Chapter VI

Summing up & Conclusion

Science fiction is the study of the change in human behaviour as a result of the invasion of machine culture. In this regard, Brian Ash in his *Faces of the Future* (1975) observes that machine culture, the survival of the fittest in the evolutionary process, and the physical mortality of the solar system have stimulated the growth of the genre.

Due to the enormous growth of SF in recent years, critics have noticed that it is difficult to define SF precisely and concisely. It can be inferred from the study of many definitions that SF is a form of writing which has emerged in response to the industrial revolution. In other words, it is the study of human response to the emergence of machine culture. Often it deals with contemporary problems with a futuristic vision. While highlighting scientific and technological factors, SF also creates a 'novum', that is, a radical deviation from the empirical reality of a writer from his time and world.

Science fiction is differentiated from mainstream fiction by its adaptation of Darwin's theory of evolution in all its forms. It is that form of literature which mainly explores the impact of the industrial revolution on human lifestyle and aims at lessening future shock. The genre Science fiction
does not so much concern itself with scientific and technological progress, as
with attempts to find solutions to the social, physiological, psychological,
ethical and moral questions raised by such advancement. In spite of the
production of qualitative works of SF in large number during the twentieth
century, it is observed that the genre of SF has not been studied seriously by
many SF critics.

Robotics (Robotistic works) as a branch of SF deals with the major
principles of the genre particularly with the principles of Darwinism in its
discourses. In other words, robotics is the study of the change in the attitude of
man who lives in a contemporary or a futurological society with robots and
computers. Though Robotics is an old art, which has its roots in Homer's
works or in mythology, serious study has actually begun from the emergence
of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). Unfortunately earlier works in the
field have focused their themes upon the creations of androids/ gynoids out of
organic substances. Such works were subjected to criticism because they
raised ethical and moral issues. But, robots are of chemical origin. Hence, the
study of robot stories and novels does not involve ethical, moral and religious
implications to a large extent. The various uses of robots in industries, offices
and homes have appealed to readers and writers in recent years. Hence,
Robotics has grown enormously in the twentieth century.
Robots were created and in turn they destroyed human masters in the stories written before 1940s. But Asimov has tried to view robots from a positive angle in his works by framing the three laws of robotics which advocate human safety, dutifulness and self-protection. In these fictional works Asimov has tried to eradicate the 'Frankenstein Complex' and to treat robots as human partners in his fictional works. In Asimov's Robotic works, allegorically robots represent women, colonised people, coloured people, and other oppressed classes.

The first chapter of the dissertation is entitled "Science Fiction: An Introduction" and it focuses on understanding certain basic concepts of SF in the form of a few definitions. In addition, the first section describes briefly the themes, forms, and movements of SF. The glorification of machines was initially the centre of attraction in the formative period of SF. Through the persistent efforts of magazine editors like Horace Gold, Hugo Gernsback, John W. Campbell and others, Science fiction later witnessed a 'Golden Age' in its form and progress; the ruptures caused by the world wars and the pulpy quality of some SF writing were gradually healed by the efforts of SF writers like Asimov, Philip K. Dick, Robert A. Heinlein, Robert Silverberg and others. Yet the boom in SF took off only after man succeeded in landing on the Moon. The event thus gave way to the emergence of 'New Wave', 'Cybernetics' and 'SciFaiiku' movements.
In the second section of the introduction, an attempt has been made to deal with Robotics before the advent of Asimov with a focus upon Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and *Rossom's Universal Robots* (1921) by Karel Capek. Both these works and the innumerable critical works on them suggest that attempts were made to create a replica of a human being. But they have raised ethical and moral questions. Robots before Asimov were conceived as monsters who would invariably destroy their masters. Thus the 'Frankenstein Complex' is the common denominator of most of the robotic works produced before Asimov.

The second chapter is entitled "'Overcoming Frankenstein': Asimovian Robotics". Though the themes in SF are varied, the present trend lays focus on Physics and Genetic Engineering. Applying the principles involved in both these areas, Asimov has imaginatively created robots with positronic brains. Thematically, Asimov has introduced these robots to testify whether there would be any change in the attitude of man living in imagined human societies. But the introduction of robots as a further aid to the organisation of man has also presented problems in the ethical use of machine intelligence to some extent. Asimov exhibits a great concern for protecting robots by narrating stories in which human follies and their possible misuses are highlighted. In many of his stories human resentment for these robots form the main theme.
In this chapter through the study of stories like "Reason", "Little Lost Robot", "The Bicentennial Man", "The Tercentenary Incident", "Liar", "Galley Slave", "Evidence", and "Robot Vision" and computer stories like "The Franchise" and "The Last Question", it could be deduced that human beings prefer simpler models of metallic robots to humanoids/robots with superhuman power. In "Robbie" the irrational people represented by the character of Mrs. Weston, are convinced that robots are harmless and the 'Frankenstein Complex' is overcome. Though many of the robotistic stories like "Salley" and "Runaround" try to erase the 'Frankenstein Complex' from the minds of the people by protecting the owners of robots and formulating the three laws of robotics, it is not eradicated in the stories where robots are presented either as equal to man or superior to human beings.

In addition to the culmination of psychohistory with robotic themes, all the robotic novels by Asimov are generally centred around detective themes. Unlike Dr. Susan Calvin, Elijah Baley is an expert in detecting the common human traits of his antagonists. Hence, he solves the murder mysteries. Since 1960s, 'New Wave' writing has given special importance to characterisation in all its forms. Asimov's adaptability to this kind of new writing can be inferred by the study of classic human characters namely Elijah, Enderby, Drs. Fastolfe, Amadio, Susan, and Ms. Gladia Solaria, as well as the robot characters like Giskard, Andrew and Daneel in his robotistic works.
A common structure in the author's detective based SF novels could also be inferred here. They develop in five stages namely initial incident, the conflict, climax, solution and resolution. Similarly, the detective techniques involve motivation, means and opportunity. In general it could be concluded that Asimov's writings are characterised by three qualities: neatness of plot, apparent plausibility of devices and clarity of narration.

Robotics is the study of life and responses of man to the newly emerged machine culture. Therefore class, race, gender, slavery and colonisation form the dominant types of human oppression. So an attempt has been made to study Asimovian robotics in the light of some literary perspectives in subsequent chapters.

'Feminism' is a modern movement, which has gathered momentum after the 1960s, with the rise of second wave feminist thinking. The movement aims at overcoming gender bias and discrimination, through a variety of means, and the study of women characters' portrayal as attempted in the third chapter of the dissertation is one of them. Asimovian women characters are not depicted as cardboard stereotypes. Though Dr. Susan possesses supreme intellectual ability, she fails to cure robot neurosis in case of "Robot Dreams", and does not understand human nature as in the case of "Galley Slave". Though Gladia Solaria of the last three robotic novels is introduced as a seductress in The Naked Sun, a gradual transformation can be noticed in her intellectual growth from novel to novel.
She excels both in emotional and intellectual abilities and becomes the Galaxy leader. Gladia develops to be an ideal woman in Asimov's fiction. The female characters like Dr. Vasilia and the gynoid Landaree in contrast are self-centred in their attitude and function.

Most of SF directly deals with the problems of colonisation and usually, Earth is seen to triumph over the people of other worlds. The fourth chapter "Colonial and Racial Overtones" takes up this issue. Asimovian robotic works, however, also represent robots as colonised people. Further, all the robotic novels centre round the theme of exploring the possibilities of colonising the Outer worlds. Apart from the detective function of these novels, the protagonist Elijah is forced to safeguard Dr. Fastolfe (a spacer leader) in the interest of Earth's progress. Earthmen rely only on Dr. Fastolfe, who in turn hopes that Earth will colonise the outer worlds. Contrarily, the Spacers' plan is to use humaniform robots to colonise other worlds. In a similar manner, the Settlers plan to colonise the worlds with the help of Earthmen. Bentley (Elijah's only son) is the first to migrate to the outer world and he succeeds in establishing the Baley World. Meanwhile, the first two novels also suggest hybridisation by introducing C/Fe culture. However, at the end of the novel series, the robot Giskard transfers his telepathic power to the only living humaniform robot Daneel who allegorically represents the colonised. In the
fictional world Daneel shoulders responsibility of moulding the future human society.

The second section of the chapter analyses the problems of racism with reference to two short stories “Strike Breaker” (1956) and “Christmas Without Rodney” (1988). The first story “Strike Breaker” portrays an attempt to solve the problem of racial discrimination. Here, the tribal Ragusniks are virtually treated as machines by the invading Elsevere who even rename the planetoid after themselves. The Ragusniks are assigned the task of reprocessing human waste. Though machines are performing all the processes, the Ragusniks are treated as outcasts. At the time of the visit of the earthman Lamorak, Mikhail Ragusnik is on strike demanding equal rights. Ultimately, Lamorak the pacifier succeeds in bridging the gap. Thus Asimov allegorically solves the problem of racial discrimination in a fictional society. In the second story robots Rodney and Rambo are of different make and age. Hence, Rambo tries to overpower Rodney, as the latter is an inferior model. Symbolically, the problems of robots refer to human problems in general. However, the inhuman treatment shown by Rambo and Le Roy confirms that racial discrimination creates an impact upon the readers and prompts them to review its evil effects. From another angle, Gracie elevates the status of the older robot model thus resolving the social problem. The replacement of Enderby and other white
The fifth chapter "The Use of Psychology in Asimovian Robotics" contains three sections which deal in turn with Unconscious, Consumer Psychology and some psychological concepts and tools such as Oedipus Complex, Dreams, Sexual Anxiety, 'Frankenstein Complex' (Robophobia), Acrophobia and Telepathy. The third section also discusses the 'inferiority complex' of man resulting from the emergence of intelligent robots and computers in human society.

The analytic techniques used in Lacan's study of "The Purloined Letter" by E.A. Poe and S.A. Cowan's "Five Finger Exercise" form the basis to study the Unconscious. It is observed that the clues provided by the author at an earlier stage of his narration remain in the 'unconscious' part of the brain of a reader and become transparent through a careful reading.

According to Lacan's study the solution to the problem posed in the previous scene will be projected in the subsequent scenes; the structure only repeats through the difference of characters. Similarly, Cowan points out that "Catch That Rabbit" by Asimov consciously presents five robots whereas the sixth one remains in the unconscious of the reader. Simultaneously the detective team also unravels the sixth robot to find the solution to the problem.
at the end. The same structure is used in the novels *The Caves of Steel* and *The Naked Sun* to unravel the real murderers and their weapons. In a psychoanalytical study the 'hand of the robot', and 'the detachable limbs' become the chief metaphors for the unconscious or the signifiers of unconscious desire as they appear in "The Purloined Letter".

A consumeristic society comprises of producers, middlemen and consumers. Though it is often difficult to bridge the gap between producers and consumers, Asimov has tried to do so. First, he has advocated the merits of robots as they form a kind of commodity. In "Salley" he has depicted robots which not only protect themselves but also are conscientious enough to destroy evil elements. In "Evitable Conflict" robots are cleaner, incorruptible machines. The hurdles to human progress are caused by the activities of certain anti-robotic organisations like 'Society for Humanity'. In "Norby" Jeff gets back the money which he had invested in a junk robot. Consumer protection and consumer laws are highlighted in this story. "Light Verse" describes the artistic abilities of a robot. Similarly, Tony in "Satisfaction Guaranteed" fulfills the desire of his owner Claire. Thus, Asimovian Robotics serves to propagate consumer protection and also tries to boost the sale of robots.

The third section of the chapter has dealt with 'Oedipus complex', 'Dreams', 'Inferiority complex', 'Phobias' and 'Telepathy'. Elijah Baley's love
for his mother has been equated to the love shown by Gladia Solaria. Likewise, Asimov's love for Mother Earth flows like an inner current in his works and his traits have been transferred to his protagonist Elijah.

Before Asimov's advent as a writer, robots were depicted as monsters. But, Asimov has formulated the three laws of robotics, which advocate human safety, dutifulness, and self-protection. The study of the stories "Cal", "Galley Slave", "True Love" confirms that robots too could be as intelligent as men. Though Asimov has helped the readers to perceive that robots are acceptable in human society, humanity can accept a robot only when it remains subordinate to him. Man's ego is stirred when they become equal or superior to him.

In the 1930s, Asimov was tired of reading robot stories in which robots were created and they in turn destroyed their masters. At that juncture Robert William's short story "Robot's Return" (1938) made a powerful impact on him as it advocated a positive outlook about robots, a fact which he himself states in *The History of Science Fiction Magazines* (1975). Hence, Asimov made up his mind to demolish the 'Frankenstein Complex' by writing a series of stories and novels. But ultimately he has also written stories like "Cal" and "That Thou Art Mindful of Him" which suggest the possibility of a return to the starting point of the 'Frankenstein Complex'. In this regard, it can be inferred that Asimov has completed a cycle in narrating these themes.
Formerly, he had adapted a similar scheme in writing the Foundation series wherein, the second foundation was ultimately located at the first foundation itself.

To conclude, Asimov's mission in his robotistic works is to eradicate the Frankenstein Complex. He even treats his 'noble' robots and computers as 'Mechanical Gods'. Fictionally, he frames three laws of robotics which advocate human safety, dutifulness and self protection. Robots which are inferior to man follow these laws. But it is observed that the robots, which are equal or superior to man, will not follow the three laws of robotics. Some of his robotistic works remind us that man too should be bound by some laws as in the final novel *Robots and Empire* where Giskard and Daneel formulate the Laws of Humanics. Thus the Asimovian world of Robotics is made up of cleaner, incorruptible, conscientious men, women and robots, who accept and follow certain principles. Yet in a virtual cyclic return to the Frankenstein Complex, Asimov writes stories like "Cal" and "That Thou Art Mindful of Him", at the end of his career suggesting perhaps the continual nature of the conflict between men and machines.