INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the Study:

The contemporary text-oriented literary theories comprising Formalism, New Criticism, Structuralism and Post-structuralism regard literature as a self-enclosed, self-sustaining enterprise or a world-in-itself. These theories oppose the prevailing interest of scholars and critics in the social context of literature and biographies of authors. The proponents of these theories analyze literary works in terms of their inner structure. Ferdinand de Saussure’s *A Course in General Linguistics* (1915) has been profoundly influential in shaping these theories. In fact, Saussure laid the foundation of the intrinsic approach and opened up a fresh way of looking at literature as an independent entity. Influenced by Saussurian linguistics, Russian Formalism attempted to introduce objectivity in the realm of literature. I. A. Richards also pioneered the technique of practical criticism. The similar kind of decontextualized objective reading was made popular in America by New Critics. Structuralism, a parallel development during the same period, considered a text only in terms of language and its system of conventions. However, by 1970, the basic tenets of structuralism were questioned by post-structuralism, and the serious challenge of deconstruction which emphasized the ‘open-endedness’ and ‘undecidability’ of the text was emerged by Derrida. The focus of all these approaches is on the phono/lexico constituents of a literary work. As all the new theories were absorbed in textual or structural criticism, the extrinsic approaches to the study of literature remained marginalized (Swingewood 1972: 11). In order to focus these extrinsic approaches the twentieth century literary critics and sociologists have developed new theoretical paradigms to study the social genesis and determinants responsible for the emergence and success of literary works. The sociology of literature is one of them. The main objective of this
paradigm is to take the cognizance of the relationship between literary works and their socio-cultural contexts of the day, the worldview of the writer, the role of publisher-author-audience relationship, social positions of authors and readers, the responses of the literary critics, the ideology of the publishers, environmental and economical conditions of the day, and the role of several socio-political and academic organizations in the creation and success of literary works. Keeping in mind this idea, the present research work is designed to cover the theoretical premises of the sociology of literature with reference to the novels of George Orwell.

2. The Sociology of Literature:

The sociology of literature has a long and distinguished history during which the different critics and social thinkers developed several approaches of the sociology of literature. The early social thinkers and literary critics such as J. C. Herder, Madame de Stale, and H. A. Taine regarded that certain social, political, cultural and geographical conditions of the day are the major determinants of literature. J. C. Herder believed in social structure whereas Madame de Stale emphasized the environment and national character as the determinants of literature. Hippolyte Taine, on the other hand, provided a systematic formula of ‘race, milieu, and moment’ to interpret and analyze literary work. His *History of English Literature* (1886) is the landmark in the history of the sociology of literature. All these critics regarded the study of literary works as social documents, as assumed picture of social reality. Their mirror image approach emphasized certain social, political, cultural and geographical conditions of the day as the major determinants of literature, but they ignored the sociology of the writer and the role of gatekeepers comprising publishers, distributors, critics, reading public and circulating libraries in the creation and success of literary works. The Marxist approach also ignored these determinants of literary works. In fact,
ignoring these determinants is like denying their role in the creation and success of literature. So the contemporary social critics and thinkers such as Lucian Goldman, Leo Lowenthal, Robert Escarpit, Milton Albrecht, Terry Eagleton, and others laid emphasis on the determinants for the evaluation of literary works. For instance, in his essay ‘The Sociological Model’, George Huaco explains that the literary phenomena are influenced and affected by five specific social structures. They are: “authors, readers, critics, patron, and publishers” (551).

The main subject matter of the sociology of literature is the relationship between literature and societal structure of the day. However, the literary critics and social thinkers have conceived this relationship in different ways. Their views about the sociology of literature are broadly divided into two approaches. The first and the most common approach to the relation of literature and society is the study of literary works as social documents, as assumed picture of social reality. The early critics advocated this documentary aspect of literature, arguing that, through the careful reading of any nation’s literature, one can tell the identity of that nation. Their mirror image approach of the sociology of literature reveals that social context is the major determining factor of literary works.

The second approach deals with the relation of the authors with the socio-cultural circumstances of the era in which they live and write, and the conditions of the creation and consumption of literature. The term ‘literary consumption’ entails the role of the gatekeepers in the creation of the text. In short, this approach tries to seek answers to the several aetiological questions such as; how does the specific literary form come into being? How does it reach to the readers? Who is the patron of the author? 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 is it accepted or
rejected by the publishers, critics and readers? How does literary taste develop? What is the role of publishers, distributors, readers and circulating libraries in the popularity of literary works? How do certain literary waves exist in a particular period? 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 critics has made a successful attempt to answer these questions to develop theoretical perspectives of the sociology of literature.

The two basic approaches regarding the relationship between literature and societal structure have been discussed differently by the several critics and scholars. For instance, in his “Two Approaches in the Sociology of Literature”, Terry Eagleton conceives the relationship between literature and societal structure of the day in realistic and pragmatic point of view. The sociology of literature combines both the ways and studies literature in its totality. Its major focus is on the areas and determinants of literature. Along with the study of the socio-political and cultural context of the day, it studies the writer’s worldview and the ideology of the gatekeepers in the creation and success of literary works. The present research work is an attempt to explore the theoretical perspectives of the sociology of literature and to explain its importance in the contemporary critical theory.

3. Introduction to George Orwell:

3.1. Life and Works:

Eric Arthur Blair, better known by his pen name George Orwell, was an English journalist, novelist and essayist. He was born on 25th June 1903, in India, where his father, Richard Blair, worked for the Indian Civil Service. His family had the tradition of government administration in the British Empire. Orwell was born in India, but he was brought up in the socio-cultural environment of England. His mother,
Ida, brought him to England at the age of one. He completed his early education in the prestigious St. Cyprian’s School in Sussex. In 1917, he entered Eton College, where he contributed regularly to college magazines. After completing his studies at Eton, Orwell joined the Indian Imperial Police in Burma. His five years there led him to reject every aspect of imperialism and brutality. His *Burmesse Days* (1934) is the result of his experience in Burma. He, then, gave up his job and moved to Paris to try his hand at short stories, but he ended up destroying them because nobody would publish them.

Orwell returned to England from Paris around Christmas 1929. During the next three years he worked successively as a private tutor, school-teacher, and bookshop assistant. His most important activity of this time was writing novels, and reviews and articles to a number of periodicals. As a proponent of socialism, he wanted to write for the common man. He purposefully lived as a tramp in London and the home countries, and stayed with the miners. He learnt the disparity between the classes and came to know about the life of poverty and hardship amongst the beggars and thieves. His study of the under-classes in general provided the themes for his first work *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) and his other works to follow.

In 1936, Orwell was commissioned by Victor Gollancz, the publisher of his first work, to visit areas of mass employment in Lancashire and Yorkshire. His *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) is the powerful description of the poverty he saw there. Soon after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1937, he went to Spain to fight for the Republicans. As a member of the Independent Labor Party, he joined the non-Stalinist far-left POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification) in which he fought as an infantryman. While on the front at Huesca in Aragon, he was shot in the neck and badly wounded. When the
Communist Party gained control and tried to purge the POUM, Orwell returned to England and began supporting himself by writing book reviews for the *New English Weekly*. During the Second World War, he was the member of Home Guard and from 1941 to 1943 he worked for BBC Eastern Service. His unique political or anti-Stalinist allegory *Animal Farm* was published in 1945. The royalties from the novel provided him with a comfortable income for the first time in his life. In 1949 his best-known work *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was published. There is no indication that Orwell ever abandoned democratic socialism that he constantly promoted in his later writings. He died on 25th January 1950 from tuberculosis which he had probably contracted during his investigative tramping expeditions in and around London as described in *Down and Out in Paris and London*.

Orwell’s career as a writer began with the publication of his first full-length non-fictional work *Down and Out in Paris and London*. This work created confidence in him to write fictional and non-fictional works. He, then, devoted his life to the socio-political and cultural writings fictional and non-fictional works. His major works span the period of Hitler, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, and the beginning of the Cold War. He wrote in all six novels: *Burmese Days* (1934), *A Clergyman’s Daughter* (1935), *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), *Coming Up for Air* (1939), *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949); three non-fictional works: *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) and *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) and four volumes of essays: *Inside the Whale* (1940), *The Lion and the Unicorn* (1941), *Critical Essays* (1946) and *The English People* (1947). His, both fictional and non-fictional works, throw light on the realistic picture of the contemporary socio-political and economic problems, the several traits of his personality and his liberal socialistic
worldview. In this research work an attempt has been made to assess and theorize the sociology of literature with special reference to his novels.

3.2. Literary Influences:

Orwell’s career as a writer has been greatly influenced by his loneliness in preparatory school, restlessness in Burma, and his worldview developed by his experiences in Paris, Spain and in his own country. His early novels and non-fictional works are the outcomes of his personal experience in Burma, Paris, Spain and London. Besides this, he was greatly influenced by several English and foreign writers and critics, and the very influences made him the best English writer of the day. In an autobiographical sketch he writes:

The writers I care about most and never grow tired of are: Shakespeare, Swift, Fielding, Dickens, Charles Reade, Flaubert and, among modern writers, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and D. H. Lawrence. But I believe the modern writer who has influenced me most is Somerset Maugham, whom I admire immensely for his power of telling a story straightforwardly and without frills (CEJL II 7)

Gibbon’s *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* also provided Orwell with important historical parallels to stimulate his thinking. A twelve-volume 1791 edition of *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was amongst the books in his personal library when he died and the very collection shows his interest in Gibbon. On the eve of the World War II, he condemned “… the stiff upper lip of the *pukka sahib* somewhere East of Suez, carrying on with his job without believing in it, like an Antoine Emperor” (CEJL I 507). In his wartime diary, he writes: “I always remember that the Roman senate still existed under the later Empire” (CEJL II 424). The shades of Gibbon are traceable in his anti imperialistic approach in *Burmese Days*. 
Orwell was the great admirer of Jonathan Swift, Jack London, Ralph Waldo Emerson, G. K. Chesterton, George Gissing, Graham Greene, Herman Melville, Henry Miller, Tobias Smollett, Mark Twain, Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad. In his essay “Politics vs. Literature: An Examination of Gulliver's Travels” (1946), he expresses his interest and favour for Jonathan Swift: “If I had to make a list of six books which were to be preserved when all others were destroyed, I would certainly put Gulliver's Travels among them” (SEOE 271). Fredric Warburg notes the influence of Swift, Dostoyevsky, Jack London and Arthur Koestler on the works of George Orwell (247-250). In his review of Zamatyn’s dystopia We, published in Tribune in January 1946, Orwell demonstrates the familiarity of his ideas with Zamyatin’s dystopia as well as Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World. In his review of Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty Four James Walsh remarks: “the idea, plot, chief characters, symbols and indeed the whole climate of Nineteen Eighty Four was in fact copied by Orwell from a novel by a Russian writer Eugene Zamyatin” (290).

3.3. George Orwell’s Socio-Political Criticism:

The literary work of George Orwell is the result of the impact of imperialism, capitalism, socialism, communism, totalitarianism and the World Wars and the social problems caused by industrialization and class distinction. His major works are written during the era of Stalinism and Nazism and the total mobilization of whole societies for war. They reflect how democratic socialism was crushed by totalitarianism and communism under the rule of Stalin and Hitler and how capitalism and industrialization demoralized the working class socially and politically.

Orwell’s career as a novelist started in 1934 with the publication of Burmese Days (1934) and reached its peak during the war period with Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty Four. His novels are closely related to the socio-cultural, political and economic issues of his times. Burmese
Days is a powerful exploration of racism, colonial exploitation and the politics of imperialism. A Clergyman's Daughter (1935) and Keep the Aspidistra Flying (1936) are about the politics of poverty. In Coming Up for Air Orwell criticizes the effects of capitalism and industrialization, while Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty Four are the bitter protest against communism and totalitarianism. In fact, all the novels warn mankind of the dangers of imperialism, capitalism, communism and totalitarianism and propose his world view of democratic socialism.

Orwell is a real socialist who desires to bring down the impact of imperialism, capitalism and totalitarianism for the happiness of the common people. He believes that if fascism triumphs he will finish as a writer. To oppose fascism, he joins a socialist party and writes against totalitarianism in Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty Four. In “Why I Write” he states: “Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism, as I understand it” (SEOE 7).

Orwell’s criticism which deals largely with the impact of politics on society is confined mainly to imperialism and totalitarianism. Besides totalitarianism, he writes on the problems arising out of poverty, class distinction, financial hardship, the faulty educational system in private schools of capitalistic society, suppression of the human spirit and the loss of social credibility. So his novels are classified under three heads: novels dealing with the politics of imperialism and racism, novels dealing with the politics of poverty and class division, and novels dealing with the politics of totalitarianism (Chakrabarti 49). His first novel Burmese Days falls in the first category while A Clergyman's Daughter, Keep the Aspidistra Flying and Coming Up for Air belong to the second category. The novels dealing with the politics of totalitarianism comprise Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty Four. In all these novels we get Orwell’s
criticism on the socio-political problems of the day. Besides these novels his socio-political criticism is found in his essays and non fictional works.

Orwell’s socio-political criticism shows his aspiration for a society in which exploitation and competition would be replaced by equality and justice. He longs for a society in which every human being would be entitled to enjoy freedom. In his “The Lion and the Unicorn” he proposes a specific programme for democratic socialism for England. Regarding his purpose behind writing Nineteen Eighty Four, he states “socialism aims, ultimately at a world-state of free and equal human beings. It takes the equality of human rights for granted” (CEJL I 119). In a nutshell, his literary work is marked by keen intelligence and wit, a profound awareness of social injustice, an intense, revolutionary opposition to totalitarianism, a passion for clarity in language and a belief in democratic socialism.

4. Statement of the Problems and Hypothesis:

The present research work, “The Sociology of Literature: A Study of George Orwell’s Novels”, is a sociological study, hence, an attempt has been made to show the role of the major determinants in the creation and success of the novels under study. The hypothesis of the research work is that the existence and success of George Orwell’s novels are shaped and determined by the socio-political context of the day, his world view and the gatekeepers of literature. As the focus of the research work is on both the realistic and pragmatic ways of the sociology of literature, the following research problems are formulated for the deep comprehension of the study:

i. How do familial, societal, political and cultural factors affect Orwell’s world view in the creation of his novels?

ii. What is the role of the socio-cultural and political conditions and situations of the day in the creation and success of Orwell’s novels?
iii. How do the environmental conditions influence to mould his world view in the fictional form?
iv. What is the role of gatekeepers and other socio-cultural organizations in the name and fame of Orwell and his novels?
v. Are the novels of Orwell, the products of his world view and the socio-political conditions of the day?

5. Objectives of the Study:

The research work attempts to focus the determining factors for the emergence and success of George Orwell’s novels in the light of the following objectives:

i. To explore the theoretical premises of the sociology of literature and to explain its importance in the history of the contemporary critical theory.

ii. To explain the significance of Orwell’s novels for the understanding of the socio-political and cultural situations of the day.

iii. To explore the impact of the socio-political and cultural situations and the gatekeepers of literature in shaping Orwell’s world view.

iv. To make an attempt for the contribution of the theory of the sociology of literature with reference to Orwell’s novels.

6. Scope and Limitations of the Study:

The sociology of literature has a long history from Madame de Stale to modern sociologists and literary critics. We get several approaches and methods in the sociology of literature. In order to get a good and valid result of the study, it is important to give the research work a clear scope and limitations. It is also important to recognize that sociology of literature is the paradigm of this research and it is very complicated. So this research work is confined to the role of major determinants of literature such as; socio-political context or referent of
the day, cultural and environmental conditions, ideology and worldview of the novelist, the ideology of the publishers, reactions of critics, reviewers and readers, and the role of other socio-cultural, academic and political organizations in the emergence and success of Orwell’s novels.

8. Research Methodology:

In the present research work the research methods such as analysis, interpretation, comparison, argumentation, assessment and evaluation of literary works are used in toto in the light of analytic, Marxist, dialectic, comparative, empirical and the socialistic perspective. The available data in the research books and journals are collected to interpret and analyse the novels and to identify the determining factors of the novels in the light of the theoretical perspectives of the sociology of literature.

The objective of this research work is to explore the theoretical premises of the sociology of literature and to examine the novels of Orwell in the light of these premises. So the first step taken for this research work is the collection of the primary and secondary sources of the study. The reading and understanding of the select texts in the light of the sociology of literature is the next step of this research work. The history and sociology of the novelist along with the contemporary socio-cultural and political conditions and situations is discussed to understand the sociology of the novelist’s worldview. The next step is selecting, transcribing, and classifying the data of the sociology of literature and the novels selected for the study. After obtaining and classifying the data, the researcher begins to interpret it to reach a final conclusion.

9. An Overview of the Relevant Literature Studies:

George Orwell’s novels have been examined and analyzed by several research scholars and critics, but very few scholars have tried to examine the sociology of Orwell’s worldview and his works. For
instance, in the last chapter of *The Sociology of Literature* (1972), Alan Swingwood has evaluated the Orwell’s novels from the theoretical perspectives of the sociology of literature. In “Governmental Hegemony of Stalin’s Totalitarian Regime in George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*” (2007) Abdullah Sajjad has discussed the novel in the light of only one aspect of the sociology of literature. In his article entitled “Socio-Cultural Matrix in George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty Four*” (2010) published in the journal, *School of Humanities and Sciences*, K. Ramesh has discussed socio-political aspect of the novel. The works carried out on Orwell include *The Making of George Orwell* (1969) by Keith Alldritt, *Glimpses of George Orwell* by N. R. Sawant, *George Orwell: The Ethical Imagination*, by Sant Sing Bal, *George Orwell A Humanistic Perspective* by Adibur Rahman, *A Study of Mind and Art of George Orwell* (1969) by S. N. Prasad, *George Orwell: A Socio-Cultural Critic* (1991) by Anupam Chakrabarti and *George Orwell* (2010) by Douglas Kerr. These writers focus one or the other aspect of the conventional mirror image approach of the sociology of literature. However, no comprehensive research work in published form, as far as the present investigator’s knowledge is concerned, has been carried out on the sociology of George Orwell’s novels. The present research work aims at making a thorough critical estimate of the sociology of Orwell’s novels.

**10. Chapter Scheme:**

Keeping in mind the earlier discussion, the present research work is worked out into five chapters. An introduction to the present research work gives the background of this research work. The first chapter deals with the theoretical premises of the sociology of literature. It explains the nature and scope of both sociology and literature, the relationship between sociology and literature, the nature and function of sociology of literature, the areas and social determinants of literature and the
importance of sociology of literature. The chapter also deals with the historical development of sociology of literature from Madame de Staal to the modern genetic structuralism and social critics along with the approaches and methods of the sociology of literature. The second chapter is mainly about the sociology of Orwell’s world view and creativity. The approaches and methods discussed in the earlier chapter are applied to the life and works of George Orwell. The third chapter deals with the sociology of his early novels. This chapter throws light on the dominant cultural, religious, literary, political and other social and pragmatic determinants in the creation and success of *Burmese Days* (1934), *A Clergyman’s Daughter* (1935), *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936) and *Coming Up for Air* (1939). The novels discussed in this chapter are selected on the basis of their period, form, content and structure. The fourth chapter deals with the sociology of his later novels. The chapter discusses the dominant political situations of the day, ideology of the writer and the social determinants in the creation and success of *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949). The fifth chapter of the study concludes this research work with a brief summary on findings and suggestions for the future researches.

This introductory chapter gives the thorough account of the present research work. It is planned out to present the background, objectives and scope of the research along with its methodology and the chapter scheme. In the subsequent chapters the emphasis is laid upon the theoretical premises of the sociology of literature and the application of this theory to the personality of George Orwell and his novels to find out the major determinants of his socialistic worldview and his novels.