CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The present research work is an attempt to theorize the sociology of literature with special reference to the novels of George Orwell. The sociological approach to the study of literature generally regards literary works as social documents, as assumed picture of social reality. But, the contemporary text-oriented literary theories have marginalized such assumption and discarded the extrinsic approaches to the study of literature. In order to focus these extrinsic approaches, the modern literary critics and sociologists have developed new theoretical paradigm known as the sociology of literature. This new framework is broadly divided into two approaches: realistic and pragmatic. The realistic approach entails the study of social referents, while the pragmatic approach studies the relation of the individual authors to the socio-cultural circumstances of the era in which they live and write, and the factors of the creation and consumption of literature. The term ‘literary consumption’ entails the role of the gatekeepers in the creation and success of the book. The major concern of the pragmatic approach is to seek answers to the several aetiological and para literary questions such as; how does the specific literary form comes into being? How does it reach to the readers? How do societal and cultural factors affect writers and their works? What personal forces propel individual to write? What are the reactions of the readers to the literary works? Why are they accepted or rejected by the publishers, critics and readers? How certain literary traditions stimulate writers to use the specific form of literature? As the major critical theories, that are commonly used to analyze, interpret and evaluate literary works, have not touched these questions, the new generation of thinkers and critics has made a successful attempt to answer these questions and developed theoretical perspectives of the sociology of literature.
The sociology of literature has long and distinguished history. The several critics and scholars from Plato down to the present have discussed the different theories and methods of sociological approach to literature. After the discussion of the contribution of the major social critics and their theoretical perspectives in the history of the sociology of literature, the researcher has arrived to the following conclusion:

The sociology of literature is mainly concerned with social determinants of literature. The early social thinker and literary critics such as J. C. Herder, Madame de Stale, H. A. Taine and others are of the view that certain social, political, cultural and geographical conditions of the day are the major determinants of literature. J. C. Herder believes in social structure where as Madame de Stale emphasizes the climate and national character as the determinants of literature. Hippolyte Taine, on the other hand, has provided a systematic formula of ‘race, milieu, and moment’ to interpret and analyze literature. Although these critics lay the foundation of the sociology of literature, they ignore the world view of the writer and the role of gatekeepers in the creation and existence of literary works. The Marxist approach also ignores these determinants of literary works. The early Marxists use the term ‘base’ to refer to the economic system prevailing in a given society at a given time and the term ‘superstructure’ is used to refer to its political, social and economic ideologies. However, it is in the works of modern sociologists of literature that the focus is given on the world view of the writer and the role of gatekeepers.

It is also found that the sociologists, historians and literary critics have discussed different theoretical approaches and methods of the sociology of literature. These approaches have been manifested mainly through: historic and pragmatic ways. As the first way is concerned with
the study of literary works as social documents, it is studied under *social referent*. The critics like Madame de Stale, De Bonald, H. A. Taine, Richard Hoggard and the early Marxists advocate this documentary aspect of literature, arguing that through the careful reading of any nation’s literature one can tell the identity of that nation. This is considered as the realistic approach of the sociology of literature. The second pragmatic approach studies the world view and creativity of the writers, and the ideology of the gatekeepers comprising publishers, critics and, readers in the creation and existence of literature. Orwell’s novels are analysed on the ground of these approaches. After the careful analysis of Orwell’s novels in the light of realistic and pragmatic approaches of the sociology of literature, it is concluded that social referent, the world view of the novelist and the gatekeepers of literature are equally responsible for the existence and success of his novels.

**The Role of Social Referent:**

The sociology of literature believes that a work of literature does not arise automatically as is shaped by the dominant social, cultural, political and economic values of the day and connected with the literary tradition. The social referent makes literary works a social document, so the study of such social referent is regarded as legitimate social evidence. It also serves as an aid in understanding both society and literature. After the close reading of Orwell’s novels, the researcher has arrived to the conclusion that all the novels of Orwell are determined by the contemporary social referents. It is also found that Orwell has not written the novels himself but the socio-cultural and political conditions of the day have made him to write these novels.

The major social referents that determine the fate of Orwell’s first novel *Burmese Days* are: the colonization of Burma from British Empire
to gain raw materials for British industrial markets, justification of the British rule for the welfare of the natives from pro-British intellectuals, the exploitation of the Burmese from the despotic Empire on the ground of racism, Burmese culture and tradition, the marginalization of women in both Eastern and Western societies, and the White Club as the center of imperialism. During his service from 1922 to 1927 as a police officer in imperial Burma, Orwell was a part of all these social conditions and whatever he witnessed, experienced and felt is depicted in the novel.

The social referents used for the subject matter and theme of *A Clergyman's Daughter* and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* are: the desolate conditions of hop pickers, tramps and unemployed workers; poverty caused by class distinction and the capitalistic educational system of the day. Orwell himself had witnessed social conditions of hop pickers and the capitalistic educational system of 1930s England. All the social referents depicted in these novels mirror 1930s unemployed England. The crisis of economic depression and the problems of poverty and unemployment faced by England during 1930s are presented through the picaresque wandering of Dorothy in *A Clergyman's Daughter* and anti-capitalistic ideology of Comstock in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*.

In *Coming Up for Air* Orwell presents the contrast between old England and new England through the nostalgic visit of George Bowling to Lower Binfield. The main concern of the novel is the drastic changes that Orwell observed in the social structure of England after the World War I. Another social referent is Orwell’s nightmare vision of impending war and the effects of totalitarianism on the entire social structure after the war. The destruction of nature and culture is the serious social problem of the modern industrialised society and Orwell has demonstrated this through the difference between the traditional England and modern capitalistic industrialised England.
The social referents of both *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty Four* are totalitarianism of Stalin in communist Russia and Hitler’s in Fascist Germany. Orwell had witnessed and observed that the principles of socialism were crushed by Stalin to gain absolute power. Both the novels reflect the social truth that the absolute power corrupts the social values and principles absolutely. The very social truth is at the base of both the novels. The sociology of literature studies such social truth as the social genesis of literature. In both the novels the mental structures are explored and these mental structures are not individual but social phenomena.

In conclusion, the existence of all the novels of Orwell is determined by the social contexts or referents that he actually witnessed, experienced, thought and felt.

**The Role of the World View of the Writer:**

Like the social referents, the world view or ideology of a writer is equally responsible to determine the existence of his novels. In fact, the world view of the writer is nothing but a specific way or a characteristic outlook in which the writer sees himself in relation to his world. It includes the record of his conscious and unconscious mind, the emphasis he places on what he sees and the choices he makes from among alternatives he knows; his hopes, fears, and unfulfilled desires; his philosophy of life, and the fundamental values of human life. The analytical study of Orwell’s novels shows that his world view is the major determining force behind his novels.

Orwell’s world view was greatly promoted by his isolated childhood, the contemporary socio-political situations, his Burma experience, his experience of poverty stricken life in Paris and London, the Spanish Civil War, the effects of the First and Second World War and
the ideology of the gatekeepers of literature. While working as a police officer in Burma, he experienced the brutality of imperialism and racism. As a result his anti-imperialistic and antiracist outlook developed in the beginning of his career, and the very outlook is the base of not only his *Burmese Days* but also his later novels. The imprint of his hatred for authoritarianism is seen in his later novels, *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty Four*.

While working as a policeman in Burma, Orwell observed a grim picture of poverty but when he saw poverty in England, his world view of poverty got a new dimension. He then decided to identify himself with the poor through Dorothy in *A Clergyman’s Daughter* and Comstock in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*. Both the novels are based on his world view of poverty and capitalism.

Orwell also believes in the socialist philosophy. He is of the opinion that socialism will lead to a world of free and equal human beings. So the protagonist of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* declares his war against money-god and joins the classless world of social structure but he cannot change the system of capitalism because it is beyond his capacity, so in the end he surrenders to money god. Gordon Comstock’s final decision of surrendering to capitalism shows the new dimension of his capitalistic world view. When he comes to know that capitalism is no more major threats to the society, he becomes mild towards capitalism and turns towards totalitarianism.

Orwell’s stay in the mild natural climate of Morocco in 1938-39 makes him to write against devastating effects of industrialization on nature and the traditional ways of living, and its result is *Coming Up for Air*. In fact, the destruction of nature and culture is the serious social problem of the modern industrialised society. Orwell demonstrates this
through the difference between the traditional England and modern
capitalistic England. The presentation of the estrangement of man from
nature and culture is the main subject of *Coming Up for Air* and the root
cause of this estrangement is capitalism and industrialization. So Orwell’s
ecological and anti capitalistic world view can be accepted as the major
determinant of *Coming Up for Air*. So far as the ecological issues
discussed in the novel are considered, Orwell is found as an early
environmentalist to warn people about the consequences of ecological
disaster.

*Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty Four* are the creations of
Orwell’s anti-communist and anti-totalitarian world view developed after
his experience of the Spanish Civil War and the Russian Revolution. He
has witnessed the influence of Communist policy such as ceaseless
arrests, censored newspapers and prowling horde of armed police during
the Spanish Civil War. He is convinced that the destruction of the Soviet
myth is essential to revive the socialist movement. To write against
Stalinism, he intentionally selects a simple form of animal fable to make
his ideas intelligible to everyone. He knows that the form is closer to
criticism than to fiction, and easily appealing to the readers. His ideology
of combining the politics of communism in Russia and the artistic
strength of beast fable makes the success of *Animal Farm* possible. The
socio-political referent of the novels shows that Orwell is against
communism and totalitarianism for the sake of democratic socialism. In
these two novels Orwell exposes the secret realities in politics of the way.

It is also found that Orwell’s world view of socialism is completely
different from the socialism of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Marx
believed that property is the root cause of inequality in the society. So he
suggested the abolition of private property for maintaining equality. In
Animal Farm, he rejects the Marxist ideology and focuses the psychological forces of human nature. His world view of socialism is not based on economics but on psychology and ethics. When he felt that the English ways of life was threatened by inevitable war with Germany, he decided to write against it and the novel Nineteen Eighty Four is the result of his intended ideology. In order to warn people the threats of communism and totalitarianism, he wrote Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty Four.

In a nutshell, Orwell starts his career as a novelist attacking imperialism and racism in Burmese Days, poverty and class division in A Clergyman's Daughter, capitalism in Keep the Aspidistra Flying and Coming Up for Air, and communism and totalitarianism in Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty Four. The several phases of his world view during the short period of his literary career are major determinants of his novels.

The Role of the Gatekeepers of Literature:

The social referents and the world view of Orwell facilitate the creation of the novels. However, on the pragmatic ground, it is found that the gatekeepers are the real determinants of the existence and success of his novels. According to the sociology of literature, one cannot think of a book without gatekeepers. It is the gatekeepers who produce the books and make them available to readers. In fact, the gatekeepers of literature exercise their function both positively and negatively. They can canonize the writers and their works and make popular the specific genre. They may influence the reading public by displaying the qualities and merits of the text and make the specific text available to every reader. The gatekeepers, on the other hand, can influence the text negatively. For instance the publisher can prevent manuscripts reaching the market, the
critics can prejudice the reading public by focusing the shortcomings of the text, and the distributors can create the problems in reaching the text to the readers. In short, the fate of a literary text depends upon gatekeepers. The major gatekeepers that play an important role in determining the existence and success of Orwell’s novels are: publishers, critics, reviewers and the reading public.

Orwell has faced the problem of the publication of his works from the very beginning of his literary career. When the manuscript of his first book *Days in London and Paris* was sent through his literary agent, Leonard Moore, to Jonathen Cape for publication, it was rejected by Cape, the publisher. Orwell, then, reworked and expanded the version, changed its title as *A Scullion Diary* and sent it to ‘Faber and Faber’ where T.S. Eliot, was an editorial director. But it was also rejected on the ground of libel action. As a result Orwell felt dejected, but his literary agent, Leonard Moore, took it to Victor Gollancz who agreed to publish the work subject to the removal of its bad language and some identifiable names. Finally, it was published with the title suggested by the publisher as *Down and Out in Paris and London* under the pseudonym, George Orwell. This shows that the publisher Gollancz, who paved the way of Orwell’s literary career, was responsible for the physical existence of his first book. The critics, reviewers and reading public responded it positively and indirectly supported him to proceed his career as a novelist.

Orwell drafted the first version of *Burmese Days* while he was in Paris, and after his return from Paris he revised and sent it to Victor Gollancz. However, Gollancz, smarting from fears of prosecution, turned it down as he was worried about libel action, and partially out of fear that it would anger supporters of the British Empire. After the rejection from
Gollancz, Orwell sent it to Heinemann and Jonathan Cape but the novel was rejected on the same ground. Finally, he sent it to Harper Brothers who published it in America in 1934 with some alterations to minimize the possibility of libel action. Unlike publishers, the critics and reviewers made positive remarks and the readers labelled it as the best novel. After its success in America, Gollancz softened his views and published it in England in 1935. It means that Gollancz’s decision of publishing *Burmese Days* in England was affected by the support and appraisal of critics, reviewers and readers. The sociology of *Burmese Days* shows that the role of gatekeepers is equally important to the contemporary socio-cultural and political context/referent and worldview of the novelist in the creation and success of the novel.

Like *Burmese Days* Orwell’s later novels *Coming Up for Air* and *Animal Farm* were also delayed and rejected by the publisher at the initial stage. *Coming Up for Air* was delayed because of Orwell’s criticism on capitalism and fascism, especially on Hitler. Orwell had sent the copy of the book for publication in March 1939 but Gollancz dared not publish it because he was uncertain about the libelous action against it. Another reason was that the novel presents a lecture organized by ‘Local Left Book Club’ on the topic ‘anti-totalitarianism’. The descriptions of an orator who delivers the lecture at a meeting shares the similarity to the members of Gollancz’s Book Club, so Gollancz did not want to be offended by his club members as well as by other communists and fascists. So Orwell was asked to bring out the changes in it and when he made the criticism softer, Gollancz agreed to publish the novel on 12 June 1939. However, since its publication the novel has been being appreciated by critics, reviewers and readers for its ecocritical approach and Orwell’s prophecy of impending war. The novel, after that, was
published by several publishers including Secker and Warburg in 1948, Hillman and Mac Fadden in 1961, and Penguin in 1963, 1969, 1976, 2000 and 2001. Although it is called as an anti-war novel due to its presentation of the devastating influence of war over the lives of individuals, the critics and readers in general responded to it immensely.

*Animal Farm* makes a devastating attack on Stalin for his betrayal of the Russian Revolution. As a result publishers of different persuasions and political associations find various reasons for not bringing the book into print. The main reason of the publishers’ refusal was Orwell’s stern critique of Stalin and Moscow-directed Stalinism, especially, after his Spanish experience. As England was then supporter of Russia during the war time, the publishers felt that the British would not tolerate the criticism of the USSR, their World War II ally, so they declined to publish the novel during the war time. In order to publish it a publisher asked Orwell to confess that it is based on totalitarian in general and not Stalinism or Russian Revolution in particular, but Orwell refused to do so. Thus the novel remained unpublished nearly for a year. After the refusal of four such rejections, Orwell felt very upset and decided to publish on his own, but eventually ‘Secker and Warburg’ took one of the wisest decisions of the publication of the novel. However, there was further delay due to the problem of paper shortages, so it did not appear until 1945.

Although the publishers raised problems, the critics and readers praised it so much that *Animal Farm* got high success both in England and America that it created history as half a million copies of it were sold through the American Book-of-the-Month Club and it was translated into thirty-nine languages. Orwell earned about £12,000 from the book by 1950 and became financially successful for the first time in his life. The
BBC radio versions of the satire came in 1947 and 1952. Sales in hardcover and paperback editions had reached eleven million. Besides the immense success, it was accepted by the academic circles not only in England but also in all over the world in their curricula. It has also been adapted for films twice though both differ to some extent from the novel. The major success of the novel really lies in the tremendous response of the readers, reviewers and critics. From this point of view it is concluded that the gatekeepers of literature are equally important to social referents and Orwell’s world view in the existence and success of his novels.

Unlike Orwell’s other works, *The Clergyman's Daughter* and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* did not face any problem of publishing but at the same time they did not appeal to the gatekeepers or even to Orwell himself. Orwell’s *Burmese Days*, *Coming Up for Air*, *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty Four* are critical of both society and governments, and of received response on the Right and as well as the Left. As there are controversial statements and harsh criticism, he faced difficulties to get them published. However, *A Clergyman's Daughter* and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* got published as soon as they were written because hey do not contain any blasphemous or critical remarks. In fact, *A Clergyman's Daughter* is an experimental novel in which Orwell was neither serious about its form nor happy with its content. Although he was critical of both novels, he was badly in need of money, so he decided to publish them. The remarkably generous reviews and criticism really determined the existence of these novels. Both the novels are pessimistic in tone and the roots of the very pessimism are found in the development of Orwell’s worldview at preparatory school and in Burma. Considering the reviews and criticism of the contemporary reviewers and critics they received mixed response. Both the novels are reprinted after the success
of Orwell’s later novels. So far as the questions raised by the pragmatic approach of the sociology of literature are concerned, it is concluded that Orwell’s name and fame rests upon the gatekeepers comprising publishers, critics, reviewers and the reading public.

After the discussion of George Orwell’s novels on the realistic and pragmatic grounds of the sociology of literature, the researcher has arrived to the conclusion that the social referent, the world view of Orwell and the ideology of the gatekeepers equally play a dominant role in the emergence and success of Orwell’s novels. Besides these determinants, the different periodicals uplift the novel and praised its quality in the several articles and reviews to cater the taste of his novels among the readers. The publishers like Victor Gollancz, who supported Orwell financially, and Secker and Warburg that dared to publish *Animal Farm* during war time also played an important role in the development and success of Orwell’s career as a novelist. As it has already been discussed one more important factor that determined the fame of Orwell as a novelist is the literary tradition of animal fable and dystopia. The analytical and sociological study of Orwell’s novels makes it clear that, the social referents, the world view of the writer, gatekeepers of literature and socio-political and academic organizations play equally important role in the creation and success of his novels.