CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION

Every great writer is painfully conscious of the presence of evil on earth. The question of human suffering and human dilemma has always spurred the creative faculty of the writer in search of salvation. Every writer worth their salt has, directly or indirectly, prescribed a regimen for the betterment of human lot and the restructuring of the world after the pattern of their heart’s desire. Every writer, therefore, consciously or unconsciously, desires to restore society to some “normal” moral order.

Twentieth century, the century of political, intellectual, moral and spiritual crises, has moved almost all writers to translate the all-pervasive social chaos into the mimetic texture of art. This perhaps is the reason why the writers, out of their concern for the lack of humanity in man, saw life as “ferocious and sinister”\(^1\) to a degree that had never been imagined before. The life of modern man “a cesspool full of barbed wire”\(^2\) was passing through rough times, perhaps the roughest that had ever been witnessed. This suffocating atmosphere compelled Eliot to utter that all enlarging emotions have been reduced to “a heap of broken images”\(^3\), W. B. Yeats to lament that “the centre cannot hold”\(^4\) and George Orwell to moan,
“we live in a shrinking world”\textsuperscript{5}.

The writers of 1920’s came on the scene with new fangled ideas for the betterment of society. E.M. Forster was convinced that wisdom of the heart could ensure moral and spiritual progress in society. The undeveloped heart, he thought, prevented him from understanding the human predicament. His philosophy has its origin in the liberal tradition he belonged to. Huxley, a writer of realistic sensibility, traced the solution of human predicament to eastern mysticism - particularly Buddhism. The force that can enable what Eliot calls the “hooded horde” to wriggle out of this impasse is Buddhism. Quite opposite is the view of D.H. Lawrence, who thinks that spiritual constipation of wastelanders is due to cerebral consciousness of the lost instinctive awareness. He says, “I write because I want folk - English folk to alter and have more sense”\textsuperscript{6}.

One remarkable thing about the writers of the 1920’s is that they chose to remain resolutely outside the political arena and refused to devote their talent to propagandist ends. Their attention was mostly concentrated on exploring the interior region, the region of the mind and the spirit, but Orwell went against the current of the gay 1920’s. A new movement in literature was launched during this decade. It
owed its origin to a major political and social upheaval. Orwell’s words make us familiar with the characteristics of the period:

We live in a time when political passions run high, channels of free expression are dwindling, and organized lying exists on a scale never before known. For plugging the holes in history the pamphlet is the ideal form.

The period of 1930’s in literary history – “a world choked everywhere with suffering, cruelty and exploitation” is identified as the “political decade”. It was the decade of totalitarianism in Russia, Germany and Italy. It was an era of concentration camps, secret police and “framed” political trials and militancy. Communism, Nazism and Fascism rose triumphantly. Consequently, democratic values suffered a setback. The Rule of Law was replaced by the Role of Leader and his “torture chambers”. It was almost impossible to ignore these public and political realities, or to live wholly a private life and play the role of an indifferent artist. Civilization was imperilled and Olympian detachment was regarded as an act of treachery. The writer was morally obliged to face the unpleasant world and to turn pure art into propaganda. Two more shocks jolted the conscience of the writers. The first terrible blow was the defeat of Spanish Government which was followed by the Munich and Hitler-Soviet
Pacts. The writers were impaired emotionally. Stephen Spender and George Orwell were amongst the few who could keep their seriousness and zeal intact. George Orwell, who found himself a witness to the "invasion of literature by politics" confessed,

It seems to me nonsense, in a period like our own, to think that one can avoid writing of such subjects (as Totalitarianism vs. Democratic Socialism). Everyone writes of them in one guise or another. It is simply a question of which side one takes and what approach one follows. And the more one is conscious of one's political bias, the more chance one has of acting politically without sacrificing one's aesthetic and intellectual integrity.

George Orwell, "the wintry conscience of a generation, which in the 1930's had heard the call to the rash assumption of political faith," belonged to the group of writers like Andre Gide, Andre Malraux, Silone, Stephen Spender, Koestler, Sartre, Camus - representatives of what he himself described in his essay on Koestler in 1944, as "the special class of literature that has arisen out of the European political struggle since the rise of Fascism". It is thus clear that members belonging to the new writing could no longer confine their attention and pursuit to the world within, for the pull of the world without was growing irresistible. "We have", says Orwell, "developed a sort of compunction which our
grandfathers did not have, an awareness of the enormous injustice and misery of the world and a guilt-stricken feeling that one ought to be doing something about it." Orwell was aware that to rely on the self alone by locking oneself in an ivory tower and to disregard the world outside was in the end destructive of the self; you can not ignore Hitler, Mussolini, unemployment, aeroplane and the radio; you can only pretend to do so; which means lopping off a large chunk of your consciousness. The writers of 1930’s were, therefore, quite different from their immediate ancestors. To quote Connolly, this movement could be differentiated from everything that had gone before by its social conscience, its leaders being both morally aware of the unjust system on which the individualism of their predecessors rested, and economically aware of the harder times ahead. They differed further in that, once admitting their social conscience, they tried to act on it. They wrote to serve the cause of socialism at home and anti-Fascism abroad. They not only wrote but worked and fought and died for this and this makes them a different animal from the writers of the twenties who had come through the last war, and left all their illusions of violence behind it.

Orwell himself writes about the purpose of the writers of 1930’s:

... quite suddenly, in the years 1930 – 35, something happens. A group of writers, Auden
and Spender and the rest of them, has made its appearance, and although technically these writers owe something to their predecessors, their tendency is entirely different. Suddenly we have got out of the twilight of the gods into a sort of Boy Scout atmosphere of bare knees and community singing. The typical literary man ceases to be a cultured expatriate with a leaning towards communism. If the keynote of the writers of the twenties is 'tragic sense of life', the keynote of the new writer is 'serious purpose'.

The "serious purpose" of Orwell and his contemporaries was to face the situation and he held a belief that a writer should develop the power of facing unpleasant facts. This feeling finds an echo in his letter to Cyril Connolly in 1938—"every thing one writes now is overshadowed by this ghastly feeling that we are rushing towards a precipice and though we should not actually prevent ourselves or anyone else from going over, we must put up some sort of fight". This idea of fighting against the political abuses of the times thus made him a political satirist. He believed that "to accept civilization as it is, without any attitude of correcting the vices, practically means accepting decay". Orwell's world more often seems to be the universe of Murphy's Law: if things can go wrong, they will go wrong and at the worst possible time. It is for this serious purpose that he turned to be a writer of political
commitment. Otherwise, he might have written “ornate or merely descriptive books with purple passages, sentence without meaning, decorative adjectives and humbug generally”. He thus emerged as a political satirist, “a necessary man” with “reactionary tendency”.

David Wykes has compared him with Solzhenitsyn:

Orwell's work, like Solzhenitsyn's, makes us aware that if we are free to put aside the problem of political writing as art, then that is simply our good fortune. In Orwell's lifetime, the first half of this century, the problem forced itself on the writer, the critic and the reader. If it has ceased to do so, the respite is likely to be brief, and Orwell's case - the story of his whole life and career, not just a couple of his books - will be urgently needed again. He is a necessary man.

Satirists work on the assumption that experience can be sorted into black and white. This assumption may be a genuine belief that experience does take such form, or it may be a guise adopted by the satirist for analytical purposes, but in either case the satirist's concern is mainly with the black in experience, that is with vice, folly, blind ignorance and stupidity. The satirist predicts that such darkness is socially dominant and focuses chiefly on the contemporary. He may have any of several starting points; the ethico-theological, the psychological or the social. But whatever his departure point and basis for analysis, the satirist presents
himself as concerned to point out those social evils which should be extirpated. His role, then, is opposite to that of the poet of praise, who creates models of goodness, transforming persons into examples of what a society can and should aspire to. George Parfitt has observed that "the satirist concentrates upon that in society which corrupts it and creates models of what should not exist in any healthy society".20

The nicest and the most delicate touches of satire consist in fine raillery. A good satirist makes a man appear a fool, a blockhead or a knave without using any of those opprobrious terms. A witty man is tickled while he is hurt in this manner, and a fool doesn't feel it. There is a great difference between the slovenly butchering of a man and the fineness of a stroke that separates the head from the body. The role of a great satirist, as it were, is to separate the head from the body with a fineness of stroke. The remarkable thing about the satirist is that he perhaps, means to hurt no particular man, least of all any innocent person. He names nobody, but aims at the universal. His aim is to lash vice and folly, to correct manners, to uphold morality. Hence the satirist's special power and opportunity, in fact his duty - which he performs with an obvious gusto-is to maintain justice as a tragic writer maintains tragic justice in punishing by death. In comic and satiric justice mean
vices and folly which are prevalent in the satirist's age are
punished by scornful ridicule. M.H. Abrams maintains that

Satire is the literary art of diminishing a subject
by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it
attitudes of amusement, contempt, indignation, or
scorn. It differs from the comic in that comedy
evokes laughter as an end in itself, while satire
"derides"; that is, it uses laughter as a weapon,
and against a butt existing outside the work
itself. That butt may be an individual (in
personal satire), or a type of person, a class, an
institution, a nation, or even (as in Rochester's A
Satyr against Mankind and much of Swift's
Gulliver's Travels, Book IV) the whole race of
man.21

Satire has a long history, longer than the history of English
Literature. The classical masters of satire - Persius, Horace and
Juvenal profoundly influenced the sensibility of the English writers.
What is common among all satirists ranging from the classical
period to the modern age is that they attempt to correct the vices
either of mankind or of society. Horace mocks at mankind in a jovial
manner, Persius indignantly lashes out at mankind, while Juvenal
hates and despises mankind. What binds them together is their spirit
of ridiculing people into correction. At the beginning of English
satire the theme was mostly non-political, but predominantly
ecclesiastical. In the reign of Edward I, Land of Cokagne ridiculed
the gluttony and licentiousness of the monks. They and the nuns live together. Their very dwellings are made of food, and the streams carry to them abundance of liquors more palatable and less innocent than water. In *Fabliau Damesiriz*, we have satire on the church combined with the covetousness of king’s ministers or the burden of taxation which leads one rhymer to complain that “ever the further peni mot to the kyng”. The frequency with which political note is sounded is significant. Obviously enough, the satirist has waged a long and untiring battle for popular rights and, as the battle was fought with greater determination in England than elsewhere, it is natural that the prevalence of political theme should be one of the characteristics of English satire. Infact one of the poems written during the reign of King Edward II includes the whole gamut of abuses condemning not only the church but also every rung of the upper and middle classes. In Chaucer and Langland we find that satire takes a different turn. They have mostly satirised the greed of monks and the frailty of women. Yet Lagland’s political concern is unmistakable. Hugh Walker has summed up the political judgement of Langland in the following words:

Langland’s political judgments are most enlightened. He is no believer in the unlimited and irresponsible power of kings, and M. Jusserand has pointed out that he is the only
literary person of his time who understood the importance of Parliament. Yet he was penetrating enough to understand its limitations also, at least in his day, and he used the fable of belling the cat to satirise those who made excessive claims for it.23

No class escapes the lash of Langland, but there are three subjects on which he especially enlarges-the church, the law and the trade. Langland has very plainly charged the men of law with corruption and want of conscience. Richard the Redless is also a political satire. The misgovernance of Richard and the misdeeds of his courtiers are the target here.

Chaucer, contemporary of Langland, was mostly non-political. He himself was a government servant. So perhaps he saw no reason to attack the abuses in the government machinery. What he hated most was the lack of morality in the men of religion and this he did attack - not bitterly or savagely as Milton might have done, but simply by laughing at it. In The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales we are introduced to no fewer than seven characters belonging to the Church, and only one of them, the poor country Parson, is truly good and spiritual. The rest are either worldly, like the Prioress and the Monk, or actually criminal, like the Summoner (an official who summoned people to court) and the Pardoner (a man who sold
pards for sins on behalf of the Church). Even these, however, are described in a good-tempered way; Chaucer does not induce us to hate them, but to laugh at them. It might be argued that in the end this sort of lighthearted satire is more effective than the fierce indignation of Juvenal or the bitterness and anger of Swift. Throughout the medieval English Literature, satire on church, monks and women is common and satire on politics remains implicit. In the Age of Reformation we have some political satire coupled with ecclesiastical satire. *The Dreme* of Sir David Lyndsay (1490 - 1555) may be cited as an example. Both the church and the state are criticised. Here covetousness, lust, ambition and neglect of duty by the courtiers have been satirised.

Throughout the fifteenth century, both English and Scottish Chaucerians show the influence of Langland and Chaucer. Dunbar, among the Scottish Chaucerians, carries forward the tradition of Langland. His satire on Edinburgh consists in the ruthless exposure of the dirty conditions of the city. In his *Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins* we come across boisterous ridicule and bantering invective.

During the Elizabethan age a number of satirists appeared on the scene and cultivated satire with vigorous energy. Prominent among them were Gascoigne, Spenser, Ben Jonson and Thomas Nash.
Gascoigne's "The Steel Glass" was the first regular verse satire with "monotonous pause" and "excess of alliteration" which provided inspiration to Spenser and Ben Jonson. Gascoigne is a good moralist, if not a great poet:

Art thou a craftsman? Take these to thine art, and cast off sloth, which loitreteth in the campes. Art thou a ploughman pressed for a shift? Then learn to clout thine old cast cobbled shoes, And rather bide at home with barley bread than learn to spoil, as the hast seen some do.²⁴

The echoes of Gascoigne can be heard in Spenser's *Mother Hubbard's Tale* and *Colin Clout Comes Home Again*. These books severely lash out at the intrigues, jealousies, false promises prevailing in the court of Queen Elizabeth. Thomas Nash's *Jack Wilton or The Unfortunate Travel* ridicules corruption, intrigue, wickedness, vice, hypocrisy, etc., prevalent in all the sections of society during the Elizabethan era. In the field of drama, Ben Jonson appeared as a towering figure. His satires pillorise the defects and foibles prevailing in the society of his times and also the leading literary personalities of the age. "Volpone" is a satire directed against humanity at large and cupidity and avarice of human beings in particular. For Jonson satire is far more than a literary fashion. It is a way of analyzing society. He tends to be a
symbol of extreme optimism and pessimism and his poems show various combinations of these impulses, from the conditioned optimism of "To Penshurst", to the more sombre discussion of "Epistle to Katherine Lady Aubigny".

Satiric spirit in the literary works took a wider range in the last decade of the sixteenth and the opening of the seventeenth century. This was an age of exhaustion of the Renaissance spirit, religious and political controversies, uncertainty as regards the accession to the throne, the uncouthness and unpopularity of James I, his extravagance and immorality, the clash between the old and the new philosophies. All these contributed to a growing sense of disillusionment and defeat in almost all writers. Satire had therefore its heyday in the seventeenth century. Joseph Hall (1574 - 1656), John Marston (1575 - 1634), George Wither (1588 - 1667) and John Donne (1573 - 1631) appeared on the scene. Joseph Hall's *Vergidemiarum* is an attack on the extravagance and foppishness of courtiers. He was bold enough to satirise even the writers who stood head and shoulders above him. He mocked at the conceits of the sonneteers and condemned grandiloquence that Marlowe had introduced in his drama.

The other notable, though not much important satirist, was John
Marston. He assumes to some extent the tone of Juvenal. He is very much abusive and obscene in his satire. Then there is John Donne who exposed the wretchedness of courtiers, magistrates and litigators. He expressed the fury of his heart against the injustice and corruption of the age in several of his verses.

Donne was a man endowed with original talent and he refused to be a slavish imitator of Horace and Juvenal. He struck a path of his own and expressed his satirical view about women and love in verses wherein the laws of metre and rhyme were flagrantly violated. His five early satires are marked with force of thought and pungent wit. They have greater sincerity and reality than Hall's satires.

Eighteenth century, the golden age of political satire in English literature, took the form of personal attack, political bantering and religious condemnation during the Restoration period. Personal satire based on malice, political satire rooted in partisanship and prejudice, religious satire founded on principles of hatred were attempted successfully by the satirists of this age. The satires of Dryden are the most significant of the Restoration satires. His satires were personal, political and religious and he achieved unrivalled success in this art. In his first political satire Absalom
and Achitophel, Dryden stood as the champion of monarchy and attacked the Earl of Shaftesbury, the Duke of Buckingham and others who were setting up a rival candidate for the throne. Lord Shaftesbury (Achitophel in the poem) was trying to persuade parliament, against the wish of Charles II, to prevent the Duke of York from succeeding to the crown on the grounds that he was a Catholic. Shaftesbury's group wanted to ensure that the next king would be Charles's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth (Absalom in the poem). Dryden's purpose was to persuade the reading public that Shaftesbury and his friends were not to be trusted. Disguising his characters under Old Testament names, he drew a clever parallel between the situation of Charles II and that of King David, distressed by rebellion of his son Absalom.

Dryden's next satire, The Medal also aims at Shaftesbury, the evil-counsellor of the Duke of Monomouth. It is a personal satire at the instance of the king. But The Medal has a political background. Mac Flecknoe is pure lampoon and is marked by coarseness and personal spite. Shadwell, the whig poet has been scathingly satirised for personal animosity. "The Hind and the Panther" is a philosophical poem about religion, but in part it is also satirical. Dryden's satire therefore covers a wider range which includes politics, personal animosity and religion.
In Pope’s works, satire is directed against individuals of no particular importance and in doing so Pope gives undeserved importance to men who would otherwise have been forgotten. Pope's long satirical poem, “The Dunciad” for example, is a brilliant attack in epic style on the poet Colley Cibber together with several other writers of even lesser importance. His “Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot” and his various “Imitations of Horace” are equally brilliant but equally personal and even trivial in their choice of subject. In short when we think of Pope as a great satirist we admire his literary skill and technical mastery rather than his moral purpose. But at the same time, Pope’s reputation as a satirist does not depend entirely on the sort of personal attack we have discussed. His Rape of the Lock is a serious social criticism. The society we are shown is rich, fashionable and idle - the smart London society of Pope’s time with the court at its centre. Politics, in broader perspective, is off the satirical point of Pope.

Another master of satire, Swift is more often general than personal. There is no other great English writer in whom the satiric element is so predominant as it is in Swift. His three principal works, The Battle of the Books, A Tale of a Tub and Gulliver’s Travels, are all satires on ancient/modern controversy, on religion and on human nature respectively. His satire is generally tinged with irony, pure
and simple. The general standpoint is revealed in his one sentence—"I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas". But the fact is that Swift is not different from other satirists. Under the thin veneer of his hatred, there lurks love for mankind. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is more important than *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books*. Here Swift's satire has reached its zenith. The powerful attack against man's wickedness and stupidity is scathing - something hitherto unheard of. It is in a way an anti-utopia, influencing almost all succeeding satirists like Butler, Huxley and Orwell.

The whole history of satire in English literature - verse, drama, prose, fiction whether personal or general, from the middle ages to twentieth century, may be seen as an attempt on the past satirists to correct the vices of society. I. R.F. Gordon observes that "the satirist confronts man with his own nakedness and with his own tenuous grasp on existence. He uses his pen partly as a weapon to attack people with and partly as a scalpel with which to lay them open".  

With the passage of time satire began to be more general than personal. Before the advent of the twentieth century there was no purely political satire because society and polity were not so
politically complex. The twentieth century satire is directed against lopsided growth of human mind, as in Eliot’s poems against science, in Huxley’s *Brave New World* against both politics and science, and in Orwell’s *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* against totalitarianism. The Victorian ideals have also been subjected to the ridicule of satirists like Bernard Shaw. Question, Examine, Test, - these are the watchwords of Shaw’s and his plays satirically expose the vices and shortcomings of modern society. In *The Apple Cart* he has exposed the hollowness of the democratic form of government. George Gissing exposed the squalid and unhealthy slum conditions in which people lived; he also worked for social reform through his *Thyraze* and *New Grub Street*. The post First and Second World War writers, whether poets or novelists, are basically satirical in their spirit. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* is a satire on spiritual and moral crisis caused by emotional starvation. H.G. Well’s *The Shape of Things to Come* is a satire on the misuse of science and technology by governments. William Steinhoff says that “Orwell’s work contains scarcely a topic related to politics and social systems which cannot be found in Wells’ books”.

In the warfare of science against superstition the satirist has played a significant role. Chaucer and Ben Jonson riddled the alchemist with crossfire of their own jargon. Nash and Swift
hounded astrologers into premature graves. Browning's *Sludge the Medium* annihilated the spiritualist, and the rabble of occultists, numerologists, who had mushroomed at the time.

So the twentieth century may justly be regarded as the age of political satire. Yet, no writer is at the same time as great a political satirist with definite political ideas as Orwell. His "Writers and Leviathan" and "Inside the Whale" establish him as a writer of political commitment because his age was dominated by politics as the fourth century was dominated by theology. It is for the transmutations of his political ideas into great works of art that he will be remembered for ages to come. His works are unparalleled in the whole history of political satire. He has satirised no individual, no religion out of any personal bias; he has satirised the very political system - imperialism, fascism, capitalism, socialism and communism out of an intense concern for diluting the power of evil in the world of politics, and it is an accepted fact that satire cannot rise to its highest point unless it has a great theme. He is unlike his friend Arthur Koestler who is also an anti-totalitarian but who abandoned political writing in the 1950's and pursued instead his interests in science, philosophy and parapsychology. Orwell also disagrees with Henry Miller who refused to attach any importance to politics and to assign himself any political responsibility.
So George Orwell stands apart from his peers although he represents his age with all its myriad hues and colours. Never since the revolutionary writers of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century had any writer used his writings to express his socio-political views and commitment without letting them become mere propaganda. It is in this context that a study of Orwell’s works that aims to analyse his themes against the background of his technique is still relevant. In the present thesis an attempt shall be made to relate Orwell’s writings with his experiences and to make an ontological study of his works, particularly with reference to the elements of satire and irony.
REFERENCES:


12. CEJL, Vol.3, 271
17. CEJL, Vol. 1, 548.
24. Ibid, 63
25. Ibid, 185