Chapter I

Chapter I

Introduction

Fiction is an umbrella term used to denote any piece of writing that is imagined by the writer and does not exist in reality. Genres such as novels, short stories, plays and poetry can be categorized under fiction. Novel is a work of fiction whose major indicator is its length. A voluminous story involving numerous characters and incidents can be termed as novel. The Augustan age witnessed the birth of this genre and therefore, novels are the most recent addition to the world of fiction. Novel is the dominant form and genre in terms of readership in the present times. However, when the novel was in its incipient stages, it was considered to be an inferior genre and was subjected to caustic attacks by critics.

Seeds of the novel were sown as early as the fourteenth century in the form of recording travels. The writings of the travellers were not entirely fictitious but could not be taken at face value either because they contained many spurious details. *Travels of Sir Mandeville* is the earliest example of travel writing and was probably published in the year 1375. The dominant trait of novels in the Elizabethan age was that it provided an insight into the culture, lifestyle and belief systems of faraway places. Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1551) played a key role in the inception of the trend to fictionalize travels.

Outlandish stories about other cultures and people instilled a sense of superiority in the minds of English readers. Thereby, it can be said that fiction served a vital role in shaping the English psyche and the snobbish attitude that defines the vast majority of the English people can be ascribed to the novels they read.

The obsession with the unexplored places of the globe seen in explorers' narratives over the century from Mandeville to Raleigh, remained a common theme for a long time. Since their popularity did not reveal any signs of dying down and they continued to tantalize the readers, the trend shifted from mere documentation to accommodating the experiences of the traveller and personalizing the narration.

The increasing readership was predominantly women from the upper or upper middle class. The seventeenth century witnessed the rise of a new ethos in the nation, which made supervision, enforcement and restrictions of all kinds of social behaviour in every strata of the society prevalent. Therefore, a new morality began to be introduced in many books, concerning relationships between men and women, and creating social awareness about wants, desires, and fantasies. Aphra Behn, who was the first female figure in English Literature however, failed to conform to the newly formulated rule. She overstepped the mark on issues of morality and her style of writing was largely untrammeled. She was also one of the first writers to boldly expound the topic of racial discrimination in her novels.

Aphra Behn used the tale of an African, who is carried off to be a slave in the English colony of Suriname in her novel *Oroonoko* (1688) in order to expose the perpetrators of the slave trade. She also shed light on the hypocrisy of the Christian colonizers and their manipulative manoeuvres to corrupt the primitive people. It is a novel of violence and cruelty and is ahead of its time as it is the first English novel by a British to portray an African in a sympathetic light. She wrote three decades before Daniel Defoe, who is considered one of the 'fathers' of novels. Nevertheless, she is credited with having written one of the first novels and her oeuvre comprises thirty

novels and seventeen plays. However, her gender never allowed her to be termed as the pioneer in the genre of novels.

The themes in Daniel Defoe's novels were dedicated to the problems pertaining to the eighteenth century. His novels are centered on social problems prevalent at that time, such as the woes of the emigrants, and miscellaneous problems pertaining to novelists, artists, journalists and the bourgeois. Robinson Crusoe, the eponymous protagonist of Defoe's novel has been considered as one of the first capitalist heroes to overcome dire circumstances and attain financial security. Stories revolving around fiscal issues were repeated in a spate of novels starting with Charles Dickens in the nineteenth century to H.G.Wells and many other writers in the twentieth century.

The genre which hitherto dealt with social issues in a genial way, turned satiric and acerbic with the advent of the English writer Jonathan Swift, who criticized and ridiculed figures of authority with very thin concealment. *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) which is widely considered a children's comic fable is in fact, a scathing attack on the political parties of the time, and on the futility of religious controversy within the sub-sects of Christianity. The novel also attacked some of the new scientific institutions of the time, such as The Royal Society. In his novel, Swift had created a clan termed as Yahoos, a race of uncouth beasts resembling apes but in human form. The protagonist Gulliver, who has been portrayed as a globetrotter in this novel, identified Yahoos as bearing a close resemblance to the human species.

Love stories and epistolary style of writing novels gained prominence with the next generation of novelists. *Pamela* (1740) by Samuel Richardson was a significant novel in the epistolary style which was a phenomenal success. For several decades,

novels in the form of letters were popular. Aphra Behn was a trailblazer in writing epistolary novels too. *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* was published as early as 1683.

Not only did *Pamela* establish a trend for the epistolary novel, but it also underlined the gender distinctions that were to become prevalent in cultures for over the next two centuries with the male as a provider and the woman as a weakling, who had to safeguard her virtue in the face of trials and tribulations. Novelists as a rule shunned the concept of female autonomy in the portrayal of female characters and any digression was frowned upon. Scholars who have analysed the character of Pamela from a psychological point of view find her behaviour mystifying. The debate about gender roles have remained a favourite subject from the time of *Pamela's* publication and it has never ceased to interest literary scholars.

The epistolary novel provides numerous characters with the opportunity to present their point of view. A single narrative voice might eventually turn pervasive with the progress of the novel. However, the presentation of multifarious viewpoints creates an impression of variety which eventually coalesces into a single composite story.

Henry Fielding propelled the novel to the next stage with the portrayal of English landscape, and manners of the English people in his works. Fielding was the first novelist to employ an omniscient narrator who directly addressed his readers with the term "dear reader".

Events were arranged according to the time they occurred in all the novels written so far. The storyline unfolded itself from the beginning, and then moved on towards the middle and end. This pattern was adhered to religiously and Laurence Sterne was the first

novelist to break away from this tradition and thereby was a pioneer in the field of novels written employing the stream of consciousness technique.

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, a new trend was established. Sexual themes began to be explored and homosexuality was defended. *Roderick Random* (1748) by Tobias Smollett was a book written in this vein. Henry Mackenzie created yet another trend with his *The Man of Feeling* (1771) in which the hero is someone who gives vent to his emotions by crying. It was a big leap taken in the history of characterization wherein, the stereotyped image of a male as someone who is domineering and perfectly in control of his feelings faced a major blow. Gender roles began to be reassessed after the publication of such novels.

The Victorian era ushered in novels dealing with ramifications of industrialization. The demography of the nation was altered completely by rapid industrialization. Urban areas were teeming with people and the cities were unprepared to handle this sudden fluctuation in numbers. Shoddy ways of living, steeped in squalor and penury were a common sight. Crime rates therefore increased drastically and the urban areas were in a miserable state. The novels of Charles Dickens depicted these conditions with immense expertise. Harrison Ainsworth and Edward Bulwer Lytton were the writers who catered to the Victorian interest in crime fiction.

English is the most widely used language in England and America. American Literature is rich with the encounters and dreams of Americans. The root and development of American writing are interwoven with the development of America as a country. The vast majority of the early compositions in American Literature spin around religious and political topics. American Literature commenced with the beginning of American history

in 1607. The genre of fiction emerged only after the colonies attained freedom. The rising demand for a unique American style of writing led to the emergence of novels based on occasions set in America's past. The most ancient writing about America comprises the impressions recorded by explorers and navigators from the European nations, after they turned homeward.

When the nineteenth century commenced, just a modest number of novels had been composed, yet by the mid-nineteenth century, American fiction evolved to the extent of being on par with the best literature in the world. Henry James played a pivotal role in the transition that took place in America's literature from the 1800s to 1900s. He infused psychological realism into his works. Henry James lived as an expatriate similar to the characters he designed and his books moved far from the obsession with the American settings, as was the norm in the nineteenth century. Rather, a significant number of his books are energized by an unpredictable exchange and an occasional struggle between the interest of a more seasoned European culture and a more youthful American vision. This interplay is evident in novels like *The American* (1877), *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) and *The Ambassadors* (1903).

World Wars ushered in an influx of novels written based on the theme of war and the repercussions that followed. A time of disillusion and pessimism pervaded after the commencement of World War I that was fought from 1914 to 1918, and it found articulation in the compositions of a gathering of Americans living in Paris who eventually came to be known as the 'Lost Generation', a term first used by Gertrude Stein in her introduction to Hemingway's novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) to describe Hemingway and his expatriate friends in Paris.

To culminate the war, the first atom bomb was used and it ushered the world into another time wherein, the likelihood of mass demolition weighed vigorously in the collective consciousness. Two of the greatest novels about World War II were *From Here to Eternity* (1951) by James Jose and *The Naked Eye* (1948) by Norman Mailer.

The twentieth century witnessed the genius of great doyens of literature across the globe. This was also the century that bestowed the greatest honour on writers with the introduction of the tradition of awarding the Nobel Prize. The year 1922 was considered to be the most rewarding year in the twentieth century as some of the best works which gained immense popularity were published in this year. *Ulysses* (1922) by James Joyce, *Siddhartha* (1922) by Hemann Hesse and *Jacob's Room* (1922) by Virginia Woolf are some examples that indicate the literary productivity of this year.

A trend which was hitherto uncommon or rarely observed began to surface in the twentieth century. English writers began lending voices to people of other nationalities, especially the ones colonized by the British. *Kim* (1901) by Rudyard Kipling and *A Passage to India* (1924) by E.M.Forster were some early examples of novels that augured the commencement of a new trend that would grow by leaps and bounds after the war.

Another theme that gained popularity during the twentieth century was dystopian literature. World War I and II affected the human psyche significantly and writers of this period found it difficult even to visualize a future that was conducive to human beings. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1931), *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) by Anthony Burgess are examples of a few popular dystopian novels.

Nevertheless, novels dealing with war and its horrors did not remain restricted to the first half of the twentieth century and thereby, dystopian novels continued to remain in vogue, as they began to translate into reality The horrors committed in the concentration camps, the genocide that took place during the holocaust and the colossal decimation that occurred due to the usage of atom bombs were the first of its kind in the history of mankind. Apart from loss of life and property, the world had witnessed the extent to which humanity had deteriorated. These incidents had a tangible impact on the human psyche and it was evident from the changes that took place thereon, that something had changed irretrievably. Man began to lose faith in values, began to question the reason behind his existence, and lost the overreaching faith they once had in religion. Death of kith and kin, diseases, mutilated bodies, insolvency and a permanently scarred psyche were some of the remnants that lingered on, after the culmination of the war. Philosophies of Existentialism and Absurdism gained significance like never before because people felt that they could relate with the characters portrayed in them. The plays written by Albert Camus and Samuel Beckett perfectly echoed this sentiment. These authors were taken at face value and a firm belief that life is meaningless began to take root in the human consciousness.

Even in the twenty-first century, writers continued to set their stories in the period of the First and Second World War, but with the passage of time the way of dealing with the topic has drastically altered. Instead of focusing on the negative aspects, many novelists have attempted a powerful portrayal of people who overcame their suffering and led a complete and successful life. Instances of this kind of writing can be seen in literature across the globe.

The reverberations of war were not only recorded in the works of English writers. War became a popular theme across the globe as it was an international issue. Moreover, instead of focusing on wars fought in their own countries, authors began to widen the horizon and adopt other nations as their setting. A few of the prominent examples of this kind are *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* (2008), a novel collaboratively written by two American authors, set in an island called Guernsey located in the English Channel and *The Book Thief* (2005), a novel by an Australian writer Markus Zusak, which is set in Germany.

These kinds of writings are in tune with the gaining popularity of the concept of World Literature. Availability of translation and recognition of English as a global language have opened up the barricades that had hitherto prevented access to gaining an insight of other cultures through literature. World Literature has now opened up an avenue for readers to understand other cultures and comprehend mankind as a whole, in a better way.

American civilization is a relatively recent one and the citizens were not the original inhabitants of the land. America was therefore more receptive towards the concept of World Literature and the first one to accept it without qualms. The same can be said in the case of Australian literature and the literature of New Zealand.

Access to literature across the globe fostered the growth of comparative literature. Researchers began to expound on the similarities and differences between various human civilizations and these works of research enabled mankind to understand other cultures in a better way. World Literature facilitated immigrants to assimilate in the host country with greater ease and largely improved global relations, as people switched over from

treating foreigners with suspicion and hostility due to their newfound understanding and insight into their cultures, through their literature.

The discipline of psychology acted as another binding factor. Many great writers had unearthed the power of mind that can make or mar things. Through the character of Lady Macbeth represented in the play *Macbeth* (1623), William Shakespeare depicted the destructive power of a guilty mind. Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) dealt with a similar concept wherein, Raskolnikov induced people to suspect him for a murder he had committed. Though he had not left any proof to prove him culpable, his strange behaviour and deliriums turned him in. Dostoevsky thereby managed to interweave literature and psychology and gave his readers an insight into the workings of the guilty mind of a criminal.

The assimilation of psychology into writing and analyzing literature turned mainstream when the research works of Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, etc. came in the limelight. Characters with mental disorders such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, clinical depression, were being portrayed in novels. Julian Barnes' *Sense of an Ending* (2011), Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963), *Lord of the Flies* (1954) by William Golding, are some popular examples of psychological novels.

Novelists ceased being mere storytellers and started to employ themes from other subjects, which resulted in the emergence of the stream of interdisciplinary studies, an area that gained prominence primarily with this fusion of literature along with fields such as psychology, ecology, anthropology, sociology, etc. The inclusion of themes from other disciplines increased the variety and improved the quality of literature in general.

In order to study literature thoroughly, researchers began to collaborate with other disciplines. The research pattern was different earlier, wherein, the researchers had to take only the literary theories into account, in order to understand a piece of art or the characters in it. Nowadays, literary studies are interwoven with disciplines like cognitive science, psychology, evolutionary biology, environmental science, sociology, political science, etc. Psychological realism is one such literary method, wherein, a fictional work focuses on the interior motives of a character as opposed to a simplistic narration of the story.

The field of psychology witnessed numerous developments in the nineteenth century which had a major impact on literature, as writers began portraying characters with a fresh perspective. Psychotherapy was one such technique that was employed to resolve mental health issues, impaired social skills, phobias and disturbing thought patterns. Contrary to other treatments in which the patient's role is predominantly passive, in psychotherapy, the patient is expected to participate actively. In fact, it is the patient who heals himself and the psychotherapist merely assists him in the process by interacting with him regularly and guiding him. Psychotherapy can be successful only when the patient cooperates with the psychotherapist and chooses to divulge essential information. If he chooses to keep certain aspects as a secret, then the therapy cannot be a complete success. The psychotherapist's competence in garnering information also comes to play in psychotherapy. In case he fails to elicit the right kind of information, then the therapy would remain unsuccessful.

In the field of medicine and psychology an individual's anxieties and worries are generally viewed as maladies and subjected to treatment. A different approach has been undertaken in 'logotherapy', propounded by an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist

Viktor Frankl, wherein, 'worry' and 'anxiety' are not regarded as diseases. Instead, it views them as essential experiences of life surpassing which, an individual becomes fit to discover meaning in his life. Logotherapy is a form of existential psychotherapy, wherein *logos* denotes meaning. This is a unique therapy in which an individual is encouraged to find meaning in his life as opposed to other forms of therapies in which the patient is either treated or subjected to palliative means to assuage his maladies. Logotherapy operates with a futuristic perspective as it enables the patient to identify the hidden meaning in his suffering and life in general and then empowers him to fulfill them in the future with his newfound wisdom, by obviating the misconceptions attached to his suffering.

Viktor Frankl was a survivor of four concentration camps and it is this experience that led him to discover logotherapy. He applied it on himself and that is what enabled him to endure his days in the concentration camp. The effectiveness of logotherapy can be gauged from the fact that Frankl not just managed to survive but also reach the zenith of success and fame after his release from the concentration camp. He realized from his own experience that a man's attitude, his drive to accomplish something and having someone to love and live for, is quintessential in motivating man to survive and find life meaningful.

Frankl delineates the concept of self-transcendence by stating that man finds meaning only when he gets in contact with the outside world. Man ought to transcend beyond the limits of his own self and reach out to other people, love others and serve others. The reward of dedicating one's life in the service of others would eventually result in the individual's mental well-being. Dodging responsibilities, avoiding contact with people, being excessively obsessed with oneself and pondering over one's

predicament incessantly, would only result in mental degeneration and create 'existential crisis', wherein, man begins to question whether life is worthwhile: "What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for a worthwhile goal, a freely chosen task. What he needs is not the discharge of tension at any cost but the call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled by him" (Frankl "Man's" 110).

Victor Frankl stated a threefold process to discover meaning in life or to get a feeling that the life one is living is worthwhile. The first is by indulging in meaningful tasks and contributing to the society, the second is by being open to experiences or by serving or dedicating all actions to someone wholeheartedly and the third is the attitude a person develops in the wake of unavoidable suffering. Prior to embarking on the journey of discovering meaning, Frankl suggested to exercise 'dereflection', a technique devised by him, using which man can shift excessive attention from himself and his problems and focus on some activity of his choice.

Sigmund Freud had opined that a pleasurable state of existence is something that mankind favoured above all things. Alfred Adler had suggested that man was a powermonger and he attained a sense of fulfillment only when he was powerful. Frankl, however, disabused both the theories with his concept 'will to meaning' and stated that man could remain content without pleasure and power but not without meaning. Man was ready to live even in dire circumstances, if it offered him with some meaning. ("Man's 104)

On the other hand, people who were powerful and affluent often complained of a feeling of emptiness within. People who had every reason to be happy also appeared to be dissatisfied as happiness was not a permanent feeling. They were thereby in hot pursuit of something that would give them a reason to continue being happy. This is because man's

rudimentary motivation is to find the reason behind his existence and make it meaningful, failing which, he loses interest in pleasure and power. Moreover, pleasure and power are of a fleeting nature and thereby cannot be regarded as the pursuit of life. Aristotle had also concurred with Frankl's view regarding the fleeting nature of happiness:

> How, then, is it that no one is continuously pleased? Is it that we grow weary? Certainly all human things are incapable of continuous activity. Therefore pleasure also is not continuous; for it accompanies activity. Some things delight us when they are new. But later do so less, for the same reason; for at first the mind is in a state of stimulation and intensely active about them, as people are with respect to their vision when they look hard at a thing, but afterwards our activity is not of this kind, but has grown relaxed; for which reason the pleasure also is dulled. (189)

Logotherapy asserts that life has meaning under all circumstances and the motivating force that makes life worth living is the meaning that man associates along with it. Further, the philosophy states that every individual has the freedom to find meaning in what they do and experience, and eventually associate it along with their respective lives. Logotherapy thereby is at loggerheads with the ideology of the absurd writers who constantly state that life is meaningless.

Likewise, Viktor Frankl was also against the concept of reductionism propagated by leading philosophers and psychologists. Frankl drew an interesting analogy between reductionist philosophers and specialists, who generally miss out on the forest of truth in favour of the trees of facts. Reductionist philosophers tend to look at specific aspects that hinder them from gaining a panoramic view of things: "Conceiving of man in terms of

bodily, mental, and spiritual strata or layers means dealing with him as if his somatic,

psychic, and noetic modes of being could be separated from each other" (Frankl "Will" 9).

Reductionist philosophers tend to compartmentalize man, instead of viewing him

as a complete entity and label man as a victim to his circumstances, drives, desires,

upbringing, repressed feelings, and his past; thereby reducing him into separate fragments

and concluding that he is powerless and a hapless plaything in the hands of a cruel and

overbearing fate:

> There are some authors who contend that meanings and values are
>
> "nothing but defense mechanisms, reaction formations and sublimations."
>
> But as for myself I would not be willing to live merely for the sake of my
>
> "reaction formations." Man, however, is able to live and even to die for
>
> the sake of his ideals and values! (Frankl "Man's" 105)

The term 'existential' denotes anything that has got to do with man's existence.

It can also be alternatively understood as the effort taken by man to comprehend the

meaning of his existence. However, when the meaning of life is obscure and evades man,

he faces 'existential frustration', a state in which man is unable to perceive his life as

meaningful.

'Existential vacuum', a term coined by Viktor Frankl that means a state of

perpetual boredom and a feeling of hollowness within oneself, is another condition that

has pervaded mankind in the modern era. This is owing to the disillusionment man had to

face in multifarious arenas of life. Man's religious beliefs were challenged by scientific

inventions and discoveries on one hand and on the other, society was evolving and the

value systems were rapidly changing.

Disillusionment in Western society can be traced back to the invention of Nicolaus Copernicus who stated that Earth is not the centre of the Universe. The discovery that Earth is merely one of the planets that rotates and revolves around the Sun was a huge blow to the set of beliefs upheld by mankind until then. This disillusionment was further strengthened with the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in the year 1859. Man's ideology was questioned and people started reconsidering their beliefs.

Industrialization was another huge factor in augmenting displacement which resulted in a sense of disillusionment. People started relocating on a large scale to urban areas which culminated in the overcrowding of cities. Overpopulated urban areas were a breeding ground to a host of problems such as sordid residential space, unhealthy lifestyle, lack of hygienic food, safe drinking water, etc. Slums began to proliferate and industrialized areas were turning synonymous to poverty, pollution, disillusionment, exploitation and a hub of criminal activities. Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1838) vividly portrays industrialized England and the lifestyle of the nefarious class.

Women began stepping out of the threshold of their homes to work in factories as they were considered as a source of cheap labour. The industries were constantly in need of more workers and women were employed to fill the lacuna. The social structure in which women tended their homes and man assumed the role of being the sole breadwinner started tumbling down. This resulted in humongous changes both in the familial and social setup.

War was another factor that contributed to the pervasive feeling of disillusionment. War is generally a harbinger of galactic and intemperate decimation. It incapacitates people and prevents them from living a normal life. Frequent contact with bloodshed and death coupled with a prevailing sense of incertitude about the future, had a debilitating effect

on man's mental faculties. Poverty is another major pernicious factor that leaves mankind hamstrung during a war. However, wars usually affected the life of a particular region or a nation till the nineteenth century. The twentieth century had the misfortune of witnessing two wars fought at the global level. Every country was directly or indirectly a participant of the war and the crises that accompanied the war occurred at a global scale, plunging the entire human race into a similar state of horror.

World War I took place between 1914 and 1918 followed by World War II which commenced in 1939 and ended in 1945. This catastrophe resulted in an unprecedented loss of life and property. Atom bombs were used for the first time and the aftermaths of it were so horrendous that it sent shivers down the spine of the entire human race. Orphans, chronic diseases, insolvency, physical handicap, mental derangement, and so forth, were the cursed gifts that emerged out of the Second World War which can be likened to the Pandora's Box.

People started viewing life as an absurd phenomenon which lacked inherent meaning and this widespread thought pattern of meaninglessness and futility of life was reflected in the genre termed as Absurd Literature. Prominent writers of this style included Arthur Adamov, Samuel Beckett, Albert Camus, Eugene Ionesco and Jean Genet. The mythological character Sisyphus was equated with man, and his arduous yet futile task of carrying a boulder up the mountain which subsequently rolled down, acted as a metaphor in indicating the meaninglessness of man's life and the tasks he indulged himself in, throughout his life.

Existential philosophy gained prominence post the Second World War as people faced existential crisis. People were aghast by the way the war had upended their lives.

People had to resolve the conflicts between the meanings they had made for themselves and the circumstances they had to deal with. A general feeling of helplessness gripped the population and they felt like hapless puppets being tossed and turned by random, disconcerted events.

The major ramifications of war were physical illnesses, penury, anxiety, depression, suicidal tendencies and a general decline in mental health. To escape from the harsh realities of life, people began to take refuge in alcohol and drugs as they wanted to numb their senses in order to mitigate their suffering. Self-annihilation was on the top of minds of innumerable people who were in war-torn regions. A famous literary example of a man who was unable to overcome the horrors he had faced during the war and sought solace in death is that of Septimus Smith in the novel *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) by Virginia Woolf.

War had forced people to come in close and constant contact with bloodshed and death. As a result, many developed a feeling of 'existential anxiety' which led them to believe that if death was to overpower everyone at some point or the other, then there was no point in living and life was a futile exercise. The ideology of 'nihilism' is culpable of having burdened mankind psychologically. Nihilism denied the existence of religion and morality, thereby depriving man's belief of an omniscient power trying to salvage him or willing to serve justice at the end of his trials and tribulations. It also professed that life was devoid of any purpose, value or meaning. Man was thereby left to fend for himself after having stripped him of hope and solace.

In the olden days, literature helped people cope with failures and Greek drama was an epitome of a genre of literature that helped man assuage his pain and come in terms with his failure. Greek dramas generally portrayed characters that were royal,

majestic and virtuous. However, they either had one tragic flaw or were the victim of some tragic turn of events which resulted in their debacle. The audience who were exposed to performances of this kind developed the maturity to accept the fact that being meritorious did not guarantee success or being average did not necessarily spell a disastrous future. People were therefore able to reconcile with their fates in the wake of untoward incidents as the society and culture as a whole shared the same value system.

However, in the Modern era, especially after the Second World War, when philosophies such as atheistic existentialism and nihilism were doing rounds, man was divested of the succor he received from rudimentary beliefs in luck and fate. Hence, in case an individual failed to succeed in this competitive world, the entire onus would be his alone. This psychological burden played a vital role in the abetment of suicidal tendencies, as society erroneously began to equate incompetence or being unemployed with being worthless. A whole lot of unemployed people thereby construed life as meaningless as the society had drilled that belief into them.

The advent of modern education system has spearheaded people into losing touch with their instincts and becoming soft targets to conformism or totalitarianism. People by and large began to prefer to follow others and walk on the beaten track or allow themselves to be dictated by others as to what path they must choose. This resulted in the loss of individuality and self-worth was gauged on the basis of comparison as opposed to individual progress and development:

> In an age of existential vacuum, we have said, education must not confine itself to, and content itself with, transmitting traditions and knowledge, but rather it must refine man's capacity to find those unique meanings which are

not affected by the crumbling of universal values. This human capacity to

find meaning hidden in unique situations is conscience. (Frankl, "Will" 63)

Researchers have traced an increasing number of suicide cases to existential

vacuum, Cases of suicide is observed more in developed countries as opposed to

undeveloped ones which indicate that poverty is not a cardinal factor in deciding to end

one's life. On the contrary, it is a feeling of meaninglessness and lack of a concrete

philosophical outlook of life that provokes people to take this extreme step. This is

evident in older people who have retired, empty nesters, or victims of an accident, that

left them incapacitated and dependent on others help for a lifetime:

> The existential vacuum manifests itself mainly in a state of boredom. Now
>
> we can understand Schopenhauer when he said that mankind was apparently
>
> doomed to vacillate eternally between the two extremes of distress and
>
> boredom. In actual fact, boredom is now causing, and certainly bringing to
>
> psychiatrists, more problems to solve than distress. (Frankl, "Man's" 111)

Good health signifies both physical and mental well-being. However, mental

health is ignored by and large. People avail treatment for their physical ailments readily.

Nevertheless, there is a social stigma about seeking help when an individual is mentally

disturbed. Mental illness is predominantly, a byproduct of an individual's thought

process. Pessimistic people are more prone to stress because they tend to imagine

negative and undesired outcomes. Thereby, they generate fear and stress, which in turn

affects the mental as well as physical health.

Depression is a byproduct of a prolonged period of sadness. The inability to

accept a particular situation, challenge or an outcome is often cited as the cause of

depression. People in general, plan the future beforehand. However, when the plan devised by the individual fails to synchronize with the actual events, he tends to get stressed. In cases, where the disparity between the plans charted out by the individual and the actual situation is humongous, man falls prey to a feeling of devastation and hopelessness. For instance, if a person's ambition was to become an athlete but he tragically ends up losing a limb in an accident, then he faces an existential crisis. He would then have to reinvent his idea of life and his vision for the future completely.

In such situations, it would be prudent on the part of the individual to understand that man does not have the privilege to question the meaning of life. On the contrary, it is the individual who is being questioned by life. It is important to understand that meaning is unique in the case of every individual and it would be a colossal flaw to generalize it. Therefore, a pattern of life that works well for one person would not be applicable to another individual. Every human being ought to undertake the quest himself in order to understand the meaning of his life and decode the meaning behind his share of sufferings: "Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfillment. Therein, he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it" (Frankl, "Man's" 113).

According to Frankl, another cause of disillusionment is freedom. This statement might appear to be contentious as freedom is widely considered as a positive terminology. However, Frankl categorically states that freedom without responsibility is hazardous as it makes man run berserk because freedom and responsibility are two sides of the same coin. When an individual is granted freedom, he fails to recognize and concur to the fact

that it comes with some amount of responsibility. He turns whimsical in the absence of this knowledge and believes that he is merely enjoying his freedom: "Freedom, however, is not the last word. Freedom is only part of the story and half of the truth. Freedom is but the negative aspect of the whole phenomenon whose positive aspect is responsibleness. In fact, freedom is in danger of degenerating into mere arbitrariness unless it is lived in terms of responsibleness" (Frankl, "Man's" 134).

Frankl thereby makes it clear that every man has a responsibility to fulfill and it is only upon the fulfillment of his responsibilities that he begins to decode the meaning of his life. If man remains preoccupied with his problems and his future, he would only end up succumbing to existential vacuum, as no amount of pondering over the question would provide the solution. Frankl suggests man to transcend himself and engage actively with the world as the purpose of logotherapy is to make man more responsible. He has added that logotherapy can also be applied on oneself by reading a book on the topic and has termed this process as 'auto-biblio-logotherapy' ("Will" 128).

Absurdist philosophies such as Nihilism and Atheistic Existentialism divested man of hope, faith and a sense of power. People, who were trapped in the snare of these ideologies and took them at face value, developed a pessimistic view of life. However, Frankl asserted that man had the power and choice to respond to a situation the way he pleased and nothing that had happened to him in the past could deny him this freedom or deter him from exercising his will to act the way he pleased. He thereby clarified that man had no excuse to offer if he decided to turn into an anti-social element on account of the brutalities he had been subjected to, in the past. He neither had the leisure to play the role of a victim by conveniently blaming his miserable past.

Absurdism encouraged people to refrain from taking any action to improve their situation, because the theory advocated that it was not worthwhile anyway. People became escapists using these ideologies as a shield, instead of taking responsibility and altering their attitudes and starting their life again on a new note. Logotherapy on the other hand provides hope to mankind by reinstating faith in the powers lying dormant within man. It inspires man to take charge of his life, participate in life's activities in order to find his unique meaning and thereby celebrate his uniqueness. Frankl also emphasizes on the power man has, in shaping his attitude towards unavoidable suffering. Frankl does not advocate masochism, but when there is no way out of suffering, he tells man to choose the best way to endure it.

Logotherapy is more reliable than other forms of therapies because Viktor Frankl had practiced it upon himself and emerged successful. Moreover, the suffering he endured was one of the most horrific ones in the history of mankind. Therefore, when logotherapy had worked in such dire circumstances, it can be safely stated that it would enable man to overcome existential vacuum and assist him in the journey to discover meaning and lead a purposeful life.

The purpose of this research is to emphasize upon the fact that man should openly embrace life irrespective of the situation he is placed in. Every life has a meaning and it is the individual's responsibility to discover it. Moreover the meaning of life is unique to every person just as every human being is unique. Therefore, mindlessly imitating another person's life might not be fruitful in attaining meaning in one's own life. The novels chosen for research are *Of Human Bondage* (1915) by Somerset Maugham, *The Book Thief* (2005) by Markus Zusak, *Mister Pip* (2006*)* by Lloyd Jones, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel*

Pie Society (2008) by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows, and *An Unnecessary Woman* (2014) by Rabih Alameddine.

The novels chosen are by authors belonging to five different nationalities. The research thereby holds good for mankind in general and the applicability of logotherapy is not restricted to any specific nationality. The plots of all these five novels are either completely or partially based in war-torn regions.

Literature based on war has evolved over the centuries. In ancient times, famous epics such as Iliad and Mahabharat glorified warriors as they fought to establish righteousness. The final outcome of the war was always about the victory of good over evil. With the passage of time, when wars were not fought to safeguard virtues or beliefs but to protect the boundaries of the country from conquerors, war emerged as a symbol of courage and patriotism.

However, in the modern times, especially during the first and second world war, when most of the countries of the world were at war with each other, the outlook towards war was altered beyond recognition. Literature ceased to glorify war on every count, as the usage of bombs and other destructive weapons that caused devastation on a massive scale did not impact the ones fighting at the borders or on the battlefields alone, but disrupted the lives of the civilians as well. It had overreaching effects to such an extent that the chemicals released after the explosion of the atom bombs continued to affect the forthcoming generations of the survivors. Diseases, barren lands, bankruptcy and mutilated bodies can never be viewed as subjects fit for glorification. Literature therefore altered the manner in which it dealt with the subject. Writers began to record the ill-effects and aftermaths of the war and portrayed the existential crisis faced by mankind. *The English Patient* (1992) by Michael

Ondaatjee, *Catch 22* (1961) by Joseph Heller, *The Razor's Edge* (1944) by Somerset Maugham and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) by Thomas Pynchon are some examples of hugely popular war novels.

However there were novelists, who not only portrayed war in a bad light and the imminent destruction that followed, but also celebrated the spirit of mankind who neither succumbed to the aftermaths of war nor assumed the role of a victim, but fought back courageously and lifted the spirits of fellow humans too. These stories sent out a strong message to the survivors of wars and other tragedies about the latent power present in every human being.

The novels chosen for research are the ones that celebrate characters possessing immense mettle. These characters had applied logotherapy unconsciously as did the neurologist Viktor Frankl when he was imprisoned in the concentration camp. He formulated his own experiences into this therapy and his life is a concrete proof of the success, applicability and universality of this therapy.

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society is an epistolary novel collaboratively written by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows, wherein the plot and characters are unraveled by means of the epistles exchanged amongst the characters. An exemplary trait of the epistolary form is that the story is presented from the point of view of several characters and therefore, the readers get the opportunity of having a glimpse of the minds of numerous characters.

The first and second world war impacted literary works to a great extent. War either became the theme of the literary works published in the era or the plot was set during the period of war. *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* is set in the backdrop of

the Second World War and heartrending descriptions of the Nazi rule are portrayed in the novel. It also consists of strong characters that emerged triumphant despite all the hurdles life had thrown at them and proved that man is more powerful than his problems.

Mary Ann Shaffer was born on December 13, 1934 in Martinsburg, West Virginia. She was an American writer, editor, and curator. She also had an impressive experience of working in a bookshop. The idea for her first and last novel came to her when she was once stranded in Guernsey. The planes were not allowed to leave the island on account of a misty weather and she could do nothing but wait for the haze to clear. In the meanwhile, she read a book named *Jersy under the Jack Boot* and thus, her interest with the Channel Isles began. Years later, when urged by her own book club to compose a novel, Shaffer naturally thought of Guernsey.

At the point when Shaffer's book was nearing fulfillment it was sold to energetic distributors around the globe, yet at this momentous juncture, Shaffer fell sick. At that point, her niece, Annie Barrows, was taken on board to help her complete the book. Annie Barrows, whose vocation included libraries, book shops and publishing, completed her aunt's venture. Barrows is also the writer of *Ivy and Bean* series for kids and *The Magic Half*.

Mister Pip is a novel that won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Overall Best Book Award in the year 2007 and it was also shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. The novel is set in the 1990s, in an island named Bougainville, which is ravaged by the Bougainville Civil War. The conflict was between the redskins who were the soldiers from the Papua Guinea faction, and the Blacks who were the Bougainvilleans. The redskins were the oppressors and the Blacks were the oppressed. The discovery of copper deposits by Australian geologists became the root cause of the conflict. The Australians were the ones

to primarily set up the copper mines and the redskins wanted to control it after the departure of the White men. The Bougainvilleans, who were the actual owners, received only a pittance as their share. The beauty of the island and the purity of the river were also lost in the bargain.

The protagonist of the story is a thirteen year old girl named Matilda, who was a Bougainvillean. She lost her father to the Australians, as he preferred the White men to his family and abandoned them, to settle down in Australia. Matilda also lost her mother and her teacher in the course of the novel apart from watching her belongings and home being burnt.

The novel is another powerful example of the inherent power of human beings to overcome any sort of problem in life and discover the meaning behind it. Despite being stripped off her family, home and all basic amenities, Matilda managed not only to survive, but also to complete her research work on her favourite novelist Charles Dickens. She desired to become a teacher and impact the lives of people, just as her teacher had impacted hers.

The author of *Mister Pip is* Lloyd Jones, a writer from New Zealand who was born on March 23, 1955. Jones was honoured with The Katherine Mansfield Memorial Fellowship in the year 1988. Jones was the 2007 recipient of the Berlin Writers' Residency for Creative New Zealand. He has gained a reputation for choosing challenging and original topics for his novels. Lloyd Jones is regarded as one of the most renowned contemporary writers in New Zealand.

The novel *An Unnecessary Woman* is authored by Rabih Alameddine. Born in Amman, Jordan, Alameddine grew up in Kuwait and Lebanon, which he left at the age of

seventeen to live in England and then in California. He graduated in Engineering from the University of California situated in Los Angeles (UCLA) and began his career as an engineer with a Masters degree in Business, which he earned in San Francisco. Alameddine, then switched to painting and writing. He has written a total of four novels and has also authored a collection of short stories. In 2002, he was awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship. Alameddine was honoured with the California Book Awards for the novel *An Unnecessary Woman*. He was also the recipient of the Lambda Literary Award for Gay Fiction for his novel *The Angel of History* (2016)

An Unnecessary Woman is another story that celebrates the grit and mettle of a woman named Aaliya Saleh. The protagonist of the novel is a childless divorcee who is not wanted even in her maternal home. She lived all by herself in her apartment in Beirut at a time when the city was ravaged by the Lebanese Civil War. However, the novel is not a tragic story about a single helpless woman left to fend for herself. Instead, it is a story that makes readers admire the life lived by Aaliya Saleh and her attempts to make her life worthwhile and meaningful.

The German-born Australian writer Markus Zusak is the author of *The Book Thief*. Zusak was born on June 23, 1975. His reputation shot to fame with the publication of *The Book Thief* and *The Messenger*. *The Book Thief* fetched him the Kathleen Mitchell Award for literature in the year 2006. He was also honoured with the Margaret A. Edwards Award in the year 2014 for his contributions to the Young Adult literature. Zusak also received the Sydney Morning Herald Young Australian Novelist of the Year Award in the year 2006.

The novel *The Book Thief* revolves around the life of Liesel and the couple who had adopted her. The plot is set in Nazi Germany which is in the grip of the Second World War. The story however does not focus on the ravages of the war. Instead, it celebrates the innate goodness of human beings and the power of man to overreach his sufferings.

Of Human Bondage is a novel by Somerset Maugham which deals with the life of Philip Carey, an orphaned boy with a club foot. Maugham was one of the most prolific writers of the twentieth century, who wrote plays, novels and short stories with equal expertise. Born in the year 1874, he predominantly wrote in the twentieth century. Maugham studied medicine and would write only in his leisure hours. He shot to fame with his first novel *Liza of Lambeth* (1897) and he decided to quit his medical career and embark on a literary journey. However, nothing he wrote nearly for a decade could hold a candle to his first work. His next breakthrough was in the year 1907 with the success of his play *Lady Frederick.* From thereon, there were no setbacks and Somerset Maugham had a fruitful literary career for over sixty-five years. The year 1914, was the most productive year in Maugham's life as he attained great fame with the publication of ten novels and the production of ten plays. His year of fame however coincided with the outbreak of the First World War and he rendered his services as an ambulance driver to the British Red Cross. It is during this time that he wrote his masterpiece *Of Human Bondage* in instalments.

The Razor's Edge (1944) was the last major novel of Somerset Maugham and the plot was very different from his previous works. The novel is predominantly set in Europe but the major characters are American. The protagonist is a veteran of the First World War who developed existential crisis. He forsook his lavish lifestyle and went

away to India in search of enlightenment. The novel's themes were in synchronicity with a vast majority of readers during the Second World War who were also disillusioned by the war. This novel portended the arrival of several literary works written in a similar vein.

Maugham's personal experience greatly influenced his novels. His experience in the department of midwifery gave him an insight into the sufferings of working class women and the consequences of adultery. He depicted poor women characters who resorted to prostitution to earn money, in his works. Mildred from the novel *Of Human Bondage* (1915) is an example. His career in the medical field acquainted him with all kinds of suffering, fear, pain and hope.

Of Human Bondage (1915) is widely considered to be his magnum opus. This novel is heavily dotted with autobiographical elements as the protagonist Philip Carey's life bears a stark resemblance with that of his own. Carey was brought up by his uncle who was a Vicar at Blackstable. Maugham on the other hand was brought up by his uncle, who happened to be the Vicar of Whitstable. Philip Carey had a clubfoot, which was a perennial source of embarrassment for him and Maugham used to stammer while talking, which made his days at school miserable. Philip Carey took up a medical career just like Somerset Maugham. A major trait in the novels of Somerset Maugham is that his characters evolved during the course of the story.

Carey is depicted as someone who is neither able to stick to a profession nor able to have a stable relationship. His excessive passion for Mildred ruined him financially and emotionally. An ongoing war had turned him bankrupt and he was forced to starve. However towards the end of the novel, he reconsidered his idea of life and took a decision that would enable him to live a fruitful life.

The novels chosen for research have been analysed by other researchers in various other perspectives. Research has been done on the man-woman relationship of the novel *Of Human Bondage*. Some researchers have done a psychoanalytic reading of the novel whereas others have worked on the narrative styles employed in the novel.

Mister Pip has been analysed as a postcolonial novel and the concept of 'othereness' has been researched upon. A study has also been done on the manner in which the novel *Great Expectations* (1861) has been rewritten by Lloyd Jones. Intertextual references present in the novel *Mister Pip* have also been analysed. A research on ecosublimity has also been carried out on the novel *Mister Pip*. The curative properties of literature and the benefits reaped by Matilda has also been analysed by researchers.

Intertextual references in *An Unnecessary Woman* have been researched upon. A comparative study on the similarities and differences between the female characters in the novel *An Unnecessary Woman* and the character of Lady Macbeth from the play *Macbeth* has been carried out. Interdisciplinary research has been done on *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* and the benefits of reading on the human brain and its cognitive advantages have been analyzed. The novel *The Book Thief* has been studied as an escapist novel. Research has also been carried out on the style of narration and types of focalization.

However, this research has made an attempt to portray these novels in a new light. The characters analysed in this research are the ones who triumphed at the end of all their ordeals and led a meaningful life. The characters added value to their life by touching other lives through their deeds. They transcended themselves and reached out to the

society at large, which enabled them to escape from being trapped in the snare of existential crisis, which is a common phenomenon during times of trials and tribulations.

Numerous empirical research works adopting the quantitative methods have been carried out in the field of logotherapy. The teachings and findings of logotherapy have been applied on a wide range of people comprising delinquents, patients with tuberculosis and dejected students who failed in their examinations. A comparative study between the tenets of logotherapy and religious theories has also been carried out. However, this research has adopted the qualitative method. The doctrines of logotherapy has been applied to fictional characters and an attempt to analyze and prove that logotherapy could be applicable universally and its effectiveness is the same irrespective of the individual's circumstances, nationality, gender and race, has been made.

The thesis has been divided into six chapters. Chapter I is the introductory chapter. Chapter II titled Shifting Focus from Traumatic Memories attempts to explain the concept of dereflection, which is a technique adopted to shift the focus away from the traumatic events in life. Instead, the individual engages himself in a task that he enjoys doing, which would not only prevent him from brooding over the problem and stressing himself further, but would also rejuvenate him and thereby fortify his mind to deal with the problem in a better way. The mode of dereflection opted by the characters chosen for the study is reading and the chapter throws light on how books serve as a faithful companion. Reading also prevents the characters from brooding, by mentally transporting them to another place and time and also enabling them to experience the life of another individual.

Chapter III titled Combating Existential Vacuum highlights the techniques used to combat existential vacuum. Failing to participate in life's activities or indulging in a task which adds no value to one's life culminates in a feeling of boredom. The individual begins to feel empty from within. In order to combat it, an individual ought to create something worthwhile or perform deeds that he finds meaningful or make the life of another human more comfortable. A study is made on the effectiveness of indulging in a task during difficult times and the positive impact it has on the individual and the people around him.

Chapter IV titled Effect of Social Support on Psychological Distress throws light on the importance of good interpersonal relationships in enabling the individual to lead a meaningful life. Man is a social animal and it is evident that he is capable of thriving only in the company of fellow human beings. The characters chosen for study become better versions of themselves solely on account of the love and support they receive from their family, friends and loved ones.

Chapter V titled Role of Attitude in Overcoming Suffering emphasizes on the advantages of cognitive restructuring and the pivotal role played by it in aiding the individual to overcome suffering. This chapter accentuates the importance of maintaining a positive attitude to overcome suffering. It emphasizes on the fact that situations are not responsible for the pain and suffering one faces in life, instead, it is determined by the individual's estimate of it and his reaction to it. The chapter also highlights the importance of accepting the challenges posed by life instead of living in denial and overcoming it by being grateful for the good things and remaining hopeful about the future.

The concluding chapter attempts to reassert the applicability of logotherapy. It also hopes to motivate people with suicidal tendencies and assure them that every problem could be overcome by applying the principles of logotherapy. The chapter has refuted the absurd theorists who state that life is meaningless. It has also vociferously condemned the practice of applying reductionist theories on man and viewing him as a victim of his desires and drives. On the whole, the study endeavours to assure mankind that he is more powerful than his problems. It also offers the assurance that every life has a meaning and the responsibility of discovering it lies exclusively with the individual.