Chapter VI

Conclusion
H.D.Traill, writing in 1884 on Coleridge, was not sure, how lasting would be the influence of ‘the Highgate oracles’, but he had no doubt ‘as to the extent of his influence’ over Maurice and concluded, “we may justly credit Coleridge’s discourse with having exercised a real if only a transitory directive effect upon nineteenth century thought”. More than hundred years after Traill’s pronouncement, we come to conclude, through our analysis of the discourse of Maurice, Mill, and Carlyle, which we have collectively called the ‘early nineteenth century critical discourse’, that ‘the directive effect’ was not transitory after all. The ‘early nineteenth century discourse’, we have said, charted a third course, alternative to both the utilitarian discourse, and to the continental discourse of militant class struggle, associated later with Marxism. This positive middle path of reconciliation, which in Halevy’s words, ‘sought by co-operation to reconcile not only Christianity and Socialism, but Socialism and freedom’, has been mutatis mutandis, the ruling ideology of the world now. Hence, I have found my study, however incompetently carried out, relevant to us in India at this moment.

I have tried to establish a cohesiveness in the writings of this group, though they carried on a criticism of each other, in a sort of
discourse unto themselves, but their over-all effect was a directive of
change. Carlyle wrote in one of his early essays:

The thinking minds of all nations call for change. There is a
deep-lying struggle in the whole fabric of society; a boundless,
grinding collision of the New with the Old.\(^3\)

The whole emphasis of the articulators of the discourse was to
guide this inevitable process of change to a healthy direction. Carlyle’s
hero of *Sartor Resartus* assigned the task to himself, of bringing
semblance of order out of chaos: “They were the leaders of men, the
heroes”;\(^4\) who were up to transform the passive world order into a new
one. This vision of change was occasionally dubbed as utopian or even
mystical, as Maurice was often called a mystic, and even Carlyle thought
of Mill as a mystic, and mysticism in those days was a term for muddle.
Mill once wrote to Carlyle:

“Is not the distinction between mysticism, the mysticism
which is of Truth, and mere dreamery, or the institution of
imaginations for realities, exactly this, that mysticism may be
‘translated into logic’?"\(^5\)

Moreover, he added ... “If I have any vocation I think it is exactly
this to translate the mysticism of others into the language of argument”,
and he did this, by building bridge between mysticism and logic, to
envision the futurity of labour. The feud between capital and labour
which characterizes the industrial civilization needs to be overcome.
Society needs to be transformed, from a situation of conflict where
different classes pursue opposed interests, to a situation of friendly rivalry, in the pursuit of good common to all; and this could be done only by the elevation of the dignity of labour. Hence Carlyle's ever insistent assertion was 'Work is Worship'\(^6\). We have tried to trace these ideas in the novels of Mrs. Gaskell, Charles Kingsley and Disraeli.

Mill's essay on 'Civilisation' sets a blueprint of a society which can heal all sectarian differences, which will be 'Catholic instead of sectarian, favourable instead of hostile to freedom of thought and the progress of human mind'\(^7\). Here he illustrates his views by a long quotation from Maurice's novel 'Eustace Conway'. In 1834, just after the publication of Maurice's novel, Mill promised to send a copy to Carlyle, who was then in Scotland, saying:

... but a much more remarkable production than anything of mine is a novel which has lately appeared, entitled *Eustace Conway* written by a far superior man.\(^8\)

Mill was ever respectful to Maurice, and so was Carlyle though they thought that Maurice was wasting his talent by devoting his whole energy and talent to the Church. He wrote to Maurice in 1865 "I never voluntarily leave unread any of your writings...".\(^9\) Maurice's work was in theology, but the trend of his thought was liberal. For Maurice the Church can not be separated from the society, nor theology from literature. "Man's experience of God is of a piece with the rest of his experience"\(^10\). Hence, he never felt that by entering the Church he had to renounce the world. Maurice felt that the Romantic movement in
poetry had brought a great change in human consciousness and perception and as such the traditional language of the Church needed alteration. He wrote:

From about the middle of the last century, we may trace the commencement of a poetry which had a much more direct and substantive reference to the outward universe than that of the earlier periods.¹¹

Maurice thus connected the development of the literary thought in the nineteenth century with that of theology. This led to the discarding of the ‘artificial and conventional language’ of the earlier periods. Those who desired something more living and permanent than the modes of a particular generation, took refuge in nature, and nature itself was conquered from the natural philosopher and sympathies had been discovered between the beholder and the objects beheld, as in Wordsworth’s famous line, ‘my heart leaps up when I see a rainbow in the sky.’ This was not an occasional emotion for the poet, but something which he had felt in his childhood, as well as when he was a man. What is implied is that it is a law of life - “the law of imagination is a law of fellowship or inter-communion with nature”¹². Thus in Maurice’s thinking, social radicalism, theology and literature are all woven into a seamless fabric.

‘Fellowship’ is the keyword which unites all Maurice’s activities. To create true fellowship in religion, the Church must overcome all sectarianism. Wholeness is the prerogative of the Church, the Anglican
Church, which was, to Maurice, the true Catholic Church, which could be the universal spiritual society including all mankind, a conviction which Maurice held all his life. His origination of the Christian Socialist Movement and his founding of the Working Men’s College were all of a piece with his theology. Mrs. Gaskell and Charles Kingsley were greatly indebted to Maurice’s vision of life. We have also hinted that Disraeli could not have been ignorant of Maurice’s writings.

One among the articulators of the early nineteenth century critical discourse, whose influence among the novelists of the period was most pervasive, was Carlyle. Carlyle provided not only a sense of urgency to the condition of England debate, he also created a language adequate to express the anxiety of the age. Mrs. Gaskell began *Mary Barton* with an epigraph from Carlyle. Kingsley’s *Alton Locke* was redolent with Carlyle’s words, images, and even with his personality, as presented in the character of Sandy Mackaye. Disraeli felt so indebted to Carlyle that after becoming the Prime Minister of England, he offered Carlyle a baronetcy, the Grand Cross of the Bath and a literary pension, which of course Carlyle politely declined. Carlyle’s reply to Disraeli speaks not only of his own integrity, but embodies the vision and commitment of the milieu, which united him with the other articulators. Expressing his gratefulness to the Prime Minister, he added that

“titles of honours are, in all degrees of them, out of keeping with the tenure of my own poor existence hitherto in this epoch of the world, and would be an encumbrance, not a
Neither Mill nor Maurice could be persuaded to accept any honour or title of preferment. Maurice used to say that he liked to live in the periphery with the flock than in the centre of the fold. All these writers were earnest seekers after truth and practised what they preached and set a model of excellence in freedom of thought which inspired all who came to know them. So, the critical discourse on the signs of the times that they addressed was not any affirmation of a system but an attempt to rouse their audience to apprehend their experience of the world with feelings and not simply with the mechanical reasoning. Even Mill who considered that it was his vocation to be a logician could write on Christian morality in such a manner as to move a person like Charles Kingsley; even Carlyle who could callously refer to the West Indian Negro or to the distressed needle women in his "Latter-Day Pamphlets", did in his early writings, show great ability to rouse his audience to sympathy with the suffering humanity.

In the Post-Romantic Victorian period, the word sympathy gained a great currency in the critical vocabulary. Maurice identified the law of imagination with ‘this law of sympathy’ and affirmed that without it, ‘life is an unintelligible blank’

If we look at the plot and character of the major novels of the 1840s, notably those of Mrs. Gaskell, this generation of sympathy across class-barriers was considered to be the principal channel for a social change. In a review of Tennyson’s poems, one leading Victorian critic,
William Johnson Fox, quoted from Adam Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) to define the nature of sympathy. Smith said that we could not test the moral validity of anything except ‘by changing places in fancy’ with the person we are judging, to enter, as it were, into his body and become, in some measure, the same person with him. According to Adam Smith,

*The morality of a society will be created* by a series of *delicately reciprocal acts of imagination* in which each person is able to call up an ‘analogous emotion’ in response to the feeling of another and is therefore able to check both his companion’s conduct and his own. 16*(emphasis added).*

In the early nineteenth century discourse, whether in the presentation of Maurice, Mill and Carlyle, or in the narrative discourse of Mrs. Gaskell, Kingsley and Disraeli, the same mode of creating sympathy across the human barrier has been endorsed. A universal society has to be created, not through the perpetuation of conflict, but through reconciliation and understanding, developed by ‘deliberately reciprocal acts of imagination’. Illustrations may be drawn from *Mary Barton*. John Barton says at one stage: “I think one time I could even have loved the masters if they have letten me” 17. The narrative sets the direction to overcome the alienation to make this communication possible between the employer and the working class leaders. The techniques of the novel endorse the ends set by the discourse.

In one of her letters, Mrs. Gaskell writes that she was asked by
her publisher to write about benevolence and charity, but she says that she can not write about 'virtues to order',18 charity and benevolence in her novels arise out of life itself, naturally and spontaneously. At the end of the novel when an aggrieved and angry Mr. Carson visits Barton’s house “he could not hate” his opponent “with the vehemence of hatred as he had felt ... something of pity would steal in for the poor, wasted skeleton of a man, the smitten creature, who had told him of his sin, and implored his pardon that night” 19

The militant Chartist leader in Alton Locke, who emigrated to America, wanted to return to England to see the fulfilment of his hope in the fraternal union of all classes, which, he says, “is slowly though surely spreading in my motherland”.20 Disraeli’s hero Coningsby’s hope was similarly centred in the mutual understanding and sympathy among the classes and he says—

“let me see property acknowledging, as in old days of faith, that labour is his twin brother, and that the essence of all tenure is the performance of duty: let results such as these be brought about, and let me participate, however feebly, in the great fulfilment...”21

My principal interest in this study has been to draw attention to this tradition of thought which developed in England in the early nineteenth century, causing a shift from utility to sympathy, from conflict to reconciliation, and this gave a direction to the society, towards which, the whole world seems to be veering now.