Chapter II

Societal and Psychological Factors
Both the social and individual personal realisms of the west were in a quick metamorphising phase during the latter half of the 19th century. As a result of this the human generations that emerged in the 20th century turned out to be altogether different in their attitudes, dispositions, and responses to life, from the people that lived before the advent of the Industrial Revolution. Arnold Bennett's chief concern, as a novelist, is this explosive social transformation. It is not that he was displeased altogether with these changes, but what he found it difficult was in coming to terms with certain unpalatable and uncommon pursuit of industrialism treading over the age old trades and traditions. Human knowledge had been becoming unmanageably vast and complex. The words of Will Durant are quite notable here. Will Durant says:

... every science had begotten a dozen more; each subtler than the rest ... physics found a universe in the atom and biology found a microcosm in the cell ...

All the new knowledge depended upon scientific specialists who "knew more and more about less and less". A scientific revolution changed people's ideas about nature. This was beginning to change the ways people lived and worked. Historians view it as in their own way. Wallbank and others' opinion is found to be genuine here. "All bank and others say":

...
They declared that it was a 'Cataclysm' followed by a catastrophe. That is new machines suddenly appeared and began the factory system, which cruelly used men, women and children.

Many new industries appeared in the 19th and 19th centuries which made social life more complex and complicated. They came from hundreds of years of strenuous work and discovery in many countries. The search for new machines and new kinds of power to run them has been relentlessly going on.

Even though Bennett wrote at a time when this 'cataclysm' of industrial revolution had already seen its climax, his fictional characters were living exactly at such a pass. They could be classed either as victors or victims of such an industrial revolution. In fact Bennett's object of expression was such a society in a flux and that society had to adapt to the changing and challenging situations of the ongoing time. For instance, Horace Clayhanger started his life as a child labour in an industrial establishment at the tender age of nine. There he is the victim of such a degenerating system. Though he had to pass through untold miseries in his childhood, later he turned the tables to his advantage with the help of his mentor Mr. Shushion. Some writers like Dickens and Thackeray keenly observe these changes and make them the subject of their interest and interpretation. This paved way for a new set of novels popularly known as social novels.
Social novels had been on the cards since the beginning of the 19th century. But speaking precisely, novels under this specific caption 'Social novel' began to appear in the second quarter of the 19th century. As every other activities of literature, social novels also had their own purpose. The novels of Dickens, Disraeli and Kingsley played significant role in the evolution of social novels. Louis Cazamian's opinion on this kind of novel is quite relevant in this context. Cazamian says:

The social 'novel with a purpose' appeared with the early Victorian period in 1830, and until about 1850 exhibited characteristics analogous with it. Impassioned, challenging novels took as their subject the grave problems which concerned the whole of society, discussed them in their entirety, and proposed precise formulas or vague aspirations for the total reform of human relations. The novel took on the emotional tone and generous idealism of the age in which dying romanticism found a new lease of life in political and social aspirations.

It is in the fitness of things to say that social novels began to grow along with the growth of industrialisation in Europe. That is why many challenging novels surfaced the fictional arena and they dealt with 'the grave problem which concerned the whole society'. In the new social contexts these novels had to play a vital role. They pointed to the crying need of the reformation and recast of the society. They tried to create a new social consciousness in the quick changing technocratic world. Social novels gained ground soon and they gave more temper and veracity to realism. Cazamian further states that:
The social novel implanted realism in English thinking. It exposed facts, and selected the most important of these for discussion. Its valuable philosophy of life was experimental and demonstrative. It showed the direct way from experience to principle. And under the writers' guidance the reader took an instructive walk through society.

We cannot fully agree with Kazamian when he states that 'The social novel implanted realism in English thinking'. It does give an impression that realism did not exist before the advent of these social novels. It is definitely true that these social novels gave a new lease and dynamism to the English realistic thinking. Moreover these novels 'exposed facts' of social inequality and exploitation. It is logical and pertinent to say that these novels gave an impression of a 'valuable philosophy of life'. This proposition is acceptable and can go a long way in understanding those novels, like those of Bennett, appeared later in this pattern.

1) Linking process:

Arnold Bennett was a keen observer of the society in which he lived. Each and every incident was thrilling to him and he tried to copy them down in the best possible way. He wanted to provide maximum details to his readers. The details he gave were sincere, absorbing and illuminating. These incidents and situations are social in the sense that they give birth to a course of events in the society at large as a traditional institution. The basis
Psychological analysis of the realism emerges out of the sharp and the instant reactions of the characters to the institutional course of activity of the society as an imposing agency on the minds of the people that constitute the society itself.

There has been a constant conflict between the social realism of the group as a social entity and psychological realism of the individual characters. This conflict has been a subject of discussion for many writers at the turn of the century. What they wanted to establish was the social truth. But that social truth was in fact the progenies of their imagination. James Hall touches this conflict when he says:

In James's stories of artist's and writers the conflict is most frequently between the real and the meretricious in art. Bennett's clash is between art and bourgeois conception of life ... between the reality of the unimaginative.

The social realism operates itself in the form of institution. Arnold Bennett knew it for certain that the purpose of adopting realism was to establish the social truth. He thought that by increasing or decreasing, ameliorating or deteriorating the social perspectives, the kinds of realism could be multiplied. With each permutation and combination the social structure and contemplation changes.
Bennett's characters are unavoidably stationed in this traditional society. They are temperamentally desirous of maintaining those social and cultural priorities and superiorities. But at the same time they are also conscious of the great material worth of comfort offered by the new emergences of industrialisations, mechanisation and urbanisation. Consequently the Bennett characters invariably find themselves in a great dilemma of choosing and asserting themselves as a new generation finding themselves altogether in a new situation different from that of their immediate ancestors. The social and cultural changes are at once invited and at the same time repulsed. It is in this context, just for the sake of clarifying the then human situations, Bennett always focuses upon the domestic situations of his characters, wherefrom the actions of his characters take their source of animation.

For the sake of the narrative convenience the domestic and the family situations are contingently divided and distinguished between the elder and the younger generations co-exist together but living altogether separate lives, with different aspirations and distinctly different purposes of life. This is what popularly called by the psychologists as generation conflict emerging out of a generation gap. The elder
generation nurtures a static view of life, while the younger generation prepares itself to a sort of dynamic and unconventional role that it is called upon to embrace. The conflict between the elder and younger generations finally leads to a catastrophic state of existence, rendering both the parties involving themselves in such contradictory directions, whereby their achievements as cross-frustratory to the mutual aspirations of the group involved.

Right from the beginning there is a sort of resentment and disagreement on the part of Mrs. Darius about the activities of her younger daughter Sophia in the Old Wives' Tale. The same kind of divided interest and pursuit constitutes the theme of Clayhanger. Darius, as against the desires and interest of Edwin, nurtures in himself a sort of lifestyle for his son, which in all probability frustrates the faculties of Edwin. Darius, with his impositions and Edwin, with his struggle to free himself from the paternal dominations, presuppose for Bennett a serious conflict in between the two. This conflict itself is the new emerging social realism in the context of which the lives of both Darius and Edwin turn out to be endless pursuit in different directions. There is no cohesion or compromise in between themselves. Life lived in these uncompromised situations leads to a sharp psychological antagonism, which finally takes the shape.
of a sort of nemesis for both Edwin and Darius. Bennett wants to suggest here that in the conflicting interest of the inmates of the family institution finally endorse no peace or stability to the lives of the inmates. This lack of stability or peace within the four walls of the family institution ultimately becomes the total cause of a great sense of waste in the lives as lived by the people around him. That way Bennett is neither a pessimist like Hardy nor a cynic like Thackeray.

But the mounting conflict of the generations and the implicitly stoical manner in which individuals stick to their guns envisages a rare unenthusing, even rather frustrating, state of life in the society. For the ultimate causes of frustration and dissatisfaction in the lives of the people neither of the parties becomes worth blaming. We are not prepared to blame one or the other part is indicative of the manner in which the very causes of social suffering are eluding the observational group of the reader. It is here that Bennett creates an implicit impression that there is somehow somewhere a gross amiss in the property of the executions of life in the society. Our sympathies are certainly with Sophia and Edwin. But these sympathies are neither strong nor passionate to the requisite extent of a declaring in our hearts of hearts Darius and Mrs. Baines as villains of the pieces. In fact in Bennett we have villainy without particular villains or
evil songies. Only there is a delicate and unaccountable point of variation in the attitudes of the inmates. Innumerable such particulars of attitudes finally culminate into the very grounds of frustration when once they become unaccountably numerous. There is no reason why there was no love lost between Mr. Staines and Sophie, or Barry and lovely. The reason may not be found; the cause may elude our attention, but the thing is there. Both the parties hate each other slight such others intentions; and consequently confound their mutual hatred to the extent of no regrets even in permanent separation.

Society as a whole, as observed by Bennett, was divided into innumerable classes; some low; some rich and some falling in between. This is one of the gross unpleasant fact on which the English society of his time was founded itself. Probably this gross distinction of the society into classes was an inevitable and unavoidable property that was coming as a tradition. At the same time the newly emerging cultural innovations like industrialisation, technocratisation and urbanisation have no place for these distinctions.

(ii) Advent of new theories:

Along with these social turmoils resulting from the interactions of social and individual institutions people had to cope up with another social reality, this time a
spatial one rather than a social one. It sent shock waves to the whole of the chistandom. The Christian faith travelled through many trials, trials and tribulations for many a centuries. It was on the cross roads under the adverse impact of individualism and utilitarianism. It was on such a debilitating faith fell the crushing smash - the publication of Charles Darwin's 'origin of species'. Ever since the ancient Greeks, there were many enlightened scholars who thought that the earth and other living object had taken shape from simple to complex forms. When Darwin called it 'the principle of natural selection' and placed it for perusal before the intelligentsia of the world, its resounding impact was evident from the words of Will Durant. Durant states:

In 1858 Darwin and Wallace read their famous papers before the Linnaean society, and in 1859 the Old world, as the good bishops thought, crashed to pieces with the publication of the 'origin of species'?

Darwin's theory stirred a hornet's nest of confusion in the social consciousness. It was a hot topic of discussion throughout the latter part of the 19th century in Europe. Churches felt that Darwin committed blasphemy as he went against the Bible story of creation. In the aftermath of Darwin's findings there came another social philosophical study from the German philosopher Carl Marx. If Darwin's theory converted the
God-oriented world into species-oriented, Marx divided the existing society into bourgeoisie and proletariat. The hurricane of anti-religious sentiments gathered momentum in the presence of Marx's social theory. These are many occasions in his novels which legitimize our inference that Bennett has been very much influenced by these epoch-making theories - anti-religious sentiments are evident in most of his Five Towns novels. But his major characters are not religious begots. Moreover, when it comes to the question of interpersonal relations something different from the religious taboos guides them to a state of understanding partners. In the Old Man's Tale Sophia cannot be considered as irreligious. But she is not falling into the line of religionists. At the same time her own experiences in France implicitly bring forth a conversion in her. This conversion renders her into a christ-like sympathetic and charitable character. She acquires for herself all the basic christian messages but at the same time she prefers to be human without being blindly religious.

Social realism had to meet some of its bad days with the advent of Marxian proletarianism. It has become a corollary to class conflict, it was unfortunate that, somehow or the other, a notion crept into the minds of many that there was a harmony between proletarianism and
realism. Marx divided the society in twain between the have and the have-nots. Many people conceived that the realistic fictional presentation gave it a proletarian slant. Moreover social realism gained notoriety as many people believed that it was anti-religious. In fact the orthodox pattern of life opposed to a realistic way of life. Bennett was, no doubt, a realist and his sympathies were always with the downtrodden. Yet he did not make a diatribe against the rich. He did not join the bandwagon of the proletariat either.

(iii) Stuff of his social realism

Even when realism was looked down upon in general and social realism in particular, writers of repute were not prepared to repudiate it. When many began to let it down as a misnomer the great exponents of French realism came forward to clothe it with a new attire called naturalism. The structure and texture of social realism remained more or less the same as it used to be with the erstwhile feudal tradition. But some of the external changes through Darwinism and industrialisation certainly provoked his characters to assert their inner instincts and freedoms. This kind of assertion of the inner instinctive freedom very often verges upon irresponsibility not condescending to immorality. Both Anna and Sophie have their abundant adolescent notion of instinctive freedom.
But they realize their human worth long before they get shattered in the new social conventions.

Bennett's novel, *The Sacred and Profane Love*, occupies a place of dramatic importance in this context. Even though it is a minor novel, in so far as its popular appeal is concerned, Bennett had attempted here something which could not have been possible for either Sophia or Anna or Mildred as fictional characters. Carlotta, the heroine of the novel is a wild adventuress following the close traditions of the French naturalists. Her first love with Diaz, in spite of its unconventionality, is saved when compared to her second love with Ispenlove. One should not forget here that Carlotta is a full fledged artist at heart. As an artist she has a desire to undergo personally all the experience of love-à-la life more sacred and profane. And her love with Ispenlove is profane, not because there is something wrong with the loving partners, but because the institutional prerogatives do not permit an affair between them, as Ispenlove is already a married person. Carlotta should not have fallen in love with him. Any affair between them could not have been anything short of immorality. To enter into the area of that immorality and yet remain unshattered in the psyche it needs somewhat a blunt sensibility. Carlotta does not have that blunt sensibility. On realizing the profanity of her affair with Ispenlove she reverts back to the old pianist Diaz. The unusual success of
of the opera she composed made her ex ecstatically happy. She was expecting a durable happiness. There again she makes a miscalculation. She thought that her lover Diaz would embrace her with love and pride, but it proves in the other way round. Due to an inflamed appendix she is carried to the operating theatre and she dies on the operating table without finding a solution to the Riva Towns predicament. James Hall makes a mention on this aspect. Hall says:

The significance of sacred and profane love is. Its failure to resolve the Riva Towns predicament by alchemical transmutation.

Carlotta's attempt to get herself absolved was sincere but the providence decided in the other way. It is in this return to Diaz that Carlotta assumes on herself the great human personality of an artist. If she wanted she could as well have tried a third partner, but does not do anything of that sort. In her affair with Ispanlove there is something wrong and painful. It is more an assertion of instinctive freedom. On the other hand it is a gross withstandable burden on her mind. This burden is the result of the intensity of the institutional force on her character. To start with, she was conscious of her instinctive freedom. But after undergoing the inevitable process of inner conflict - she realises her duties as an artist. It is out of this realisation that she returns to Diaz. In returning to Diaz there is nothing contentious in so far as her instincts are concerned. Incidentally she becomes
the best opera writer after her return to life. Earlier
something was crumbling her artistic personality. It is
this artistic personality that ultimately asserts its
freedom and choice in self evidently experiencing the
difference between the sacred love and the profane love.

One should not forget that the word sacred does
not have its religious connotation for Arnold Bennett.
Whatever that is humanly charitable, either in act or
gesture is sacred for him. It is out of this sacredness
of art that Sophia personally visits her long separated
dying husband. Her visit literally contributes for noth-
ing in the sense that it could be of some material dif-
ference for Gerald Scales her irresponsible husband. It
only shows that glorious gesture of Sophia's mind which
ultimately becomes the real sacredness in a humanistic
sense. Some such sacred gestures are available for us
even in the character of Anna in her attitude and position
towards Willie Price. Carlotta's heart's gesture is more
conspicuous than that of Sophia or Anna as an artistic
revelation. But with all such profound innovations, The
sacred and profane love is a mere minor novel that would
not attract the General interest of the posterity. More-
ever in the very structure and design of the novel there
is something palpable and this palpability renders it
into an insignificant mark. But its thematic importance
is obvious. There are many novels that Bennett wrote just
with a thematic interest. In all such novels he fails not to show the potential mechanics of the institutions which ultimately forced the inmates to discipline and colour. The lessons that his characters learn are highly commendable in being the permanent artifacts of human life in the world.

Social realism operates and thrives under the shade of social institutions. Nature also plays a very important part in creating the social reality in the novels of Bennett. But at the same time the same nature becomes causative force of the psychological conflicts in his characters. The individual characters maintain in themselves a rare love of freedom which in its physical and metaphysical dimensions turns rebellious at the institutional rigidity and staticity. In this atmosphere of conflict between social and psychological realisms there is the fictional stuff for Arnold Bennett.

In all the Five Towns novels of Bennett we get a bird's eye view of the social life prevailing there. This is the case with all such novels as The Old Wives' Tale, Clayhanger (Trilogy), Anna of the Five Towns, ... fan from the north and Card etc. The Old Wives' Tale and Clayhanger (trilogy) present a long panorama of life. In the former novel two sisters, Constance and Sophie Daines are pictured from their adolescence to their ripe
old age, first they are presented in their teens surging with hope and vigour and fire of a throbbing life. It is projected in turn their trials and tribulations, triumphs and defeat, idiosyncrasies etc. In the process the novel combines humour and tragedy, pathos and indignity, beauty and ugliness. How the characters reacted to the prevailing situation about them was explained in the very first sentence of the novel The Old Lives'

Those two girls, Constance and Sophia Baines, paid no heed to the manifold interest of their situations, of which, indeed they had never been conscious (O.T., first sentence)

Bennett informs the reader that these two girls, Constance and Sophia Baines, are unaware of the pulsating interest sweeping across their environment and they do not wake to it. They are oblivious of the atmosphere in which they are living. This shows that they are to be understood not in relation to the life-styles of London or Manchester but with that of a remote dingy manufacturing town of the old Staffordshire potteries.

This is true with the characters of other five Town novels also. Darius Clayhanger is least bothered about this environment. His was a crusade against rank adversities. Poverty was his main concern. So for him social, cultural and religious interactions were more too important. At times, he contributed to Sunday-school
fund because of the debt he owed to the grand old Sunday-
school teacher, Mr. Shushions.

Edwin Claymanger, Darius's son, who represents
the younger generation is also not well in tune with the
prevailing perceptions of the Five Towns society. The
only family to which he could look for with some hope was
that of Orgreave. Theirs was the only family in the pro-
ximity which had risen to face the Challenges of the
growing environment, at least to a limited extent. It
is heartening to see that Mr. Orgreaves allows a certain
amount of liberty to his children. But it is unknown that
what psychological impetus guided him to allow his darling
daughter Jennet remain a spinster for the whole life. The
fact is that Mr & Mrs Orgreave hang heavily on their daugh-
ter for their comfort. That means their understanding
also was far from being myopic.

Even the Orgreaves who showed some promise of pro-
gress could not retain it for long. Doctor Charlie
shifted to a suburban town called Saling. He presumed that
he was gradually rising in the social ladder but it was
only an illusion. The Orgreaves once thought to be well
knit cultured family was broken asunder as a flock of
birds leave their habitat at the first arrow of a hunter.

The life of Anna, in Anna of the Five Towns is
painted with sublime beauty. Her response to the social
interaction is comparatively inadequate. She lives in a triangular world with a primal bullwight at the vertex and herself and her younger step sister as the two base angles. She does not wish to go beyond this self-imposed boundary. That is why even after reaching maturity she does not show much social interest. When she came to know that she was to be an heiress of fifty thousand pounds, she did not feel any sense of relation. This shows her lack of social sense. But she begins to take part in the functions of the Sunday-school with hymns; many times, she is at a loss and gets flabbergasted.

(iv) His facetious social approach

Bennett's approach to social problems was neither pedagogic nor that of a demagogue. He unveiled the curtain of the Five Towns in a facetious and objective manner with a grinning delight. Bennett adopted this method as a protective shield. It was in the fitness of things, he decided, to do so. It is his purpose to explain the frailties and frivolities of his characters who hail from the humble circumstances of the Five Towns and who are free from the sophistication of the world outside. So he thought it better to do it with a grain and a grunt, that is to say, half serious and half humorous. Some of these characters are directly related to his life. The
draper's shop, Mr. Critchlow, Maggie and Povey all are deeply attached to him through his formative years in the Five Towns.

The relationship between Darius Clayhanger and Edwin Clayhanger is a real parallel of the relationship between Enoch Bennett and Arnold Bennett. That is why when he presents them he enjoys their laughter and sometimes he himself laughs at their expense. The instance of Samuel Povey's death in The Old Man's Tale is significant. Povey fought for the cause of his cousin but he lost the fight and in the process he had to sacrifice his life itself Bennett steps in and says:

A casual death scarce noticed in the reaction after the great febrile demonstration! Besides, Samuel Povey never could impose himself on the burgesses. He lacked individuality. He was little. I have often laughed at Samuel Povey. But I liked and respected him. He was very honest man. I have always been glad to think that, at the end of his life, destiny took hold of him and displayed, to the observant, the vein of greatness which runs through every soul without exception. He embraced a cause, lost it, and died of it. (GWT, P.215)

Povey's greatness and smallness are equally revealing. Though physically weak, his social sense was sound. He knew his cousin Daniel was a pious gentleman. But the situation became so that Daniel had to bear the notoriety of murdering his drunken wife. Samuel Povey borne on himself the onus of proving his cousin's innocence. It was a lost cause. Even after knowing the rare chance of
success, he embraced the cause, lost it and died of it. But the same 
povety explodes when he comes to know that his son Cyril has stolen a florin. This contradictory 
attitude of Samuel Povey is quite mysterious. But that 
mystery makes him more attractive.

Through this incident Bennett tries to show the 
elemental strength and determination of the people of 
theFive Towns. When they embrace a cause nothing can 

deter them, even a threat to their life. It shows that 
Bennett tries to make an indepth study of the people of 
the Five Towns in their unique social and cultural back-
ground. Walter Allen thinks,

With Bennett it was plainly warm affection, 
even love, though it might be tinged with 
exasperation. It comes out without disguise 
in his out burst on Samuel Povey. For the 
rest, he could make it under the semblance 
of objectivity which was facetious irony?

Thus Bennett shows unstinted affection to the pe-
ople of the Five Towns even though it is tinged with 
irritation. He is quite sympathetic to Povey but he 
does not want to spare his double standard i.e., his 
passive acquiescence of murder and active abhorrence 
of theft.

In this context Darius Clayhanger is a much dis-
cussed character. Metaphorically speaking, Darius was 
risen like a phoenix from the ashes of poverty and
ignorance. Edwin Cleyhanger is his only son and he is proud of him. Yet he does not allow him to pursue the vocation he cherished. This dilemma is not a singular one. Nor is it attached to the older generation only. The same is indecision and uncertainty are present in the relationship between Edwin and Hilda Lessways also. That means the Five Towns predicament is a phenomena rather than a temporary phase.

Edwin loves Hilda and she responds positively. Everything was set for their marriage. When it was taken for granted that they were made for each other the things took a u-turn. She was called to Brighton by a lawyer of disrepute named George Cannon. There she is married to George Cannon in a precipitated manner. We don't know what was the drama that enacted behind the curtain. What we gather from the episode is this that the behaviour of the people of the Five Towns is unpredictable. Yet it remains as an unconvincing answer. But if any reader complains that the whole episode is not sufficiently explained, Bennett has to come out with a sufficiently convincing answer.

Bennett wanted the help of comedy to reveal the double standard of the people of Five Towns. He thought that comic revelations were more effective than the direct admonitions. John Bachelor puts it as follows:
Much of their duplication is attended by a comic or parodic tone, and the tone is perhaps part of the novelist's total strategy by which the Five Towns of Bennett's childhood are kept at an objective distance.

(v) Five Towns' repression described

Arnold Bennett made a major analytical study of the people of Five Towns through The Old Wives' Tale, Anna of the Five Towns, Clayhanger, Hilda Lessways, etc. Most people belonging to the younger generation were subjected to enormous pressure by their elders while pursuing the outworn shibboleths of the Five Towns social manners. Anna, Sophia, Constance, Edwin Clayhanger, Janet Orgreave are the chief among them. Their reaction to the repression was in different plains. Anna, Constance and Janet completely capitulate to the repression. But Sophia rebels, she shows vitality and vigour. She was audacious enough to elope with the man she liked and for this she had to bear the brunt of untold miseries in an alien land. First she had to struggle for a sheer existence and then she had to spend in a pension doing the work of a servant, manager and owner by turn for three full decades.

Thereafter Bennett alters his focus on Edwin whose gradual growth from boyhood to manhood and the social impediments on his way and how he strives to liberate himself from the bondages of his environment are touchingly explained.
Here Edwin’s problem is more complex than that of his predecessors. Of course, Sophia wanted to be a teacher, where as Constance and Anna had no special taste for any vocation. But here Edwin is in search of an identity of a young man. His cherished desire is to become an architect, and this idea he got from his surrogate father Edmund Orgreave. But his egotistic father, Darius Clayhanger, turns a deaf ear to his pleas and arrogantly binds him to his own business—running a printing press. All his attempts to pursue a vocational career were mercilessly thwarted until he surrendered to his father’s will. Edwin thought that it would be futile to swim against the uncongenial social currents prevailing in the Five Towns which was tilted in favour of the old than the young.

Even after becoming a seasoned worker, Darius starves him for money. Edwin suppresses all his desires which generally crop up in the mind of a young man. This five Towns suppression is well delineated in a conversation between father and son in chapter fifteen of Clayhanger. Edwin had a taste for music. It was his long felt desire to buy a brass. When he got the club money on its maturity he bought the brass withdrawing a small amount from the total of 50 pounds in his credit. This was enough to incense Darius. He thought that his son might have
made some misappropriation of money which he had entrusted with him. When Darius made a surprise check of the accounts, Edwin understood that his father was strongly suspecting him of misappropriation. He said:

I've drawn my club money, said Edwin, for an instant the old man was at a loss; . . . Darius had made a mistake, and a bad one; but in those days fathers were never wrong; above all they never apologised (CH. . .251)

The sentence 'but in those days fathers were never wrong', clearly shows the attitude existed among the parents in those days. Edwin, the alter ego of Bennett himself, was fighting against such odds. In real life Bennett's father Snosh Bennett behaved despotically and the children had no say at home. His very arrival at home was enough to send shock waves among his children. That was the atmosphere in which Bennett was brought up. Bennett artistically transposes his biographical experiences into his fictional modes. This is the largely indicative of Bennett's capacity to be objective in relation to his own biography. Some such things were done by Charle's Dickens also in his novels. But Bennett's method is rather more objective; therefore more artistic.

If the repression of Edwin was bad, Anna's was worse. She stands as a silent monument of repression. Her plight was more pathetic than that of Edwin. The only difference between Edwin and Anna is that Edwin is ardously seeking
an identity where as Anne capitulates unconditionally.
The more Edwin tries to come out of the Five Towns
morass, the more he gets buried into it. When Edwin
comes into the hold of Hilda he becomes capable of
dislodging himself from the down pulling curse of the
institutional forces of the Five Towns. In the same
manner hymns helps Anne come out of the sun
atmosphere of the Five Towns life. In all probability,
Sennett, as a novelist concentrates on the idea of
creating individuals out of the back trotting soul of
the Five Towns. At the same time Anna is a standard
traditionalist. She says:

She had sucked in with her mother's milk
the profound truth that a woman's life.is always a renunciation, greater or less.
Her's by chance was greater (v.t, 17235)

Anna was thoroughly a Five Towns product. The belief
was inborn in her that a woman was supposed to compro-
mise when the problems relating to her likes and dis-
likes confronted her.

But Sophia's temperament does not allow her to
dance to the tune of the whims and fancies of her parents.
When Mrs. Baines decides to withdraw her daughter from the
school as she thinks that they have had enough schooling
Sophie reacts sharply and vociferously to the utter dis-
may of her mother. All the devils came out, her (Sophia)
person when she came to know that her education had come
to a grinding halt. She cried:
'Do I want to leave school?' Yelled Sophia, stamping. In a moment a hurricane of emotion overwhelmed her, as though that stamping of the foot had released the demons of the storm. Her face was transfigured by an uncontrollable passion. 'You all want to make me miserable!' She shrieked with terrible violence 'And now I can't even go out! You are a horrid, cruel woman, and I hate you! And you can do what you like! Put me in prison if you like! I know you'd be glad if I was dead!' (c.7, r.51)

She wanted to continue her education to become a teacher.

Bennett shows that a live in town's business-class family cannot understand the value and validity of a vocational career. Sophia utters all these out of desperation. What Mrs. Baines errs is that she takes it only as a childish protest of a girl.

Sophia, as a character, does not have any platonic notions about her love towards Scales. She was secretly continuing her love with Scales as that is the only alternative provided to her from the otherwise drab monotonous domestic circumstances of her life. When she became totally frustrated she prefers to run away with Scales. The causes of her frustration are many, the most dominating being the autocratic personality of her mother. Sophia's love towards Scales is a mere venue of escape for her. Thus it is a source of relief. One can never say that Sophia was adolescently indiscreet in turning away with Scales. Her utmost precocious behaviour with Scales before and after they leave for Paris is an evidence of this fact. Her love is real and it is realistically mature.
(vi) Conflict of Social Perspectives

Mrs. Saines fails to understand the profundity of Sophia's protest. It happened because of the existence of chasm between the young and the old. As it happens in any generation, here again Mrs. Saines fails to understand her child though she pretends to be mature with such a knowledge. Though this subject is of universal relevance, Bennett's concern is only with his Five Towns potteries. He is not of the past but of the present. Everyday life never lost its glorious to him, his predecessors, the Romanticists and Victorians, seemed to have been regretting the passing away of the glory and grandeur of the ancient Greece and Rome. But Bennett found an abundant recompense in the day-to-day life of the Five Towns. In all his Five Towns novels Bennett sketches the historical and social background with a considerable skill. A well depicted social evolution we see in these novels. John Lucas' words on The Old Wives' Tale sound genuine here. Lucas says:

For Bennett's novel is not simply about Constance and Sophia; it is about a whole family, its successes and eventual failure and disappearance; and because the Saines family is in trade in Bursky, The Old Wives' Tale is also and inevitably about the Five Towns.

Though the novel, The Old Wives' Tale, is dealing mainly on the two sisters Constance and Sophia, it is a short social history of a complete family spanning for
nearly four decades. The ups and downs of a set of people are precisely and penchantly presented and it touches the people of the five towns far and near.

From the foregoing discussion it may appear that Bennett is a novelist concentrating on the themes of generation gap and generation conflict. Precisely it may be seen that his novels are exclusively domestic novels. But the fact is that Bennett is a concerned and responsible social commentator. He has taken into considerations the economic imbalances, particularly of this art that emerged after the economic depression of the 1880s. He also represents very aptly and faithfully the enterprising spirit of economic innovations coupled with mechanisation and urbanisation. In a sense, Bennett created some real charming characters with certain moving situations around them. That does not mean that he is giving sanction to exclusive individualism, wherein the prime motive of the character is achievement of relative superiorities in one form or the other. At least he does not consider that society as an insitution is an operational field of ego-centrised activities of the individuals. Bennett has a rare loving view of the society. The need of one to the other in the society of Bennett is always animated with the age old Christian concept of charity, christ-like compassion, and love for each other.
Society as such is made up of people for him. When it comes to the question of stressing the relative value, he certainly does not emphasise the importance of machines and the industrialisation over and above human affections. Moreover, the advent of industrialisation, the emergence of economical society and the advent of new sceptics through scientific innovations go to add misery to the people who were already facing poverty and want of place for dignity of labour. Bennett’s prime concerns as a novelist go with human dignity as an affectionate partner in the social group. The culture of the Five Towns with its openness of performance ideally suits his purpose of comprehending the mutual affections amongst the people. The London society, or for that matter any metropolitan society could not have provided a place of feasible operation and existence for his characters. We know well as to what happens to Sophia when she required to adjust with the Paris life-style. In fact, she does not adjust with the metropolitan constraints of the Paris life-style. On the other hand, out of her grit and zeal she creates around herself a social situation in her Paris Pension, which closely resembles the ideal, affectionate society of the Five Towns.
As a writer living in the heart of London, Bennett clearly understands the segregational courses of the age-old human concerns. He was pained at the gross erosion of the perennial human values. In his Five Towns novels he attempted to summarise his own vision of society that subsist on the essential courses of primal human affections and concerns. With this task in mind, Bennett tried to create an imaginary picture of a parallel fictional world so what all he experiences as social warmth and affections in the course of his own life. The parallel fictional world he creates was not a social reality in the 19th and 20th of the 20th century, when exactly he was writing his novels. Also the main historical events of the 20th century like the first world war and the emergence of the international institutional like the League of Nations do not appear to have any creative interest for him. As a result the parallel fictional world that he created in his novels is a matter of the past; and to that extent Bennett is a novelist standing for the simple old time values of the old world. The next chapter is devoted to this parallel world of fictional creation of Arnold Bennett.
1. Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy*

2. Ibid, 1.477.


5. Ibid, 1.5


