CHAPTER VI
SUMMING UP

After having analysed the three novels, Huxley’s *Brave New World*, Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty Four*, and Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* applying Marxist and Neo-Marxist approaches in the previous three chapters, in the present chapter an effort is made to summarise the findings. Science Fiction is generally considered a genre dealing with stories about futuristic societies. The most common subjects in Science Fiction are time travel, space travel, creation of new life forms using eugenics, life on other planets and etc. There is, however, another dimension to Science Fiction; it is also about social problems of the contemporary society. The present study has, thus, set about to understand the significance of Science Fiction in portraying, and projecting the contemporary society and the problems faced by it. With a view to achieving this purpose, the researcher has applied Marxist and Neo-Marxist critical theories for interpreting the select novels. These novels were written during the first half of the twentieth century which had witnessed great strides in science and technology, and political upheavals impacting world history. The emergence of Fascism, Nazism, and Communism challenged many European societies, with an impact on human rights in general.

The changes in the life style of man are mainly caused by the political changes and the developments in science and technology. The Industrial Revolution brought about a tremendous transformation in the agrarian way of life of the people. Villages lost their importance as people migrated from villages to cities in search of
riches. The cities, consequently, became overcrowded, and centres of exploitation of the poor and the weak.

In the political front, people were shocked by the role of totalitarian government. The Russian Revolution which promised equality failed to deliver its promise. Those who rose to power in the name of equality never practised it. In fact, they introduced opportunistic rules for perpetuation of their own unrestrained power.

In capitalist countries too people are exploited in the name of equality, but their exploitation is so subtle that it often goes unnoticed. A popular culture is created or encouraged by the rulers to engage people with frivolities without understanding the significance of their life. Entertainment attains a special status as if it is the only purpose of life. Huxley, Orwell and Bradbury critique their societies for encouraging these activities, and remaining insensitive to social problems resulting in dehumanization.

6.1. Science Fiction – Powerful Critique of Contemporary Society

The novels written during the twentieth century reflected this distortion of values caused by the rapid changes in value system. While twentieth century novelists like James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf portrayed the psyche of people and their trauma, Science Fiction writers portrayed the prevailing political climate, and its impact on society.

Krishnamoorthy highlights the advantage of Science Fiction in critiquing society:
Serious writers … can not help making their works reflections of contemporary values, masked in some cases and overt in others … Science fiction has a specific advantage as a vehicle of satire. Satirists have always felt the need for ‘other’ places or times for purposes of comparison or contrast, for freedom to criticize individuals or institutions without fear of being censored or censured, and for singling out for scrutiny specific issues unclouded by other current political or social prejudices … When most other writers felt gagged from social criticism in the McCarthyite fifties, science fiction writers continued to criticize society unmuzzled because of the freedom that this mode offered. (4)

It is only Science Fiction that is perfectly in assonance with the reality of a technologically advanced society. Roberts says that

the symbolic purchase (purpose) of science fiction on contemporary living is so powerful, and speaks so directly to the realities of our accelerated culture, that it provides many of the conceptual templates of the modern Western world. (Critical 35)

For example, the debates about the effects of genetic engineering and computers have entered into the consciousness of the people, and they are elaborated in Science Fiction stories and films, such as *Deep Impact* (1997) and *Armageddon* (1998). As Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. puts it, “SF has ceased to be a genre *per se*, becoming instead a mode of awareness about the world.” (qtd. in Roberts ed., *Critical* 35) Thus, Science Fiction does not merely project us into the future; it relates to us stories about the present and the past. “Counter-intuitively, SF is a *historiographic* mode, a means of symbolically writing about history” (35).
6.2. Marxism and Neo-Marxism Relate Literature to its Socio-Cultural Matrix

Marxism is basically concerned with real economic conditions than with some abstract truth. It rejected the earlier theories that portray human beings as having been influenced by a superior power, or some abstract truth, or the forces beyond human control. It insists that mankind is responsible for its own action. Nagarajan remarks that Marxism foregrounds economic realities of human nature, and it attempts “to explain things without assuming that there is a force beyond the natural world and the society we inhabit” (223). Worsley views Marxism as a humanity-centred philosophy which recognises the constraints upon human action and aspiration. But these constraints are created by “those who monopolise power and wealth, and want to keep it that way” (8).

Marxist Literary Criticism enables the readers to analyse a novel focusing on the prevalent economic conditions at the time of writing. It endorses that by portraying the economic and political conditions, a writer actually criticises the factors responsible for inequality among different classes. Inequality among classes leads to the exploitation of the lower classes by the upper classes or the people in power. Marxist criticism does not merely point out the inequality among classes and the resultant exploitation, but they want to change the existing scenario through revolution.

Abrams remarks that later Marxists like Louis Althusser considered social oppression and economic oppression are equally important. The social oppression is operative in all societies, and it is nourished by different factors like religion, culture etc. Rejecting the notion of ‘false consciousness’, Althusser views ideology as the medium through which we get to know the world. Hence, ideology itself is a
determining force, and it is impossible to get out of it, and judge whether it is right or wrong.

Gramsci (qtd. in Abrams) introduced the concept of ‘hegemony’ (162), meaning ‘cultural dominance.’ It is a process where one group in society assumes leadership over other without using power, but by promoting the interests of the ruling group exploiting language.

Gramsci’s most widely echoed concept is that of hegemony: that a social class achieves a predominant influence and power, not by power and overt means, but by succeeding in making its ideological views so pervasive that the subordinate classes unwittingly accept and participate in their own oppression (162).

The later Marxists or Neo-Marxists endorse that literature is not a mere reflection of the economic base. It takes into account, the role of culture in spreading the ideology of the dominant class. The Neo-Marxists revised Marxism accepting its relevant principles, while rejecting the antiquated ideas. Neo-Marxist theory deviates from a classical Marxist position by focusing attention on the superstructure issues of ideology and culture, rather than on the base …

Many Neo-Marxists assume that useful change can begin with peaceful ideological reform rather than violent revolution in which the working class seizes control of the means of production. (Baran 236)

Influenced by the Frankfurt School philosophers, Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton in Great Britain, and Fredric Jameson in the United States, explored the role of mass culture in the light of Marxian principles. Jameson, in particular, dealt with the commodification of all cultures. Thus, Marxism is developed and is “no
longer simply national or regional in character but reaches for global dimensions, and is especially difficult to construct” (www.springerlink.com).

In his essay “Marxist Theory and SF”, Burling emphasises that “Marxist theory is always connected both in spirit and practice to objectives that range beyond a specific literary text and thus employs cultural analysis in the interest of social and political praxis.”

Thus, Marxist and Neo-Marxist approaches to literature effectively bring out literature as a product of the socio-cultural matrix in which it is produced. Science Fiction attained popularity during the twentieth century because it reflected the changes in the society created by science and technology. Unfortunately, it is considered by many as a genre meant for entertainment. In reality, Science Fiction portrays the prevailing conditions in politics, and their impact on society. It is through Marxist and Neo-Marxist approaches to Science Fiction we understand that it is not meant for mere entertainment, but a critique of the prevailing socio-political scenario.

6.3. Marxist critics emphasising the role of Science Fiction to highlight perpetuation of power

Science Fiction, apart from creating a fantasy of the future using technological advancement, critiques the contemporary society. Since the 1960s most of the studies of Science Fiction have been influenced by Marxist and Neo-Marxist principles. It often implies “critiques of contemporary conditions or possible future outcomes of current social trends” (James and Mendlesohn ed. 113).
Marx considered technology as an important tool to bring about a change in society. He believed that human suffering and toil would be reduced to a great extent by means of technology. However, Marx failed to observe that it is also capable of mass enslavement. Technology is used in *Brave New World*, *Nineteen Eighty Four*, and *Fahrenheit 451* to condition people by way of creating a culture conducive to people in power. Thus, instead of reducing human suffering, and ensuring a better order of living, technology in the hands of people in power has increased their resources of power, and suppression of others without their being conscious of what is happening to them. Great writers like Huxley, Orwell and Bradbury awaken readers to the terrible social implications of the application of science and technology.

### 6.4. Basic Tenets of Marxism and Neo-Marxism

#### Marxism

- It interprets history as class struggle with the ruling class, or capitalists trying to exploit the proletariat, or working class, to their advantage.
- The interests of the ruling class, or capitalists, is protected by the use of ‘superstructure’ legitimising the power of the owners of the means of production.
- Such exploitation can be reversed only by the revolution of the proletariat.

#### Neo-Marxism

- Art and literature is a part of the superstructure to condition people to suit the designs of the rulers, not just a reflection of the economic base.
- They highlight the dominant ideology, and make us experience it.
Culture plays a major role in enabling the rulers to perpetuate power.

Exploitation can be averted not by mere revolution of the proletariat but by creating awareness among the people of their own existence.

6.5. Conflict Between Old and New Ideas in Huxley’s *Brave New World*

Huxley’s *Brave New World* is a comment on the modern society—a product of Soviet Communism and American Capitalism. Both the political doctrines thrive on the establishment of One Party rule, or organized government. The citizens under these governments have to be kept in control, either coercively or discursively, to maintain the status quo. Further, the new government projects certain ideas contrary to that of the past to create an atmosphere conducive for its survival.

Huxley’s exasperation caused by the American society’s obsession towards material comforts, and unbridled attraction for frivolities is projected in this novel. The early part of the twentieth century witnessed World War I due to which the people lived in constant fear. Later, the improvements in science and technology heralded the introduction of machines to improve the living conditions of the people. And, Huxley expresses his anxiety science and technology can be abused by the power elite to exploit common man.

The society of the World State presented in Huxley’s *Brave New World* is based on the principle of Fordism. Fordism is the system of mass production and consumption in the developed countries. Henry Ford was the president of an automobile company. He introduced assembly-line production to improve efficiency, and save money in car production. This stabilized the economy of the country. Ford is the god of *Brave New World*. Like automobiles being produced in
factories, children are produced in Hatcheries in an artificial manner as per the requirement of the World State to ensure stability. The concept of family, or motherhood, is abolished in the new society. The New Mexico Reservation is the perfect foil for the World State. In the New Mexico Reservation, children are born in a natural way, and family relationships are maintained and even revered.

“Community, Identify and Stability” (BNW 16) is the motto of the World State, and it is achieved at the cost of individuality. The World State appears to be an ideal country where citizens are always happy, and do not experience poverty. In reality, it has a rigid class structure favouring the upper class citizens. The entire society is divided into five groups or five classes – Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta and Epsilon; each class is convinced that its intellectual ability and job competence is better than the other classes. They wear different uniforms according to their classes. They are chemically, and psychologically conditioned to accept their social status without any dissent.

The Alphas are the only privileged class to have intelligence as their jobs demand it. They are conditioned to conform to the laws of the World State despite their ability to think for themselves. People like Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson who despise the mindless entertainment, and crave for real happiness are considered abnormal. The rigid class system enables the World State to preserve stability. The World Controllers are not dictators as they never kill others to retain their power.

The inequality among the classes is not felt by the citizens as they are chemically and psychologically conditioned to accept their social status without protest. While the foetus is in bottle, the physical and mental structure of the child is
conditioned by increasing, or reducing, the supply of oxygen depending upon the class to which it belongs. Lack of oxygen will hinder its mental development. The conditioning that takes place from the time of fertilization through the individual's formative years guarantees, in most cases, the individual's complete acceptance of every aspect of life in the World State. Freewill of an individual is completely denied by controlling the heredity and environmental factors that influence the person.

In addition to chemical conditioning, the infants are psychologically conditioned to fulfil their duties effectively. For example, the Delta and Epsilon babies are conditioned to hate flowers and books because they have to do menial tasks. Chemical and psychological conditionings are, thus, effectively used by the World State to establish stability.

To make people amenable to the policies of the government, propaganda is used both in democratic and totalitarian governments. It is used to divert the minds of the people from looking into what the rulers are doing. In *Brave New World*, people never question the policies of the ruler due to the systematically programmed propaganda of the World State.

Hypnopaedia, otherwise known as sleep-teaching, is used by the World State to impart 'moral' education to its citizens. When people sleep, their mental resistance is least powerful, and is favourable for propagating the ideas of the World State. The Bureaux of Propaganda and the College of Emotional Engineering ensure that the citizens are made to adhere to the rules of the World State. The World State also propagates its ideals with the aid of meaningless entertainment to make the citizens conform to the rules of the State.
In *Brave New World* stability is achieved by controlling emotions. Any intense feeling is discouraged by the World State. Everyone is made to be happy by eliminating painful emotions. By taking ‘soma’, a tranquillising, and hallucinating drug, the citizens live in a state of false happiness. According to Pearce the citizens of *Brave New World* “resort to ‘soma’ when they feel depressed, angry or have intrusive negative thoughts. They take it because their lives, like society itself, are empty of spirituality, or higher meaning. Soma keeps the population comfortable with their lot.”

The Marxian dictum that “Religion is the opium of people” is reversible as in the modern world mind-transformation has become an effective tool to divert the attention of the people. While describing the society of the *Brave New World* Huxley clarifies that ‘soma’ is used by the rulers as an instrument of statecraft. The citizens are not violently forced to obey the rules of the government. But “they were chemically conditioned to love their servitude, to cooperate willingly and even enthusiastically in the preservation of the social hierarchy” (web 1).

John from the New Mexico Reservation, a character referred to as Savage in the novel, represents the old ideas, and wants to be a real human. He wants to experience pain. But the citizens of the World State avert the possibility of experiencing pain and suffering by taking ‘Soma’. Bereaved by the death of his mother, John leaves the Park Lane Hospital only to find the Delta workers waiting to get their quota of ‘soma’ after completing their duties. He is disgusted, and tries to awaken them to reality. And the moment the workers find a man carrying a box with ‘soma’ pills, they neglect John, and hurry to get their ‘soma’ ration. John vigorously
attempts to stop ‘soma’ distribution which eventually results in pandemonium. The citizens of the World State are conditioned not to live without ‘soma.’

The knowledge of the past is vital in understanding as well as judging the present. But the citizens of the World State are denied any opportunity to think about the past. According to Mond history is bunk. Since it has to record pain and suffering it proves fatal to the conditioning of the World State. The citizens of the World State experience neither suffering nor dotage. Even death is treated as a casual incident without any emotional attachment as people are ‘death-conditioned’. Since people don’t know anything about the past, they are not even aware of any other alternative to the status quo. The World State, thus, ensures that the existing system can never be challenged.

John tries to open the eyes of the citizens of the World State to the emptiness of their life. His reading of Shakespeare’s plays enables him to compare the living condition of the people of the *Brave New World* with that of the past. The title of the novel is a parody of Shakespeare’s character Miranda’s admiration of people.

Mustapha Mond, the World Controller, reveals the purpose of banning books as they tend to make people melancholic. The World State has created a new society where citizens are conditioned to adapt themselves to the environment. So, a thing of the past is not found in the *Brave New World* as they have the potential to decondition the citizens. Huxley satirises the mentality of the American society that rejects any thing that is old, and craves for new things though they are not necessary.

In addition, the World State systematically destroys any scope for revolt by the citizens against the existing system. It ensures that no citizen is given an opportunity even to feel against its will. The improvement of science and
technology enables the government to condition people, and make them live under the illusion that they are always happy. But developments in science and technology associated with critical inquiry, prove detrimental to the concept of a World State. So the citizens, except Alphas, are conditioned to work in factories and laboratories without understating the real nature of their work. They are like robots programmed to carry out the tasks assigned to them without any apparent reason. According to Gehlhaus, “the key ingredient to stability that the novel implies is that individuality must be absent and the government in *Brave New World* understands that fact … Stability, in effect, demands robots, not people.”

Huxley’s *Brave New World* portrays a society without any human values. Such a dehumanized society is the product of the World State that has created a popular culture to keep the citizens only under a pretentious happiness. Constant entertainments, and mindless distractions of the citizens, benefit the World State to sustain the condition of the masses. Entertainment requires mechanical gadgets which lead to a consumerist economy.

So, the World State thrives on the continual consumerist behaviour of the citizens. Huxley attacks the consumerist culture of America in this novel. It has not lost its relevance even today. In his article ‘*Brave New World* – 2009; Quinn condemns the consumerist tendency of Americans:

The mass production of HDTVs, CD players, Laptop computers, Blackberries, iPhones, iPods, luxury automobiles and other electronic toys distributed to the masses through easy credit policies has successfully distracted the populace from the pillaging of the country by the Alphas at Goldman Sachs. The feelies of today are 24-hour cable TV with 600 stations,
downloadable movies, an unlimited amount of free porn on the internet, strip joints, and prostitution.

God is no longer required by the citizens of the *Brave New World*. People need religion to mitigate their fear, and alleviate their sufferings. By removing pain and suffering, the World State has found a new God in Ford. The World State controls sex, amusement and religion. The Solidarity Service is a parody of religious service. During Solidarity Services people take ‘soma’ that can induce quasi religious feeling which invariably ends up in orgy-porgy (physical copulation). All the citizens of the World State enjoy unlimited sexual freedom. Lenina’s sexual freedom is in sharp contrast to the attitude of John, the savage. His love towards her is Platonic and he hesitates to express his love. Lenina is more interested in the bodily pleasure he is likely to give her.

Education, in the World State, aims at making the citizens accept its principles. Education, in its real sense, should aim at enlightening learners about the world. But it is used to make them ignorant of the real values such as love, faith, family relationships etc. Education, thus, has lost its true meaning in the World State. The process of education in *Brave New World* starts at an early level. The principles of the World State are indoctrinated even at the embryonic level of the citizens. The embryos are chemically treated to suit their class. Later, hypnopædia, or sleep-teaching, is used as an instrument of emotional education. The children are educated to have class consciousness which is the very foundation of the World State. It is ensured that the citizens no longer understand the real implication of the nature of their work.
Language is reduced to such a low level that it can no longer express complex intellectual processes. The College of Emotional Engineering produces slogans and ‘feely’ scenarios in a simple language using repetition. On the contrary, John, the Savage, understands this world only with complex language used by Shakespeare. Huxley, through John, uses Shakespeare’s plays as an antidote to the loss of emotional and cultural significance of language.

6.6. Orwell’s Criticism of the Suppression of Individualism

Orwell’s disgust towards totalitarian governments because of their suppression of individualism is expressed in Nineteen Eighty Four. A dictator uses coercive methods to suppress the will of individuals to perpetuate his own power. But, the citizens accept the rules of the dictator without showing any dissent because they can not express it openly. Given a chance, they use their mounting anger against the existing system to bring about a change. Marx believed that it was only through such outburst of anger revolutions would occur which, in turn, would emancipate workers from being exploited by the owners of the means of production.

Nineteen Eighty Four reflects the paranoia that prevailed in Europe during the World Wars. It presents a society governed by a Party where people are controlled and conditioned to accept its principles without dissent. Though it is projected as a futuristic society, it is, actually, a parody of the contemporary political, social and economic situation.

Nineteen Eighty Four projects the political administration of the ruling elite to maintain the status quo. In this novel, Orwell expresses his fear of power resting in fewer hands. Nineteen Eighty Four is generally misinterpreted as an attack only
on Communism. A careful analysis of the book reveals that the novel highlights the perils of the perpetuation of power by the ruling elite. Crick interprets *Nineteen Eighty Four* as an attack on totalitarianism practised by both Communism and Capitalism.

Many of the features of Oceania and its province Airstrip One are wickedly comic and deliberate conflation of Nazism and Stalinism (the Anti-Sex league, the Two Minutes Hate, the compulsory exercises, the child spies, the sadistic war films); and Orwell saw many things in his own society either pointing that way or capable of being satirized in that manner. (7)

The industrial relations after World War I were affected badly in England leading to strikes resulting in unemployment, and a feeling of inequality among the working classes. The workers longed for equality. The Western writers were skeptical of the rise of Communism in Russia to create equality among the people, and the failure of Russian Revolution to form an egalitarian society. They wanted to form an egalitarian society in their countries but were cautious of any drastic upheavals. Orwell, while criticising the inequality among people, and the resultant exploitation in England, is equally critical of Communism.

As a matter of fact, *Nineteen Eighty Four* is the expression of Orwell’s disgust for inequality between the upper and lower classes. In this novel, Big Brother is at the helm of affairs followed by the members of the Inner Party and Outer Party. The Proles are no longer considered a threat by the Party as long as they continue to work and breed. But, there is inequality among the Inner Party members, and the Outer Party members. Winston and Julia are aware of the inequality. The people
who are aware of that inequality are conditioned by coercive methods not to express it.

The Party effectively uses propaganda to feed the citizens with the information they must know to understand the greatness of Big Brother. During Two Minutes Hate, Emmanuel Goldstein is portrayed as the enemy of the people and a traitor to the Party. It is systematically programmed to arouse the emotion of the people against a common enemy. It serves as an outlet to the anger and hatred of the people. The Spies and Junior Anti-Sex League are meant for propagating the principles of the Party to the citizens.

Nationalism comes to the rescue of the Party whenever it wants to divert the attention of the people. Ministry of Plenty highlights insignificant false statistics only to evoke meaningless euphoria of the citizens. For example, it boasts of the production of one hundred and forty five million pairs of boots while half of the population of Oceania is barefooted. Similarly, the chocolate ration given to the citizens is reduced drastically without making the people aware of it. Even if the Party contradicts its own statement, the previous records are corrected by the Records Department in Ministry of Truth to justify the most recent statement. People can not remember what was announced by the Party earlier in the week. It is made possible by thought-reduction.

Man’s rational ability is minimized by way of reducing his brain power. It is done by the Party with the intention of maintaining power equation by reducing the thought process of the citizens so that they are never critical of the status quo. In *Nineteen Eighty Four* we can not find a record that can make the citizens remember the past. Thought Police ensures that any citizen with unorthodox beliefs is
punished. By making people not to think of pre-Revolution days, the Party has full grasp of their memory.

_Nineteen Eighty Four_ highlights how history is mutated and changed according to the whims of the rulers. What is considered by the Party as truth is true for everyone. By falsifying records in Records Department of the Ministry of Truth, and supplying bogus data by the Ministry of Plenty, the Party ensures that the people never get to know the real history. The official slogan of the Party is “who controls the past controls the future and who controls the present controls the past.”

The people in _Nineteen Eighty Four_ are tired of the political oppression of the country. Their wills are broken by that of the Big Brother. They have to live in constant fear of being punished even if they think against the Party ideals. McIntyre in his article ‘Orwell’s Despair: _Nineteen Eighty-Four_ and the Critic of the Telocratic State’, points out the dehumanising factors in the novel as follows:

Citizenship, like the rule of the law, becomes purely functional. Considered solely in terms of their contributions to the overriding purpose of the state, citizens in Oceania are understood as mere instruments. They are required to wear uniforms which are mocking reminders of the working-class origins of Socialism. They are forced to exercise together and socialize with each other. Their free time is devoted to re-creation so that they are better equipped to fulfil their function. The distinction between private and public is obliterated and individual choice is criminalized, becoming an act of rebellion.

People like Winston and Julia who are against the Party ideals are imprisoned and conditioned using terror to accept the principles they had revolted
against. Finally, they are eliminated. The Party with the help of the Inner Party members like O’Brien establishes its unchallengeable authority by suppressing the wills of individuals.

Fearing that the loyalty of the citizens towards the Party and Big Brother will be affected by personal sexual attachment, the Party eliminates it by imposing anti-sexualism with the help of the Junior Anti-Sex-League. O’Brien tells Winston that neurologists are working to extinguish the orgasm because it affects the mental energy required for prolonged worship of Big Brother.

The members of the Outer Party are not allowed to be alone. Even when they are alone in their beds they abide by the principles of the Party. The Party has double standards for sex. The members of the Party consider sex only as a means of bearing children, and devoid of pleasure. Only Proles are allowed to have true family relationships, and enjoy activities like playing lotteries. But the prizes always go to some non-existent person.

Education must aim at creating awareness among the people, and make them conscious of their role in society. But, in *Nineteen Eighty Four*, it is used to spread the ideology of the Party. The Records Department in the Ministry of Truth supplies the citizens with information through newspapers, pamphlets, textbooks and telescreen programmes, and leave them with no option other than accepting what is propagated. Language is used by the Party to educate the people to attune themselves to suit the designs of the government. The Party creates a new language called ‘Newspeak’ to remove the words capable of expressing ideals against those of the Party. It is created to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc or English Socialism.
In *Nineteen Eighty Four*, the concept of family is devoid of love and affection. Instead of offering solace, it turns out to be a place filled with suspicion and malice. Parents have to live in fear of being caught by Thought Police if they think or speak anything against Big Brother, or the Party as they are constantly spied upon by their own children.

The Party prevents men and women from forming loyalties by condemning promiscuity. But this is not the only reason for banning it. Rather, the Party aims at removing the pleasures in the sexual act. The Party members have to get the permission of the Party for marriage, and the people who show physical attraction towards one another are denied permission. Marriage is considered to be a necessity only to beget children.

Though Western critics interpreted it through anti-Communist prism, *Nineteen Eighty Four* is a criticism of any centralised economy. The Party tries to perpetuate its power by controlling the masses through fear, torture and police espionage. As Williams rightly avers,

> The only human beings left in Oceania are the members of the Outer Party, caught between power and paralysis, between political psychosis and moral catatonia, who can be murdered at the most efficient time and in the most efficient manner. (45)

In other words, the only survivors are those without rebellious instinct, who are already dead as human beings, and are no threat to the government. The novel is a powerful warning against totalitarian tendencies in society where all human values of liberty and fraternity perish. Slusser, Greenland and Rabkin quote the words of Fredrick Phol revealing the intention of Orwell in writing *Nineteen Eighty Four* in
his essay ‘Coming Up on 1984’. According to him, Orwell wrote the novel “to whip up public (and vent his own) anger and loathing against the Bolshevik regime of Joseph Stalin in the USSR.” (105)

6.7. Bradbury’s Attack on Anti-Intellectualism and Meaningless Entertainment

_Fahrenheit 451_ presents Bradbury’s nightmarish vision of American society evolved by the materialistic outlook of life. The World Wars and the Economic Depression traumatised the American society. The rise of Communism created a panic not only in America but in all capitalist countries. All free thinking individuals in a capitalist country were viewed with suspicion as Communists. The people in power tried to prevent any intellectual activity of people so that they never criticised the status quo. The popular culture of the society keeps the masses engaged in meaningless activities in the name of entertainment. In _Fahrenheit 451_, Bradbury expresses his concern for the decreasing intellectual activities like reading in the modern society. It depicts a seemingly democratic government, there being no coercive methods practised. However, it controls the people, governing their sensibilities, and denying critical thinking.

Through education, entertainment, and distortion of family values, a popular culture is created to deprive people from using their intellect. Anything that develops critical insight is forbidden, thus resulting in thought-reduction. According to Bertonneau

the dictatorship of _Fahrenheit 451_ is a confidently self-regulating one that insures its continuity through the methodic inculcation of regressive taboos
and infantile totems that render people no longer capable of examining or
doubting what the state tells them.

Both democratic and totalitarian countries resort to propaganda to condition
people for accepting the designs of the rulers. Propaganda aims at creating
conformity among people. Anybody who does not comply with the designs of the
rulers is considered abnormal. In this novel Clarisse, Montag, Faber, Granger and
his friends are the only people who could understand the need for individuality and
free thinking.

On the other hand, Beatty, the fire chief, is the representative of the
government. He argues that the only way to create an ideal society devoid of any
pain is to condition people not to think of anything other than pleasure. Only by
preventing critical reading, and enforcing conformity through censorship and popular
culture such society can be created. The people are made to immerse themselves in
entertainment to seek constant pleasure. But it is done only at the cost of
individuality.

The people are, thus, reduced to the level of morons indulging in futile
exercises in an effort to establish conformity. Since books have the ability to make
one think of the exploitation that prevails in a society, people are prevented from
reading. By forbidding reading, and creating pleasure mongering society, the
significance of the past can be erased from the minds of the people. Faber, a former
professor, lost his job as all the departments that enabled the students think of the
past were closed down. The only other characters in the novel who care for the past
are Clarisse, her uncle, Montag, Granger and his friends. Granger and his friends
understand the need to carry over the knowledge of the past to the posterity. To
achieve it, they developed skills to attain a photographic memory, and everyone of
them memorised a text. They used to burn the books after memorising them for fear
of being caught. But they have become ‘walking books’ wandering with the hope of
setting a new society after the imminent war.

People who question the mindless entertainment, and don’t conform to the
laws of the State are viewed as threats to the government. When they are allowed to
express their concern about the need for such activities they influence others to think
along these lines. The rulers, thus, severely deal with such free thinking individuals.
They know that unless the individuality of people is suppressed the foundation of the
modern society will be thwarted.

In Fahrenheit 451, all activities are done without any emotional attachment.
Even the orderlies of the Emergency Hospital, who cleaned the stomach of Mildred
after she tried to commit suicide, work mechanically because suicide is not
uncommon in such society. The people who try to retain their sanity by reading
books, talking with others, or by communing with nature are considered abnormal.

Montag’s meeting with Clarisse McClellan kindles his consciousness. Till
then he has been under the illusion that he likes his job. It is Clarisse McClellan who
highlights the contrast between natural and artificial. She is different from the other
members of the society who are deprived of aesthetic sensibility. Montag’s wife,
Mildred, is a typical member of the hedonistic society finding solace in illusion. She
drowns her true feelings by taking sleeping pills, and getting exposed to meaningless
distractions. She is more interested in living with the characters of the television
serial ‘family’ than with her real family.
Fahrenheit 451 highlights a popular culture created by the rulers to suit their needs. Human relationship becomes strained, and people are conditioned to be engrossed in entertainment. People drive fast, roam around with Seashell ear thimbles all the time, and spend their time sitting in front of the wall-sized television interacting with the characters in television programmes. Love and affection find no place in such an indifferent society. People are afraid of showing any signs of emotion or feeling as they tend to result in despair. Such feelings will make them alienated from others, and make them non-conformists to the designs of the government. The rulers who propagate their ideals through discursive means resort to entertainment which keep the people engaged in constant distractions. The citizens are conditioned not to read books so that they lose their ability to think critically before taking important decisions. We get to know a glimpse of the careless attitude of the citizens from the neighbours of Mildred. Mrs. Bowels’ (a friend of Mildred) remark that she has voted for President Nobel as he is good looking, while his opponent Hubert Hoag is a short, fat man echoes Bradbury’s prediction of a thoughtless society. Since people spend their time only in meaningless activities they accept the designs of the rulers without critically examining it.

Education should aim at enlightening people making them aware of reality. By burning books that could make people think of reality, the government of Fahrenheit 451 prevents critical reading in the society. School education is systematically programmed to create a society attuned to obey the rules of the government. Clarisse hates the school system as it does not promote any intellectual activity, rather the children are trained not to ask any questions. Further, it promotes
violence and the children kill others, or commit suicide without understanding the value of life.

Any activity that encourages people to construct their own idea, or deconstruct the ideas of others, is a threat to the existing system. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the students’ minds are, therefore, stuffed with useless facts just to create an impression that they are learning. As a result, all the students have the same level of intelligence. Further, the age of children to get admitted to schools is reduced each year. The earlier the children are admitted to schools the easier it will be for the government to train them to be conformists.

Furthermore, *Fahrenheit 451* warns us of the distortion of family values in the modern society. Family is a place where an individual feels secure and experience the pleasure of living. But Bradbury fears that ‘family’ has lost its significance in the modern world as love and caring are missing from it. In the novel, the government does not permit the construction of houses with front porches to prevent the family members from sitting leisurely and interacting with the other members. Montag and Mildred live like strangers in their own home. She refuses to come out of her illusion, and does not care for her husband.

But Clarisse’s family is a perfect foil for the other families in the imaginary world of Bradbury. Clarisse’s uncle represents the old world, and has been even imprisoned for being anti-social. But Mildred and her friends, Mrs. Phelps and Mrs. Bowles, are the typical representatives of the modern society. They spend their time not with their family members but in watching television. Mrs. Phelps’ comment that nobody in their right mind would have children, indicates the decaying family system in the modern world. They have no concern for the imminent war. Mrs.
Phelps says that she would marry another person if her husband, who is in the warfront, gets killed.

6.8. Findings of the Study

The three novels have science and technology as the factor influencing human life. However, they are no mere fantasies; they critique contemporary society. Though science and technology have enriched and expanded our lives, they are also capable of rendering those in power, absolutely callous to the sufferings of others, and enable them to build social structures through which they perpetuate their privileged positions, and interpellate the suffering others to willingly accept their inferior dispensations. So, the novels under study aim at promoting social awareness to remain perennially on the alert. As Wendell Philips, way back in nineteenth century observed, “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.” (http://freedomkeys.com) Though more than fifty years have elapsed since these novels were written, the symptoms of degeneration they predicted have undergone no perceptible revision, instead they have become real and worse. So, the systematic study of these novels have relevance in the context of reception as our own society stands in need of seeking remedies for such degenerate life.

In Huxley’s *Brave New World* equality is achieved by chemical and psychological conditioning. The psyche of an individual is carefully moulded by the World State to achieve the goal of stability. But, in that process, the citizens of the World State become dehumanised. In the World State, equality is achieved through uniformity. The members of the different classes are exposed to the same experiences, and are taught to be happy with social status. But, moral values like
monogamy and personal loyalty are abolished, while promiscuous activities and feigned happiness are encouraged by the government.

*Brave New World* projects Huxley’s critique of contemporary society through focalisations of two characters, John, the Savage, and Mustapha Mond, the World Controller. In a sense, chapter sixteen and seventeen of the novel summarise the entire book. Mustapha Mond has access to ‘forbidden books’, and remains aware of ‘old beliefs and ideals’. John, the Savage, is suddenly exposed to the values of the World State. By constantly questioning Mustapha Mond on the ways of the World State with its machinery of chemical conditioning, hypnopaedia, and destruction of the past, he highlights the degeneration that has overtaken the World State. The other chapters only elaborate, and illustrate how the machinery of exploitation works.

Similarly, Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty Four* projects the degeneration of human values in a totalitarian country. Though Western critics interpreted it as a criticism on Communism, *Nineteen Eighty Four* highlights the danger of any centralised economy. The Party tries to perpetuate its power by controlling the masses through coercive methods.

In Oceania, the freewill of individuals is destroyed to make them accept their social status without dissent. The party projects Big Brother as an omnipresent and omniscient leader, and propagates its ideology through its Ministers. The application of Marxist and Neo-Marxist principles makes the readers understand the Party’s quest for power.

Likewise, Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* criticises the loss of human values such as faith, love, comraderie, and love of nature, in a pleasure mongering society. It
highlights the effect of the suppression of opposing points of view in order to gain political control. Such activities have happened in all eras. Nazis burnt books that criticised their party ideals. Similarly, during the 1950s the FBI blacklisted film makers, script writers, and actors as Communists. Our contemporary society is not an exception. In a recent article in *OPEN* on censorship in the World Wide Web, Pillai and Swarup criticise SOPA (Stop Online Piracy Act), a law planned by the US to stamp out infringement of copyright by holding not only the violator but all who feeds off them. Whenever a new technology like social networking is introduced, the State either creates draconian or vague laws with overarching policing powers to control it. “To justify these laws, the State’s approach is to take the worst of what is out there, and use that as a template for the setting up of controls that police everyone as if they were the worst” (13).

The popular culture of the modern society perfectly conditions people not to think of anything beyond pleasure. The role of the rulers in encouraging such popular culture conducive for exploitation is easily forgotten. In *Fahrenheit 451* Faber tells Montag that the firemen are no longer necessary as the public has stopped reading to indulge in meaningless entertainments.

This novel is not only about book burning and censorship, but it is also about the decaying human values in the society. The loss of critical thinking due to mindless distraction is a greater threat than the government-imposed censorship. Sexton identifies similarities between the modern American Society and the imaginary society of Bradbury as follows:

Where *Fahrenheit 451* is most successful in predicting the American of the first decade of the twenty first century is … in the anaesthetized state of
Americans doped upon the omnipresence of television that requires the sacrifice of critical engagement that is an inherent part of authentic literacy.

Huxley’s *Brave New World* and Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty Four* present totalitarian regimes successfully imposing their will on the citizens. But the role of government in conditioning the people to accept its ideology is not highlighted explicitly in Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*. Moreover, Mond in *Brave New World* and Big Brother in *Nineteen Eighty Four* have full control over their citizens, and exercise their power with authority. It is interesting to note that Huxley does not present the use of coercive methods in dehumanising the citizens of the World State, whereas Orwell portrays the suppression of individualism in Oceania using terror and State control. On the whole, the citizens in both the countries are devoid of real human emotions.

*Brave New World* presents a society built on the advancement of science and technology. In a sense, it may be considered Huxley’s warning about the possible abuse of technology in depriving human feelings and emotions. In *Nineteen Eighty Four* technology is not used to create feigned happiness. But it is used for surveillance, a means to establish State Control. In addition, it is used to modify records and propagate the principles of the Party. On the other hand, Bradbury, having witnessed the sudden changes in the life style of people during the middle of the twentieth century, is more concerned with the society than with the government. It is quite evident from the novel that the degeneration of human values in society, and a lack of critical reading is more dangerous than the totalitarian regimes of *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty Four*. The hedonistic modern society in *Fahrenheit*
does not require any dictator for the loss of human dignity because it is done by the indulgent society itself.

6.9. Contemporary Relevance of the Study

The three novels chosen for study highlight the dehumanisation of the common people by the rulers to perpetuate themselves in power. Huxley’s *Brave New World* uses chemical and psychological conditioning, and creates a popular culture to establish conformity and stability. The possibility of deconditioning is reduced by the regular use of ‘soma’. The people escape from any thought against their conditioning by drinking ‘soma’. Even Alphas who possess some rational thinking compared to the other classes of *Brave New World* are not exceptions. No coercive methods are used to condition people. Since State rule in Russia under the regime of Stalin happened only after the publication of the book, Huxley did not highlight such cruel methods of governing in his novel. He merely warns us of the ill effects of totalitarianism, and the creation of a popular culture for its survival.

Having witnessed the horrors of Moscow purges, and the atrocities done in the name of Communism, Orwell in his *Nineteen Eighty Four*, presents a dehumanised society created by violent means. He criticises the exploitation of masses by the ruling class both in Communist and Capitalist countries. Bradbury highlights, in *Fahrenheit 451*, the prospect of degeneration of human values through destruction of books, and promotion of all-absorbing pop culture of the media that caters to weaker instincts of the subject people.

The intellectuals of the West wanted a change in the existing system. However, history has proved that the requisite change did not always come after a
revolution. So, the Western writers wanted to create awareness among people about the nature of exploitation they are likely to be subjected to, and desire to create a different mindset leading to better legislation.

All the three novels are the critiques of the facile optimism created by the rapid improvements in technology. It is believed that technology can be used to liberate people from being exploited to create an egalitarian society. But the fruits of technology are used by the people in power to retain themselves in power forever at the cost of the general public. The scientific discoveries and inventions aid the rulers to condition people without resorting to coercive means. Bertonneau remarks that “It is the old panem-et-circenses formula of the Roman Empire, distracting the restless plebians by welfare handouts and titillating displays on stage or in the arena.”

Neo-Marxists, in particular, are worried about prevalent popular culture, and the use of mass media in conditioning people to suit the designs of the rulers. Most of the magazines we read, and the popular music we hear do not intend to ennoble us. But, they are used to divert our attention from the problems haunting us about the nature of our very existence. Only by creating awareness about the prospect of our being exploited by our popular culture, we will be able to find the meaning of our life.

This study has adopted Marxist and Neo-Marxist approaches, as being very apt approaches for critiquing Science Fiction texts, with reference to personal, social and political aspects of life in the context of production and context of reception.

What emerges from the study is the advantage of applying Marxist and Neo-Marxist approaches to Science Fiction. Far from being Utopian fantasies, Science Fiction is found to deflate contemporary social and political exploitation resorted to
by people in power, through the utilization of the marvels of modern technology to condition the common people. The common people, on their part, are too willing to succumb to the entertainments of popular culture, and an indulgent life made available by technology through its gadgets like television, computer and cell phone. They have little time for anything else. The scientific fantasies warn us of the danger of an anti-social life that has become the main feature of our modern life.

The application of Marxist and Neo-Marxist theories to Science Fiction brings out the effectiveness of the theories in critiquing the prevailing social condition. Science Fiction, is generally considered to be a genre meant for creating cheap thrill devoid of literary merit. But their significance as a vehicle of social criticism is established by the use of Marxist and Neo-Marxist criticism. The findings of this study point to the possibilities of further research in the Science Fiction genre applying principles of modern literary criticism to bring out the fact that Science Fiction does not present mere fantasy.