INTRODUCTION

The First World War occupies a unique position in the modern consciousness, especially in Europe and North America. Although the terrible struggle that rocked mankind from 1914 to 1918 was chiefly fought on the European continent, yet it can justly be called 'The Great War' because in terms of death, destruction and unmerited suffering, the World War stands as an unparalleled phenomenon in the history of human civilization. In the Great War eight million people were killed because two persons - the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his consort - had been shot.

The Great War not only fundamentally affected the course of modern history externally with its scope of fighting, the volume of killings and the scale of destruction, but it also affected man's outlook on life because as Paul Fussel puts it, "Every war is ironic because every war is worse than expected. Every war constitutes an irony of situation because its means are so melodramatically disproportionate to its ends."

As a sequel to this, the First World War brought to a dramatic close a century of relative peace and ushered in what is referred to as the 'Age of Violence'. It reversed the idea of progress. After Britain had made the final plunge, Henry James wrote to a friend:

The plunge of civilization into this abyss of
blood and darkness...is a thing that so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be, with whatever abatement, gradually bettering, that to have to take it all now for what the treacherous years were all the while really making for and "meaning" is too tragic for any words.

With the British soldiers were involved, without any consultation, some 50 million Africans and 250 million Indians in a war, of which they understood nothing, against an enemy who was also unknown to them. It was done on the assumption that:

The British navy would fight a great engagement with the German high seas fleet in the North sea while the armies of the continental Allies defeated Germany on land. All would be over in a few months, if not a few weeks. The ordinary citizen would be little affected. As Grey said in the house of Commons on 3 August: "if we are engaged in war, we shall suffer, but little more than we shall suffer, if we stand outside.

This reflected the temper of the age which had recorded tremendous industrial, scientific and cultural progress in the nineteenth century. Subsequently, no preparations were made for changing the civilian life; no accounts of manpower or surveys of the industrial resources were ever conducted. There was no accumulation of raw materials or even consideration of what raw materials would
be needed, for the obvious reasons — that the war would be over by Christmas. It was unimaginable to the leaders of the times that the war could extend itself to hitherto unimagined reaches of suffering and irony. "Thus the duty of the civilian was to carry on normally", records A.J.P. Taylor, "and in Churchill’s phrase 'Business as usual.'"

Soldiers had gone to war with a sense of high excitement, with lesson of honour, courage and heroism to save the world for democracy. There was a sense of adventure and relief from boredom that drove them on to fight on alien soil. There was much idealism, sense of sacrifice and patriotism, with little understanding at first of the horror and then of death and destruction accompanying modern mechanised war. The spirit was expressed by the English poet Rupert Brook when he wrote:

If I should die think only this of me,
That there's some corner of a foreign field,
That is for ever England, There should be
In that rich earth, a richer dust concealed,
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware.

Perhaps this accounts for the mad rush of chauvinistic and patriotic people outside the recruiting stations and it owed much to the innocence of the people themselves. Further, Britain had not known a major war for a century on the continent, and no man in the prime of his life knew what war was like. All people imagined that it
political influence, cultural creativity, military and financial power. This small continent ruled a vast colonial structure and with it hundreds of millions of dependent people. Ideologically political liberalism and paramilitary institutions had flourished and multiplied. Democracy, it seemed, was destined to spread all over the globe. Capitalism was the prevailing economic creed with the middle class, its master and chief beneficiary. Europe's material and economic strength had unquestionably expanded in the course of the century, and the intellectuals and theorists matched this growth with a proliferation of ideologies and scientific discoveries. This laid the economic and material foundations for the European dominance and control of the world. During this period the number of Europeans more than doubled and the food supply grew at an even greater rate. Transportation and communication systems were vastly improved. The Industrial Revolution increased productive power and material strength beyond anything previously imagined; it built on the basis of more food and people and of improved transportation to transform age-old ways of life. Although the early stages of industrialization process brought hardship and misery in the rapidly growing cities, most Europeans enjoyed more comfortable lifestyles by the end of the century.

At the beginning of the century, Europeans depended on agriculture and the ways of life tied to it. By 1914,
this picture had changed - most of Europe had gone through the Industrial Revolution and made the basic transition to a modern society. It witnessed the change from human and animal power to machine power, from the limits of flesh and blood to the enormous capacities of coal, steam and oil, and from local or regional markets and resources to a world economy which brought about a transformation that drew a line between the old and the new Europe.

This excessive mechanization sounded the last post for the rural England. It signalled the collapse of English agriculture in 1875. The promulgation of the 'Doctrine of Free Trade' propounded that if one industry, for instance agriculture, went under in free competition, others would gain proportionately and take its place - and so all would be well. But it could not be so, for the decay of agriculture symbolised the decay and crumbling of an established order. G.M. Trevelyan observes: "The men of theory failed to perceive that agriculture is not merely one industry among many, but it is a way of life, unique and irreplaceable in its human and spiritual values."

This decay in agriculture also affected forestry. The landlords, who had planted diligently in the 18th and 19th centuries, lost interest in forestry as a trade, when government no longer required big oaks to build battleships as it was an era of relative peace and prosperity. Timber of all other sorts poured in from Scandinavia and North America at prices that discouraged the homegrower.
The development of American Prairies as grainlands, struck the last blow to English agriculture. The new agricultural machinery enabled the farmers of the Middle-West to skin the cream off virgin soils of the unlimited expanse; the new railway system carried the produce to the ports; the new steamers bore it across the Atlantic. This mass production of crops by a simpler and cheaper process undercut the elaborate and expensive methods of farming which had been built up on well managed English estates during the last 200 years.

This eventually resulted in the overthrow of the 'British Landed Aristocracy'. It could not get out of the agricultural depression and as a result the change was from village to town and the villagers became 'Town Birds'. It symbolized a divorce of Englishmen from life in contact with nature, which in all previous ages had helped to form the mind and imagination of the island race.

This decline of the agricultural industry was looked upon indifferently by the statesmen, because it did not involve any acute problem of unemployment. The farm labourer did not remain on land, after his occupation was gone, as unemployed miners hang round a closed mine. When a labourer lost his job, he quietly slipped away to the towns or migrated overseas, to 'better himself', and so he raised no outcry when this involved exile from the scene of his boyhood.

Till the nineteenth century the earlier emigrant
usually parted forever from the folk he left behind. Little was ever heard of him. A close proximity was established between the emigrant and his people at home, through the 'Postage stamp' in Queen Victoria's reign.

Often he would return on a visit, with money in his pocket and tales of new lands of equality and self-help, with a little contempt for the old ways at home. In this quest to better himself, the middle and the lower classes came to know quite as much about the Empire as their 'betters' and rather more than their 'betters'. So the professional and upper classes also went out to careers all over the world to govern and trade and shoot big game in Africa and India.

With the advent of motor transport the intrusion of urban life on rural parts became a flood, turning all England into a suburb. Moreover, newspapers, ideas, visitors and new residents of the cities aided in transforming the old 'feudal' countryside of Trollope's England into a democratic city. As a result of the Education Act of 1870, the agricultural labourer of the next generation and his women folk could all read and write. Unfortunately, this power was not directed to foster in them an intelligent and loving interest in country life. The new education was devised by city folk, intent on producing, not peasants, but clerks. The distinctive rural mentality was suffering under urbanization and local traditions were fast disappearing.

The establishment of the Municipal system in
Victorian England furthered urbanisation because the cities promised to its people democratization in accordance with a very different scale of social values rather than the orthodox traditions as practised by the Aristocracy in the countryside. The rapid growth of cities increased the numbers of ugly, disease-ridden slums. As industry grew and became more complex, so too did the centralized bureaucratic states which developed a new structure to collect the greater amounts of taxes needed to cope with the unprecedented challenges and demands in the political system. In pursuit of economic growth, businessmen and politicians - out of ignorance or short-sightedness - inflicted major damage on the environment. The state had permitted the landlord and the speculative builder to lay out modern England as best suited to their private gains, too often without amenity or public welfare. In vast areas of London and other cities there were no open spaces within the reach of children, whose only playground outside the school was the hard and ugly street.

To millions, the divorce from nature was absolute and so too the divorce from all dignity and beauty and significance in the wilderness of mean streets in which they were bred, whether in the well-to-do suburbs or slums. The race bred under such conditions of urbanization and materialistic ventures, saw a gradual but necessary decline in its imaginative powers and the stage was set for the gradual standardization of human personality.
This urbanization, with money playing the dominant role, altered the social values and the social milieu. There was a changed pattern of social relationship and the generation saw the emergence of a new ethic—the ethic of competition of making money. It reduced man to the level of an 'economic man', thereby encroaching upon the 'old established order' and ushering in an era of new human relationships. In the social context there were signs of total degeneration and degradation in the form of human relationships. The upper classes were no longer quite what they had been. The aristocracy of birth and inheritance was being replaced by one of wealth and economic power. In the words of Ramsay Macdonald:

The age of Financier had come and expressed the belief that 'such people' (they included the scums of the earth which possessed itself of gold in the gutters of Johannesburg market place) did not command the moral respect which tones down class hatred.

Thus, we find that the society was getting mixed. The earlier society which had been a limited world, closely guarded by certain Whigs and Tory Peeresses, had a vaguer meaning now. Men of mere wealth, the whole of upper and professional classes including all the well dressed men and women, formed the new middle classes. Factory workers and peasants on the one hand, and aristocrats and nobles on the other, were not part of the middle classes. Those closer to the working classes were called the lower-middle classes
or the 'petite bourgeoise'. Those who were near the elite formed the upper-middle classes.

The first group outnumbered the second group, for it was a heterogeneous mixture of people from all walks of life. It included skilled artisans, bureaucrats, clerks, teachers, shopkeepers and the clergy. Being conscious of their proximity to the working classes, they desired to climb socially. If their betters patronised the concert hall and art galleries, the lower middle classes went to the music halls and the popular sporting events. By the end of the century, the new transportation networks gave them the mobility to spend their vacations at resorts on the sea-shore or in the mountains. This resulted in the development of a new industry - 'Tourism' - which met their demands.

The upper middle classes controlled a large portion of the wealth created by the Industrial Revolution. They came to gain access to many of the benefits of aristocracy, such as the best schools, shops, restaurants and cultural life. Factory owners, bankers, lawyers, architects and high government officials entered the upper middle class ranks. It was hard to gain admittance to this level of society, but money, taste and aggressiveness could open the doors for those who so desired. This period has come to be labelled as the Victorian period, in honour of the English queen idealized by Tennyson as the ultimate 'Mother, wife and Queen'. On the surface, the victorians
evidenced very little doubt regarding what was right and wrong, moral and immoral, proper and improper, but underneath, it seems, they (the new middle classes) may have felt insecure in their new found dominance; and perhaps this accounts for the emphasis on appearance and propriety— the hallmark of the Victorian age.

Appearance, humbug and hypocrisy came to characterize the Victorian respectability. It enabled people to live double-faced lives and profess a morality which permitted prostitution, firstly because the ladies of the newly rich had become 'Ladies' and secondly because of the spate of domestic servants to take care of the household affairs. These 'Ladies' had nothing to do and lived in a void.

Private morality, at least on the face which it turned towards the world was authoritarian and taboo-ridden (Never mind what went underneath). Serious personal oddity was dismissed as a sign of degeneracy, not diagnosed as neurosis. The bringing-up of children as Samuel Butler bore witness, was strict, and the overt decencies of family life and relationship were maintained, whatever went on under the surface. The 'great ladies' of the day sent for Lord Templecombe when the question of divorce arose in Miss Sackville-West's 'The Edwardians'. 'No blesse oblige, my dear Endred', they said 'people like us donot exhibit their feelings; they donot
divorce. Only the vulgar divorce."

Women stood further liberated with the advances in science and technology in the twentieth century. The traditional, conventional, the orthodox ideas which envisaged marriage as mainly a series of domestic and extra-domestic activities - home, family, society and Church - were contested and challenged. The invention of contraceptives brought an upheaval in the traditional Victorian moral code. It controverted the Pauline and prayer-book doctrines concerning the primary purpose of marriage and asserted that "reason is, undoubtedly, the servant of passions". Marriage, hereafter, meant a personal relationship between man and woman to secure the highest happiness of the two in unison; and it was held that only through the attainment of such happiness can the two make their full and unfettered contribution to the welfare and happiness of others. It furthered the conviction that the right ordering, mutual adjustment and full development of the physical love-life between husband and wife is the first principle of happy marriage. This exultancy of the physical love is not simply an end in itself, but, more and more importantly the way to that peace and understanding which are the beginning of wisdom in marriage. Sex no more remained an absent-minded, mechanical habitude. It got a new purpose and function to life. Sex experience can be perfectly known when the mind, spirit and blood of both the man and the woman are in tune.
Renewal of this experience constitutes true marriage since its end is peace in the deepest sense, and a child—its perfect symbol. Love, thus, became an art and symbolised that sex is a biological necessity like any other thing required to keep the body functioning—food, drink, clothing and so on. Therefore, sex, in case of women, was as instinctive as to a man. It thus revolutionised the traditional view about marriage which only propagated the institution of breeding. A.C. Ward comments:

"Love is an art with subtle principles to be mastered, not a casual affair into which any clodhopper and featherbrain can blunder with ignorance and success... For the physical love to be rightly ordered and fully developed, important mental and spiritual adjustments are indispensable."

The new morality, thus, advocated the release of sex from unnatural restraints, taboos and inhibitions, so that it would fall into place among other natural instincts and demand no more than its normal place in human affairs. The orthodox sexual morality taught by the Churches began to appear more as a matter that might be governed by simple, personal hygiene than by inexorable laws of the Deity. In the past, moral conduct had always depended on the hope of rewards and fear of penalties, but the contraceptive devices removed the fear which, combined with sexual curiosity, had often led to disastrous marriages.

This gave rise to experimental relationships or
free association between men and women. Earlier, the state penalized the unhappily married couples through restrictive divorce laws and took no official cognizance, whatsoever, of those who "lived in sin". Two people, who had "lived in sin" for a period and found their association a happy one, could regularise their union by subsequent marriage. If their association was unsuccessful they could call it a day, without any taint which the Divorce Courts and the energies of the King's Proctor might impose upon those two people, whose only fault originally was that they were unable to live in harmony. Thus the people came to suspect too easily the manifestation of authority especially in the hands of the Church. They lost faith in organised religion, and as science and technology advanced, religion declined. The advent of motor cars and motorcycles gave to the people the freedom of movement, which was necessary for experimental and unsanctioned relations between the sexes. This decay of sexual morality symbolised a revolt against the dogmatism of the Church, and resulted in the decline of the religious morals ultimately.

Furthermore, the conduct in the nineteenth century had been founded on accepted notions and people had always been "led to believe". Certainty previously seemed to be absolute and the authority of the Church seemed to be supreme and inviolable. Thus organised religion came to preach 'fixation' and it manacled the mind of individuals.
But the advances in science and technology revolutionised the lives and the thinking of the people and created problems for which neither religion nor the past experience of humanity could provide precedents or answers.

The dominant middle class responded enthusiastically to Darwin's theory of evolution, finding in it a comfortable assurance of their own recently acquired position. The Darwinian hypothesis, when simplified, stated that all existing plant and animal species are descended from earlier, more rudimentary forms. The direct effect of the environment causes species to evolve through the inheritance of minute differences in individual structures. In the struggle for survival the fittest wins out at the expense of rivals. A species may also be changed by the cumulative workings of sexual selection which Darwin declared to be the "most powerful means of changing the races of man". The point that most appealed to the newly dominant middle classes was that regarding the survival of the fittest, and this aspect was emphasized in subsequent popularizations. The middle classes employed the Darwinian theory to support their belief in the inevitable improvement of humanity; but while they shared this conviction with the romanticists, they had lost much of the latter's idealism and optimism, for they had become too materialistic.

Furthermore, Einstein's 'Theory of Relativity' hit the last nail in the coffin of the 'organized religion'. Man, by now, had come to question all the complexities of
the human world, the traditional and orthodox beliefs and 17 also his own position in the universe. The 'plain man* had felt within himself that he was not so plain as he had been formerly led to believe. If "material, space, time and energy", were no longer governed by the old orthodox assumptions, why should he continue to be governed by them without further enquiry into the old orthodox beliefs and prohibitions ? The human mind became inquisitive. Since, according to the relativity theory, nothing 'was fixed' in the universe, why should not all customs, laws and moral standards be considered equally relative ?

From now onwards, improbable possibilities were to be preferred to probable impossibilities and the journey of the human mind was from belief to knowledge through inquiry. Thus the plainman, directly or indirectly, was persuaded by the 'spirit of the age' to adopt a new creed, as recorded by A.C. Ward:

I believe in the uncertainty of all things. I believe that all things are possible, nothing incredible. I believe in myself as the closest manifestation—however irrational, imperfect, unsatisfactory—of reality. I believe that life is for free speculation and experiment, world without end.

Consequently, the plain man became more adventurous and in his outlook—he became a romantic. The urge to experiment with life made him fight against the organised efforts of
the Church to force him into a mould and the quest for searching out for a more meaningful life which would respond to the spark of life within made him abrogate the materialistic pursuits of the day. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, this urge had become so strong in him that he rejected the mere mechanical life and refused to be a cog in the mechanised world. He rejected the Falstaffian values and craved for a life of honour, chivalry and self-respect and it was in pursuit of these romantic ideals, that he strode into the great adventure - 'The Great War' to fight on an alien soil, against an enemy, about whom he knew nothing. He, thus, became a rebel, revolted against the constraints of society and often expressed his contempt for contemporary standards because society's laws and rules of conduct only fettered the natural instincts of humanity.

The liberal impact of romanticism, which had initially started as a revolt against the rationalism of the eighteenth century, was also felt in the twentieth century. The romantic movement's emphasis on the individual created among some of its participants a picturesque life style, since the romantics saw the individual as a creature of feeling no less than of thought. Further, the romantics, by concentrating research into the past and the picturesque to find their own roots, gave birth to nationalism. Romanticism prompted investigation of their history, folklore, linguistic backgrounds and myths in an attempt to define their uniqueness. Romantics saw the
world not as a cosmopolitan and rational unit, but as a place of natural variety. All these investigations of national myths and folklore were reprinted for the eager public which helped the recovery of national pasts.

This ushered in an era of nationalistic pride. Composers, poets and historians turned to the national themes during the century and took pride in native songs. Wordsworth upon his return from the continent to England wrote:

...Oft have I looked round
with joy in Kent's green valves, but never found
Myself so satisfied in heart before.
Europe is yet in bounds; but let that pass
Thought for another moment. Thou art free,
My country! and its joy enough and pride
For one hour's perfect bliss, to tread the grass of England once again...

Similar manifestation of national feeling, the feeling of sharing, of being a part of the group, eventually resulted in sharpening of national identity in France, Spain, Russia and Italy. It brought about fragmentation of Europe into a number of self-contained, egotistical units, where common land, language, folklore, history, enemies and religion have drawn people together into an indivisible unit - the nation.

But-ressed in this feeling, the people of Europe, in this age of scientism, came to justify European
dominance and racism on scientific grounds. The Europeans believed that they had a monopoly on scientific knowledge and, by implication, on civilization. Thinkers throughout the continent implicitly believed in the superiority of western culture because in the West the triumphs of science had come to be applied to society. It furthered the belief that white people alone were capable of cultural creativity and that the intermixture with other races — (this was the direct impact of Darwinism) — would destroy that creativity. In England and Germany it was fervently echoed that the world's leadership should naturally reside in London or Berlin because the people there possessed the proper combination of religion, racial qualities and culture to dictate the world's future.

Mesmerized by Britain's notion of the 'welfare state', based on the concept of 'liberty, equality and fraternity', the people of the world looked to England for leadership to carry the white man's burden. A.J.P. Taylor remarks:

Until August 1914, a sensible, law-abiding Englishman could pass through life and hardly notice the existence of the state beyond the Post Office and the policeman. He could like where he liked and as he liked... He could travel abroad or leave his country forever without a passport or any sort of official permission.
Came the Great War. The whole life of the Englishman was changed. The impact of the State was felt everywhere and in all fields, for the first time.

The mass of the people became for the first time active citizens. Their lives were shaped by orders from above; they were required to serve the State instead of pursuing exclusively their own affairs... The State established a hold over its citizens which, though relaxed in peace-time, was never to be removed and which the Second World War was again to increase. This history of the English State and the English people merged for the first time.

The shift is from independence to servility. People did not mind it. Bored by an incredibly active era of relative peace and against a background of tremendous progress registered by technological advancement under the impact of Industrial Revolution, the mechanical men, with all the power and pelf, secretly craved for honour and glory in life. War promised both. Consequently, they hurled themselves headlong into the great abyss of fire, death and destruction – into the great adventure – the First World War.

Remembering and recalling the war spirit of the age, the popularity of the war and the 'war humour', which would be essentially labelled as 'Black humour' today, Paul Fussell quotes Phillip Gibbs: "The more revolting it was, the more...(people) shouted with laughter".
The more the people shouted with laughter, the more
the people fed on the romantic notions of war, vied with
one another to seek recruitment in the forces, to
draw themselves into a fight with the enemy at the war
front because they saw it,

...as an opportunity for demonstrating the
progress of comity among men since the era when
the Greek Amphyctyonic Council proclaimed that
no city of the league might be destroyed, nor
its olive-groves cut down, nor its watersupply
stopped; ...pictured it as a chivalrous passage
of arms which would limit itself to establishing
the superiority of one side in the struggle,
while as for as avoiding acute suffering...

And finally, when the war did break out in 1914, it
not only proved bloody but also more destructive than any
war of other days, because of the enormously increased
perfection of weapons of attack and defence. It
perpetrated more horrors than had been imagined so far.

It was... the laughter of mortals at the trick
which had been played on them by an ironical
fate. They had been taught to believe that the
whole object of life was to reach out to beauty
and love, and that mankind, in its progress to
perfection had killed the beast instinct,
cruelty, blood-lust...Now that ideal was broken
like a china vase dashed to the ground. The
The people were, therefore, soon disillusioned because of the fearful price paid by men, who endured world War I, as they believed that a better world would emerge. This view is endorsed by Private E.T. Radband, in 'The First Day on the Somme', by Middlebrook: "My strongest recollection! all those grandlooking cavalry men, ready mounted to follow the break-through. What a hope!" And Corporal J.H. Tansley: "One's revulsion to the ghostly horrors of war was submerged in the belief that this war was to end all wars and Utopia would arise. What an illusion!"

If we critically analyse these two passages, the difference in mental outlook becomes self-evident. It is the end of confidence and self-assurance, and instead begins a mood which is near to despair. Dwelling on the horrors of war, Sigmund Freud says:

…it is at least as cruel, as embittered, as implacable as any that has preceded it. It disregards all the restrictions known as International law, which in peace-time the states had bound themselves to observe; it ignores the prerogatives of the wounded and the medical service, the distinction between civil and military section of the population, the claims of private property. It tramples in blind fury on all that comes in its way, as
though there were to be no future and no peace among men after it was over. It cuts all the common bonds between the contending peoples, and threatens to leave a legacy of embitterment...

The 1914-1918 conflagration fulfilled all these requisites and thus rightly came to be called as 'The Great War'. It took recourse to a very devastating stage and its far-reaching consequences, eventually, resulted in the 'Second World War'. It was the grimmest and most brutalizing type of conflict, which man had to endure in the shape of 'Trench warfare'. There was a cynical reaction to Rupert Brooke's romantic conception of death in battle and the mood of public changed to one of war-weariness and total futility. This growing mood was illustrated in the poetry of a Young British officer and poet Wilfred Owen, himself a victim on the warfront, who poignantly observed in 'Anthem For Doomed Youth': "What passing bells for those who die as cattle? Only the monstrous anger of the guns..."

This lacerated sensibility was represented by Owen with emotions of love, compassion, admiration and joy, but it also underlines that man had not only been alienated, but also dehumanised because of war.

Simultaneously, The Great War brought about a growing awareness that progress couldn't be measured in terms of material, but in terms of spiritual, human and
moral values. Lamenting the horrific impact of war on the shocked nerves of a generation, writes D.H. Lawrence in his novel, *Kangaroo*:

It was in 1915, the old world ended. In winter 1915-16, the spirit of the old-London collapsed, the city, in some way, perished, perished from being the heart of the world and became a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears and horrors.

By the end of 1916, there was a deep yearning for peace. Sensing this mood, leaders on both sides put forth rather half-hearted appeals. But these achieved nothing. Although the statesmen of the Victorious allies had championed the democratic and humanistic traditions of western civilization, yet their motives in making peace were often as vindictive and nationalistic as any preparation for war. Therefore, all the people in the warring nations were made to believe that they were part of a crusade for 'better world'. This insatiable hunger for egocentric power and national aggrandisement spelt total disorder, both in the world of history and in the mind of man. Thus, it can be very safely summarised that while the First World War, on the one hand, gave rise to new organizational, economic and socio-political problems which defied the traditionally hallowed readymade solutions leading to a pervasive climate of frustration and disillusionment; on the other, it focussed attention on the cruelty and evil inherent in the nature of man.
During the early years of the century, most men had still believed in progress even when they denied its existence. They had believed in the permanence of things even as theoretically they were on the side of change. Now in this interwar period, the vision, though never complete, is yet more profound.

For Thomas Hardy, the period between the two wars marked the beginning of a new barbarism. In the preface to 'Late Lyrics and Earlier', he writes:

Whether owing to the barbarising of taste in the younger minds, by the dark madness of the late war, the plethoric growth of knowledge with the stunting of wisdom, a degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation (to quote Wordsworth), or from any other cause, we seem threatened with a new Dark Age.

This premonition did ultimately turn out to be true when the world saw the breakdown of the old-familiar, authoritarian pattern, in the twentieth century. The beginning of the Great War in 1914, signalled the reshaping of this old authoritarian order, both in private and social life. On the warfront, the conflict between the generations, too old to fight and the generations of the trenches, did a great deal to reshape the old authoritarian pattern, because the powers that be, politicians and generals - proved incompetent and failed to tackle the situation. Many of them had been wasteful and incompetent
and their mutual recriminations did not help preserve the facade of authority. Instead, it helped the younger generation to challenge their wisdom - exhibited by their inept handling of the war.

Before the war, England had no mass regular army. There was no idea that one would ever come into existence. When the war did eventually break out, the people, bored by a mechanical life of progress and fed on the romantic conception of war, sought enlistment in the military. As a result, "the army had more men than it could equip and voluntary recruitment would more than fill the gap, at any rate until the end of 1916."

The year 1915, brought the repeated failure of British attempts to break through the German line and to unleash the cavalry in pursuit. They failed. The Second Battle of Ypres saw the wiping out of 60,000 British soliders. The void so created by these casualties had to be filled. The volunteers were no longer sufficient to fill the ranks. In addition, Lord Derby's Scheme - a genteel form of conscription - was promulgated and at the beginning of 1916, with the passing of the Military Service Act, England began to train her first conscript Army, an event which could be said to mark the beginning of the modern world. It also provided that no married men should be called up until all unmarried men had been taken or consumed at the warfront. The reason was obvious: "...the married men would have felt outrageously cheated if they
had been called up while a single unmarried man walked the streets."

England thus saw a conflict between the younger and the older generations. It was the direct outcome of the war which started having telling effects everywhere and in all walks of life. War no more remained an affair of great marches and even in its simplest terms, it meant sheer brutality, death and destruction. With the shattering of the romantic conception of war, the people, especially the younger generation, tried to avoid conscription:

...men with a conscientious objection to military service were allowed to state their case before a local tribunal, which could grant them absolute or conditional exemption. This provision, almost without parallel in other countries, worked clumsily. The tribunals were composed of the elderly and retired, unsympathetic to all young men and especially unsympathetic to conscientious objectors.

Therefore, perhaps rightly so, the younger generations came to suspect too easily all manifestations of authority, thereby evincing/demonstrating/exhibiting a gradual loss of faith both in themselves and the powers that be. This was to reach its nadir by the time the fighting ended and Germany surrendered.

However, The Great War saw mass killings of younger men. Casualties were about three times heavier in proportion among junior officers than among common
soldiers. This struck at the highest in the land. The roll of honour in every school and college bore witness to the talents which had perished. History saw the elimination of the men of promise born during the eighteen nineties, whose promise was not fulfilled. In the words of A.J.P. Taylor:

Though the death roll was not large enough to create statistically a 'lost generation', there may have been an exaggerated sense of loss among those who survived. Or may be the true misfortune of the war was that the old men remained obstinately alive.

This 'sense of loss' widened further the chasm between the younger and the older generations. This gulf could not be bridged even when the war was over. It bred in the younger generation a feeling of despair and disillusionment. Further, the soldiers who might have suffered in the war and despite all the horror and cynicism of the war, had expected a new Postwar world, because they felt that their countrymen and country women would not forget, and that one or other of the utopian catchwords of the wartime politicians and publicists would prove to have some relation to actuality.

If there was to be a world safe for democracy and homes fit for heroes; if the war, however terrible and disgusting, was really to end war; if the league of Nations for the preservation of
peace was established on a basis of honest intention and trust - if these desirable ends had been achieved, few of the millions who took part in the war would have become embittered in the years that followed. But because none of these ends was achieved, because there was little evidence of a will to achieve such ends among those who ruled the postwar world, a whole generation became involved in the desperate bloodless war between the contents end Not-

Hardly was the war over when the labour market became congested with hundreds of thousands of workers. A huge proportion of the workless were ex-soldiers, who had returned to permanent idleness and penury. During the war, the shortage of labour was met by the induction of women into active service. "The Right to Serve" was granted. Women took up the jobs of their male counterparts in every sphere of life, both in the government departments and private offices. They also acted as conductors in the engineering shops. The male clerk with his quill pen and copperplate handwriting had gone for good. The female shorthand typist took his place. The number of domestic servants declined. Women became more independent and enterprising. Practical needs revolutionised fashion. Never did the skirts sweep the ground again. The petticoat disappeared and women's hats became neater. The 'women' stood emancipated and liberated.
It was against this background of social change that the wartime soldier, having exhausted himself at the warfront, returned to a life of unemployment, penury and insult at home. Having drained the state exchequer due to the war expenditure and the guarantees so accorded after the war, on behalf of the belligerent nations, England had now to provide for the soldiers. Consequently, new taxes were levied on the people. This brought about a great change in the attitude of the people towards the soldiers. A.C. Ward observes:

Through four years the soldiers had been 'beloved Tommies', credited with undying courage and every virtue. Once the panic was over, the 'beloved Tommies' became, in the mouths of their one-time sentimental and hysterical admirers, loafers and lazy wastrel concerned only to draw 'the dole' (unemployment benefit paid by the state).

The shift is, from hero-worship to condemnation and contempt. This fostered in the soldiers a feeling of rejection, despair, disillusionment and frustration. This disillusion and distress continued to smoulder a resentment and the smoke from this source was perhaps the main contributory cause of the mood of militant despair which settled upon the world. This sense of disillusion was reflected in the arts.

We, thus, see that war, no more, remains war in
the traditional sense. In fact, it outstretches itself from the battlefield into the social lives of the people who are already disillusioned with its romantic illusion. The agony becomes unbearable as it carries the disorder and the doom into the arena of human relationships and leaves people in a great moral shock.
NOTES AND REFERENCE

27. Freud, Civilization Society and Religion, p.65.
32. Fussell, Modern Memory, p.10.
33. Taylor, English History, p.86.
34. Taylor, English History, p.87.
35. Taylor, English History, p.166.
37. Ward, The Nineteen-Twenties, p.6