Chapter - I

Introduction

The word "pessimism" comes from Latin "pessimum" which means "worst". Thus the word denotes 'an attitude of hopelessness' towards life and existence. According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, "Pessimism" means 'the tendency to look at the worst aspect of things; doctrine that this world is the worst possible, or that all things tend to evil'. In other words, this doctrine asserts that the world is, on the whole, bad and takes a depressing view of life; or it is an attitude that directs attention to the dark and evil side of things and events. So, pessimism is the tendency to look at the dark side of life to the exclusion of the bright.

Philosophically, pessimism is a view that existence is an evil and that life is full of pain and suffering. Indian Philosophers recognize the fact that there is suffering in the world. But the suffering is not ultimate. The aim of Indian Philosophy is the removal of suffering caused by ignorance (avidya) and the highest happiness and peace according to it, can be attained through true knowledge. And it prescribes a definite way of life to attain it. True knowledge removes ignorance by breaking off bondage and it reveals man's divinity hidden within and gives him real freedom which is bliss absolute. Hinduism suggests the 'Law of Karma' as the origin of suffering. It
maintains that no action, either good or bad, great or small, can ever be without its proper effect. Our suffering is, therefore, due to our past misdeeds.

The Sankhya Philosophy of the Hindus deals with the problem of suffering. This system of philosophy holds that there are three kinds of sufferings (tritapa) due to Psycho-Physical condition, natural calamity and harmful wild animals. These are called adhyatmika, adhidaivika, and adhibhantika respectively. Jainism teaches that, the particles of matter (pudgala) are obstacles that infect the soul. The Karman are the forces of passion and desire, which, draw the particles of matter together and create material body with which the soul identifies itself. Thus, according to Jainism, the soul is in bondage with matter and that is the cause of man’s suffering. It says that with the destruction of evil Karma the liberation of the soul is attained. At the liberated state the soul attains to infinite knowledge, power, and bliss.

According to Lord Buddha, there is suffering in the world, because we desire and cling to things which are transitory. Everything is subject to decay. Buddhism holds that personal existence involves pain and illness. Of the four noble truths enunciated by Buddha, the first is the existence of sorrow and suffering. Lust, passion, thirst for an existence that yearns for pleasure are the origin of suffering.
Existence itself involves disease, old age, and death, which nobody can escape.

Platonism maintains that things and beings of this world necessarily deviate from, and fall short of, their ideal and that fleshly existence and experience only represent the barriers to achieve the Ideal. Man's sorrow and suffering consist therefore in non-attaining the Ideal or the Good. The Book of Job in the Old Testament deals with the problem of suffering and there also we find a note of deep pessimism. There we have Job, a good, upright and God-fearing man who always avoided sin and evil. He had seven sons, three daughters, many servants and a great number of cattle. They were destroyed one by one, and Job's life became one of great grief and loss. Indeed, his was a tragic life. He got angry with God and complained against Him in the following words: "Even to-day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment. Should I lie against my right? My wound is incurable without transgression".

There upon the Lord said unto Job: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" It is foolish to sit in judgment upon God who creates and sustains the world. Indeed inscrutable are the ways of God and evil in life seems to be mysterious. Job later became wise and repented, and the Lord gave back all He had taken away from him. In Christianity, too, we find "a qualified pessimism" which is deeply characteristic of the religion of the Christ. Man suffers because of 'original sin'. To this religion
ours is "a fallen world" where human reason and will are corrupted. The rectification of the ills of the world lies in the belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, and man's redemption will come from the world beyond.

Rousseau (1712 - 1778) however denies man's original sin and says that man is naturally good. He maintains in an essay called Discourse Sur les Sciences et les arts that arts and sciences confer no benefits on mankind. He contends that science and arts are the worst enemies of morals and by creating wants they become the sources of slavery. He holds that science and virtue are incompatible and all sciences have an ignoble origin.

In Discourse on Inequality (1754), another essay, Rousseau expresses the view that human institutions are bad and have corrupted man. There he says: "Man is born free and every where he is in chains. One man thinks himself the master of others but remains more of a slave than they are."

According to him, the origin of civilized society has to be traced to private property from which social inequalities follow. The development of agriculture and technology has proved an evil and grain has become the symbol of man's misfortune. He holds that Europe is the most unhappy continent as it has the most grain and the most iron. To undo the evil, it is only necessary to abandon civilization.

Thus, he is against the human race of the civilized world, and in his writings we find a dark picture of society and disappointment and frustration.
In this connexion Anarchism may be referred to. Anarchism in politics arose in Europe with subjectivism in philosophy. It is a belief that it is possible and desirable to abolish government, laws and the machinery for the enforcement of law. It aims at a stateless society in which harmony and order are maintained by voluntary agreements among individuals and groups. Anarchism holds that man is essentially good and that he can be trusted without government, and that individual properties and class distinctions should be removed altogether. Like Rousseau, Proudhon (1809-1865), a French anarchist, thinks that, right to private property creates inequality and causes exploitation and it is a bar to individual development. According to him, 'property is theft'. The anarchists are revolutionaries indeed. They can not accept the existing systems of society. M.A. Bakunin (1814 - 1876) and P.A. Kropotkin (1842 - 1921) - two noted Russian Anarchists - advocate anarchism, that is, they want the abolition of government and private property, which stand in the way to full liberty and equality between man and man. William Godwin of England (1756 - 1836) speaks of a system of anarchism. In his book Enquiry Concerning Political Justice he says that man acts in accordance with his reason; reason teaches benevolence and rational creatures can live in harmony without laws and institutions. Shelley, a romantic Poet of England of the early nineteenth century, also subscribes to the anarchical views held by Mr. Godwin. Shelley has been a revolutionary and has traced evil in
life to slavery. According to him external restraint is to be withdrawn from society and its place is to be taken by Love. For, only in atmosphere of love liberty can work effectively.

Schopenhauer (1788 - 1860) says that a reflection on life makes one convinced that nothing at all is worth our striving and struggling, and that the world is the worst possible place at the back of which "a blind irrational Will" is active. For him, Will is ethically evil. The Cosmic Will is wicked and source of man's endless suffering; suffering increases by every increase of knowledge. He is, indeed, out and out a pessimist. Existentialism holds that there is nothing stable in the world. The world comes out of nothing and goes into nothingness. This is the destiny of man and the world. Man needs freedom but he can not enjoy it in society. Even in absolute freedom there is no peace. Peace is only to be had at the end of life. Death, nothingness and anxiety are its central topics of interest.

In literature, however, we use the word "pessimism" in a different sense. There it refers to a persistent dark aspect of life expressed through different kinds of suffering, sad and undesirable happenings, tragic characters, immoral acts, frustration, disillusionment, discontent, unfulfilment of desires and aims, unhappy relations between one individual and another and between individual & environment and the like. The pessimism of a writer indicates an attitude to life that develops from witnessing such sad incidents and situations.
It should be noted, however, that the pessimistic attitude, which we notice in literature, does not necessarily imply total hopelessness in life. The object of hope may exist somewhere beyond our experience and existence. So, pessimism in literature is a sort of qualified pessimism.

There can be no common cause or causes of pessimism in authors belonging to different countries, ages, societies, parentages, environments, religious or classes and having different mental make-ups, education etc. It is in these factors that the causes of an author's pessimism have to be sought. So, a study of an author's life and the age in which he has flourished will help us to know the cause of his pessimism. Pessimism may be caused by some bitter experiences, viz., a shock at the premature death of near and dear ones, long and protracted illness and suffering, marked humiliation and frustration in life; or a series of calamities such as accident, flood, fire, earthquake, war that bring about great destructions to man and make a deep impression on his mind or, some vicious social systems which have a great impact on the mind of man. Again, some people grow pessimistic because of their general temperament due to their psycho-physical constitution. Pessimism may be philosophical, religious, moral, social, as well as aesthetic. These different types are caused by different phenomena as their names imply.
It is to be noted here that the philosophical or religious pessimism is a systematic one, while there is unsystematic pessimism which is born out of reflection on material circumstances and is largely conditioned by individual temperament. In literature we usually find the latter kind of pessimism. However, the pessimism found in literature has its social background and is ultimately traced to some philosophical or religious system or systems. And there is, in fact, a close relation between philosophy and literature. The thoughts and ideas, beliefs and feelings, purpose and ideal constitute one's philosophy and are expressed in one's literary work. The author's philosophy of life sometimes gives us directives and suggestions for better life and society. It helps to present life and the world in an artistic way.

Philosophy is the rational interpretation of life and the world as they are visualized, while literature interprets life as it is felt and imagined and suggests as it should be. There is a relation between reason and feeling, between reality and imagination; so, there is a close relation between philosophy and literature. As a matter of fact, we cannot fully isolate literature from philosophy. A good literary work must have some philosophical background. The author's philosophy of life is reflected in his writings and without a view of life literature of a high order cannot be produced. Coleridge,
therefore, rightly says in his *Biographia Literaria* (Ch.XV): "No man was ever yet a great poet without being at the same time a profound philosopher". Both philosophy and literature are products of social environment. Further, it may be said that while philosophy seeks truth, literature seeks beauty; but in the ultimate analysis "beauty is truth, truth beauty" as Keats has stated. Thus there is a close connexion between philosophy and literature. And pessimism in literature falls within the province of some system of philosophy. Though we get in literature the philosophical view of an individual, it somehow conforms to a philosophical or religious system.

If we trace the history of different countries we shall find that there is pessimism in social life at different times. For instance, pessimism appeared in England during the transition period following the Norman Conquest (1066). After the two Great Wars pessimism pervaded the social life of Europe owing to the collapse of moral and economic solidarity. Social ethics, social values and social relationships were not thought to be important and permanent. And a pessimist develops a tendency to look too much at the dark side of life and society. He finds little or no good in contemporary life as well as in institutions. Pain and suffering loom large in his mind. His outlook thus takes a particular turn and he is guided accordingly. He generally tends to criticize the established values and conventions. He has his own ideal or standard of life, and when an individual or a society falls short of it...
he feels bitter and sad. A man with a pessimistic attitude
becomes thoughtful and serious. Frivolities and superficia-
lities are foreign to him. He realizes the truth about life
and the world in his mind and also suggests ways to reach
it. And his suggestions sometimes have a deeper impact on
life itself.

In this connexion I would like to mention that in
literature there are three kinds of tragedy caused by three
different factors viz. Fate, Character and Society. Pessi-
mism is, in a way, connected with tragedy. So, the causes
of pessimism may be attributed to these factors also. Thus,
the causes of pessimism may be noted as follows:

Fate, a superior force, causing death, disease,
natural calamity, chance happenings etc;

Character, showing the inherent disposition of
a man;

Society, revealing social and political injustice,
economic exploitation and modern mechanical civilization.

In ancient Greek literature tragedy was due to Fate
that played a prominent part therein and man was nothing but
a mere toy at its hand. The tragic hero was helpless against
circumstances. Fate was the determining factor of the dramatic
actions. With the Greeks Fate was "deus ex machina", God out
of machine. In modern times Thomas Hardy is a fatalist, and
all his novels are tragedies of Chance or Fate. That the
character of the hero is held responsible for his tragedy
is prominently found in Shakespeare's plays. For example,
the inordinate ambition of Macbeth, too much simplicity and child-like credulity of Othello, too much reflective nature of Hamlet, arrogance and foolishness of King Lear by and large guided the actions of their lives and ultimately brought about their doom. In these cases character is fate.

In recent times the tragedies of Somerset Maugham and Graham Greene are the tragedies of character. Their characters are mainly responsible for their ruin and sorrow.

With the modern writers social systems and customs are responsible for man's tragic life with all his sufferings and miseries. The individual is in conflict with society, its traditions and conventions, its laws and prejudices. Modern writers concentrate their attention on the tragedies of common men and women living in the sordid atmosphere of a poverty-stricken society. Social evils and vices, political and economic systems and exploitations affect the life of the hero. The Society is the villain responsible for the tragedy. Thus, in Galsworthy's tragedies like Justice (1910), Strife (1909) and Silver Box (1907) the tragedy is due to a vicious social system. In Justice Galsworthy makes Bolster, who in search of justice finds himself in a very embarrassing position, and say: "Nobody wishes you harm, but they down you all the same." This may be taken as the crux of pessimism in modern times. The machinery of the modern society is set in such a way that the fall of a particular man is due to the fault of the society. This is well expressed by Mr. G.D.H. Cole: "What, I want to ask, is the fundamental evil in our
modern society which we should set out to abolish?
There are two possible answers to that question, and I am sure that very many well-meaning people would make the wrong one. They would answer POVERTY, when they ought to answer SLAVERY ...

Poverty is the symptom; Slavery the disease. The extremes of riches and destitution follow inevitably upon the extremes of licence and bondage. The many are not enslaved because they are poor, they are poor because they are enslaved."

"Quotation is taken from Russell's essay: "The World As It Could Be Made"

The tragedies of Galsworthy mentioned above evoke pity rather than awe, and stir our conscience to make social reforms. In Europe Ibsen, a Norwegian playwright, is perhaps the pioneer of social tragedies directing to social reforms. His plays A Doll's House (1879), Ghosts (1881), An Enemy of the People (1882), When We Dead Awake (1900) are examples in point.

It may be pointed out that though there is a relation between tragedy and pessimism they also differ. A tragedy deals rather with a sad event than with sadness in general. This sad event is due not to the sadness in life but to some error on the part of the hero or to circumstances beyond his control. Its representation in dramatic form has no depressing effect whatever; on the contrary, it has the
effect of 'Catharsis' or purgation and thus it elevates us. Indeed, "the theme of tragedy has always been victory in defeat, a man's conquest of himself in the face of annihilation." Maxwell Anderson: The Essence of Tragedy. But pessimism depresses us as it deals with the sadness in life in general and its morbid effects on life. We may consider tragedy as an important element of pessimism. If pessimism is the genus tragedy is a species of it, so to say.

If we glance at the history of English literature we find pessimism from its very beginning. It appears and reappears again and again in different ages in different forms. Some stray examples from English literature will make it clear.

Pessimism in English literature may be traced to Anglo-Saxon poetry. In it the first poem Beowulf is a poem of grim struggle, war and bloodshed. Some poems belonging to the Anglo-Saxon period explicitly express pessimistic moods; for example, The Lament of Beowulf, The Wife's Lament, The Ruined Burgh, The Wanderer, The Seafarer etc. breathe the note of sadness and the speakers in these poems are fatalistic though at times bold and courageous. A line from The Lament of Beowulf: That grief passed away: So may this. In the Middle Ages also we come across some elements of pessimism in English poems. For instance, The Pearl deals with a father's grief for his little daughter Margaret. This poem is perhaps the saddest of all early English poems.
During the Elizabethan Age tragic drama developed enormously. Shakespeare wrote tragedies besides Comedies and Histories. His masterpieces Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello and King Lear are the greatest tragedies of world literature in which deeper issues of life are dealt with. His heroes are noble but there is in their character a 'fatal flaw' that brings about tragedy in their lives. In Shakespeare's tragedies dark, dismal aspects of human life have been clearly reflected. Other playwrights of the Elizabethan period viz. Kyd, Marlowe and others too wrote plays filled with tragic gloom. Their plays - Spanish Tragedy, Doctor Faustus, Duchess of Malfi, The White Devil etc. are full of intrigues, revenge, horror, bloodshed, immoral acts, vices and deaths, and through these the evil in man is vividly mirrored.

In the eighteenth century pessimism again appears in the form of satire. Swift's Gulliver's Travels, the greatest prose satire in the English language, expresses the author's extreme bitterness and deep hatred for human beings. Once he said to Pope: "I heartily hate and detest that animal called man". The above-mentioned book is indeed 'a monstrous satire' on humanity - a satire on politics, religion, scientific progress and meanness of man. The causes of Swift's satire are the conditions prevailing in the contemporary society and man's debased nature revealed therein. He saw in the growing polish and decency in society only a mask of hypocrisy and ugliness under every beautiful exterior. Swift himself was the victim of this ugly society and suffered much.

In the nineteenth century Wordsworth, Shelley,
Keats and other romantic poets were dissatisfied with their environment. They had discomposure and disquietude in their mind and for their mental poise they created worlds of their own. So, being dissatisfied the romantic poets laid emphasis on "other worldliness" as opposed to "this worldliness". They always pined for the good in life and society and therefore with them the experience of evil and loss of values became more poignant than with others.

Wordsworth was dissatisfied with too much materialism prevailing in the England of his time. This is expressed in his poem *The World is too Much With Us*. He was also dissatisfied by the Reign of Terror which prevailed in France after the Revolution of 1789. When Wordsworth's idealism was rudely shattered by 'The Reign of Terror' he greatly suffered from mental depression and almost lost his belief in God. All this we know from his autobiographical poem *The Prelude*. The poem entitled *Guilt and Sorrows* which he composed at this period reflects something of this mental gloom and despondency.

Shelley did not like the existing social system - the State, Church and Social laws - and so he revolted against them. These take away man's liberty and crush him. He also suffered at the hands of his rough class mates. His discontent and torments due to social rules and customs are expressed in his poem *Ode To The West Wind*. There he writes:

"O, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud !
I fall upon the thorns of life I bleed !

Again, in another poem, *Stanzas Written In Dejection Near Naples* he writes about his mental suffering & disquietude :
"Alas I have nor hope nor health
Nor peace within nor calm around,"

In Keats' Odes, one meets with a note of deep sadness. Ode To a Nightingale, On Melancholy, Ode To Psyche, To Fancy etc. are instances in point. This note of sadness is closely bound up with the theme of transience and permanence set forth in Keats' Odes. A few lines may be cited to illustrate it.

Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin and dies;

Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

(Ode To a Nightingale)

Again,

Pleasure never is at home:
At a touch sweet pleasure meltseth.

(To Fancy)

The mental background when Keats wrote his Odes of sadness is explained by Middleton Murry. The death of the poet's brother Tom, disappointment in love with Fannie Browne, emigration of George (Poet's another brother) to America, cruel reviews of his poems in the Blackwood Magazine "changed the poet's ecstasy of happiness to an ecstasy of despair."

In the Victorian period pessimism in some poets was a dominating mood. We find sceptical and pessimistic
tendencies in the poetry of Fitzgerald, Clough, Arnold and James Thomson who gave way to despair in their verse. It is to be noted that scepticism and pessimism in the Victorian era were caused by Darwin's theory of Evolution, degrading conditions in factories and the problems of social unrest due to new industry. All the poets named above were affected by those trends in the life of their day, which drove them to despair. So they gave vent to their despair, while their poetry pleases, their message depresses. Such literature is called the literature of pessimism - where the writer draws the attention of his fellowmen to the evil in life.

James Thomson gradually became a poet of pessimism and his inspiration grew darker owing to the shock of incurable moral suffering. The central theme of his poetry is "the pain of living and sombre majesty of despair." This is sketched especially in *The City of Dreadful Night*, To our *Ladies of Death* and *Insomnia*. The first poem is marked by gloom and depression. He says in this poem that life is a hell and progress is illusion. The picture of life Thomson paints is deeply pessimistic. So his verse earns for him the label of the poet of pessimism. His pessimism is largely due to the many disappointments in his life and is intensified by his weak constitution. Fitzgerald translated Omar Khayyam's *Rubayat* whose theme is pessimistic as well as optimistic. Clough in his *Dipsychus* ('Doubled-soul') shows grim struggle between good and evil and this strikes a pessimistic note. In some shorter poems the poet's despair is mixed with hope. Arnold represents the despair
of the Victorian age more clearly than others. Indeed melancholy is the prevailing note of his poetry. He does not find any solution of the ills of his time and loses faith. He laments for the loss of religious faith, the selfish pursuits of men and misdirected life of his countrymen.

Thomas Hardy is the greatest pessimistic writer of the Victorian era, nay, of English literature. His conception of life is essentially tragic and his novels are pitious and heart-rending. Hardy is blinded by pessimism and his is a gloomy philosophy influenced by Schopenhauer. In his novels love cannot enjoy its full fruition and it is always involved in tragedy. Everywhere in Hardy's novels man appears to be crushed by a force far superior to him: the force of nature, the force of indifferent, hostile chance and that of the errors implied in man's own desires. At the end of Hardy's novel Mayor of Casterbridge a deep pessimistic note is struck in the words of Elizabeth: "Happiness is but occasional episode in a general drama of pain". Hardy's philosophy of pessimism grows in him owing to his peculiar mental make-up. His manifold consciousness of human misery, the anguish of the time and the industrial civilization that destroyed nature and rural life in his own and nearby villages also contribute to his pessimistic attitude.

Another pessimistic author of the late Victorian age was Gissing (1857 - 1903). Unlike Hardy, his pessimism is one of circumstances rather than of personal temperament or the spirit of the age. He was a devotee of the French
Realism and of Schopenhauer's philosophy. He sees the world as full of ignoble and foolish creatures. For him, the problem of poverty is insoluble and the oppressed lower classes cannot revolt successfully, and the rich shall not voluntarily try to ameliorate their sufferings. Thus naturally there is loss of faith in the intellectuals.

Gissing's own life is one of struggle against acute poverty, obstruction and degradation, which leave traces upon his writings. His unfortunate marriages also frustrated his genius to some extent. His youth had to undergo several trials. Thus, there was hidden a great suffering and bitterness in the depth of his mind. So Gissing's general outlook is darkened. In his novel Demos (1886) he describes the diseases of the society without any hope of their cure and he exposes the poverty of London Slums in The Netherlands (1899). He found vulgarity and ugliness in society and frustration in man. In his other two books New Grub Street (1891) and Born in Exile (1892) Gissing deals with his joyless surroundings and social corruptions and no solution to them has been suggested. He shows therein that society is built on greed and hatred and there are sad, unhappy victims of society. Indeed, in his works he breathes a sense of hopelessness.

Pessimistic notes are also found in the continental and American literatures. Thus, we see that pessimism is so common and pervasive that it has entered almost into every literature worth the name. In Italian literature we may find pessimism in the plays of Vitto Alfieri, the poetry of Leopardi and to the novels of Giovanni Verga, while in
Germany pessimism is to be found especially in the novels of Heinrich Mann, Hermann Hesse and Thomas Mann. In Russian literature Turgenev, Chekhov, Maxim Gorki and Dostoyevsky have shown in their writings the somber side of human life. And in French literature Emile Zola, Andre Gide, George Duhamel and others may be taken as pessimistic writers of various types. In American literature, too, one comes across a pessimistic note. In recent times Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner have written novels in which pessimistic elements are in abundance.

Literature is the fruit of thinking and imaginative soul. It is again conditioned by social environment. For, an author is, in fact, not an isolated being but a product of society. So in a literary work the writer is either consciously or unconsciously influenced by the social environment and reflects the spirit of the age in which he lives. At the turn of the last century and perhaps a little before English society began to change. This change is attributed to the mechanical and industrial growth and the decline of the rural peaceful way of life. Thus there arose an all-round discontent. In the language of Arnold Kettle: The late Victorian period marks the beginning of the disintegration of the epoch ushered in a century before by the epoch in which Britain became the workshop and the banker of the world. After about 1870 the apparently secure foundations of the world of the London & Manchester businessmen began to be shaken. It was not until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 that full horror became clear but by then for nearly half a century the process...
of disintegration had been going on. "The Boer War (1899 - 1902) greatly shattered British imperial complacency, and Victorian social stability was no longer in existence. Furthermore, old aristocrats of English society ceased to enjoy their pride and privilege and the middle class came to the forefront. It would not, however, be wrong to think of the years from 1900 to 1914 as the great age of the middle classes in England. The rise of the middle class and the disintegration of aristocracy form the central theme in the novels of John Galsworthy and Arnold Bennett. Although there were labour troubles sometimes, the labour class was not yet a major force in English life and society. Already, some thinkers and writers Robert Owen, Dickens, Matthew Arnold, Ruskin, William Morris had, with a variety of stresses, pointed out "the human unsatisfactoriness" with the existing institutions dominating in England. Under the leadership of Sidney Webb and others the Fabian society was preaching the doctrine of socialism so as to awaken the social conscience in the people. Galsworthy and Bernard Shaw have shown in their works, in ample measure, the growing social consciousness of the people and a growing discontent against the privileged classes.

According to A.C. Ward, "Questions Examine: Test I were the watchwords" of the writers of the early twentieth century, and so this age was stamped as the "Age of interrogation". Freud's discovery of the dynamic unconscious and importance of Sex in man's life profoundly influenced man's made of thinking which is well reflected in literature.
The novels of Virgina Woolf and the contemporary psychological novelists and also those of D.H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley and Somerset Maugham go to show this oncoming prodigious influence of Sigmund Freud. Incidentally I might add that Sur-realism, a literary device, sustained itself by the Freudian unconscious, and gave art and literature a sound mooring in the alarming absence of values in the wake of the First World War. According to Bertrand Russell, man's hopes and aspirations are "but the outcome of chance collocations of atoms". Thus "a pessimistic scientific humanism" was developed in England at the beginning of the present century. At that time there was a problem of personal relationship that arose out of scientific and gross individual development. To quote Sidney Webb:

"What was demoralizing ... because it bred a poisonous cynicism about human relations, was the making and breaking of personal friendships according to temporary and accidental circumstances in no way connected with personal merit." — Boris Ford (ed): The Modern Age. P-29

And this problem is mirrored prominently in the novels of H. G. Wells and D. H. Lawrence. The loss of sweet and natural personal relationship is a spiritual loss to man, which immediately received literary attention. This social and intellectual background would greatly facilitate the understanding and appreciation of English literary works of the time.
In my study I have singled out for my discussion the pessimism in the inter-war period (1918 - 1939) especially that in the novel. Different branches of English literature viz. poetry, drama and the novel produced during the period breathe different moods of pessimism. Before I enter upon the discussion in some detail about the pessimism found in the novels of some representative novelists of the period in the subsequent chapters, I should like to dwell upon the pessimism revealed in poetry, plays and prose works (including some war novels) of the period concerned.

In the field of poetry Wilfred Owen (1893 - 1918) is the greatest war-poet who stressed pity and indignation as his chief reaction to the war. He is a stern realist and strikes a realistic note in his war-poems. He sings of disillusionment, of the pathos and tragedy of war. For example:

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns,
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.

- Anthem for Doomed Youth

Again,

Think how it awakes the seeds, -
Woke, once, the clay's of a cold star.
Are limbs, so dear - achieved, are sides,

Was it for this the clay grew tall?

- Futility -

Here we see a tinge of pessimism underlying the poem and a tragic scene of war.
Siegfried Sassoon (1886 - 1967), like Owen, is another war-poet who expresses his horror, disgust and frustration about war in his poems. This will be evident from one of his poems called *Suicide in the Trenches*. A few lines from it are quoted below:

> You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye
> Who cheer when soldier lads march by,
> Speak home and pray you'll never know
> The hell where youth and laughter go.

In some poems of T. S. Eliot (1888 - 1965) pessimistic attitude is clearly pronounced. We see in them hopelessness and emptiness of modern life. His notable poem *The Waste Land* (1922) breathes anxiety and triviality of modern life and strikes a warning that a disaster is lying ahead. It treats of the barren, dry, outworn and disintegrating civilization. And there is an absence of creativeness in the vegetable and the human world from which arises an unlimited suffering. The rebirth of a new civilization is possible through spiritual discipline and this is what the poet frankly advocates. Let us quote a few lines from the poem *The Waste Land*:

> April is the cruellest month, breeding
> Lilacks out of the dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire, stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain.

*The Burial of the Dead Sec I*
These lines of the poem are full of pessimistic sensibilities. But it is to be pointed out that the pessimism of Eliot is not the outcome of the Great War. The causes of pessimism are always present in every age and the poet's pessimism is nothing uncommon. Eliot is here concerned with the world manifestations of the moment but the roots seem to go deep down into the realization of the mystic truth. He, like Maugham, finds in the spiritual method of India a possible mood of escape from the terrible grip of lust and passion ready to throttle mankind.

In the field of drama I shall refer to Sean O' Casey (1884 - 1964) and Noël Coward (1899 - 1973). In one of his dramas called The Shadow of a Gunman (1923) Sean O' Casey deals with the Anglo-Irish War of 1920, and exposes bloodiness and violence and crowded squalor involved in it. In another play named The Plough and Stars (1926) the dramatist has shown 'a strong sense of irony and humour'; besides one finds in the drama the futility and horror of the war and the suffering that follows. His The Silver Tassie (1929) is a powerful tragedy dealing with the war. O' Casey's own experience of poverty and violence are presented in his plays.

Noël Coward in his plays, particularly, in his The Vortex (1924), Fallen Angel (1925) and Easy Virtue (1926), exposes the emptiness and frivolity of contemporary life. He also satirizes the country society, the newly grown rich and the conventional morality of the day.
Some prose-works including some novels viz. Rough Justice (1926), Disenchantment (1922), Fiery Particles (1923), by G.E. Montague (1867 - 1928); Understones of War (1928) by Edmond Blunden (1896 - ); Goodbye to All That (1929) by Robert Graves (1895 - ); No More Parades (1925), A Man Could Stand up (1926) and Last Post (1928) by Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939); The Death of a Hero (1929) by Richard Aldington (1892-1962) were written on the war itself. In this connexion Erich Maria Remarque's notable work All Quiet on the Western Front (1929) is worth mentioning. In all these books mentioned above, disillusionment, the ugliness and futility of the war are well indicated. The books proclaimed that the war had been fatal to a whole generation of youth. Besides the material destruction, the war destroyed the people morally and spiritually. A few words about some of the books named above may be said here.

Rough Justice is a war novel. It deals, among other things, with the First World War. The author himself was a soldier and wrote about his experiences in trenches, of the marches etc. in the training camp and the war action in France. All this is told through a long story. In the story Auberon is the hero and Molly the heroine. There grew between them romance and love. The hero was maimed and his closest friend suffered both physically and mentally. Some characters also felt frustrated and disillusioned about the war because of sufferings. The life of the hero seems to be a reflection of the life of the author who took part in the war and had practical experience.
Understones of War is a classic prose-work about the 1914 - 1918 War. The author was a British lieutenant on the Somme and in Flanders during the war and set forth his personal war experience in this book. Like other prose-works on the war the present one records the ailment, damage, crime and cruelty caused by the war. The work gives us varied and horrible pictures of battlefields. Blunden had a similar experience of the Camp, trench, march, bombing, shelling, enemy attack and so on like other officers and soldiers who took part in the war. Indeed, we had the pathetic evidence of a warfare expressed quite well in this book.

Goodbye To All That is an autobiography in which the author sets forth his experiences of the First World War, which include a horrible and gruesome picture of what happened during the war. Robert Graves was an army officer in the British Army and participated in action in France. He gathered a first-hand knowledge of bombardment, air raids and killing on an extensive scale. The book also describes devastations, ruins and damages caused by the war; and injuries, hunger, cold and other sufferings of the soldiers and officers. There were atrocities - rapes, mutilations and tortures, which also came under his view. Pessimism was natural in such circumstances and the author's attitude reveals a sense of horror, and sympathy for the victims. The book is a reflection of the post-war disillusionment of his time.
During the years of war and after, a disruption in family life took place. Social ethics also changed. "The abruptness of the change bred a mood of disillusionment and bewilderment, a moral and psychological crisis that was the most serious of all crises, because, even more than the experience of or of the immediate aftermath of war, it shattered the ideals and codes of behaviour on which the old order had rested." (David Thomson: Europe Since Napoleon 1815)

It is obvious that the First World War led to the collapse of social values and struck a blow at the very foundation of social life. At the beginning of the war it was thought that war would bring more liberty, more prosperity, more security and more social justice; and that it would put an end to all wars in the future. And therefore any sacrifice was worth-while. But in the aftermath of the war there was heart-searching and a feeling that nothing was gained by the sacrifice. The war was, therefore, looked upon as a colossal and meaningless waste. The post-war mood is well expressed in the words of Edward Albert:

"Spiritually the period saw the immediate post-war mood of desperate gaiety and determined frivolity give way to doubt, uncertainty of aim, and a deeper self-questioning on ethical, social and political problems until the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 ...."
After the cessation of the war social unrest followed in England and on the continent. There was a conflict between conservative nationalism and liberal socialism accentuated by the rise of the new communist parties and the Third International known as Comintern. In England there were several strikes and threats of more during the years 1919, 1920 and 1921. With the labour unrest production was greatly hampered and consequently the economy of the country began to collapse. The labour unrest came to a head in the general strike of 1926. This event left a legacy of bitterness in the political and economic fields: Serious discontent arose in industries, and strikes and disputes became frequent. Besides, towards the close of the war plague and influenza as epidemic diseases darkened many houses. Many people - men, women and children became victims of the diseases in London and many other towns in England. "London's total deaths from influenza in 1918 - 19 were 15,054; in the 96 great towns (including London) to toll was 62,815. In England and Wales as a whole 150,000 persons died of influenza, gleaner of the war's harvest."

(McInt, Political Between the Wars, 1918-1945, p 22)

In 1929 another event, the crash on the Wall Street, had shaken the economy of the U.S.A. and the Western World. This culminated in the Great Depression of 1929 - 31 which had a shattering effect upon British economic stability. This crisis continued till 1934. This social and economic crisis bred moral as well as intellectual crisis. There was a general sense of hopelessness, of the loss of direction, of depression. There was also a deep-laid regret
and remorse. Thus we see that many complex problems - social, political, economic and moral - filled the post-war years. These years were a period of disorder and confusion, turmoil and discontent. Many workers were thrown out of employment and production declined. Exports and imports fell and in industry there was depression. The standard of living was lowered. All this is definitely a dark, dismal side of a country's economy. Thus the years are labelled as the "gloomy thirties". This had impact on literature and on the thought of the intellectuals. Moreover, there took place an event in Europe that greatly threatened peace on the continent. In 1934 Hitler who had come to power in Germany in 1933 broke the Disarmament Conference and withdrew from the League of Nations. He began military preparations. Europe visualised another Great War and got panic. Howat at the opening of his book Britain Between the Wars says: "The history of the twenty years between two World Wars is the history of the disappointments of these hopes." In the same strain he continues: "Post-war shaded into pre-war; war remembered or war prefigured was seldom absent." Indeed there was spiritual morbidity and mental sickness and 'the lost generation' sunk into 'a self-indulgence of despair'. [A.C. Ward]

With the outbreak of the War (1914 - 1918) an important change in English life and literature began. And after the war a pessimistic attitude manifested itself in all classes of people and found expression in contemporary
literature. The literature produced at this time reflects this pessimism exposing perplexity, disillusionment, discontent, hopelessness and uncertainty of aims, which arose from the post-war break-down of accepted values. To quote G. S. Fraser: "The Great War unsettled society in many ways. It had a great liberating effect: it hastened the emancipation of women; it promoted a temporary merging of the social classes. Young men from humble backgrounds received commissions; young officers like Graves and Sassoon gained a new questioning attitude towards their inherited code. But above all the First World War shattered Great Britain's national self-confidence and produced doubt, uncertainty, and confusion. In stead of thoughtless complacent hopefulness of the Edwardian decade, there was a 'new realism', a tendency to think of man as a strictly limited creature. Man was no longer a giant figure striding to perfection though he might achieve a certain tendency through harsh self-discipline."

In the novels of John Galsworthy, H. G. Wells and Christopher Isherwood we may trace their pessimistic attitude and pessimistic elements which are due mainly to the First World War. Therefore, their pessimism in this connexion is worthy of mention. Galsworthy (1867 – 1933) treats of sociological problems. A social disquietude is reflected in his novels. He gives us in his novels an objective, ironical portrait of the upper middle class in a changing society. In his The Forsyte Saga (1922) consisting of three novels beginning with The Man of
Propertv (1906) and A Modern Comedy (1929) Galsworthy depicts a society whose foundation has been shattered by the World War. Man did not believe in the permanence of things. Galsworthy's pessimism is found in The Forsyte Saga where some 'rebels' in the characters of Irene, old Jolyon and others are presented. But the 'rebels' are not prototypes of what human beings should be for, their inner freedom ultimately lands them into the world of licence.

Soames Forsyte is married to Irene. Through prolonged persuasion he marries her and the result is disastrous, and 'the profound subtle aversion which he felt in his wife was a mystery and a source of the most terrible irritation'. Irene falls in love with Bosinny, a penniless architect who rejects the Forsyte values and their affair touches off a series of events which end in disgrace and disaster. Again, in the book In Chancer (1920) we find Irene in love with Jolyon, one of the relatives of Soames and the latter is in misery thereby. The conflict between Irene and Soames is the conflict between Beauty and Property. Galsworthy throws light 'on the dark places, the evils, and abuses of life', and at the same time he shows good things, too.

Galsworthy had sympathy for the young people of the early twentieth century who were restless and the mentality of the time has been well stated by the author in his analysis of Nadda, a young girl. She had endless questions in her mind. This attitude reveals an element of dissatisfaction, so to say. A satisfied person generally does not question about life and society.
The Great War (1914 - 1918) left dismal changes in society and it had also wrought fantastic changes in taste and behaviour of man. Soames has now changed in his attitude and temperament. He would look askance at changes, dark and dismal. Young, restless men were cut adrift from the moorings of tradition; so they had no fixed aim, nor had they any purpose in life either. Gulsworthy was frustrated at the aftermath of the First World War and shrank back almost in horror.

The problem of the adjustment of the individual to his social environment is the chief interest of H. G. Wells. His novels are commonly marked by serious view of life and contemporary social and intellectual problems. He suggests reconstruction of modern society on a more equitable basis. After the First World War he finds a universal disorder, social anarchy and a conflict between antagonistic forces in the life of an individual as well as in society. In Mr. Bristling Sees Through (1917) the novelist's reactions to war are clearly set forth. The bitter experience, frustration and disillusionment about the war have been expressed therein.

Wells at first believes that science might bring about changes in man and his material environment. But his fond belief and hope were rudely shattered. He came to understand that the progress might be evil and disastrous and man, the master of scientific advancement will be a slave to it. His early scientific fantasies are deeply pessimistic. In them
(The Time Machine, The Island of Dr. Moreau, The Invisible Man, The War of the World, The First Man in the Moon and The War in the Air) we see life and individual genius end in frustration and defeat. He also saw the industrial civilization which had been rapidly expanding in England and lamented for the waste, the disorder and the 'selfish exploitation'. His novels are full of ideas, social and educational. He relies on ideas - the idea of the World State and of socialism.

In his Salvaging of Civilization (1921) and Meanwhile (1927) H. G. Wells gives us a gloomy picture of contemporary England. There was a crisis of civilization due the collapse of social values and the absence of any ideal. The English Society - nay, the whole of European Society, too, was shattered by the War. In Meanwhile the general strike of England, mentioned before that shattered the economic condition of the country and the failure of the League of Nations to establish peace have been treated of. There was a conflict between two classes - Trade Unions and the mine owners. Wages went down; unemployment was growing; social unrest was prevailing and its cause was economic. We shall do well to quote a few lines from a letter occurring in the novel called Meanwhile:

"It is England 1926 ... people smile about the streets and dry jokes in our English way, but hundreds of thousands must be hiding worry almost beyond bearing. Anxiety untold, hardship and presently hunger. And outlook bad. At any time there may be shooting and killing."
Suffering expressed in this novel is a social phenomenon caused by economic condition which was again caused by the Great War of 1914-18.

During 1930s in some of his short novels there was "an increasing pessimistic awareness of the tragic dangers of the future". Some of his novels are bitterly satirical. In his old age clear pessimism appeared in Wells and at the outbreak of World War II he lost faith in man. He portrays 'a bleak vision' of our world where nature rejects man and is destroying him. This idea is clear in his books *The Outfit For Homo Sapien* (1942) and *Mind at the End of Its Tether* (1945).

Christopher Isherwood (1904- ) is another novelist of note in this connexion. His two documentary novels *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* (1935) and *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939) may be mentioned here. In the first novel he shows the decadence in the social life of Berlin City and growing cruelty of Hitlerism. Through Mr. Norris, a cheat, treachery and murder are committed. In the second novel Isherwood shows that ordinary men and women are helpless as civilization begins to collapse. In a series of episodes the author illustrates that the German nation was getting trapped in political snare. In both the novels the post-war characteristics viz. corruption and loss of moral sense are quite clear. His novels reflect the social tension of Europe in the 1930s and forebodings of the Second World War. So we see that pessimism originating in the beginning of English...
literature still persists. Indeed it appears in literature in different colours assuming different forms.

In this study I propose to discuss in some detail pessimism found in the major novels of William Somerset Maugham, David Herbert Lawrence, Aldous Huxley and Graham Greene produced in the inter-war period. I have selected them because they are the leading and representative novelists of the period concerned. In them pessimism is more abundantly found than any other novelists of the period. I shall enter upon the detailed discussions on their pessimism in the following chapters.