ABSTRACT

Chapter 1: Introduction -- proposes an analogical study of Conrad and Mu. Va with reference to their moral stratification of humanity in their fiction. With brief biographical sketches of the two novelists, it establishes the temperamental affinity between them in their rationalistic outlook on life. They search for a natural/instinctual morality in the place of a religious one for the conduct of man/woman on earth. They share the view that man is a complex mixture of both good and evil. Apropos their fiction deals with human beings inevitably caught in a moral dialectic of good and evil. Though they seem to be preoccupied with this complex variety, they also float two other categories which are morally or immorally involved in the tragic action of the earlier.

Chapter II: The Tragic Man -- deals with the complex category of humanity containing both the criminal and redemptive potentials within -- the criminal potential is revealed when he/she exercises his/her ontological freedom in an extreme situation and his/her redemptive potential when he/she develops a spiritual communion with his/her victim. Their tragic man/woman, though succumb to the devil within, is concomitantly disturbed by his/her moral consciousness. They are of a broad nature comprising the other two varieties -- the infra and the supra. The Conradian heroes involve themselves in professional crimes, whereas, the Mu. Vavian heroes/heroines in domestic crimes. However, the area of exploration in both their fictions is the human mind affected by crime. The prolonged suffering, moral isolation and repeated humiliations make the tragic men and women realise and admit that they are equally affected like their victims by their crime. It results in their open confession. After their confession, they are accepted as "one of us", both in the much advanced Western society and in the orthodox Tamil society.
Chapter III: The Infra Man -- deals with Conrad's "fools" and Mu. Va's "numb people". The people of this category are the intensified versions of the dark aspect of tragic humanity living without the benefit of moral codes. They are also endowed with criminal potentials but the redemptive potential is absent in them. They always remain in darkness, not even once making an attempt to come out morally alive. In both the authors, they serve as accomplices to the dark powers, aggravating/precipitating the downfall of their tragic counterparts which invariably ends in their death.

Chapter IV: The Supra Man -- deals with Conrad's "thunderingly exalted creatures" and Mu. Va's people who are "too careful to commit a crime". In both Conrad and Mu. Va, the Supra men/moral teachers perform the same priestly function in bringing the tragic men and women to the altar of confession, making them redeem their lost moral selves. In fact, the tragic men and women look up to them for their moral recovery. The relationship between these wise old men and the tragic humanity resembles that of a father and his children. The supra category run counter to the infra type in facilitating the tragic protagonists to resolve their moral dilemma.

Chapter V: Conclusion -- sums up the three categories of humanity and winds up with the conclusion that Conrad is idealistic and Mu. Va. pragmatic in their treatment of the human psyche caught in the moral dialectic of good and evil.