PREFACE

The twenty first century world’s vision incorporates the ideals of holism, pluralism and universalism. We are experiencing the major societal transformation from the industrial machine age to the post-industrial information/ knowledge age. These changes and transformations are re-shaping our thinking and recasting the way we view ourselves, the systems of which we are part, the environment in which we live, and the way we view the world.

Literary criticism which started at an early stage as an activity simultaneous and dependent on literary creation, has traversed a long way since the time of Plato. Literary theory is a mode or the philosophy of the interpretation of literature.

Since artistic creation and appreciation are the twin tendencies which go together, it is imperative to mention that postmodern literary theory has also assumed a new form where one sees how meaning emerges in all cultural practices which include all art forms; films, literature, sports, fashion, architecture etc. Theory today is the study of the production of meaning in texts and the reception of meaning. It is not abstract speculation in abstract language rather it is praxis – ‘Praxis’ may refer to a process by which a theory is implemented and realized. It may also refer to the act of practising ideas. Aristotle believed that there were three basic activities – theories, poises and praxis which corresponded to three dimensions of knowledge theoretical with truth as its goal, poetical with production as its end goal and practical with its end goal as action. The objectives of theory today are to analyze and reflect on
the interpretative strategies applied to texts. The term text has also acquired various new dimensions as by text we now mean any form of representation, from fiction to film and can also mean Google Search’s opening menu. One of the conspicuous developments in postmodern literary studies is that most of the theories have emerged from areas other than humanities and have implications beyond literature itself bringing respite to the intellectuals for whom the compartmentalization of knowledge and specifically the gulf between science and humanities are of great concern.

The emergence of systems thinking and systems philosophy based on the notion of holism in 1950s corresponded with the postmodernist rejection of “reductionism” and its incredulity for static grand-meta narrative.

The notion of emergence and complexity are inextricably tied together. Many systems of interest to humans are complex systems. Systems Science offers a variety of transdisciplinary theories which can be applied on a variety of systems. The thesis discusses the following theories and also presents their applicational case studies taking a variety of texts.

The thesis is divided into six chapters dealing with complexity of various kinds, at different levels, in different forms of literature.

The first chapter entitled “Postmodernism, Complexity and Emergentism: A Historical Perspective” maps out and analyzes some key movements to interrogate the key shifts in
theory, culture and literature to understand the drift from “Modernism” to “Postmodernism”.

The chapter deals with the notion of postmodernity, complexity and emergentism in two sections.

The first section of the chapter defines postmodernism as a tendency, as a movement, which has become a global phenomenon influencing every realm of human endeavor. It also traces the genesis of postmodernism to some crucial developments in philosophy, science and Linguistics such as Nietzschean philosophy, Albert Einstein’s theory of Relativity, Werner Heisenberg’s Uncertainty principle, Quantum mechanics etc. which very much suited and reinforced the postmodern world –view defined by probabilities rather than absolutes.

The second section of the chapter showcases the relationship between complexity, postmodernism and emergentism in general and with special reference to literature. This section contains a detailed discussion on Systems Thinking and Systems Theory which is a meta discipline and how it unites various scattered disciplines. The chapter gives sufficient space to the discussion of various systems theories and approaches viz., Generalized Physical Systems Theory, Interpretive Structural Modelling and Nominal Group Technique, Graph Theoretic Field Modelling. The chapter also presents the salient features of Quantum Theory.

The second chapter entitled “Quest for Universal Narrative: Generalized Physical Systems Theory Modelling of The Bhagavadgita and The Waste land” has two sections. The first section subtitled “Untying the Spiral Knot: A Case Study of The Waste Land” presents a detailed analysis of the poetic system The Waste Land in the light of Generalized Physical Systems Theory Modelling. The section also focuses on how man was disturbed by the sense of futility
in the post war world. The chapter also locates *The Wasteland* within the Psycho-Hermeneutical perspective and discusses the highest level of spiritual consciousness with reference to Oriental Religion of Saints (Radhasoami Faith).

The second section entitled “*The Bhagavadgita as a Narrative of Eternal Consciousness: A Holistic Systems Perspective*” locates *The Bhagavadgita* within Systems framework and presents it as a Grand System of Thought which is an embodiment of psychological, scientific, aesthetic, Esoteric and quantum systems, using Generalized Physical Systems Theory Modelling. Since there is analysis of *The Bhagavadgita* from holistic systems perspective, the chapter also presents the application of some quantum theory principles in the study of *The Bhagavadgita* and shows how by blending Quantum Theory with Systems Theory we can move towards deeper holism and deal with both ambiguity and complexity. The chapter also deals with the complex notion of consciousness and concretizes various levels of consciousness as depicted in *The Bhagavadgita*. The Chapter also depicts *The Bhagavadgita* as an embodiment of ‘spiritual intelligence’ and also discusses *The Bhagavadgita* from the perspective of the Oriental Religion of Saints (Radhasoami Faith).

The third chapter entitled “*Fears of Entropy and Futility: A Case Study of Arcadia and Waiting for Godot*” has two sections. The first section entitled “*Complexity and Contextuality in Waiting for Godot: A Case Study*”, presents an analysis of Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* from Systems perspective and studies various systems properties.
This section presents a study of the dramatic system from the perspective of Generalized Physical Systems theory model blended with Quantum Field Graph Modelling. The dramatic system *Waiting for Godot* is highly contextual, complex and observer/reader dependent and thus lies at the High-end of the complexity scale.

The section adopts holistic systems methodology and puts forth the message of Beckett which has been presented in a disoriented style. The section discusses the system as various sub-systems viz. political, psychological, philosophical, Ethical, and Christian. The chapter also analyses the dramatic system from the perspective of levels of consciousness.

The second section subtitled “*Science as Metaphor for Human Behavior: A Study in Arcadia*” shows how through the use of some purposeful anachronism, Tom Stoppard uses his 1993 play *Arcadia* to explore the effects on man’s psyche of the transition from Newton’s laws of Thermodynamics and from Thermodynamics to Chaos theory. The chapter discusses how second law of thermodynamics, Quantum Mechanics serve as useful metaphors for human behavior. The chapter shows the complex thematic patterns, the relationship among various elements in the dramatic system using Physical Systems Theory Modelling.

The fourth chapter entitled “*Mirror up to Nature*: A Study of *A Suitable Boy* and *The Razor’s Edge*” has two sections.

The first section further subtitled “*Graph Theoretic Field Modelling of Vikram Seth’s A Suitable Boy*”, is a 1474 page fictional system set in post-independence, post-Partition India. A close study reveals that the system has nineteen sub-systems and in each sub-system further
sub- sub systems have been traced. This fictional system has the canvass of an epic system. The chapter throws light on how various sub–systems and sub- sub systems dealing with various social, political and cultural issues as Hindu- Muslim strife, abolition of the Zamindari system, land reforms, empowerment of women together create the complete structured systems.

Using The Graph Theoretic Field Modelling, the large number of characters/ elements, 30 major characters and an array of supporting characters, their influence on one another is shown. Through various graph theoretic field models the relationship between characters and also the relationship between characters and events is shown. The discussion also throws light on interdependency and interconnectedness at various levels and places the fictional system as an exposition of middle cognitive level of consciousness.

Graph theoretic field modelling, based on holistic perspective, facilitates, the concretization of the complex plot. Interpretation from Systems perspective reveals that the picture life in the Indian sub- continent ultimately becomes a part of the larger world as this fictional system celebrates life and suggests that ultimately all people share the same concerns as they experience life, death and birth and draw strength from family and love.

The second section subtitled “Conflicting Values- A Study of The Razor’s Edge” deals with another fictional system which has a complex setting. It spans a period of 24 years from 1919 to 1943 and takes place in many different locations, including Chicago, Paris, London and India.
The discussion throws a good deal of light with reference to the fictional system how there is conflict between the values of materialism and spiritualism. Finally the chapter ends with the discussion of how the two fictional systems hold a “Mirror up to Nature”.

The fifth chapter entitled “Films as Cultural Systems: Interpretive Structural Modelling of Slumdog Millionaire” presents the notion of Literature and Films as two branches of the same tree. The study is not restricted only to literary fictional systems but it expands its horizon by analyzing “Slumdog Millionaire”, the Hindi film which is also a fictional system using linear graph theory. The application of Interpretive Structural Modelling and Nominal Group Technique for the analysis of a film is first of its kind. The chapter shows high-end complexity in this film system and throws light on the emergent patterns from Jamal Malik’s life journey which includes being orphaned at an early age; growing up with an older brother, Salim, who was his guardian cum protector and antagonist; and having a relationship since childhood with another orphaned child, a girl named Latika. His motivation for being on the show also may provide some answers to his success.

The sixth chapter ‘Conclusion’ sums up and presents the findings. It is devoted to the discussion of the relevance and validity of trandisciplinary theories perspectives such as “Systems Theory” as made of interpretation for literature. The bewildering variety of theories certainly provide ample opportunity to scholars to explore various dimensions of a literary discourse, still critics/readers find it difficult to capture the “literariness” of literature as most of the theories segregate the four co-ordinates of art criticism: text, reader, author and Universe.
Systems thinking is integrative in which one selects from a wide range of approaches, methods and tools depending on the type of system, its purpose, nature of the inquiry and the specific problem situation. System Science, which is called “Meta-discipline” has an ideology of inclusion, unlike literary theories which are tied to specific ideology. In the analysis and interpretation of literature coherence, precision and objectivity are of great importance.