped by the age-old bondage of social consciousness from which there was no escape to them. So they were quite satisfied to present the existing society in different hues and
So Bennett wanted to make a deviation from the traditional stereo-typed presentation of the society which existed in the 18th century... David Daiches pertinently touches this point. Daiches says:

The English novel, as we have seen was essentially Bourgeois in its origins, and throughout the 18th and 19th centuries it was solidly anchored in a social world. The fact of social class was not only taken for granted but even depended on by English novelists; it provided humour and atmosphere and local colour as well as motivation for self advancement.

As it has been noticed that English novel 'was essentially Bourgeois in its origin'. Bennett sincerely and with a sense of urgency tries to do away with this tendency. With this purpose in mind he shaped some of his characters who succeeded in the social consciousness. All his five Towns novels were shaped with this motto in his mind. The new awakening he achieved in all these novels was noted with great interest and enthusiasm.

When Sophia stamped on the ground in her supreme desperation when she came to know that her education was over, the whole Five Towns heard her groaning. The mighty Mrs. Saines was compelled to think that the end of the world had come. When her progeny turns defiant Mrs. Saines shows symptoms of losing her confidence. Edwin Clayhanger, Anna and even Hilda Lessways contributed capitally to Bennett's scheme of social awakening.
Apart from these major characters, some of his minor characters as we see in whom God Hath joined and sacred and Profane Love are tremendously effective in arousing a new social awareness. If a common social problem, the marriage and the upkeep of its sanctity is the problem in the former, to bring a spendthrift in the matters of love (carlotte) to her common sense is the subject matter of the latter. In their limited range they serve Bennett's purpose effectively.

In all these new experiments of Bennett the French exponents of naturalism rendered their inspiration liberally. His journal entries, made as an emulation of the degoncourts, are helpful to have a peep into the inner fabrics of his thinking. One of his journal entries of Monday, "January 1897, is illuminative of this. This entry gives the quintessence of Bennett's idea regarding the form and formation of a novel. It throws light on how he had evolved his typical type of realism from the great masters of French naturalism.

The novelist of the contemporary manners needs to be saturated with a sense of the picturesque in modern things. (Journal, 11 January 1897)

Though Bennett is addressing in to his contemporaries, he does it with an eye on future. What he means is that the things may be viewed with an intuitive interest.
Though Bennett earned some notoriety in his excessive application of external details he never forgot to do it intuitively. He thinks that each and every scene, even the commonest and the meanest is wonderful. The only condition is that the beholder must be detached. Then only, Bennett thinks, one can watch things in its exact state. When Bennett finds fault with the Victorians in their lack of detachment in observation, he on his part, tries his level best to be impartial in his observations. In the dying decades of the 19th century the French and Russian writers of fiction opened a new way for the younger generation of novelists like Bennett. The Edwardians in their approach to the fictional writings stopped the dilly-dallying of the Victorians and began to project the social imperatives without a lowbrow-highbrow complex with the spirit they imbibed from the French.

Though Bennett denounces the Victorians in general, he adopts the panoramic method of Thackeray. Bennett's novels *The Old Wives' Tale* and *Clayhanger Trilogy* present characters through long infinite tracts of time. The novels have their root definitely in the Five Towns. The characters are having the typical traits of the Five Towns inhabitants and they grow in
the mysterious cycle of time and in the long run we are rather attracted by the rolling of the wheel of time than the characters themselves. In the relentless flow of time nothing remains constant. Bennett's novel opens The Old Wives' Tale projects the dichotomy of human nature. He makes a contrasting study of two sisters, Constance and Sophia Baines. Constance keeps constant, stagnant and steady whereas Sophie is dashing enterprising and dynamic. Both are the product of a cultural crisis. In one (Constance) the crisis remains dormant with out showing any external symptoms, but in the other (Sophie) it surfaces with many facets.

Though their father is being tended as a 'bearded baby', their mother Mrs. Baines commands great authority over her daughters. Her orders were like oracles. But in the general scheme of Bennett's technique he does not allow Mrs. Baines to steal the show. His scheme is to project the two faces of the typical Five Towns traits through these two girls. So Bennett does not show much sympathy to Mrs. Baines. Bennett places the old order in a low key and he does it deliberately to focus the attention on the younger generation. Though Bennett introduces Mrs. Baines as a powerful lady, his main intention is to expose not only herself but the whole class she belongs to. Bennett wants to show how that class hampers and e
thwarts the efforts of individual eminence of the youngstars with the help of a smoke screen called the old order morality. So he thinks that they deserve no sympathy whatsoever it may be. James Hall's remark is interesting here. Hall says:

Jennett does not want to arouse a great deal of sympathy for Mrs.Baines's plight, for this would divert attention from Constance and Sophia, the girls he is grooming for the book's protagonists. By treating Mrs.Baines with an epigrammatic, Jane-Austenian condescension, which makes her almost a humour character.

Bennett was 'grooming' his heroines with utmost care. So he did not want anything to come in the way which would fail his purpose. With all her arrogance when Mrs.Baines compels Sophia to consume castor oil she doesn't understand that she behaves in a laughable manner. All this Bennett does in an objective manner. This objective method keeps him at a safe distance from the subject matter of discussion. In his zeal for more and more details he does not find anything ugly or unsavoury. He thinks that every object will have its own beauty. It is the duty of the observer to make it out, he believed. Bennett never takes sides with the objects he discusses. He is always eager to provide maximum details to his readers. He devours everything that comes in his way to satiate his hunger for more and more objects and details. Bennett looks at the objects innocently as if a baby peeps
out through her window at a smiling spring. What
was the incentive behind Bennett when he was madly in
pursuit of minute details? Earnest Baker tries to
give an answer for this. Says Baker:

Life continually surprises those who watch
it most intently. All the efforts of bio-
chemistry, physiology, and the rest, to predict
the future of a living organism are liable
to be overthrown by what actually changes
occurs. Life is ceaseless activity, perpetual
changes. Bennett was one of those who do not
break up and analyse, but comprehend by intuition.

Baker says that 'life continually surprises those
who watch it'. Bennett's was such a personality. As far
as this aspect of watching is concerned he was always a
student. The advantage of an objective recorder is that
he does it with 'intuition'. This gives enough scope for
interpretation for the beholder. Bennett knew it well
that with the chemical or philosophical properties one
does not infer the possible occurrence of things. So he
decided to observe things objectively and intuitively.
Moreover, though Bennett is considered to be an objective
observer, many times, he tries to interpret the 'unseen
by the seen'. Baker's another statement throws further light on this point. Baker states:

He thought it only a matter of fact
and common sense to interpret the unseen
by the seen, the mind by the features
character and motive by behaviour. But
he was apt to trust too recklessly to that
common sense of his, which may have been
infallible, but only when he took the trouble to exert it seriously. His craftsmanship, at any rate his ability to maintain a hypnotizing semblance of actuality was not to be surpassed, when once he had got into his stride.

What all Baker wants to suggest here is very simple. Even with the best of intentions one cannot be sure about the mind just on the basis of observing the features and characters. Behaviour very often keeps the motive undisclosed, particularly when a culture is undergoing a serious change. Therefore a mere intellectual 'tact and common sense' is not sufficient to interpret the unseen by the seen'. The seen in particular and the unseen behind it is elusively interior and spiritual. On such circumstances the most uncommon property that comes to the rescue of the author is his 'Common Sense'. It is in this common sense that Bennett abounds. But Baker wants to suggest that we can be sure of his common sense when 'he took the trouble to exert it seriously'. The suggestion quite naturally involves that there are moments in Bennett where he exerted it non-seriously. Therefore he was declared to be 'apt to trust to recklessly to that common sense of his'. It is a fact that Bennett had written novels sometimes for pure commercial reasons. In those novels his common sense, 'which may have been infallible', gets overshadowed by various other constraints and urgencies. This is to say that Bennett sometimes willingly gives a slip to his infallible
common sense; and performs himself in rather an unenthusiastic narrative technique. His Imperial Palace is one such example where we have such unenthusiastic technique established, but when it comes to the question of his Five Towns novels, Clayhanger trilogy and Kiceyman steps, the technique of Bennett is absolutely foolproof and it is his common sense that becomes the most laudable feature.

As it is already seen that Bennett is always in quest of new objects. At times he presents the same object through varying angles. But his objects are always meticulously plucked out from the everyday life of the Five Towns common man. When he introduces them he is very particular to bring into use the typical atmosphere which they hail from. Compton Kickett agrees with this point. Says Kickett:

A pedestal style which is wonderfully adopted for building up the efforts he wishes to create.

Bennett is not satisfied to reveal the life in one full show in its entirety. Instead he does it bit by bit. To use one of Holmes’ phrases is interesting here, i.e., ‘a great bundle of little things’. No doubt the ‘great bundle of little things’ he presents before us one after the other in quick succession. Dickens did it in a humorous way. Brontes did it frighteningly with nerve
breaking tension. They go on expatiating upon such comedies and tragedies. Once we come under their spell we cannot escape. But Bennett's method is different. He makes a mention whether it is irritable or comfortable and then passes it on to his readers. He does not hypnotize the reader. He changes from one aspect to another with electric rapidity. According to Compton Kickett this strategy gives him writings more credence and strength. Says Kickett:

> It is quite clear as we read the succession of his novels that his strength lies in showing a diversity of new points.

### (iii) Characters Crisis

Bennett's characters, both major and minor, always pass through a crisis. This crisis is the result of social cultural and psychological interactions. Sophia, in a quite ordinary way, parting a few words with a young sales agent. Instead of leaving it as a silly incident, Mrs. Saines takes the extreme step, that is not to give her any further opportunity to meet that person. With this motto, she winds up the schooling of her daughters. The crisis gains momentum and then it leads to the elopement of Sophia which ensues a life of utter chaos and struggle for more than three decades.

Edwin Clayhanger, the only son of Darius Clayhanger, leads a life of perennial crisis. Darius loves him dearly
and he is proud of his son's virtues. But when Edwin conveys the message that he proposes to study architecture, Darius turns a deaf ear to his son's demand. It was a long struggle for Edwin until he prepared mentally to give up his cherished ambition.

Hilda, whom Edwin loves, passes through a long crisis. Hilda has got her own inhibitions. Because of this she cannot move freely in any society. Jannett Grigov is her real friend. Even Janet also could not make a proper assessment of her character. Many of Hilda's actions are inconsistent and mysterious. Many times she behaves as a nervous wreck. Though Bennett created Hilda he himself found it difficult to understand the inner working of her mind. This increases the profundity and dimension of her crisis. Apart from the cultural and social crisis she undergoes a psychological crisis also. If this is the case of some of Bennett's major characters there are a galaxy of minor characters who always pass through a crisis. Lord Haingo, Mr. Prohack (same are the names of the novels also). Inspenlove, Diaz, Carlotta (Sacred and Profane Love) Lawrence and Phillis Midware, Pearns (whom God Hath Joined) are some of the names worth mentioning.
Most of Bennett's heroes and heroines are not much concerned with the moral conduct which is an important element in the linguistic totality of Jane Austen's novel. William Bellamy pertinently touches this aspect. Says Bellamy:

"Their predicament as one in which cultural 'sublimation' no longer seems to work; for them the guidelines for a fuller implementation of 'humanity' in society must come not from morality but from a cognitive analysis." In the world of Bennettian characters the concept of morality has undergone a slight alteration. They are trying to interpret human values in terms of social consciousness in evolution. The artist narrator in Bennett keeps apart at a safe distance, not because he is disinterested in the ends and means of the society, but because he tries to be impartial in his observations in the atmosphere of the post-cultural crisis. Bellamy hastens to add that "The artist narrator is alienated in such a fictional world not because he is antibourgeois, but apparently because the fully conscious mind in process of analysis must automatically, proceed to a post-cultural level".

(iv) Bennett's growing world.

Bennett's regional appeal becomes effective only when it receives a universal colour. Most of this Five Towns novels are confined to the Staffordshire potteries.
But from there they reach the outside world at large, sometimes physically and at other times effectually.

Richard Larch, the hero of his first novel *A Man from the North* is representative of his age, the dying decade of the 19th century. A tendency prevailed among the young men of the regional towns that they had been born to live and succeed in London. He had talents of literature and he thought that he would thrive in London. But his dreams never came true. The only man he meets there with an aptitude for literature is Amed who is always having a scheme to write on the suburbs of London. Without materialising his dreams he breathes his last.

In the same way Sophia, a pure product of the Five Towns has an urge for continental culture and somehow she manages to reach her haven—Paris, the capital of France. There she does not take much time to understand her disillusionment. She came out into the wide world after demolishing the wall of old customs, beliefs and easy contentment. Her physical attainment is not so enormous, though it is substantial, her spiritual gain is to be reckoned with.

Anna also is a girl purely of the Five Towns. She acquires wisdom comparatively late in her youth. But she gains it and also gain a vision of the world outside. All of Bennett's Five Towns novels, without fail, touch this
To say time as the hero of the novel is a little exaggerated proposition, though the power of time is significantly felt throughout this novel. No doubt it is mighty, it pro创s, protects and annihilates, doing the function of of Peter, Son and Holy Ghost which goes parallel to the Hindu concept of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara.

Bennett cannot claim to have proposed a surprising novelty in his concept that whatever is born is liable to decay and death. But it seems that Bennett wants to establish this tested truth once more and he does it with a philosophic zeal. Through various angles he tries to reach this truth. He goes into the depth of social truth after digging out layer after layer of day today incidents. When we watch these girls from their early teens to the ripe old age, the very life itself in its totality of splendour and ignominy is raised before us as a dew-drop on a lotus leaf dancing to the rhythm of the ripples in the morning streak of the sun. Nothing can escape the strangehold of time in Bennettian novels. All the characters are time-bound. Through the murky Five Town an outsider sees nothing but hears the mysterious ticking of time. Nothing remains. There the death of a fly, fowl or a parched arm does not make any difference. Everything is devoured by time, either sooner or later. By each step forward the intimacy with the time grows. Though Henry
James also applies the same technique, Joseph Warren Beach says to find a difference in the methods of James and Bennett. Beach says:

In the James type of novel our intimacy with the characters grows in the spiritual dimension of thought through the infinite expansion of the moment, but here it is the literal dimension of time, with its constant incremental cumulation of feeling that makes us intimate with the people of the story and gives them their incomparable air of solidity and reality.

Beach sees the working of time in both James and Bennett but with a difference. By the passage of time Jamesian character 'grows in the spiritual dimension' where as the Bennettian characters grow in 'the basic literal dimension'. No doubt James was a greater exponent of art but Bennett does not fall short in stature comparing with such writers as Henry James.

There is only one major novel Bennett writes where time plays only a second fiddle, that is, 'icetron steps.' There time and space have been relegated to the rear. The total time span is only one year and everything happens at one particular suburban square, the clerk's well. Here Bennett proves his prodigious talent of writing plainly without any aid of time and space. In his chronicle novels like Old Wives Tale and Clayhanger trilogy he uses an expansive canvas where his characters and incidents are strung all over there. But here his
canvas is narrow, yet he doesn't feel any contraints to reach to a logical end and his pictures are quite clear and convincing.

In his two novels *Anne of the Five Towns* and *Kicemansteps* he gives up his attempt for an 'overall picture of life'. They proved beyond doubt that Bennett could adopt artistic methods other than that he used in his other Five Towns books. That is why Angus Wilson rates these two novels very high. Says Wilson:

*Anne of the Five Towns* and *Kicemansteps* give as a result an intensity and cohesion which I find entirely lacking in *The Old Wives' Tale* or *Clayhanger.*

It is true that these two novels of Bennett have an 'intensity and cohesion' rare in his other novels, but as far as 'intensity' is concerned neither *The Old Wives' Tale* nor *Clayhanger* is lagging behind. We can say that Anna and Henry Earl forward are monolithic creations. Both stand apart from others. Anna is terrorised by her despotic and miserly father. Where as Earlforward is a pure miser himself. A bright ten shilling note is a thing which he never likes to part with. He thinks it is better to die than to squander money.

In a weak moment Henry Earlforward surrenders to his inner urges and marries Mrs. Violet Arb. She was not a spend thrift, yet in the beginning she found it bit difficult to cope up with the master miser but later she
managed to surrender perfectly to the miser, her second husband. About his typical miserliness James Hall's observations are illuminating. Hall says:

Riceyman steps deals with the psychology of the crudest form of ascetism . . . miserliness so strong that it starves both the miser and his victim. Henry Earl forward is literally a miser, but miserliness as it appears in Earlforward's relations with his wife, and as it grows into an obsession, becomes a symbol that gives the novel force.

Riceyman steps shows a drastic change in Bennett's technique. As a mention is already made, here he forgets time and space. Bennett's concept of realism has undergone a thorough change here, some what towards the end of his career. In the Old Wives' Tale and other Five Towns novels the characters were only partly responsible for the changes, either for the good or for the bad. But here Earlforward is solely responsible for the calamity. Sophia is, no doubt, a little hot-headed but the social bigotry plays the major role in her love affair and subsequent elopement. The foundation of Riceyman steps was set in a faultless manner and a magnificent edifice could be erected over it. But the superstructure slightly falls short of our expectations.

The tragedy of Earlforward is developed in the Aristotelian concept of 'tragic flaw'. According to that concept 'catharsis' emanates from it. The comic portrayal makes the story interesting from its very inception.
Gradually the comedy changes and finally it becomes piercingly pathetic. But the pathetic intensity would have been increased had the author come out on occasions from the rear as he did in the case of Samuel Rovey. By not doing so he missed the chance narrowly of becoming the author of a memorable masterpiece.

(vi) **Ultimate reality: death.**

In the realistic world of Bennett death comes with a certainty. For Bennett death is an integral part of reality and it is the consciousness of the ultimate reality. Death raises pity, fear and purgation and that very same death combines the whole mankind into one unit. Death, being the leveller, destroys the discrimination between the highbrow and the low-brow. In the lap of the mother earth, there is complete fraternity caused by death, the king of a commoner, madman or a leper has to reach ultimately there. All other realities are transient whereas death is a realistic certainty and it is permanent.

Had there not been death, man could not have learned. The redeeming aspect of death is very vital. The great edage from the Bible goes as "The wages of sin is death". The word 'wages' is used very carefully. It could be used as 'punishment', but then its redeeming
aspect would have been lost. Bennett was very much concerned with death. In real life he had witnessed the death of his father with all its ferociousness, and he might have created a fear psychosis in his mind. This might be one of the reasons that he dwelt upon death with mystic dimensions. Many of his characters die a death after fully redeemed. The death in all its ferocity is explained in the Old Wife's Tale and Clayhanger. Mr. Beines, a chronic paralytic patient had been in the death-bed for fourteen years. Physically he is alive, but for all other practical purposes he is dead. That is a different phase of death.

"Mr. Beines ... His brain had almost ceased to be active now; he had to be fed and tended like a bearded baby". (WT, p. 62)

Here death would have been a blessing in disguise for the sufferer and his kin and kin. Death plays havoc in Arnold Bennett's Five Towns novels. Most of the important characters of his Five Towns novels die before the close of the books. After her long sojourn Sophia returned to Burley. After a long gap of three decades the two sisters united and when life again began to flow quietly, she learnt from a telegram that her long-forgotten husband was lying serious in London. She reached there only to learn that scales was dead and to her
utter dismay she saw the pitiable corpse. Bennett explains it:

withered face, with the shiny skin all drawn into wrinkles: The stretched skin under the jaw was like the skin of a plucked fowl. The cheekbones stood up, and below them were deep hollows, almost like egg-cups. A short, scraggy white beard covered the lower part of the face...

This kind of naked description of a dead body may be tiresome to many. But for Bennett it is very important. Gerald Scales was a handsome civilized youngman for whom Sophie was crazy. But here, Gerald squandered that youthful elegance. Here he is nothing but a dark and fearful shadow of that bygone charm. Bennett’s purpose of elaborating the death scenes is to educate his heroes and heroines, and through them the world at large, the philosophic truth, the impermanence of material splendour.

The entire purpose of the various literary techniques that he evolved out of his literary technique are invariably directed towards a new sense of humanism that was coming into a poise, as a certain social property, during the first few decades of the 20th century. It was Arnold Luxley, in one of his essays, suggested that 20th century would be remembered by the posterity not for its skyscrapers, not for its aeroplanes, not at all
for its touching the moon, but for its great human sense of existence. Huxley further states that men for the first time started thinking in terms of knowing the other, exactly in a manner as to how it looks like being the other. All other Edwardian novelist like Wells and Galsworthy certainly contributed for a great sense of understanding human affairs; but it is only Bennett that directed his miraculous common sense towards the purpose of knowing how it looks like being the other. There is a great difference between the act of understanding and the project of knowing, we understand when we are told; but we know when we undergo the process of experience itself. It is in this context that Bennett’s humanism is more significant than that of the other Edwardian novelists. The subject of Bennett’s humanism is shifted to the next chapter.

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References


2. Ibid


7. Ibid - P.299

9. Ibid.


12. Ibid.


This book was originally published in 1917.


The book was originally published by the Century Company during 1932. The place particulars of the Century Company were not given in this edition.
