CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION
Children are the epitome of innocence. Their touch, their smiles, and their gestures have the power to transport hardened cynics to those long forgotten times when they knew what delight was. The first showers after a long, hot summer, or the opening of birthday presents fills the child with infectious joy. To such uncorrupted minds we teach kindness, goodness, and other positive qualities. These teachings at home are reinforced by a sense of duty and discipline at school. To keep children from harming others, parents and teachers threaten them with punishment. Where then does the child learn to torture pets and insects? Who teaches the child to bully weaker or handicapped children? Which institution trains them to harass other children, including their younger brothers and sisters?

There is a striking physical fact which may answer these questions. Why do our nails continue to grow? When man was a cave dweller and a hunter of animals the nails served the twin purposes of defence and tearing food. With evolution these functions are being performed by other instruments and implements; thereby rendering the nails useless. Like the tail, the nails too should have
stopped growing, but they continue to grow inspite of constant paring right from the moment of one's birth till one dies. Are they the outward manifestation of the cruelty and evil inherent in man?

History is replete with examples of man's cruelty to man. During the Second War, six million Jews were massacred in Europe. It was not the work of one man. A whole nation, actively and passively, took part in the worst genocide in history. What prompted millions of civilised, home-loving, and cultured people to indulge in this orgy of torture and killing? The irony of the situation is that the World War ended not because good sense dawned on the people, but because the Allied Powers had weapons of greater destruction! In these enlightened times how is it that nations train millions of men and women to kill other men and women?

During June 1989, our senses were bombarded with the pictures and sounds of a terrible massacre in Beijing. Thousands of students and workers were crushed to death under tanks or shot. All they wanted was a right to shape their own destinies. For more than a
month these students were voicing their demands in a peaceful and orderly manner. For their trouble they were killed by the Chinese army, acting on the orders of the Chinese Government. Sadly, this is not the first time that those in power have snuffed out the lives of people demanding a change.

The greatest problem in America today is drug abuse and drug related crime. Innocent children are the victims of gun battles between rival gangs who have turned the streets of the poorer sections of the cities to battle fields. The most powerful nation does not know how to tackle this problem. In our own country, young women are burnt to death by their in-laws for not bringing sufficient dowry. Thousands of children work sixteen hour-long days in cracker factories in the most inhuman conditions for the profit of a few unscrupulous people. Each day the newspapers document the depths to which we have fallen.

Even this most cursory of glances is enough to show that no country, no race, no society is free from evil. Our study of literature enhances our
understanding of the various elements that make up life. The basic human experiences are the same, whether they be Indian or Russian or Chinese. The plight of Dicken's child characters is not very different from that of millions of children who are engaged in child labour in different countries in the world. Nor is the greed and selfishness of slave runners any different from that of employers of bonded labourers.

I have chosen to look at the concept of evil in the words of three writers who have explored the human psyche. A study of their works will definitely further our understanding of this complex subject.

Conrad's guilt complex in relation to Poland shaped many of his works. He was charged with betraying his country and his language. How hurt he felt because of these charges can be seen when we analyse his novels, *Lord Jim* and *Under Western Eyes*. Briefly, the story of Jim is one of lost honour and regained pride. Jim is a trained seaman. He knows what terrors the sea holds and what is expected of him in a crisis. He has fantasised overwhelming danger to such an extent that when the
moment comes, he is unable to act. With eight hundred pilgrims on board, the "Patna" strikes a submerged wreck. The cowardly captain deserts the ship with the first and second engineers. Jim is appalled by this betrayal and does not participate in the frantic efforts of the deserters to loosen a life boat. He is rooted to the spot by his overwrought imagination. At the seemingly last moment, he jumps. But the "Patna" does not go down. She is saved by a French gunboat. At the consequent enquiry, Jim is found guilty of deserting his post and his mate's certificate is revoked.

Jim is consumed by guilt, and unable to face society, he flees east. With Marlow's help, he gets a job. As soon as the news of the Patna incident reaches the port, he leaves the job and goes further east until he finally reaches Patusan. There he becomes the saviour and protector of the local community. This helps him to rebuild his shattered confidence. Jim is seen as a butterfly in contrast to patently villainous characters like Brown, Chester and Cornelius who are compared to beetles. Like Oedipus, in running away from his destiny, he runs headlong into it. His isolation is most profound
at the last moment of his life when he sends forth a "proud and unflinching glance" to the right and left before dying at the hands of Doramin. It seems that he has lived for an illusion and died for a dream. His tragedy is that he is totally isolated, alone. Nothing, and nobody, can touch him.

In *Under Western Eyes*, Razumov is a hardworking student studying for the silver medal. He has no family and no friends. His life has meaning only in so far as he can get the medal and join the ranks of the bureaucracy governing the Tsarist State of Russia. His solitary existence is shattered when Hal<: data-cke-eol="1">din comes to him seeking refuge after assassinating a public figure. Razumov is forced to go out and seek a coach driver who is supposed to take Haldin to safety. He then goes and betrays Haldin to the authorities. Once the deed is done, he on the twin racks of guilt and fear for the remainder of the novel. His prospective career is ruined and no amount of self-justification can wipe the sense of guilt from his mind. Councillor Mikulin shrewdly uses him as a spy to infiltrate the society of revolutionaries in Geneva. Razumov being his worst enemy courts danger by
his very behaviour with Peter Ivanovitch or Necator or Sophia Antonovna. In the end, he redeems himself by confessing his deed and his physical suffering, following the beating by Necator, purges his mind.

*Heart of Darkness* is a multilayered story set in Africa. On the surface, it is a simple adventure story with an undercurrent of social and political awareness. At another level, it is a study of the human mind, a psychological study of what happens to a man when he breaks off all moral restraints. Human behaviour is governed by public opinion and law. Conrad placed Kurtz beyond the horizons of Western civilization so that his natural instincts can come into play. This unleashing of savage energies is ultimately responsible for the shrunken heads of adversaries decorating the compound, and finally the death of Kurtz himself.

As in the case of Conrad, in Dostoevsky's works too were influenced by his own experiences and the social conditions obtaining in Russia at that time. His interest and involvement in the Petrashevsky circle earned the wrath of the powers that be, and he was
sentenced to death by a firing squad. The sadistic ruler spared the lives of the condemned men at the very last moment and the life sentence was commuted to hard labour. The mental agony of this close encounter with death was so intense that one of the prisoners went mad. Dostoevsky spent the four years of his term in prison among hardened criminals. A lesser man would either have found the physical suffering unendurable and died, or become very embittered. But Dostoevsky was changed in a very different way. He rejected his youthful liberalism for an antirationalist faith, and a belief in the sacred destiny of the Russian people.

In *Crime And Punishment*, Roskolnikov murders the old money lender and her sister, not out of greed or revenge, but to test the Napoleonic idea. According to this idea, the world is made up of a few, select extraordinary men and ordinary masses. The former are beyond all laws and norms, and it is their destiny to lead the millions of ordinary people to a better tomorrow. To do this, if thousands of lives are to be sacrificed, it would not matter. Perhaps, it was such an idea that led Stalin to sacrifice millions of Russians,
first in the defence of Lenigrad and then in the barren wastes of Siberia. Roskolnikov is not repentant that he has murdered two old women. On the contrary, he feels sorry that he is too weak a man to test the Napoleonic idea. He is on the brink of confessing his deed immediately after the murder and later when he is summoned to the police station for non-payment of rent. His urge to confess, and end it all, is balanced by a desire to outsmart the police. It is this tension which leads to his alienation from family, friends and society. Finally on Sonia's persuasion, he confesses his crime and seeks rehabilitation in society through repentance and suffering.

In The Brothers Karamazov, Dostoevsky asks two questions that have disturbed man since he began to think rationally. The two questions are, "Am I my brother's keeper?" and, "Does God exist?". To these questions, Dostoevsky's answer is a resounding yes. The novel deals with the conflict between the ideas of a believer, Father Zossima, and a sceptic, Ivan. Alyesha is the principle proponent of Father Zossima's ideas while Smerdyakov is the agent of Ivan's ideas. Against
this background, we see the unfolding story of two sensualists, Fyodor and Dmitry, caught up in an inexorable struggle. The relationship between Dmitry, Katerina and Ivan, where Katerina vacillates between the two brothers, portrays the destructive passions between man and woman. A complicating issue is Grushenka's love for Dmitry. In addition to these, we have Ivan's outrage at the suffering of children, his poem about the Grand Inquisitor, and his nightmarish encounter with the devil. The result is a masterly analysis of the human psyche.

The central theme of both the novels is that man, no matter how tainted by evil, can be reborn through faith in God. We see in them a working out of the idea of salvation through suffering. According to Dostoevsky, evil is the direct result of man's rejection of God. Conversely, evil can be overcome by faith in God and sincere repentance for one's wrongs.

Before moving on to the works of Isaac Asimov, it is necessary to understand what is Science Fiction. Fiction can be broadly classified under realistic fiction and fantastic fiction. A very elementary
distinction between these would be that realistic fiction deals with events against social backgrounds which are not significantly different from those that exist now or have existed in the past, while fantastic fiction deals with events against social backgrounds. Having made this basic distinction, we can now further divide fantastic fiction into Fantasy and Science Fiction. The surreal backgrounds in Fantasy cannot be supposed to be derived from our own. On the other hand, the surreal backgrounds of Science Fiction can be derived from our own by appropriate changes in the level of science and technology. Since a change in the level of science and technology can lead to either advancement or regression, a Science Fiction writer has an inexhaustible range to choose from. He can create a scientific utopia where all imperfections in the world are removed by the application of science, or a chaotic universe where science and technology are used as means of destruction.

An example will clarify how this can be done. We all know that oil and coal are fossil fuels and that there is only a limited quantity of both on earth.
These supplies were formed millions of years ago and are being depleted at an ever increasing rate because our demand for power is growing day by day. New supplies are being formed at a trivial rate and the day is not far when we will be without oil and coal. It is at this juncture that a science fiction writer steps in. Once these power sources are no more, it is quite probable that any, or a combination, of these events will come to pass:

(1) Man will develop new and alternate sources of energy.

(2) Man will desert earth and go to other planets in search of food and fuel. This will lead to interplanetary travel and could lead to encounters with extra-terrestrial life forms.

(3) A whole new civilization will emerge from the ruins of the old civilization in which there will be no need for coal or oil.
Civilization, as we know it, will disappear. There will be no automobiles, aeroplanes, factories or farm machinery. The resultant shortfall in agricultural production coupled with a growing population will be the cause of the next World War.

The list is endless and the science fiction writer has boundless horizons to explore.

Asimov presents the problem of choice to his students because of his tremendous output. He has written more than three hundred novels, short stories, articles on science and books on religion. I have chosen the most representative works of his, two Robot novels and the Foundation trilogy for analysis.

Thanks to Hollywood and comic books, robots have been seen as clumsy, metallic products of technology out to destroy mankind with laser guns. With his Three Laws of Robotics, Asimov transformed them into man's helpers, protectors, and companions. These Laws are elementary to the study of Asimov's Robot novels as
Newton's Laws are to a study of dynamics.

They are:

First Law: A robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.

Second Law: A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.

Third Law: A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

On closer scrutiny, we see that the three Laws are the guiding principles of many of the world's ethical systems. Every good human being is supposed to love others and protect others from harm even if such action is risky to himself. This is the First Law differently stated. The Second Law reiterates what we are taught.
throughout our lives, deference to authority. Without obedience any kind of organisation would be impossible. Lastly, the Third Law puts the basic instinct of survival in so many words. If the robots are allowed to operate without any external interference, then it would indeed be an ideal world.

The world of The Naked Sun is a prime example of the futuristic environment found in Asimov's Robot novels. Faced with a shortage of food, shelter and clothing some earth dwellers have settled on Solaria. On Solaria, all the inhabitants live a life of luxury because all the work is done by robots. Since the entire planet is occupied by only twenty thousand people, each person has acres of space to himself. To begin with, robots were needed to do the day to day work but with time and specialization, there are different sets of robots to do each task. Hardworking and never tiring, protective and ever obedient, they make life on Solaria easy to the point of boredom. It is to such a world that Elijah Baley is sent to investigate a murder. Like Holmes has his Dr. Watson, Baley has R.Daneel Olivaw, the robot from Aurora who is so like a human that the
Solarians are successfully deceived. Solaria is a strange world for Baley. There is no need for physical contact as all the work is done by robots. When the need arises, people view each other's trimensional images. The large estates reinforce the isolation. The Solarians are so comfortable in their cocooned worlds that even the mere presence of other individuals is intolerable. On such a world, the family, as we know it, does not exist. Marriage is by assignment and is only a means to maintain the population level. The parents do not know their children as the fertilized egg is removed from the mother's womb in the first month after conception to be cared for by the foetal engineer. On such a world who could murder Dr. Rikaine Delmarre? How was the murder performed? What was the motive? These are questions whose answers Baley must seek to solve the mystery.

The murder is the act of Gladia Delmarre, the wife of the victim. She has stuck the fatal blow using a robot's detachable arm. But the true culprit is the robotist, Dr. Leebig, who is seeking to undermine the basis of Solaria's robot dominated society. The
Solarians are complacent in the knowledge that robots cannot harm them because of the Three Laws of Robotics. Why does Dr. Leebig tamper with the Three Laws? He has grown so accustomed to isolation that he is paranoid about human contact and is prepared to go to any length to avoid it. He wants to design spaceships with positronic brains so that these can destroy other spaceships, even if there are humans on them. This would not be possible with robot-manned spaceships because of the Three Laws. With his new spaceships, Dr. Leebig wants to subjugate the universe to Solaria so that the life he is accustomed to will not be disturbed. It seems to the reader that he is going too far to fulfil his whimsical plans. We have only to look around us to realise that this is not confirmed to fiction alone but is a fact of even everyday life. People living in flats in metropolitan cities like Bombay or New York are unaware of either a wedding or a death in the adjacent flat. The fabulously rich, especially in America and Europe, live on solitary islands which are guarded like fortresses. From there to Dr. Leebig's situation, is only a mental leap away.
With the Foundation novels, we are at once thrown in a situation where the Galactice Empire is in the initial stages of collapse. It is a gigantic political unit made up of millions of inhabited planets which are governed from the centre, Trantor. The collapse is brought about by indolence and complacency, and if something is not done urgently it will result in a thirty-thousand-year dark age when the Galaxy will recede into technological barbarism. The Foundation is a group of physical scientists established on the Galactic periphery on the planet of Terminus. It is cut off from the centre of power, Trantor, by a revolt on the planet, Anacreon. The Foundation must maintain its independence by wits and guile alone because Anacreon is immeasurably stronger than Terminus. The Foundation not only survives all the Seldom crises, but emerges stronger from each one.

The first Seldon crisis is overcome by resorting to balance of power. Salvor Hardin seizes control of the government in a coup and establishes the ascendancy of the Foundation over the four Outer Kingdoms. With the help of atomic technology, knowledge of which has
become extinct in the outer worlds, Hardin further consolidates the power of the Foundation. Using the "priests", he gains full control over the economies of the Outer Kingdoms. When the second Seldon crisis comes, he uses the "priesthood" to vanquish his arch-enemy Wienis, the regent of Anacreon. What is refreshing about the Foundation novels is the absence of violence. It is positively rejected as being the last resort of the incompetent.

The first Foundation novel was written in 1951 and was quickly followed by the other two novels of the Foundation trilogy. The Caves of Steel and The Naked Sun were written in 1954 and 1957 respectively. The idea of the Robot novels was revived after long hibernation in 1983 in The Robots of Dawn. What Asimov was trying to do was to write a single series of novels combining the Robot novels, the Empire novels, and the Foundation novels. In trying to weave together the threads of the non-robotic universe of the Foundation novels with the robot-dominated worlds of The Naked Sun, Asimov had to resort to devices which are more ingenious than satisfactory. It is not necessary to wade through
the full set of fifteen novels to understand Asimov's concepts. I have chosen the first two Robot novels, *The Caves of Steel* and *The Naked Sun*, and the first three Foundation novels for detailed study. This study will show that though landscapes have changed, human beings have not. They are motivated by the same ideas and ideals that men have been motivated by since time immemorial. The tools and instruments are definitely more sophisticated, but the human mind has not changed.

We will see that in Conrad's words, the protagonist places himself beyond social boundaries by a deliberate act. The two great checks on man, the neighbour's opinion and the institution of law, are not present to deter him. He is thrown on his own resources, and how he copes with life is indicative of his strength. In Dostoevsky's works, the root of all evil is man's rejection of God. The muddled modern thinking compounds the problem in that it cuts people away from their culture. The salvation lies in accepting one's wrongs and repenting for the mistakes one has committed. Through intense suffering, the protagonist is purged and rehabilitated in society.
Asimov's works are particularly difficult to study because they are about a time which is thousands of years in the future. The attitudes of characters are logical extensions of how people think and live in technologically developed societies today. On the physical plane, technology has made the world a smaller place, but it has driven people away from one another. Each individual lives for himself alone. Many of us have seen people hurrying past a fallen child because they have to reach the office in time. This kind of mental isolation has reached such ridiculous levels that people prefer pets to having a family. This extreme selfishness leads to deliberate isolation, and is the cause of evil in our times. In Asimov's works, we see this concept carried forward many times over.

Theologically, the problem of evil arises any philosophical or religious view that affirms the following propositions.

1) God is almighty.
2) God is perfectly good.
3) Evil exists.
If evil exists, it seems that either God does not want to obliterate evil, then His goodness is denied. On the other hand, if He wants to obliterate evil but is not able to, then His omnipotence or almightiness is denied.

The theological issue can be resolved by denying any one of the three propositions. The well-known American philosopher, William James, attempted to solve the problem by denying the almightiness of God. He regarded God as having great but limited power, and as being perfectly good. Some philosophers, like the Seventeenth century German philosopher, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, have not totally denied the proposition that God is almighty. They have defined the proposition to mean that God can do anything that is logically possible. Since He is limited to what is logically possible, existence of evil is necessary in this "best of all possible worlds".

While Hinduism denies the existence of evil, Orthodox Christianity has chosen to live with the tension involved in affirming all the three
propositions. Be that as it may, no religion exhorts its primary aim of all religions is to so order their followers that society can be possible. With this intention, all religions preach peace, harmony, and goodwill. It is only the fanatics who give religion a bad name. It is indeed ironical that it is fanatics who spread a religion far and wide.

Many people will be surprised to learn that Islam categories as sin any action, thought, or will that is harmful to the body or soul; and violates the right of God or the right of man. It acknowledges the fact that man has a great capacity for goodness and piety. It is his primary duty to curb his tendency for evil and practising goodness. To remind man of God's omnipresence, Islam directs its followers to pray five times a day. Christ taught his followers to treat others as they would like to be treated by others. This sublime teaching alone is enough to wipe out envy, hatred, cruelty, and vengeance from the face of the earth. In the face of these teachings, how does one account for the orgy of bloodletting between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland; or the decade long was
between Iran and Iraq in which millions of people died. It is equally difficult to understand why Jews and Arabs are sworn enemies because of religion. It would appear that rather than ennobling man, religion has made him intolerant of the other's point of view.

From the ultimate point of view, there is no good and no evil according to Hinduism. Evil is nothing but a perversity of what is considered to be good. From the ultimate standpoint, the difference between the two is dissolved, just as a pinch of sugar and a drop of a bitter juice lose all significance when they are dissolved in the waters of the ocean. The incidence of duality, like good and evil, is merely incidental to the sport of creation, and the wise man transcends both. While this may be an acceptable philosophical view, it does not help the ordinary man who has to live in a demanding world.

Without going into too much detail, one can say that Hinduism is more a way of life than a religion. The various texts, the pronouncements of saints and seers, and the different schools of philosophy are only
meant to be signposts on the road of life. Hinduism does not say that there is only one way. It specifically says that different religions are like different rivers leading to the sea, different ways to the same ultimate reality. Depending upon the follower's physical capacity and mental inclination, he is free to choose any way he likes, so long as he does not harm others. The central precept of Hinduism is that while helping others is virtuous, it is sinful to harm others. Given this basic premise, there can be no conflict with another school of thought. But then this is not an ideal world. Inspite of religious exhortations, parental instructions, and social institutions man gives in to evil.

Evil arises only due to wrong thinking. If man wants wealth or power, there is nothing wrong with it. What is wrong is that he attaches so much importance to it that he loses all sense of balance. To make wealth or power the central object of one's life only demeans it, because life is much greater than the individual components that go into making it. If a man who has purchased a pair of very expensive shoes were to wear
them around his neck, he would become an object of ridicule. However expensive or however beautiful they may be, shoes are meant to be worn on the feet and not around the neck. Similarly, however important wealth or power or any object might be, it simply does not deserve to be the be all, and end all of one's life. Once this basic idea is grasped, one can move forward.

Any person can break free the vicious cycle of desire-fulfilment-greater desire by analysing his thoughts. When one constantly thinks of a sense object, say a car, he gets attached to it. This attachment crystallises to form a burning desire for possession and enjoyment of the car. When the car is denied, the intense desire is transformed into anger. An angry man, like one intoxicated, forgets everything and acts in a delusion. The car having become the most important thing in his life, he is prepared to do anything, including harming others, to get it. This loss of the power of discrimination is the first indication that the man will perish soon unless he takes remedial action.
In the above example, the source of all suffering is the intense contemplation of the car. On further thinking, we see that if a car could make a person happy, then the car manufacturer would be the happiest man. Conversely, if not having a car can make one unhappy. Then millions of people who do not own a car can never be happy. We know that both the statements are patently incorrect. Let us go a step further. If a person can be happy only by possessing a car, then he will be miserable when it is taken away from him. This would mean that the person is dependent on the car for his happiness. It is ridiculous to think that any object can have such power over a right-thinking man. What is true of the car is true of every sense object.

Right from childhood, every man seeks joy in sense experiences. Pain or pleasure depend upon the discomfort or comfort that the sense experience provides. Few people ever get out of this notion to understand that happiness is more in the mind than in the gross physical experience. Gradually, in the course of the sense experiences, man starts to rebel in the thoughts of the experiences and that is how he binds
himself further into the gross physical perceptions and experiences.

The man who seeks pleasure in the sense perceptions is bound to suffer. If the proximity of the flower to the nose, sweets to the tongue, a movie to the eyes, and music to the ears provide man with a joyous experience, these experiences have frustration and sorrow inherent in them. When the flower fades away or the nose is blocked, the food is not available or the tongue is burnt, the eyes lose the capacity to see or a ticket for the movie is not available, the ears go deaf or the music system breaks down, the joy is transformed to sorrow.

From the foregoing, it is clear that Hinduism is concerned with man living a balanced life. One can go and assert that these ideas have no religious or spiritual content; their primary aim being to reduce stress and strain, so that he is free to contemplate the reason for his existence. It is only when the mind is turned inwards that it will seek answers to the fundamental question, "Who am I?" The search for the
answer, the journey on the path to self-realisation is an adventure. It is not for the weak, but for the strong. It is not by running away from home that one seeks the answer, but by living a full life.

In the following pages, the concept of evil in Conrad, Dostoevsky, and Asimov will be discussed with reference to plot and character. We will see that these concepts have not changed drastically. The changes, if any, are only in the external environment. The very fact that we come across people who exhibit the traits of Jim or Raskolnikov or Hardin, makes such a study more compelling. Understanding the motivations of the principal characters will certainly enhance our appreciation of literature and awareness of the complexity of life. In the conclusion, I will briefly examine the role of religion in curbing evil, and in opening to us avenues for the enjoyment of the positive aspects of life.