INTRODUCTION

It is a commonly held critical opinion that the world of Faulkner's novels is a world where time has been arrested. He is concerned only with the romantic past of the South and its tragic degeneration. Future does not seem to exist for him. As such there is no-where for man to go if the past is lost.

But this opinion ignores the fact that though Faulkner bases his stories and characters in the South and deals with the problems with which he was familiar; his basic concern is to delineate those dramas of emotion, passion and feeling which are universal. In other words, he deals with the human predicament as such. Human existence has two poles: one is the facticity of time and place, the other is transcendence. A close study of Faulkner's works shows that he looks for values that would enable man to transcend the limitations imposed by the facts of his lineage, place of birth, prejudices of his environment and his materialistic pursuits. Like the other spokesmen of the second decade of the 20th century, Faulkner had witnessed the sudden collapse of the whole order, but unlike them, instead of being made dizzy by the
whirligig of time and looking for personal codes of conduct, he tries to look for perennial values that would enable man to overcome his vanities and attain serenity of spirit.

It does not mean that he ignores the need for change; but his approach is different. To him, change is of two kinds: one that takes place in man's surroundings and requires readjustment of approaches and attitudes, causing confusion and bafflement as it affects his set ways of life; the other that takes place in man's consciousness leading him from unawareness to awareness of the real nature of human situation and enabling him to endure it. The latter is possible only when one is able to imbibe such values as brotherly love, charity, tolerance, humility, understanding and control of wild passions.

The universality of Faulkner's vision is somewhat obscured by his very palpable recreation of the South. The feeling of its presence is so strong that Faulkner appears to be almost a regional writer. But it is not a shortcoming; it is rather a device that gives his works a ring of authenticity.

An author is born and grows up in a particular society and, unconsciously, imbibes all the fears,
anxieties, hopes and aspirations of that society. As he is an integral part of the society which nurtures him, his personal views and impressions are not entirely his own. The imaginative representation of life in the novels of William Faulkner also reflects the spirit, fears and hope of the society in Mississippi in which he was born and brought up.

Faulkner's chief experience was confined to the rural society of Lafayette county of Mississippi which believed in old pieties and, despite all suffering, led a contented life before the age of Depression. Owing to the Depression, the sudden fall in the prices of all commodities and unemployment, especially in the rural area, the labourers working on the plantations and the farms had to leave their homeland in search of food and shelter. The change in the external circumstances of life made it imperative that the moral and social outlook should also change.

After the 1st World War, the younger generation in Europe and America lost faith in the premises of the superiority of western civilization. It felt the need for a complete revision of the past value-system in keeping with the changed circumstances. But the South
still clung hopelessly to its past traditions and conventions and wanted to retain the old social norms, unmindful of the fact that they were now a part of history which could only be contemplated not revived. The incompatibility between the changed circumstances and the outdated social and moral moves led to utter confusion and immobility of thought.

The great heroes of the South were buried safely under the ground. The time of proving one's valour and physical prowess in the battlefield was over with the end of Civil War. The glorious past of the South was now a part of the history which could only be contemplated not revived. The South was not only in collision with Europe but also with North America. Owing to the establishment of democracy the individual got more privileges, rights and liberty in the North, while in the South the planters were still ruthless and the Negroes, women and the poor whites were being denied the right of equality. Moreover, the industry developed rapidly in the North making it more prosperous. But, because of resistance to change, the change in the modes of production in the South was rather slow and caused profound tensions, deep inner divisions of loyalties and
despair. The economic prosperity of planters marred the human values. The white traders in the South were getting more prosperous. Every section was scared of the other section. The resultant narrow mindedness, mutual jealousy, hatred and fear created a conflict in the Southern mind. The old problem of racial discrimination was still unresolved. It became more acute and violent.

Inspite of it, the Ist World War, which had an extra-ordinary impact on the United States, did not leave the South untouched. It speeded up the changes ushered in by the Civil War. The attitudes that had once prevailed began to crumble away and the economic, social and moral values seemed to lose their validity. Faulkner was not unaware of the contemporary issues but unlike his contemporaries such as Hemingway, Dospossos and Fitzgerald, he did not try to portray the sensibility of the generation affected by the war. He tried to peep below the crust that degenerated the existing society and found that Sex, Religion and the Negro were the main issues which required a change in the outlook. They were the root obsessions in the mind of the Southerner mainly responsible for the over all
stagnation. The result was that life had lost its charm and harmony and there was dissatisfaction and deep frustration. To communicate this sense distinctively he has created an imaginative past in his novels and used it for comparison with the present to show the loss of values and degeneration in the present chaotic society, which, still believing in the glorious legend of the past, is unmindful of the fact that the past can never be revived. He wishes for changes in attitudes that would make the society harmonious and just and human existence more dignified.

Faulkner is emotionally attached to his 'South' so he is more perturbed by watching its degeneration which is revealed in the following lines:

"Yes, I think the reason is simply that I love my country enough to cure its faults and the only way that I can cure its faults within my capacity, within my own vocation, is to shame it, to criticize, to try to show the difference between its evils, its goods, its moments of baseness, and its moments of honesty, integrity and pride, ..."  

He gives a satirical view of the Southern society but he treats himself an integral part of the South; so it is rather the self-analysis of a man who is aware

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of the evil within himself and feels exasperated. His novels are self-searching and not just critical accounts of the South's dehumanization.

In his imaginative creation of Yoknapatawpha County, he creates the themes and characters that he knew well and gives a realistic account of situations which makes them appear more convincing and real. Being himself from the South he knew it well that the people of the South were finding it difficult to adjust to the changing values of the time. The emotional wrangling of the people he created are a result of their reaction to change from a standpoint of rigidity. They are so obsessed with their past that they even forget that life is always in a state of motion and would ever flow on. The past gives way to the present and future, so they should try to adjust to the new values. But they either resist change or capitulate to it without understanding its requirements, which leads to a conflict between the human will and the circumstances which are beyond control. Faulkner presents his characters in the perspective of a changing world and this perspective goes beyond the 1st World War. It extends back up to 1860 -- the time of Civil War.

The tales told by Faulkner are gruesome, the
characters are abnormal and the situations are grim. So, apparently, it does not appear inappropriate to call him a bard of dark atmosphere, a fatalist or an author with an anti-vision. In his sheer idealism Faulkner forgets all but his own identity. Feeling that he is involved personally in the baseness of the Whites, he looks into the dark recesses of his own being. However, he is submerged in the love of his South to such an extent that his own identity is lost. Being an integral part of the South, his revelation becomes the revelation of the South.

But Faulkner is not devoid of optimism. He is aware of the possibilities of improvement. However, He, therefore, throws the baseness of people into their faces and virtually shames them into looking for improvement. In his novels he brings us face to face with peculiarities of the age and indicates possibilities of improvement. To achieve it, he has created some touchstone characters such as Dilsey, Clytie, Jenny, Byron Bunch and Nancy. These characters expose the hollowness of the Southern myth of the moral differences between the whites and the blacks and superiority of whites. They emphasize the need for necessary social change for
fostering equality of mankind.

Dilsey endures all suffering for the sake of members of the Compson family. For her, work is worship and humanity is above all. In a symbolic way she represents Christ who suffers for the mankind. Clytie endures suffering for all the members of Sutpen's family and ultimately sacrifices her life to save its integrity and honour from the unscrupulous designs of Rosa Coldfield. Nancy sacrifices her life to save Temple Stevens from eternal damnation. Miss Jenny Sartoris serves the four generations of Sartoris family. The Sartoris family is her microcosm. For her the service of humanity is above everything else. Byron Bunch represents a humanistic attitude. On the one side he is known as a sincere worker in the factory along with Christmas and Lucas Burch, on the other he is the only visitor to Hightower, the obsessed priest. Thus he forms a link between the traditionalists and naturalists. He successfully persuades Hightower to save Joe Christmas' life and help Lena Grove in her child-birth. He also persuades Lucas Burch to return to Lena Grove and her child. After Lucas runs away, he marries Lena Grove and accepts her child, that is, he willingly shares the burden of
humanity.

Faulkner's fictional characters can be bisected broadly into three groups; the traditionalists, the opportunists and the reformists. The traditionalists are those who hopelessly cling to romantic legends, past traditions and conventions. They unconsciously go astray from the right course as the traditional virtues are blended with prejudices and rituals to such an extent that they cannot be separated easily. Unknowingly they treat the meaningless rituals of the past as true Christian virtues and follow them blindly and pay the penalty. The opportunists know that times have changed and reject the traditional values, but they are hypocritical self-seekers who do not have any values. The third group realizes what is wrong with the South and stands for a change in attitudes so that a better society would come into existence.

Faulkner's novels depict that disintegration, vulgarity and other evils of society are a result of man's inability to realize the weaknesses in his set ways of behaviour. We find him constantly asserting that "man can endure", but to endure life man need not accept passively a current code of conduct but has to
acquire those active values which are an outcome of the progress of human civilization.

Faulkner is not an out and out fatalist. He thinks that since man makes no effort to rise above his prejudices, vanities and ego he is bound to meet disaster. His characters like Joe Christmas, Caddy, Addie, Anse, Thomas Sutpen etc. are doomed because they either surrender to instinctive pressures and inner compulsions are unaware of the defectiveness of the collective approach to life of their social group.

Women in Faulkner often suffer because of the defective role assigned to them by the individual and the collective self. The poor simple minded girl Dewey Dell is jilted by Lafe then cheated by Macgowan in the city of Jefferson. Caddy is a 'bitch' for Jason, Charles, Herbert Head, Charley and other men. Speaking of Ruby Lamar in Sanctuary:

"Listen. By tomorrow they will probably ask her to leave town. Just because she happens not to be married to the man whose child she carries about these sanctified streets'.

Faulkner is rather critical of sanctified streets where the rituals and pharisaical norms of society are

above humanity. The conventional society tolerates the function of a brothel at Memphis but fails to provide any shelter to Ruby Lamar as it is against their code of respectability. Women are denied their rights in a male dominated society which refuses to recognize their existence as separate from objects of male sexuality and adoration.

Faulkner upholds the basic human rights of man. Individual should be in a position to avail of freedom, equality and liberty. No individual should be denied the right to live in the name of race, creed or colour. The womenfolk should be treated as human beings and not as things. An individual should willingly share the burden of humanity, and life should not be denied in the name of respectability. Faulkner also believes that one should not be self-assertive. The blind faith in rituals and meaningless traditions should be discarded as it distorts and destroys the present. Rigidity is harmful to the individual and society both.

In a way Faulkner implies that society should reevaluate its norms and attitudes. As without revaluation it is likely to lapse into prejudices, meaningless rituals and self-complacency leading to hypocrisy and
corruption. He is conscious of the fact that change is an inevitable process of life and if we don't renew our value system it can only lead to tragic consequences. His concept of time is closely related to it. To a certain extent he has been influenced by the Bergsonian concept of time, according to which 'past experiences of a man never pass into oblivion'. The past always seems to caste its shadow on the present in Faulkner's novels. But Faulkner uses it not because he is enamoured of the past, but to show how an imprisoned present leads to catastrophe. For, the South that Faulkner depicts obstinately lived under the shadow of its past.

Writers like Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce etc. have also used the concept of two times, but Faulkner uses it in a different manner. Marcel Proust's quest for 'lost time' is an attempt to recapture the memories of moments that have long disappeared but which still live somewhere in the human consciousness.

To Virginia Woolf, all the past experiences are related to the present moment in a manner that though they are not in a chronological order but they are regulated by time. The past experiences help in guiding and evaluating the present actions in relation
to the past. The present remains the focal point, but the impact of the past lightens it up like a flash. James Joyce in his Ulysses is also preoccupied with the presentation of two times, but it is merely to retrieve the memory that is relevant to the presentation of eighteen hours of experience. Joseph Conrad's narratives may cross the past and present in the consciousness of his characters but the lives evoked in each retain a chronological order. The depreciation of present and future is used as a literary device to hide the linear movement of the narrative rather than a means of showing the grip of the past on the minds of his characters.

The core of Faulkner's work is the 'orbitary dial' whose shadow marks the present and absorbs the past. Thomas Compson tells Quentin "not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it."^3 Quintin spends the last day of his life in a kind of time rage trying to conquer it. In tearing the hands off the watch he seeks to obliterate the present. Obliteration of the present, is a denial of life but life refuses to be denied. So Quintin destroys himself

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as he is unable to put the present into a meaningful relationship with the past. Likewise, other protagonists of Faulkner also try to deny life as their minds seethe with violence. Bayard too tries to arrest time and denies life but he fails in his effort. He gets tumultuous and when his mental tension mounts too high he is forced to deliberately traverse the path of self-destruction. Joe Christmas realizing the futility of his escapade surrenders himself at Marston. Thomas Sutpen, realizing the failure of his design of pure dynasty, walks like a great Greek hero to court his death.

In Faulkner's novels time in many cases appears to be frozen. He uses the concept of two times to show the rigidity of the mind of his characters that makes it difficult for them to comprehend the changes around them and the consequent loss of the sense of values.

Though many of Faulkner's characters live only in the past, this is not true of all his characters. Faulkner's touchstone characters such as Dilsey, Clytie, Jenny Sartoris are not obsessed with the past. Dilsey's religious experience is determined by her faith in the Compsons. Her phrase "I've seed de first en de
last, .... Never you mine me.

indicates the union of Dilsey's religious and social life, for she uses the language of the book of Revelation to state her critical observation of the Compson family. Her participation is the symbolic suffering of Christ who endures all suffering for others, that is, all human beings. For her service of humanity is above everything else.

Likewise, Clytie the daughter of Thomas Sutpen from a Negro woman endures suffering throughout her life for the Sutpen family. She is not obsessed with the clock-time but believes in the service of humanity. She even sacrifices her life in defending the honour and integrity of Sutpen's Hundred from the nefarious designs of Rosa Coldfield. To quote:

... then for a moment may be Clytie appeared in that window from which she must have been watching the gates constantly day and night for three months - the tragic gnome's face beneath the clean headrag, against a red background of fire, ...

Like Dilsey and Clytie, Jenny Sartoris has no rage against time. She serves the four generations of Sartorises without expecting any reward. She endures suffering for the other members of the family. Though

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4 The Sound and the Fury, p. 264.

she has greater love and affection for Bayard, yet, when she is informed about Bayard's death, she adopts a sober and quiet posture which indicates that she is far above the clock-time. The characters like Lena Grove abide by the motion of life. To her, her future child is a symbol of hope.

In short, time has been used by Faulkner as a device to depict the stagnation and dehumanization of his contemporary society in order to emphasize the need for change. His "Momentary Avatars", who only live past and unconsciously try to arrest the flow of time, meet tragic ends.

His main aim is to probe into the inner recesses of his character's minds in order to find out the causes of human degeneration and social and moral ills of society. He differentiates between two kinds of change: the change that is merely a drift and the change that comes through an understanding of the nature of human suffering and weakness. While the former leads only to misery, the latter leads to regeneration.