CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

I

The literary historian or critic while making an assessment of a work of art appears to bring about a conciliatory approach to the bonds that unite the creative writer with his environment. He however attempts to judge a situation or character in a novel or any form of literature by analysing various factors that relate to an agreement between man and his milieu. Considering literature as a chronicle of man's activities in a specific social sphere Graham Hough affirms,

By writing we intend to communicate, if our end were solitary contemplation, why write? ¹

He further adds, that

literature is a social activity ...... meant to be read. ²

Probably he means to suggest that unless it is read and understood by a sizable part of population, the process of understanding the interactions between literature and the
milieu might remain incomplete. Pointing out the reciprocal influences that operate between literature and society, one might observe how

**Literature is pre-eminently a social act**
as well as a social product. 3

If Sociology is generally defined as a study of human social structure and relationships, the series of interactions that take place between human beings or between certain communities of men have been spontaneously recorded or expressed in literature. As B.Kuppuswamy observes:

**Society........... is a process........ a series of interactions between human beings........ No social life is possible without interactions.** 4

It is generally agreed that the various processes of interactions taking multifarious shapes of conflict, competition and co-operation in a relatively sociological sense spell out wider possibilities of modifying or transforming numerous established patterns of living.

Man is primarily a social animal. It is universally believed that he comes to acquire a quality or virtue more by
means of imitation rather than inspiration. Raymond Williams is of opinion that

All human virtue is the creation of society and in this sense not 'natural' but 'artificial': art is man's nature.  

Thus many a critic and social thinker observe that the corporate existence of man in a family, community or neighbourhood is mostly responsible for strengthening the qualities lying latent in him. Max Stirner expresses it in a more literal way when he concludes that

society has been............ man's original state.  

If man is considered as inherently susceptible to initiate or experiment on varied patterns of living, society in its turn and being an aggregate physical expression of such experiments is supposed to frame its criteria of executing and implementing them. Such an accommodation of interest on the part of man and society may be termed as social or sociological change. Thus an understanding of any kind of sociological change is, by and large, a matter of particular social process that is subject to change. Gillin and Gillin observe:

Social changes are variations from the accepted modes of life; whether due to alteration in geographical conditions in
cultural equipment, composition of the population or ideologies and whether brought about by diffusion or inventions within the group. 7

It is generally acknowledged that change is the law of creation. Family, religion, custom or tradition as veritable components of a specific social structure are supposed to undergo the processes of change from time to time. Vidyabhusan and Sachdeva observe:

Individuals may strive for stability, societies may create the illusion of permanence, the quest for certainty may continue unabated, yet the fact remains that society is an ever-changing phenomenon, growing, decaying, renewing and accommodating itself to changing conditions and suffering vast modifications in the course of time. 8

However, as a persistent phenomenon by itself, a certain social structure might maintain its continuity inspite of sporadic changes or disruptions that emerge from within and without.

The creative author or novelist studies a character or a situation largely in context of a tussle that is generally found between the aforesaid forces of persistence and forces of disruption: more literally speaking, between change-resistant spirit of simpler societies and change-ready spirit of complex
societies. The author more or less is a product and rebel of the environment he lives in. He is just like any other person living in society who naturally conveys within a fraction of a moment the ethnic characteristics he has reared in himself as part of the milieu. He not merely experiences the gestures of various forces of change that bring about such tussle, he also attempts to convert, exploit and eventually project such forces of change from a level of sociological or social being to that of a literary becoming. Despite a personal or subjective method of handling a situation or portraying a character, to a considerable extent he is aware of the possibility that his rendering might catch the populus or mass response in the long run. Under normal conditions or circumstances he might not get away from the community or milieu in communicating a certain message to the readers for whom he generally writes. He as such shares the feelings of a group of people by dint of which, he could seek release into some socially meaningful pattern.

As a result of more emphasis being laid on the empirical modes of education, modern techniques of human social living seem to have made the dichotomy between forces of persistence and disruption more obvious. In view of ushering in of new scientific and technological experiments, ecological and demographic studies or journalism and political upheavals, the
basic values of life have been at war with one another. The events of human history following the First World War have rather more elaborately disclosed the tug of war between the old and the new values in living patterns: tradition versus modernity of which a growing awareness on the part of a novelist or author for sociological ambivalence in creative literature seems to have more steadily developed in twentieth century. Being an integral part of the milieu the author at least cannot subconsciously part with the values emerging from a certain crisis in culture subsequently embodying themselves as parts of characters and events in a work of art. Therefore the author or novelist to a great extent attempts to incorporate the diverse sociological trends, or in other words the varying modes of culture into his work of art, which he feels, might identify his literature with culture.

The obligation usually maintained between culture and literature probably could be more meaningfully studied if one acquaints oneself with a few theories of social change. Literally speaking such theories may be studied under two separate categories: the evolutionary, that deals with the directions of social change, and the revolutionary, that deals with the causes of social change. The former, apparently based on the observation made by Charles Darwin, aims at analysing social evolution as one cultural or human aspect of the law of cosmic evolution, which more or less makes an attempt to restore
order as criterion of all forms of social relationships. The latter, chiefly advocated by Karl Marx highlights that only material conditions of existence out and out determine the factors of social change, which may even bring about changes in various social institutions like state, religion and family. The evolutionary doctrine lays stress on continuity of social structure as a natural persistent system, on the contrary, the revolutionary theory has been rather framed to confine itself to functional or economic realities like modes of production and exchange that determine the process of social change. Here the question of establishing order in a strictly idealistic or philosophical sense is often ruled out.

The evolutionary theories or directions of social change mainly include theory of Deterioration, Cyclic theory and Linear theory. The theory of Deterioration unfolds how initially man lived a life of perfect integrity and happiness which he gradually or eventually came to lose when deteriorations began to take place in all spheres of life as parts of a natural order. The Oriental thinkers and visionaries who suggest that man is supposed to pass through four determinate ages or yugas like Satya, Tretaya, Dwapara and Kali, are of opinion that values keep on changing or deteriorating from one age to another, though each age or yuga generally holds its own values under the plea of ‘Yuga Dharma’. 
Events of human history also disclose how the theory of deterioration upholds the notion that any sociological change or variation of culture unfixes itself from the level of order, and subsequently reveals a stage by stage movement the level of deluge or disorder which again may restore order. Generally it is experienced or agreed that social order is expressed by means of certain hierarchies which, as H.G. Duncan writes,

\[
\text{differentiate men into ranks, classes and status groups, and at the same time resolve differentiation through appeals to principles of order, which transcend those upon which differentiation is based.} \quad 12
\]

The theory of Deterioration coincides with the Cyclic theory of social change which rather attempts to deduce the fullest utility of its own objective from the preceding one. Unlike the former, the Cyclic theory strongly denotes the idea of progress that offers interesting studies in social change in a more modern context. By accepting the Oriental or Hindu concept of the four determinate ages or 'Yugas', Spengler views that modern society in the current century is passing through a catastrophic phase of extinction. He not merely identifies a particular stage of society with a particular age or 'Yuga', simultaneously he affirms how

\[
\text{society rather possesses a pre-determined life cycle and as such it}
\]
passes through a rotation of birth, growth, maturity and decline. In a definite cyclic order or rotation, society must get through phases of all kinds from the phase of conception to extinction and would come back to its phase of conception once again. Spengler studies the rise and fall of Greek and Egyptian civilisations

as parts of the Cyclic theory and concludes that the entire Western civilisation is now in its declining phase which he holds as inevitable.

Vilfredo Pareto observes that any society as such comprises two categories of people: the rentiers and the speculators. He says while the rentiers accept the traditional ways of life, the speculators are eager to take chances for accomplishing their ends in a rather reactionary manner. He is of opinion that any effort made by the rentiers to hold power by method of manipulation is finally thwarted by the speculators thus completing the cycle and vice-versa.

In identical manner F. Stuart Chapin explains how various parts of culture usually move through a cycle of growth, vigour and decay,
If the cycles of major components such as the government and the family, coincide or synchronize, the whole culture, he believes, would be in a stage of integration. If these do not synchronize, the culture will be in a shambles. 16

Pitirim Sorokin analyses how the entire Western civilisation, passing through an agnostic phase has got itself devoid of an ideational value. He advocates that

only by restoring to reality and values which are conveyed in terms of prevalence of a supersensory or supernatural God, the Western civilisation could be saved from the contemporary agnostic disorder or decay. 17

It appears that, the theory of deterioration and the cyclic theory throw light on maintaining a kind of quintessential discipline in shaping the phases of civilisations which may be more or less accepted as parts of the law of creation.

In establishing the Linear theory, Herbert Spencer explains that society as such proceeds to a point of more perfection or refinement as civilisation advances. He analyses and illustrate how man initially believed that Divine or supernatural powers determined the affairs of life from which he evolved his own way of philosophical speculations that have culminated in an empirical observation of facts and events in recent times. Unlike the Cyclic theory that is taken as the result of abstract
philosophical studies, the Linear theory aims at disclosing the development of social life from supernatural and philosophical stage to that of a positive stage which assures how

society as such is slowly yet steadily moving towards a stage of perfection.  

He concludes that any one while trying to comprehend the growth of a particular community or society might affirm how in its primitive stage it is in a state of militarism when different groups of people fight with each other for existence. When existence is followed by security it moves towards a state of industrialism thus leading to greater differentiation and integration of its parts. The installation of an integrated system makes it possible for the different groups—social, economic and racial to live or continue for good. Hence it may be observed that industrialism eventually gives rise to a complex urban set up by more or less completing the linear evolution. Looking at the socio-political and cultural history of England Cobbett, like his predecessor Burke, observes how

the savage form of militarism or barbarity the common people of England undergo before and during the Industrial revolution: a kind of self-assertion that they come to know or experience later on and ultimately the more complex and urban milieu they have been adjusting with in recent times.
All these aforesaid observations to a large extent come to establish how the development of a specific social system is considered as part of a natural or cosmic evolution. Talcott Parsons affirms,

A social structure is a natural persistent system. It maintains its continuity despite internal changes from moment to moment, year to year, just as a living organism remains the same living organism inspite of metabolic changes it is dynamic.

The revolutionary theories or causes of social change headed by Karl Marx’s theory of economic determinism suggest that only material conditions of life determine the factors of sociological change. Such theories broadly constitute a 'materialistic interpretation of history'. Like Keller he believes that social change is as such brought about by purely economic factors. As Marx observes:

It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness.

He explains, in this context, how social order which has passed through the five different phases called the oriental, the ancient, the feudal, the capitalistic and the communistic,
chiefly centres round changes in the modes of man's life as a social being against materialistic connotation of production or exchange. The individual as a social microcosm is supposed to assist the changes that operate from without as parts of environmental macrocosm. Marx and Lenin both visualise a state of total perfection to be gradually achieved by the people of U.S.S.R. But many oppose the Marxist view as a contradiction of the basic concept of superiority of social forces over economic forces, for they affirm that economic forces only assist in building up man's inherent status in society. Despite the proposition put forward by Raymond Williams that

```
Marxist theory of culture is more or less subject to take facts of the economic structure and consequent social relations as the guiding string on which a culture is woven,''
```
man's approach to a certain pattern of living owes more to psychological and moral criteria than economic. Vidyabhusan and Sachdeva observe,

```
An inadequate psychology is perhaps the fatal weakness of all determinisms.'
```

Like the theory of economic determinism, the theory of religious determinism is equally significant. Max Weber believes that religion chiefly brings about the social change. The principles formulated in the code of Hinduism or Buddhism have
largely influenced the socio-economic strata of living of people belonging to these religious cults. But the question arises, if different social institutions keep on changing being influenced by changes or variations in religions, under what circumstances religion itself gets changed? Religious doctrines being considered as absolute, time and again have thwarted any attempt to secure a clear or empirical knowledge of a certain circumstance or situation by causing change in religion.

Besides the two major concepts, the concept of evolution and that of progress, more or less come to regulate sociological changes. Evolution, as taken by Mac Iver, is an order of change, which

must occur within the changing unity as the manifestation of forces operative within it. But since nothing is independent of the universe, evolution also involves a changing adaptation of the object to its environment, and after adaptation a further manifestation of its own nature. Thus evolution is a continuous process of differentiation –cum– integration.26

But referring to the idea of progress one may find out how a particular social system fast improves both morally and materially being exclusively based on a personal motivation or choice. Ginsberg defines progress as
a development or evolution in a
direction which satisfies rational criteria of
value.\textsuperscript{27}

An inter-caste wedding or a nuclear family as a part of progress
might be accepted by a change-ready community or rejected by a
change-resistant one as values keep on differing from person to
person. Progress as such comprises its own criteria of social
interactions following its own cultural variation. Despite
being a temporary experiment or identification of a certain
cultural variation, it rather attempts to highlight one's own
choice of living. To sum up, evolution and progress are
inter-disciplinary forces in sociology that have largely
influenced the set of actions and reactions of characters drawn
in literature in general or fictional literature in particular.

II

In view of a few variations in culture or in other words
theories and phenomena of sociological changes keeping pace with
such variations, the creative writer usually comes to acquire an
innate faith in reality or truth of his experience. The
novelist conveys in his work the truth which he draws out from
an immediacy of experience as a part of society. Such truth is
part of the reality contemporaneous to him or else the judgement of value might not be relevant in its cultural context. Such attitude not only makes him a kind of safety-valve of contemporary reality, but also a time-binder who records the changes brought about by a specific section of people living in a community. Raymond Williams concludes in this context that

\[
\text{Literature changes as per changes in society. A rising social group will create new institutions which shall release its own writers.}^{28}
\]

On the contrary the novelist is supposed to see that the human interest in his work of art is least hampered by infusing into it a socio-cultural data. In this context he comes to rely on persons as individuals rather than types. In R.K. Narayan's *The Man eater of Malgudi* (1962) the introvert printer Nataraj and the extrovert taxidermist Vasu offer themselves as antipodes of contrasting human qualities. The observation of the author astutely pertains to the post-Independence strategy of Indian political leaders during the Nehru era. The procedure of industrial planning backed by those political leaders who take political freedom granted to India as means of wielding more power and profit for themselves, encourage a few opportunist industry-maniacs to achieve their profit-hunting motive. Taxidermy as an industry is accepted by the aggressive Vasu as a better source of economic re-orientation of India than mere
running of a press. Complete misuse of native resources or an abrupt imitation of western way of living might account for any threat imposed by the gymnast-taxidermist to the humble population of Malgudi, rather represented by a docile Nataraj. Hence an abuse of industrialisation serves as a constant barrier to the over-all human freedom or interest which Narayan has profoundly displayed in the novel. C.I. Glicksberg observes that

Society is an abstraction, only the individual the social microcosm is real. 29

The creative writer or novelist, therefore, attempts to bring about a kind of reconciliation between the social man and the individual man, which he is supposed to elaborate in view of presenting or maintaining the mutual obligation that generally exists between man and his milieu. As a form of creative literature and mostly as a result of India's contact with the West, fiction has been considered as a recent development in Indian literature. Following gradual exchange of multiple forces of acculturation between India and the West, the elite of the sub-continent had not merely resorted to regional novel writing in respective regional languages, some of the most relevant studies of changing Indian social life depicted in a mode of authenticity in the works of a few authors have more or less influenced the writing of Indian or Indo-Anglian fiction in later years. As Iyengar puts it,
Some of the best studies of social life are naturally enough in the regional languages; and it is not easy to translate the racy idiom of everyday speech into English.\(^{30}\)

The regional Indian novelists like Rabindranath Tagore, (Bengali), Sarat Chandra Chatterji (Bengali), Munshi Premchand (Hindi), Fakirmohan Senapati (Oriya) and Thakazhi Shivasankar Pillai (Malaylam), present in their works the problems of child marriage, widow re-marriage, emancipation of women, feudalism versus new-wage economy, mass illiteracy versus caste system prevalent in the sub-continent. A few Indo-anglian authors and novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Govind Desani, Bhabani Bhattacharyya, R.P. Jhabvala and others, almost keeping pace with their regional counterparts quite articulately present in their works the growing economic instability, struggle for survival, political upheavals, famine and poverty artificially created by pseudo-capitalists, problems of caste-system or joint family system and East-West encounter in almost each level of social experience or personal experience of the Indian middle-class both before and after Independence. These novelists, apart from maintaining a deep human interest in portraying a character or situation, also play the role of social critics in course of treating the same.

Mulk Raj Anand’s *Coolie* (1936) portrays the restless attempt of a commoner to survive in a world whose end is chiefly
material. The protagonist Munoo— an Indian version of Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849) is out to face life amidst untold tyranny and hardship inflicted upon him by his uncle and aunt as well as outsiders. However physically stout he might be as a hill boy the eventual struggle for survival psychologically knocks him down. As parts of his quest for a job against a milieu infested with growing economic exploitation of the 'have-nots' by the 'haves' of pre-Independence society, Munoo becomes a domestic servant, labourer in a cotton mill, coolie in the grain market, and porter at the station. Following acquaintance with an elephant trainer he comes to Bombay which baffles him with greater disappointments in life. While attempting to escape in course of a violent communal riot he is incidentally rescued and brought to Simla by an Anglo-Indian lady who engages him as her rickshaw-puller, personal attendant and even an instrument of her carnal satisfaction, thus thoroughly using (or abusing?) him more as her pet-dog than a human by-stander! Excessive strain on body and mind leads to consumption to which he naturally succumbs at last.

The multiple masters (and a mistress too?) who successively keep on torturing him at contemporary households, go-downs, mills or factories may represent the sadist-pseudo-capitalist outlook of the British authorities, who have finally reduced an aspirant native youngster to a mere sub-human bread-earner. H.M. Williams observes,
Anand wants to expose the vicious injustice inflicted by privileged members of Indian society on the poor, the dehumanizing of a whole class of workers.  

Munoo actively submits himself to all sorts of dehumanising forces and rather maladjusts himself to the growing structuration of new totalities of current socio-economic set up. His docile confrontation with realities makes him realise that only two classes of people have been flourishing in his country: the rich and the poor or the habitual exploiters in the form of sycophant-officers, mill owners, money lenders and 'memsahibs' and the permanently exploited who are no other than the labourers, farmers-cum-debtors, bonded slaves or servants.

Here the Marxian view of economic determinism may to a certain extent be taken into account. The successive plights that befall the teenager-protagonist emanate from the fact that he lacks even a minimum economic status. Without economic equality a person cannot possess any social recognition. Hence he is destined to rush into humiliations in all spheres of earning a livelihood. Notwithstanding his ethnic awareness of self-respect or desire to obtain an identity of his own, his desperate effort to survive or his 'mission for bread' overtakes any sense of self-esteem present in him. Though he is unable
to make any protest directly his miserable experiences strongly imply a Marxian note of economic determinism as part of a revolutionary theory of sociological change.

If Munoo suffers silently his counterparts Bakha in Mulk Raj Anand’s Untouchable (1935) and Kalo in Bhabani Bhattacharyya’s He who rides a tiger (1954) astutely protest against caste-tyrants and Mammon-worshippers whom they consider as responsible for all social inequalities of the times. Bakha’s usual reticence in performing the work of a sweeper is amazingly converted to a kind of explosive defiance of the caste-tyrants which on the contrary is a mode of action that establishes the self-esteem of the protagonist in the long run. He has not merely undergone series of humiliations following a chain of events occurring during the day, he feels quite encouraged to hear Gandhi’s speech in which the Mahatma has emphatically identified a low-caste person as 'Harijan' or man of God. He too feels elated while learning from a local Marxian poet that very soon the use of flush is coming to replace the manual operation of cleaning the dirt. His enthusiasm redoubles when a Christian salvationist assures to provide him with a status in society if only he agrees to convert himself to a Christian! The Gandhian ideology accompanied by the advent of technological wonders and the tactical spread of Christianity in a caste-ridden Hindu society completely thrill him and with the feasibility of a full self-transformation he behaves like a
challenging reactionary or a part of the 'brave new world' showing promises of his success in the final part of the work. As Gandhi himself says in course of a public speech in Untouchable:

All public wells, temples, roads, schools, sanatoriums must be declared open to the untouchables. And if you all profess to love me, give me a direct proof of your love by carrying on propaganda against the observance of untouchability. 32

The direct impact of Gandhian ideology, as a part of Anand's political novel, helps in restoring the self-esteem of the have-nots of the country thus transforming a myth into reality. The Marxian theory of economic determinism finds expression in forces of polarisation present in both the novels. If Munoo merely accepts the reality, Bakha is rather confident of changing a myth into reality. This may be taken as a kind of parallelism which is more sociological than vaguely economic. C.D. Narsimhaiah observes:

The social concerns and artistic preoccupations seem to take hold of Anand by turns and where the two fuse, as in
'Untouchable', the novel is safe and its course is one of absorbing human interest.

Bhattacharyya’s He who Rides a Tiger highlights a more dynamic sort of parallelism and contrast than the episode of Bakha. Kalo, the protagonist, unlike the Indian proletariats depicted in Anand’s fiction, presents himself in a strange camouflage followed by a set of fun, profiteering adventures and a unique sense of victory—a victory not for a pecuniary gain for himself, but for the entire community of the down-trodden, tortured and humiliated in a caste-ridden Indian Hindu society. Kalo is probably by far the unprecedented master of the situation or destiny which he himself has devised to save his brethren from a caste-ridden inferno! Following his dismay of a prison life that occurs while trying to steal a banana to quench his hunger, the embarrassed blacksmith is determined to take revenge on the so-called gentry of the urban society of Bengal whom he takes as primarily responsible for admitting all kinds of evils including the 'man-made' famine in recent years. Thus taking on the profile of a Brahmin priest he is out to counsel the hoarders, black marketeers and affluent businessmen asking them all to donate heavily for the 'supposed emergence' of a holy deity from the ground on an imaginary day. His clever appeals to the gentry fetch him not only plenty of cash and milk which he secretly diverts to the poor and hungry population of the neighbourhood, but also such appeals and crafty persuasions enable him to earn a stable livelihood for himself and his
daughter. Last but not the least, on the day the fake deity is supposed to 'emerge' he most dramatically discloses his true identity before the huge crowd of donors telling them how all along he has been able to take revenge on them all: the caste tyrants of society!

A product and rebel of a malevolent social system Kalo presents his reactions in such pre-planned manner that one might not ignore the contextual significance of the structuration of new totalities which might relevantly satisfy the demands of social groups mentioned earlier. As K.N. Joshi and B.S. Rao explain, Kalo's mission finally ends with a note of triumph for the soul over the flesh.

The climactic triumph in a sociological sense may be approximated with the result of an archetypal process of manipulation which Kalo has devised and experimented by himself. In a purely historical sense the concept of division of labour formulated in olden times has in course of time paved the way for a complex caste-system that has gradually sub-divided the Indian Hindu society into multiple compartments of castes and sub-castes thereby attributing more authority to the high-caste gentry. The further intricacies being admitted to the infra-structure of caste system may be studied under the head of
linear theory of sociological change. It upholds that the greater the subdivision or fragmentation, the more convenient it becomes on the part of high-caste Hindus to wield more power at the cost of ignorance or superstition of the low-caste ones. Hence emanates the tactical method of taking up the mask of a Brahmin priest which helps Kalo to command respect of all classes of people and categories of castes and sub-castes.

Precisely the camouflage teaches a lesson to the affluent which may help open their eyes and make them feel as to what extent they have divested the formulation of division of labour of its human connotation. The discovery of the man behind the mask is followed by a pandemonium or in other words a state of militarism which the audience have to inevitably pass through as a part of reality. Such an experience reveals how the other extreme of the linear theory of sociological change does manifest itself in context of an uncalled-for situation! If caste-system is a manipulable phenomenon so also is Kalo's handling of the situation with utmost tact, which proves—like the emergence of 'a fake deity'—that mankind for its decent survival should come back once again to the primordial point of militarism. The pandemonium may be equated with a return to militarism and Kalo's guise that forms the genesis of it serves as means of approximation of the Linear doctrine as advocated by Spencer.
Besides, the technique adopted by Kalo may also be considered from the point of view of how the popular faith in supernatural or Divine powers determines the affairs of mortal existence, which provides a purpose to Kalo's 'temporary' priesthood. Kalo, who could well make out the inherent weakness of the gentry for religion, plans his future actions thus fully depending upon such blind belief that turns a myth into reality. He is sure that years of English education, urban style of living, imitation of foreign mannerisms or culture and a pseudo-industrial set-up could not eradicate such popular faith even from the minds of businessmen or hoarders. The novelist thus presents an x'ray report of the idiosyncratic religious fear lurking in the minds of the metropolitan gentry, which the black-smith exploits only when the time ripens for it. He is a kind of speculator too, as suggested by Vilfredo Pareto, who by sheer tricks of calculation gives the rentiers or the top-ranking ones a lesson that forms a parallel experience found in the cyclic theory of social change. To conclude, the narrative combines parts of both the Linear and the Cyclic doctrines which together do not fail to highlight the suspense and variety of the human drama sustained till the last. Inspite of the excitement of an angry crowd, Sir Abala Bandhu, the seasoned hoarder and businessman comments on Kalo's fashion of self-revelation:
"Marvellous!........ What business sense! What method! why aren't there are one or two men like the blacksmith in my office"?35

III

In R.K. Narayan’s novels and stories one may conveniently locate ‘the story teller’ occupying a more stable position than ‘the social observer’ or ‘critic’. Claiming himself to be a pure story-teller whose fundamental interest lies only in narrating a story, Narayan rather counter-attacks the critical opinion which by and large consider his works as being sociological. As he himself replies to a query made by a correspondent of a journal:

I write about what interests me, human beings and human relationships; improving society is not my aim......... 36

However confident Narayan might have been in his own perspective by acknowledging his novels and stories as only the aggregate of delightful plots or entertainers, one may not possibly overlook the sociological development of Indian milieu centering round his fictitious world of Malgudi. It appears
that the statement offered by the author on the nature of his own novels and stories has been only a one-sided interpretation. Elsewhere he has replied in the interview made by the same correspondent of India Today:

I would be quite happy if no more is claimed from me, than being just a story teller. Only the story matters; that's all.

But one may question in view of the aforesaid remark emphatically made by the novelist a few years ago—does the story alone matter? Narayan unlike most of his contemporaries such as Anand and Rao, lays fundamental stress on presenting an episode of life with such simplicity of narration, suspense and novelty that it makes his works highly absorbing to the average reader. The felicity of his narrative structure accompanied by a tale-tell charm in fact keeps the readers engaged till they come across the most surprising end of a story delineated by the author. But ironically considering his entire body of work as a sincere documentation of the concept of truth Narayan adds in course of the aforesaid interview:

If a story is in completely with the truth of life, truth as I perceive it, then it will automatically be significant.
Thus while himself acknowledging his stories as sources of truth combined with human beings or modes of human relationship as stated by him earlier, his counter-attacks on critics aiming to find out sociological meaning in his works seem to be contradictory in nature. The truth he refers to may be taken essentially as a part of reality or environment against which, as discussed earlier, the events and characters of fiction are usually built up. Therefore in a literal sense attempts may be made to establish how far the changing Indian society has influenced the nature of his fictional work right from the inception of his creative writing to date. A probe into the exchange of forces of acculturation and the author’s response to the changing Indian milieu might make the author’s vision of truth clear in its proposition thereby helping the readers calculate to what extent the truth is perceived by him in terms of sociological changes contemplated for around six decades of Narayan’s saga of long-standing writing of fiction.

The novels of Narayan as such are popularly known as ‘Malgudi novels’ by his readers and critics. This sort of recognition attributed to his novels affirms how the various characters or events created by him are exclusively confined to a fictional township of Malgudi, which he has depicted right from the inception of his first novel *Swami and Friends* (1935). A topographical description of Malgudi as offered by him may be conveniently identified with any semi-urban township of
twentieth century India. The concept of Malgudi, which many a critic has construed as carbon copy of Lalgudi, a town located in ex-Mysore state or modern Tamil Nadu has been more real than fictitious in view of the said identification. It is by and large accepted as a place-symbol in all the works of R.K. Narayan. Even a superficial look at his works may readily bring home the proposition as to how the Indian society, both before and after Independence, finds copious expression in the depiction of a place-symbol that serves a quintessential character by itself. H.M. Williams says:

Malgudi is perhaps Narayan’s greatest "Character": Malgudi with its Mempi hills, its tiger-haunted jungle beyond the statue of Sir Frederick Lawley, Nataraj’s printing shop (so like Sampath’s), Jagan’s sweet emporium, Malgudi haunted by its Jonsonian - humour characters: the “adjournment lawyer”, Vasu the twentieth century ‘Rakshasa’ driving madly along Malgudi lanes, Mr. Sampath, Nataraj and the wildly gesticulating Ebenezer.

Like Wessex depicted in the novels of Thomas Hardy, Clochermerle treated as a place-symbol in the fiction of Gabriel Chevallier or the set of Five Provincial Towns depicted in the fiction of Arnold Benette with their atmosphere, history, local colour and tradition, Malgudi has time and again maintained a regional quality of its own inspite of sporadic phases of change
creating ripples over its surface. Yet the peculiar nature of regional quality associated with Malgudi enables it to have, artistically speaking, more proximity and relevance with Williams Faulkner’s depiction of Yoknapatawpha than with either of the former two places mentioned in Hardy’s or Chevallier’s. In *The Sound And The Fury* (1929) and subsequent other works Faulkner exposes the crime-infested society of the southern American states which, sociologically speaking, has rather been fast heading towards a saga of total extinction and deterioration. Yoknapatawpha, as a veritable social microcosm presents a tight little community of men whose stereotyped, orderly existence is soon taken over by a thrusting in of outside forces that pave the way for bitter racial discriminations.

Faulkner however portrays the trend of such tussle by mainly alluding to the legends flourishing in the southern part of Mississippi, ancestral stories of the Civil War or the local mythology available in his native Oxford. Such allusions or regular processes of myth-making rather portray the reality of such discriminations in a more saturated form unknown to the contemporary American story tellers and novelists. He portrays the crisis of apartheid as a part of modern American culture which has led to adequate moral perversion or deterioration that may be studied under relevant sociological theories of change. The highly crucial structure of urban life rather makes Yoknapatawpha appear as a replica of complete decadence where the possibility of restoring order or moral quietitude has been literally ruled out.
A contrast to Faulkner's, Narayan's fictional narrative presents wider possibilities of socio-ethical stability through an archetypal depiction of the place symbol self-idolised and self-complete in itself. K.R.S. Iyengar observes,

Narayan's Malgudi is a much smaller place—a mere town really compared to the vague vastness of Hardy's Wessex or the dark immensity of Faulkner's Yoknapataupha county where the blacks and whites are massed against one another......... Moving from Wessex or Yoknapatawpha to Malgudi we move from a tropical jungle to a Municipal Park.

Like Faulkner's the men and women in Narayan's narrative steadily get themselves at war with alien influences. As such there ensues a rapid deterioration of values. Yet unlike Faulkner's, before the worst part of the catastrophe operates, a dramatic reversal of situation sets in causing a kind of return to the forces of persistence once again. Malgudi discloses the identity of an indigenous culture of a 'certain' local habitat, which is as such free of the intricacies of cosmopolitisation or over industrialisation of far northern India. Unlike the works of Anand and Bhattacharyya wherein a total diffusion of life-patterns has been ordinarily seen following variations or digressions in a steel town or industrial culture, in Malgudi one may discover a semi-agrarian semi-urban local habitation emphatically based on a tradition-bound culture: a culture which
is not merely a heritage for the usually half-literate orthodox Indian people, but also a method of justifying the ultimate victory of good over evil. In this context C. Paul Verghese mentions,

the details of the physical world, the customs and practices of the people are woven together into a meaningful and more effective design. These details strengthen the illusion of reality not merely through their correspondence to actuality but through their relation to the whole vision the novelist is trying to communicate. 41

In Anand’s Coolie Munoo moves from place to place in urban-north-western India in quest of earning a livelihood, from Daulatpur in Punjab to Bombay and later on to Simla thus associating himself socio-topographically with forces and counterforces of metropolitan or economic expansion. His incidental humiliations obtained from mill-owners or other urban masters clearly suggest how the north-western India under the radical expansion of neo-industrial complexes undergoes structural changes. In Narayan’s isolated and peripheral world of Malgudi, any character would disclose a natural and constitutional involvement of his own to the concentrated locale of Malgudi alone. Even if a few of these characters go abroad in quest of exploiting an alien or western pattern of living or move away for seeking solace in the guise of a ‘Swami’ or
holy man as part of self-experiment, they depart only temporarily and on returning home they either display a kind of disillusionment which is incidentally purged off or they settle down peacefully for good. The most peculiar thing is that a foreign-returned youngster or an ex-criminal-turned-to —Swami stays at Malgudi or its outskirt, operates his motivations within desirable limits and has been left to brood over his activities in a manner that have finally led to his failure or success.

In Narayan’s The Vendor of Sweets (1967) Mali, the molly-coddled wayward son of Jagan sharply reacts to the problems of generation gaps following his hatred for an orthodox pattern of living. The reactions of the youngster get manifested in desiring to sell novel-writing machines, to have a permissive sexlife or to resort to alcohol or drinking which he has obtained as a result of a brisk American tour. The evils of intrusion or ultra-modernisation only ultimately augment the gap between the conservative father and the spoilt son more and more thus finally leaving the latter entrapped in his own coil. Yet one may obviously find how the father-son-encounter is all along contemplated as a matter of reality in Malgudi alone—a locale totally untouched by the complex actualities of northwestern India and all the while maintaining a strong ambivalence of a chastened-agitated rural-urban backdrop of its own. Against an immutable structure of such a place-symbol, any other
mutable modernising element is rather allowed to function only for the time being. Finally one may see Malgudi coming back to its ancient starting point of moral quietude after a deluge is contemplated as a passing phase of decadence.

Therefore artistically or rather deliberately the author keeps his men and women confined to Malgudi-on-Sarayu which eventually presents the cyclic experiences of their life: the birth, growth, maturity, decline and death -operating within the social infrastructure of a township only. Any confrontation with intrusion of alien forces of culture may bring in disorder in their social or private life, but one who is habituated in coming across the growth of individual characters in Narayan may inevitably notice how Malgudi assists them all move like 'rolling stones' that at last discover to have 'gathered no moss' or if a few of these have gathered any, are got rid of ultimately as the rounds are completed! The process of resuming the natural order as part of theory of Deterioration and the Cyclic theory is accomplished as law of Cosmic Order in the last part of Narayan's novels. Such a process also paves the way for utilitarian and demographic patterns of sociological changes that chiefly aim at protecting the interest of a community against a self-rule temporarily initiated by a few disillusioned characters. Thus Narayan's narrative may acquire a justification of its own. Verghese is of opinion that,
Man in the Indo-anglian novel is represented as continually adjusting and reacting to society.\textsuperscript{42} This certainly offers an evidence of the bond that follows between the individual man and the social man meeting one another on the creative plain of the author's psyche. As Narayan has managed to maintain the 'mere township' of his locale— that is neither a village nor a city— hence a personage in the drama of existence depicted by him has to accommodate himself, if not wholly, to parts of environmental realities. Unlike Anand who is considered a socially 'committed' writer\textsuperscript{43} and novelist, Narayan alternately portrays his characters as docile products adhering to stereotyped values and digressive ones sticking to modes of intrusion by means of polarising them in spirit of utmost neutrality. The human microcosm manifests itself in diverse forms varying from impostors, Mammon-worshippers, cold-blooded scholars, orthodox elders to buffoons, lunatics, sensitive lovers, curious rustics and challenging youngsters: in a rather more parallel way from the identity crisis of a teenager schoolboy to the preposterous conversion of an ex-prisoner to a 'spiritual guide'. Neither of them belong to quite affluent or aristocratic origin or an impoverished downtrodden lot. In the entire range of his works he probably most astutely selects 'a middle-class' majority of Malgudi population as proper human agents through whom he intends to establish the socio-ethical polarisation probably
unknown to his contemporaries either in regional or Indo-Anglian literature. Though not a ‘committed’ writer in the sense Anand is being identified by critics, Narayan in a quite typical manner sticks to a regular delineation of the middle class society. William Walsh observes how Narayan concerns himself with the middle class as

\[
\text{a relatively small part of an agricultural civilisation and the most conscious and anxious part of population...... psychologically more active in whom consciousness is more vivid and harrowing.}^{44}
\]

Probably for this reason most of his heroes appear to have lost self-confidence in course of their attempt to stick to an ideal. While in Anand and Bhattacharyya the preoccupation with the needy and poor paves the way for a proletarian humanism, in Narayan largely it is a kind of oriental humanism that persists around middle-class majority of Malgudi population. Thus like Arnold Bennet who sticks to the likes and dislikes of people inhabiting a specific region, Narayan offers himself as a chronicler of a ‘small Municipal town’ inhabited mainly by a ‘modest’ group of men who as an alert stuff of human microcosms protect the lineage of a native culture. Hardy remarks in this context:
It is better for a writer to know a little bit of the world remarkably well than to know a great part of the world remarkably little.

Narayan may be considered more as a social delineator or even a social philosopher than as a social realist. Any speculation he unfolds in terms of man's relation to his society is only incidental. Society exists in the body of his works as part of the cosmic order, which implies more or less the evolutionary doctrines of sociological change. One may ascertain without a doubt that sociology or any other acknowledged branch of human social relationship prevails only as a passive constituent of cosmology or doctrine of cosmic evolution. Such a doctrine, being sharply different from Darwinian theory, is a kind of ideational or abstract synthesis of values, which Narayan has rather specifically formulated in delineating his events or characters. An individual choice or mode of action for a particular length of time might emerge on the surface on the plea of progress, but in the long run there is a conflict between one's self-oriented action and the cosmic law that perpetually controls a social human existence as believed or suggested by the author. The law as such comprises a metaphysical or ideational value that equates men with the milieu. Considering Narayan as a social philosopher of his kind Lakshmi Holmstrom concludes:
The criticism of society and the observation of the social predicament implicit in his work is only incidental. For Narayan society is not man-made by choices, but existing as part of a universal order with which it is continuous.

As a moral analyst therefore, Narayan upholds a notion that the law of eternity is generally superior to the law of wisdom. Before taking up a study of his works in terms of sociological changes, one ought not to ignore the novelist's vision of society as discussed earlier. In Narayan thus one would come to agree that society is the part of a mytho-poetic abstraction—as stated in both The Ramayan and The Mahabharata—in which the sensate and physical notions are finally superseded by the ideational truth. Though sporadically there have come up matters concerning an economic or religious determinism, mostly he concentrates upon the Cyclic and Linear doctrines. In subsequent chapters attempts will be made to assimilate a few such theories into the various contexts and modes of living patterns depicted by the author in his works. The genesis of such theories to a large extent may be traced out in a revised form of antiquarianism which the author being a social philosopher offers to us as a part of his own statement:

Traditionally India is The Ramayan, The Mahabharata and The Puranas. The values remain the same in every village, town or city.
NOTES


2. Ibid.


4. Social change in India (Delhi, Vikash Publishing House, 1972), p.3.


30. Indian Writing in English (New Delhi, Sterling publishers, 1983) p.327.


37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.


42. Essays on Indian Writing in English (Delhi, N.V.Publications, 1975) p.27.


