CHAPTER V
CONVERGENCE / DIVERGENCE

Ever since man started living in a community, many institutions created by him helped to overcome the savage elements in his personality. But man also realized that it was impossible to purge himself of all these ‘evil’ qualities and the best option before him was to perpetually struggle with these elements and keep them under control. Over the years as he sought to grasp the predicament he found himself in, it was the literary field which offered a better understanding of the same and a means to negotiate it. Born out of the expression of an agony experienced, these literary creations turned out to be aesthetically and philosophically wonderful creations.

This study is an attempt to see the trajectory of these works that appeared at the crucial junctures of different civilizations. In the west, the modern era had been witness to a war which left behind a crippled social, political and economic state. The sense of anguish, despair and desolation that remained was palpable for a long time and found expression in different forms of literature across nations. In India, it was the liberation from the clutches of the colonizers that awakened in the Indian consciousness, on one side, feelings of nationalism and on the other, a sense of uncertainty brought about by the clash between tradition and modernity.

William Golding had a personal experience of the existence of man’s beastly qualities and the sacrifices the other “civilized beings” had to make to keep the community going. Martyrdom, as Golding sees it, is indispensable for every society that has a concern for all its members. Camus had an opportunity to live in a land that was forced to adopt his own culture and so was able to notice the changes that came about in
their personalities and the realization about the ultimate meaning of existence. Blind adherence to tradition, religious and otherwise, is the issue that U R Ananthamurthy is concerned with. When the head of a religious and spiritual has no clue how to settle a crisis, it thoroughly exposes the fragility of that tradition throwing the most essential aspects of humanism to the winds. Any tradition that fails to accommodate materialistic and practical sides is prone to lose the faith of a community.

The concern here is not only to critically evaluate these three literary works that appeared at the crucial junctions of their cultural history but also to observe the thought process of the protagonists or agents of change. Twentieth century having contributed significantly to the evolution of modern existential thought, this is an observation cutting across cultures that challenges all the established notions of culture and society especially their institutions which always have had closed-ends not allowing any kind of discourse. For a better understanding of any work and its relevance to social mores, it is essential to understand the ideology behind the work, how it is applied and what the impact is on the community. Ideology or the way in which people think about the world and their concept of how to live in it helps in the understanding of a culture. The difference between ideology and philosophy is that while ideology believes that one’s ideals are the best way to live by, philosophy examines the way ideology affects the lives of people. Philosophy however can become ideology when a philosopher lays down the ideal concepts that one should live by as in Plato’s Republic. The term ideology may also be used to describe the shared beliefs of a group of people, for example a nation, a sect of a religion, or a group of theorists. Every age brings with it a set of common ideologies.
Whether in prose, poetry or drama, the angst left behind by the vagaries of the World Wars was felt in the literary works of the 20th century writers. As in most of the literature, William Golding’s writings delineate the beast within the human being. Taking a pessimistic view, Golding bemoans that war is the dreadful gift that parents gift children. Pointing out the “fragility of civilization”, Golding redefines violence and the inability of humanity to address it. This “fragility” is a metaphysical concept which can be applied to other modes of human behavior. Evil has been and is an important concern of human existence which has been discussed right from the early ages by the early philosophers and continues to be a predominant point of discussion with social theorists. It assumes greater significance in today’s context where evil seems to threaten the entire universe. Whether it is terrorism that is plaguing the world, environmental destruction or the nuclear threats, everything points towards evil and the dangers that are lurking to strike at human civilization. Since evil thrives in all of mankind it is not surprising that it is a much discussed subject by writers the world over. By grappling with this evil, writers are actually grappling with questions and issues of humanity. The horrors of war as well as the evil nature of human beings left behind in Golding a lasting impression, enough to shape his interest in exploring the darker side of human beings. Lord of the Flies which seeks to demonstrate the conflict between the forces of light and dark within the human soul is an excellent oeuvre which shows the beastly nature of man in a crisis. In his own words, Lord of the Flies is “an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature.”

The regression into a primitive state by the group of school boys, who find themselves in a paradisiacal island far from civilization, more than shocking, reiterates
the fact that man needs to be governed by norms. Centering around the conflicting impulses toward civilization - to live peacefully, conforming to the norms laid down by society for the well being of the state or to seek power through ruthless means – Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* is a perfect picture of the clash between rationality and irrationality. The title, a reference to the Hebrew name of Beelzebub which means “god of the fly”, “host of the fly”, or literally “Lord of Flies”, a name synonymous with Satan, itself alludes to a power struggle in a world of chaos and disharmony. The descent into savagery, initially arising out of fun filled excitement and quickly turning into a lusty bloodbath smacking of carnal desires, throws civilization out of gear and reveals the cranks in the personality of human beings. As the beautiful island is torn apart by the savages led by the demonic Jack in pursuit of his prized prey, one can only watch with abated breath as Ralph stricken by terror and exhaustion flops down helplessly, surrendering to a bloody death. That he is saved at the nick of the cruel moment by a naval officer, is Golding’s attempt to show that there is a ray of hope yet even as the world is at the fringe of insanity.

All is well as long as the boys play the game in accordance with the rules of the game. That even Ralph is not spared of the innate natural savage instinct, is evident in the hunting scene where Piggy and he are party to the killing of Simon when Jack’s tribe, reeling in bloodlust from their latest kill, mistake him for the beast. The continuous taunting of Piggy for his name, his obesity, his gnawing asthma and his thick glasses is demonstrative of how the weak are trampled upon in a world dominated by power and authority. The end of reason and with it all signs of civilization, is complete with the gruesome death of Piggy, pushed down from the cliff top to crash against the rocks and
the conch shattering into smithereens. The saint-like Simon, a symbol of reason and good faith, and one in harmony with nature, believes in a world of peace and order. Refusing to believe in the “beast” which threatens to shatter the peace of the island and causes nightmares to the littluns, he dares to go in search of the truth. His encounter with the pig head on a stick, swarming with flies, left as an offering to the beast, which seems to talk to him, ascertains the fact that the real beast is within them and not outside as believed by the boys. It is to his misfortune that he is brutally murdered inadvertently before the truth about the beast is disclosed.

In Jack are seen the worst aspects of human nature which emerge when not controlled or tempered by society. Jack’s feeding of the beast with the sow’s head on a stick is symbolic of man’s eagerness to embrace evil. The bleeding picture of the sow itself, once a caring mother nursing its young, is reminiscent of the transformation from goodness to evil. The intervention by the naval officer at the end, minutes before the lethal blow, and the breakdown of Ralph proves that there is some hope left. Ironically though, the naval officer is yet another symbol of war, indicating perhaps that man will never be at peace with himself and that there can only be a semblance of order in a strife torn world.

The devastating impact of the war in Europe and the existential dilemma it posed found expression in the writings of people like Sartre, Malraux and Camus. One of the schools of thought that emerged was existentialism which emphasized on individual existence, freedom and choice. A literary phenomenon as well as a philosophical one, existentialism had its roots in the late 19th century and went on to gain a foothold in the 20th century. The later schools of thought like post-modernism, deconstructionism,
Historicism and multiculturalism are said to have their roots in this philosophy. Due to its subjective nature, the existential philosophy is considered more a trend or attitude than a movement, proved by the fact that existentialist thinkers vary significantly in their thoughts and concerns. The emphasis above all is on the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience in an indifferent and hostile world without attaching specific importance to the essence of human beings.

Existentialism states that man exists and in that existence, man defines himself and the world in his own subjectivity and wanders between choice, freedom and existential angst. Despite being referred to as an existentialist, the philosophy of the absurd which revolved around two poles – the absurd and the revolt remained the personal doctrine of Camus who believed that, “the absurd is born out of the confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world and this revolt in turn gives meaning to an act”. The “absurd” therefore is the gulf between man’s desire for a world of happiness which is governed by reason, justice and order on the one hand and the actual world which is irrational and causes suffering and death. Since the “absurd” is a reality should one submit to it helplessly? Camus’ answer is a clear no. In his view, man should “revolt” against this “absurd” universe in keeping with traditional humane values.

Through an account of the bubonic plague in the Algerian city of Oran, Camus, as in The Outsider, treats the theme of the absurd, which is represented by the meaningless and undeserved suffering and death caused by the scourge. To Camus or Dr Rieux in the novel, who does not believe in heroism, “honesty” means preserving one’s integrity by struggling as best as one can, even if unsuccessfully, against the plague. While on one
level, *The Plague* is representative of the Nazi occupation of France, on a wider plane, it is symbolic of the fight against evil and suffering, which is a major moral concern of human experience. Camus’ political thought centres on the moral consequences of human action in a world that is absurd yet filled with pathos. In this meaningless world filled with suffering and mortality, it is man’s responsibility to seek a meaningful existence. The fight against the human condition needs to begin in solitude and progress into an act of solidarity. This rebellion against suffering may give dignity to human existence. At the same time it may end up serving the evil it seeks to eradicate, as the twentieth century has borne testimony.

Quite conscious of the complexity of politics in advocating rebellion, Camus nevertheless believed that death need not be the inevitable outcome of rebellion. His ambivalent stand on rebellion can be traced to his own position on the Algerian independence that he refused to support as much as his non acceptance of the continued French colonization of Algeria. His own feeling of homelessness as an Algerian *pied noir* in the French intellectual world as well as his own ill health is reflected in the sense of exile in *The Plague*. The social philosophy of Camus is represented in *The Plague* which while dealing with the themes of personal and collective death, lays emphasis on the need for human responsibility or being with “others” for a cohesive social order. More than the futility of Rieux’s mission, the zeal he exudes in forging solidarity among the inhabitants of Oran to fight the plague rather than give in helplessly to it, is proof enough for the need to make one’s life meaningful.

Camus’ moral stand is expressed through Jean Tarrou who feels that being party to killing is as bad a crime as death itself. True to the post-Nietzschean philosophy,
Tarrou wants to be “a saint without God” (196). A profound moralist who is dedicated to the cause of the abolition of the death penalty, he seeks redemption from the sense of guilt by being totally involved with the sanitary squads. Viewing it from a religious point of view, Father Paneloux sees the plague as a retribution for the sins committed by the people. Since all religion preaches moralistic values for the social well being of all, the implication is that anyone who deviates from the path of righteousness will be punished.

Whether it was the Great Plague of Athens in 400 BC; the bubonic plague of 1347 which devastated China and left twenty-five million Europeans dead, or the worldwide flu epidemic of 1918 which left behind many casualties, plagues have been and will continue to be a threat to human lives. In the twentieth century, plagues have appeared in the form of the wars, the HIV/AIDS epidemic; the tsunamis or other forms of evil. At the most there can be a temporary hiatus as the plague bacillus goes into hibernation. The truth is that the threat from the plague and the horror it evokes is real. What matters is how one relates to it. A lack of identification with the victims would reduce horror to mere pity or indifference whereas a non distancing would make one a victim of fear and anxiety. The horror described in *The Plague* is the sad fate that awaits mankind no matter how happy he is during his lifetime. Since the crisis that looms during an outbreak of any kind of epidemic can be real, only a concerted effort through a forged solidarity is the answer if social order is of any concern to humanity.

Western thought brought about changes in modern Indian literature. Indian writing reflected the deep rooted beliefs and efforts of the impoverished to uphold those beliefs. There were also artistic responses to socio-political events. Novels in all Indian languages echoed the ultimate aim of literature- the self realization, and experimentations
continued with or without the influence of the west. Demystifying tradition with all its sacredness is one such experimentation and the Kannada writer, U R Ananthamurthy chose to express his ambivalent attitude towards the “moral dilemma of the post colonial condition” through his literary works.

Ananthamurthy’s *Samskara* deals with the moral crisis of Praneshacharya, a Brahmin who is torn between the ideals he has lived by and the realization of having failed in his duty, as his mind is torn between spirituality and desire. It forces him to question the values by which he has lived all along and to seek new values by which he can consciously shape the future course of his life. *Samskara* deals with the crisis arising out of the death of a Madhva Brahmin, Naranappa who had spurned the Brahminical way of living, much to the displeasure and disgust of the community. As the corpse lay waiting to be disposed, the debate revolves around the sacrilegious act they would be committing if they were to accord to him the funeral rites due to a Brahmin and yet despite his amoral living he was entitled to a Brahmin’s funeral since he had not been excommunicated by the community. As the crisis deepens with no solution in sight, everyone goes through hard times. Deprived of food, for some it is an existential crisis more than the stigma attached to the act while to Praneshacharya, the search for a solution leads him into a spiritual crisis and moral crisis - spiritual because he is unable to get an answer from the holy texts as well as the Gods and moral since he feels that he has strayed from the path of righteousness by indulging in an immoral act.

Caught in the deep rooted grip of the *varna* or caste system, modern India found itself at crossroads. The crisis was more evident in the Brahmin community. On the one hand it continued to espouse the age old customs and traditions while on the other
western education had aroused their sensibilities to the need for a change. *Samskara* is an example of a community confined in socio cultural binaries. The world in *Samskara* is a reflection of the hierarchical structure of the Varna Dharma analogy of Brahmanic Hinduism that defines the human form to the Brahmin head and the Shudra limbs. Although *Samkara* appears to be another hegemonic text reasserting the Brahminic worldview of patriarchy and hierarchy, reflected in Praneshacharya’s ambivalent stand despite undergoing transformation through socialization with Putta, it is actually an attempt to expose the false hypocrisy and the archaic customs which impede social and economic progress. More than the “right to rites”, it is the voice of dissent against social discrimination, unfair practices, patriarchal subordination and sexual exploitation of the subaltern women, clamoring for the “right to rights”. Though a complete disassociation with tradition is not right, a refinement of spirit, an openness to change and a better understanding of life is required if society has to live in harmony and peace and that is what Ananthamurthy propagates through *Samskara*.

All the three texts deal with some sort of crisis which unsettles the social order. While it is the war and its consequences that cause the crisis in the first two novels, it is the uncertainty brought about by modernity that is the reason for the crisis in the third. Golding attributes the evils of society to human beings’ innate desire for violence and appeals to the saner side of man to counter it. Camus suggests that since the ‘plague’ is ever present and ready to strike, man should always be prepared to handle it. By choosing to expose the hypocrisy of a society, Ananthamurthy calls to the discerning mind to address the changes that come with a society in transition. Although the crisis affects the whole social functioning of the respective cultures, only certain individuals are troubled
by their moral conscience. To these individuals, the need to bring about social cohesiveness through proper judgment is important, be it battling the beast within, fighting a formidable foe, or negotiating tradition and archaic customs in the context of modernity.

Parallel trajectories can be drawn across the three texts which come together in a variety of ways to reflect similar thematic concerns. All are grounded in Nietzsche’s theory that the Apollonian and Dionysian coexist in human beings. The critical distance, which separates man from his closest emotions, originates in Apollonian ideals, which in turn separate him from his essential connection with the self. The Dionysian embraces the chaotic nature of such experience as all-important; not just on its own, but as it is intimately connected with the Apollonian. The Dionysian magnifies man, but only so far as he realizes that he is one and the same with all ordered human experience. The godlike unity of the Dionysian experience is of utmost importance in viewing the Dionysian as it is related to the Apollonian because it emphasizes the harmony that can be found within one’s chaotic experience.

The influence of existentialist writers like Nietzsche, Sartre and Kafka is evident in the texts. The philosophy of existentialism claims that though science and morality are important aspects in understanding human beings, they are not sufficient. A further set of categories governed by the norm of authenticity is necessary to comprehend human existence. Themes like dread, boredom, alienation, the absurd, freedom, commitment, anxiety and nothingness which are associated with existentialism find a philosophical significance in this search. All these themes are explored in the three novels. There is a
strong sense of isolation, desolation and despair arising out of an existential crisis in the novels.

Character development is an important aspect in character-driven literature, where stories focus more on individual personalities than events. The characters in the three texts have been delineated in a manner setting in contrast, the good and the evil, the right and the wrong, the moral and the amoral. The main characters contribute significantly not only in voicing the concerns of the authors but also in taking the story forward. The moral crisis that the individual characters experience has an impact on their social bearing. Moral and ethical considerations matter most to all of them, be it Ralph, Piggy, Rieux, Tarrou or Praneshacharya.

Women are marginalized in all the three works of fiction. While there are only casual references to them in *Lord of the Flies* and in *The Plague*, the subaltern has hardly any role to play beyond being treated as the oppressed subordinate, an object of the male fantasy, in *Samskara*. The scant attention paid to women by the three writers could well be reflective of the status of women during the mid 20th century.

In the three novels, there is a mix of genres – auto biography, narrative, discursive analysis, dialogue, utterance and exegetic prose. The third person narrative mode has been used, interspersed by the first person, with flashes of the stream of consciousness. There is also a touch of the personal, arising from the authors’ real experiences which give the novels a sense of authenticity. The narratology follows a similar trend with all the three novels operating in a realistic mode, through a symbolic form. While the historical reality of the times is confronted through the realistic mode, the symbolic form negotiates with the individual’s existential dilemmas and choices. The three elements that
Aristotle believes, form part of any narrative, “namely the *hamartia*, or ‘sin’, ‘fault’ or ‘tragic flaw’, the *anagnorisis*, or ‘recognition’ or ‘self – recognition’ and the *peripeteia*, or the ‘turn-round’ or the ‘reversal’ of fortune” are also seen in the three novels (Barry 216) through the acts of Ralph, Tarrou and Praneshacharya. All the three narratives are presented in a mimetic manner, with the action taking place in a scenic setting, creating an illusion of ‘seeing’ and ‘hearing’. As the scene unfolds upon an idyllic island in the Pacific, a town with its back turned towards the bay or an *agrahara* with a river flowing by; there is an unmistakable awakening of the visual and auditory senses.

Allegory and realism go hand in hand in all the three texts. The titles of the novels themselves are loaded with meaning, symbolizing much more than what they appear to be. Camus’s *The Plague* is an allegory of the Nazi occupation of France as well as the scourge itself while *Lord of the Flies* is an allegory of the battle between the Allies and the Axis, besides being an adventure tale. *Samskara* is a bundle of allegories as it takes on varied meanings like a death-rite, a refinement of spirit, a transformation as well as rituals. Symbols abound in all the three novels. In *Lord of the Flies*, the conch, Piggy’s glasses, the signal fire, the imaginary beast and the characters, Ralph, Piggy, Jack, Simon and Roger, all have great significance. In *The Plague* the town with its back turned towards the sea, the human condition, the isolation camps and the black marketing with characters like Cottard all are symbolic of historical realities. In *Samskara*, the references to the night queen bush, Chandri’s black-snake hair coiled in a knot, the champak flowers, the heady fragrant screw-pine, the gluttonous bear and the raging striped tiger, all symbolize eroticism and lust.
The imagery of the forest and the sea as a source of comfort in the three texts, suggest life, vigour and freedom. Simon finds calm and serenity in the cool forest glade while Praneshacharya seeks solace in the forest and Dr. Rieux experiences a sense of happiness as he swims in the cool waters of the sea. Both the forest and the sea seem to offer a sense of liberation to the alienated souls. Rodents, vultures and a pig head are used to signify impending danger, death and destruction.

Religion also finds a place in the three texts. In *The Plague*, Father Paneloux, a staunch believer, is emphatic that the plague is the result of the sins of the citizens of Oran and the only way to salvation is to submit to it. Drawing from the Book of Genesis, *Lord of the Flies* asserts that man can never attain salvation until he recognizes that the idols he creates are mere delusions and that he cannot claim to be the master of reality. In *Samskara*, Praneshacharya is hailed as the ‘Crest-Jewel of Vedic Learning’ whose spiritual guidance is much looked up to. In all the three books, there are references to the holy books – the Bible and the Vedas. The *Lord of the Flies* draws on the Book of Genesis; Father Paneloux’s argument is based on St. Augustine and the Brahmins in *Samskara* turn to the Vedas for spiritual guidance.

What Sura Rath says of *Samskara* is true of the *Lord of the Flies* and *The Plague*. Amidst the centrality of death and destruction, the message of the three novels is “the assertion of life and its inextinguishable presence in the midst of extinction, physical or metaphysical, individual or communal, visible or invisible, not because of but in spite of the forces of nihilism and despair” (101).

The novels also differ in several ways. Golding’s and Camus’s works are set in war torn Europe whereas Ananthamurthy’s novel represents the post independence era in
India. The representation of moral crisis has also been handled quite differently. While Golding and Camus have chosen to depict the moral crisis through a set of characters, Ananthamurthy has expressed it only through Praneshacharya. In the *Lord of the Flies*, Golding voices his concerns through Ralph and Piggy and in *The Plague*, Dr. Rieux and Tarrou who feel strongly about values and ethics are Camus’s spokesmen.

Camus and Ananthamurthy have resorted to adult characters whereas Golding has opted to see the world through the eyes of children. Golding’s characters are painted in black and white, showing a stark contrast in character whereas Camus’s and Ananthamurthy’s are closer to reality, in shades of gray. While the good and the evil are depicted strongly through two characters in *Lord of the Flies*, the characters of *The Plague* and *Samskara* are not shown in extremes.

While in *Lord of the Flies* and *Samskara*, the narrator is an authorial personae narrating in a non-intrusive manner, in *The Plague*, the narrator Tarrou or Rieux as is revealed later, is ‘homodiegetic’, or one who is telling the story in his own voice. Black humour seems to be the narrative style of Golding whereas Camus resorts to absurdism and Ananthamurthy assumes a satirical tone. Another difference is the way the story is handled. Both *Lord of the Flies* and *Samskara* follow the ‘proleptic’ or forward mode of narration while *The Plague* follows the ‘analeptic’ or back and forth mode. *The Plague* is “written in a rather dry and meticulous prose with a distinct lyricism vibrating below the surface, which often erupts in passages of genuine poetic force” (Goyal 211) whereas what distinguishes *Lord of the Flies* is “its powerful and exciting qualities as narrative, and its appearance of extreme clarity of meaning” (Weekes and Gregor 15). *Samskara* on the other hand, “exemplifies an effective deployment of ‘ludic realism’, operating on
several levels”—with a linguistic play on the word *samskara*, as a social text and at a cosmic level. (Rath 21).

Through a study of the texts belonging to different cultures, an attempt has been made to see how crisis, particularly moral crisis, affected social life and how the respective societies managed to tide over the crisis. Using a comparative framework, the convergent and divergent trajectories have been examined in the three novels and inferences drawn. The fact that variables of the same concerns still appear in the literary and cultural horizon prove that crises will always be part of every culture and society. Crises may vary in nature and kind across cultures but man’s struggle with them will be a perennial one, often involving the ideologies, principles and beliefs of a society. Since crises can lead to social upheavals resulting in disorder, chaos and confusion, it is for mankind to find strategies to engage with them in the most morally sound manner possible. The means may not be easy, sometimes requiring an individual to rise above the self but if well being is the concern of any society, it will be a worthwhile price to pay. The power to create or destroy social order rests with mankind.

Emerging from three different cultures, the three novels, *Lord of the Flies*, *The Plague* and *Samskara*, all belonging to themid 20th century, speak of the crisis which befell their societies challenging the world of cozy compromises and threatening to weaken the social fabric of life. They explore the central tenets of human existence: good, evil, dignity, honour, suffering and respect for the natural world. While the writings of all three writers have similar elements in them, with death, decay, desolation, suffering and helplessness forming the core themes, they differ in the treatment of the same. In *Lord of the Flies*, the timely intervention by the military officer saves a society on the verge of
annihilation. The solidarity and resilience of the community in facing up to the scourge is the triumph of *The Plague*. The rebirth of the protagonist through the process of initiation into reality is the success of *Samskara*. Golding’s belief that goodness coexists with evil in man, Camus’ faith in humanity, and Ananthamurthy’s attempts to strike a balance between tradition and modernity help the respective cultures negotiate the crises they experience.

5.1 CONCLUSION

Crises have been part of human existence from the beginning of civilization. A universal phenomenon, nations and societies have found themselves in the midst of crises resulting in social upheavals, destruction and disharmony. Crises can be the result of natural calamities or manmade. Crises that are political, economic, social, religious and moral in nature are the outcome of man’s selfishness. Affected deeply by the World Wars, the 20th century was an age which saw a lot of turmoil and unrest in Europe and an independent India struggling to negotiate with modernity. The agony experienced by the people was reflected in the literature of the times. As humanists, who still had faith in humanity, despite man being responsible for the crises, writers like William Golding, Albert Camus and U.R.Ananthamurthy chose to deal with the moral aspects. The three texts engage with the crises of their respective cultures during a particular period and bring out poignantly the trauma and anguish experienced by individuals and communities alike, with the common elements being suffering, death and decay. A close reading of the texts taking into account the time, space and the factors that influenced the writing of the novels, leads one to certain surmises and conclusions.
Crises can befall a nation, a society or an individual at any time. A crisis is said to be a moral crisis if there are moral implications to it. Morality can be defined as the general acceptance of good and bad, right and wrong. Morality requires the individual’s accommodation and internalization of the norms, standards and practices of society. As social norms are laid down by a community, morality is also determined by the community. Man being a social being, he needs to identify with the morality of a culture as he is dependent on society for his existence. Moral crisis is more evident among the middle class because of “middle class morality” or the fear of social exclusion by failing to conform to its norms. Moral crisis can lead to a loss of identity and an identity crisis if the individual is conscious that he is part of a larger community and that his actions will have social bearings. Hence he is bound to be conscious of the choices he makes as they are likely to affect his standing in society. Since the need to be accepted and recognized by others is a basic craving of man; his actions are normally guided by ethical considerations as he would care about his self esteem and self respect. Although an individual’s moral crisis need not have a direct bearing on society, more often than not, it does have an impact. In *The Plague* it is Tarrou’s sense of morality that makes him want to seek redemption for the crimes that he had indirectly committed. In *Lord of the Flies*, it is Ralph’s moral consciousness that insists on establishing a sense of order and discipline. In *Samskara*, Praneshacharya feels a sense of guilt when he deviates from the path of righteousness. All their actions have a direct bearing on society and it is their sense of purpose that makes them actively involved in initiating changes.

Social conflicts and tensions the world over have often been traced to moral crises which have led to the disintegration of values in a society. For instance it has been
perceived that western society is in the throes of a serious moral crisis as modern youth have failed to imbibe the moral values and ideals laid down by society. In fact the moral permissiveness of contemporary liberalism believed to be an outcome of liberalization is viewed with concern in most Asian countries.

All the three authors feel a strong sense of responsibility towards society and through their novels attempt to show their moral concerns. While recognizing that evil is innate in all human beings, Golding vows that there also coexists some goodness that can save humanity. Camus emphasizes the point that through a concerted effort of solidarity, the plague that strikes Oran can be contained, if not eradicated completely. Ananthamurthy affirms that while retaining the best of history and tradition, there is a need to be receptive to changes in an evolving society.

Though the crises shown in the three novels may have been unique during their times they nevertheless continue to hold relevance even today as the world is confronted by a plethora of crises in the form of terrorism, violence, racial discrimination, economic inequalities, natural calamities and the threat of another World War. On the one hand the quality of life has improved by the giant strides made by science and technology but on the other there are signs of the creation of a Frankenstein, as consumed by greed and desire, human beings seem to be blind to reason. In the modern world, it may not be wrong in believing that traditional values are being overthrown in favor of self-interest, unbridled freedom, drug abuse and a rejection of morality by relativistic attitudes. If social order has to be maintained, individuals need to understand that since society plays a role in determining an individual’s standing, adherence to its norms and values is essential. At the same time rather than a blind adherence to traditional values and
Practices, one needs to be guided by justice, equal respect for people and freedom from oppression.

The study is important as the subject of discussion has relevance today as it did in the 20th century. In a world of seemingly eroding values, morality and ethics are topics of serious concern which continue to form part of literary discourses in the 21st century. History continues to be the concern of 21st century English writers. *Cloud Atlas* (2004) by David Mitchell envisages future eras ravaged by malign technology and climatic and nuclear devastation. Mc Ewin’s *Saturday* which describes the city of London on February 15, 2003 demonstrating against the imperial war in Iraq is modeled after Virginia Woolf’s fictional presentation of a war shadowed London in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925).

In the French context, the void left behind by Sartre and Camus has been filled by thinkers like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault and their theory of deconstruction. Much of present French literature includes voices from the colonies, like the Algerian Rachid Boudjedra who was engaged in the war against the French in Algeria’s war of independence. Samuel Zaoui’s *Saint Denis bout du monde* which recounts the tale of a journey between Algeria and Paris, speaks about Algerians in France who are caught between two worlds. The uniqueness of French history, its mission to solve the problems of mankind and the hyper-complexity of contemporary life in a globalised world, all feature in French literature of the 21st century.

In Karnataka, despite other schools of thought like the *Navyottara* (postmodern) and the *Bandaya* (Rebellion) movement coming into being, with the intention of fulfilling a more socially responsible role, Kannada writings still draw inspiration from history and tradition, and U.R.Ananthamurthy continues to be one of the dominant figures of the

### 5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has been limited to the representation of moral crisis and social order across three cultures in a specific time frame, namely the mid 20th century. Other factors like political instability, religious uncertainty and economic depression have not been dealt with. Further, though the other texts of Golding, Camus and Ananthamurthy also voice a lot of serious concerns in the context of modernization, the research has been confined to only one of their texts.

### 5.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Since the world is a turbulent place with crises being central to our lives, there is scope to extend the research to include more novels which are representative of the crises in their cultures. The study could be expanded to include political, economic and religious crises. Texts by other authors in the present context could also be explored. Such a study will not only help understand the crises of the respective cultures better but will also help in suggesting ways to negotiate crises.

Every age is faced with deep moral questions and it is the compulsion of the committed artist to give creative expression to it in order to place before his society, a set of possibilities. An overview of the 21st century society reveals that all the three novels -
Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*, Camus’s *The Plague* and Ananthamurthy’s *Samskara* continue to have relevance in today’s world wrought by crises of similar nature. The plague of Camus’s 1947 chronicle may refer to World War II, Fascism and the fall of France; Golding’s, to a strong power conflict and Ananthamurthy’s, to a cultural critique of tradition but they are still valid in today’s context where the plague may be symbolic of the war in Iraq, the tsunami in Japan, the deadly and destructive hurricane Katrina, genocide in Darfur, malaria in Haiti the bomb blasts in many parts of the world or simply the many problems and uncertainties that are part of human existence.