

Chapter III

Human Resilience in a Conflicting Society

“All wars signify the failure of conflict resolution mechanisms, and they need post-war rebuilding of faith, trust and confidence.”

- A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (“A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Quotes”).

The creation of society is done in a mixed pie chart like structure, guarding itself from the external force that try to break through. Just like the mixed components of a pie, society also has a varied cultural mechanism that diversifies linguistically, geographically, politically, anthropologically, and also in many other sectors. The betterment of such societies is ensured when peace is maintained. Entry of conflict damages the communal growth and the unity of society is disrupted. Falling apart into fragments and the stress of unending war makes society dysfunctional. When people mend their ways to bring equilibrium in society it changes gradually.

No society can function without conflict in its basic structure. Conflict has an important role in society as it either resolves the problem or increases it. Conflict Theory,

being part of Sociology, relates to society's inequalities of class, materialistic perspectives, social, economical, and political stances. Social Conflict theory is based on conflicting ideologies present in the society and deals with how individuals and societies interact based on conflict.

Karl Marx (1818-1883), a German Sociologist who was later termed as the Father of Social Conflict Theory claims that society consists of two groups of people whom he divides as ruling class and subject class also known as *Bourgeoisies* and *Proletariats*. Marx in his work, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) invests his thoughts and ideas of a society which was considered ruled by people (the ruling class) with power and who lived in the higher class stratification end of the society. The people in subject class are those who live in the lower end of the society, mostly working class who remain only on the receiving end. Thus when the ideologies of the two groups' differ, it brings conflict in society (Communist Manifesto).

Conflict theory not only talks about social class conflict, it also brings power, discrimination, subordination, exploitation, oppression, alienation, and false consciousness to the forefront, which can relate to any social order of the society. Conflict theory is used to explain the problems between two groups of society- the ruling class and the subject class- to talk about ideologies; it is capitalism versus socialism. The functioning of society has to go on, even if it is government headed or not.

The two groups, ruling class and subject class, exists in every realm of society, as the ruling class has power to subordinate the other through the political system, educational system, architectural background and many others. The subject class is believed to be

exploited whenever a need arises, because they are not at liberty to choose, they are sometimes deprived of basic amenities and are not free to live. Such necessity leads to an unbalanced stage in society resulting in conflict, which sometimes has a larger impact on the society.

Some theorists view conflict as an engine of change as they produce a contradiction which either resolves or enhances the conflict. According to Karl Marx, conflict in society has two factors of appearing; the first one through class consciousness and the next is due to plunging economy. When it comes to conflict in social structure, it appears frequently and depends on how society functions.

The explanation of how conflict enters the social setup may be analyzed but finding an ultimate end of conflict can be difficult as when one problem ends, the other surfaces is given. Though the emergence cannot be pointed out, the reasons of conflict are various, sometimes due to unequal distribution of limited resources, basic amenities (food, water, and medical facility), space, power, and much more.

Under the huge term of conflict theories, there are several theorists who merge conflict with various problems of society like environmental conflicts, economical conflicts, political conflicts, conflict of resources (Petroleum, water), religious conflicts, psychoanalytical conflicts, psychological conflicts, inter-state conflicts, racial conflicts, individual conflicts and conflict within oneself. There can be a struggle for power between different groups in society. Society is viewed as a combination of different groups and interests in competing for power and resources. Conflict does not always end

with war or argument. Some Sociologists believe that conflict does not separate or divide societies, but that is one of the ways in which society holds itself up together.

Marx has identified four main ages of Western society, “Marx believed that western society developed through four main epochs-primitive communism, ancient society, feudal society and capitalist society.” (Yakkaldevi 12). Primitive Society is only one in which there is no divided classes. The other three ages have binary oppositions-master and slave, lord- peasant, and capitalists and wage laborers. Marx’s ideology ran along the idea of capitalism and communism, which later went on to become the trendsetter of economical and political status of many countries.

Marx states that societies evolve from Agriculture to Industrial concerns when survival needs are replaced by concern over making profit. Marx’s theory emerged during the nineteenth century, in the epoch of Industrialization. He derived examples from the Industrious England, its working class, the architects of building England’s economy. The two groups according to him, in the society were *Bourgeoisie* and *Proletariat*. The *Bourgeoisies* class who were the owners of production resources had an upper hand in society, and used power to control for their advantages. The Proletarians were of worker class, the daily wage laborers or lower strata of the society, they were sufferers, and had to work long hours to run their families.

Earlier, before Karl Marx had come up with his *The Communist Manifesto*, few contemporaries of Marx had a variety of approaches to conflict based on class stratification. A Polish-Austrian sociologist and political thinker, Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838-1909) who was also considered one of the fathers of Conflict Theory, terms that

societies were formed due to war and conquest, which would have given rise to class system. He understood that the clashes happened between two races after the conquest, along with their ethnic and cultural struggle.

Lester. F. Ward (1841-1913), a paleontologist and a sociologist from America, suggested an optimistic outlook on people in conflict, instead of going behind their economical statuses; he wanted to reduce the levels of conflict and worked on the betterment of people. “Although Ward and Gumpowicz developed their theories independently they had much in common and approached conflict from a comprehensive anthropological and evolutionary point-of-view as opposed to Marx's rather exclusive focus on economic factors.” (Ibid 17).

Emilie Durkheim (1858-1917) and Max Weber (1864 -1920) were leading sociologists whose interests were on Functionalism and Symbolic Interactionism respectively, but they spoke on conflict based on their specified field of crime and deviance. Weber felt that conflict can be rectified with some social action done in society. His views differed from Marx in understanding class conflict, and valued economic factors as more important. According to him, ideas, values of individuals can create a powerful impact in society and can lead to a huge transformation.

The impact of an individual's value, ideas and his/ her role in society has been discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter deals with the conflict depicted in each novel based on the actual events that had happened in China. The characters are studied for the resilience they develop in due course.

Amidst the defining ideologies of Social Conflict of Marx and Weber, they had a different opinion on society's riddance of conflict. Marx was interested in the working class and class stratification whereas Weber was interested in rationalization of society, and believed that some amount of conflict in society remains dynamic and thus it cannot erase itself from social structure.

While some sociologists consider conflict as a disruption and dysfunctional aspect of society there are other theorists who look at conflict as a normal form of life including day to day interactions ensuring change which works in society. George Simmel calls conflict the centre of social life and also attributes that helps people socialize and have "a collective life" (Simmel 491). According to Randall Collins, violence is also a form of emotional communication that one uses based on the situation where he/she is put in.

Two other theorists, Wright Mills and Gene Sharp, base their study on power, its dominance in society or its availability only to elites. Mills believed that due to the unequal distribution of power and other resources, policies of equality gets disturbed, which would result in increase of conflict, larger disturbance to society. Gene Sharp is different from the lot, he is known for his non-violent approach to conflict.

Sharp's basic idea is that power structure in society exists only when "the subjects' obedience to the orders of the ruler(s). If subjects do not obey, leaders have no power." (Yakkaldevi 20). This thought brings unity of masses into existence, giving a new turn to solution. The application of such ideologies when inflicted in reality, gives a new lease for society. Some of Gene Sharp's principles have been borrowed to ease the conflicts

existing in society. Few of the points can be taken to analyze how Mo Yan brings in conflict in his novels and also comparing it to reality.

After studying the basic components of conflict, Marx's concern was only with capitalism faulting the society which led to class stratification. The class effect was seen in every sector of society, leading to two groups- the "haves" and the "have nots". The second group was deprived of basic education, proper work, leading to an unstable society which could lead to inconsistency in living.

Society's inequality in dividing resources gives rise to conflict, which can be modified through changes in social set up or in relation with one another helping in newer social relations and lesser conflicts. The issues like exploitation, oppression, can put creativity under risk or make it cease ultimately. Sometimes conflict helps to identify individual's potential during the time of stress in social structure, it topples the order of power. "The role of theory is in realizing human potential and transforming society, rather than maintaining the power structure." (Ibid).

The perspectives of Conflict theory contain factors that are taken to study the novels based on conflicts that happened in the Chinese society which the author writes about. Mo Yan's writing timeline saw many upheavals in Chinese society, the formation of a new government of new China based on communist ideologies that had turned world's eye on China, but as every change comes with cause and effect, the lives of Chinese people saw various events in the name of change.

If conflict is a way in which society travels then, resilience is the mode of travel ultimately reaching social change as its destination. Resilience theory was formulated

mainly in an environmental case. Many theorists have used resilience in various fields like medical, human behaviour, social construction. Patrick Sakdapolrak and Markus Keck developed an overall view of “What is Social Resilience?” Its way towards the upliftment of society, to tackle social vulnerability also to its perspective towards global change. (Keck and Sakdapolrak 06).

A research paper based on Social Resilience defines it as “An individual’s or a group’s, organisation’s ability or capacity to emerge from any kind of social problem/unrest is called resilience.” (Ibid 09). Social Resilience sets up a kind of working mechanism, through which the social structure can adapt, transform and cope with disturbances in society. Noting Heracles’ view, the concept of Resilience is set as “everything changes, nothing remains still” (Ibid). This is also the key framework of the thesis where after resilience, comes social change.

The first definition of Social Resilience was given by Adgar (2000), who called it, “the ability of communities to withstand external shocks to their social infrastructure.” (Ibid 08). Many other theorists have termed Social Resilience as an absorber of external shocks (problems) that society has been suffering from. In Cutter’s definition, resilience can be termed as ability to coerce working terms with any social evil that causes social hindrances from time to time. It brings change which helps people in society to re-construct, re-grow, and re- connect with others. Resilience from a problem can lead to change, through the three way process of Persisting, Adapting, and Transforming. They are otherwise called as dimensions to define social resilience.

“Sociologists use the term resilience to explain the human ability to return to its normal state after absorbing some stress or after surviving some negative changes”(Trkulja 49). There are plenty of examples from day to day life of being resilient to external sources that deter personal growth. The ability to transform one’s adverse situations for his/her own personal growth and develop new relations with society is one of the factors of resilience. Kate Murray and Alex Zautra developed an adaptive model through which resilience works in a three way process – recovery, sustainability and growth. They are similar to the Marcus Keck’s matrix of social resilience. Tanja Trkulja says,

Resilience also includes growth reflected in progress and changes in perspective which came as a result of some adversity. It may even give some new meaning to life (this aspect of resilience is also related to the concepts of posttraumatic growth). People can come out of a stressful situation equipped with new skills, wiser, with improved self-esteem and with changed perspective on life in general (Ibid 50).

Based on the research paper, “What is Social Resilience? Lessons learned and ways forward.” the researcher group of Voss, Lorenz, Benet et al. have developed a matrix which defines the three stages of Social Resilience. They are also known as Coping capacities, Adaptive capacities and Transformative capacities. As per the theory presented in the matrix resilience, coping capacities shows how people are able to find a solution for “immediate threats” that help them to restore peace momentarily, meaning it is short lived before the whole problem could be solved. The four criteria table developed by researchers, helps in understanding the three capacities’ matrix; they are response to risk, temporal scope, degree of change and outcome (Keck 10).

Mostly the degree of change and outcome relates to solutions for each capacity. In the Coping Capacities, the response to risk is “re-active” when people face problems and the time taken for arriving at a solution is short term, therefore the degree of change and outcome is only temporary. It can guarantee only the present state of well being. While the other two capacities (adaptive and transformative) are tested; their response to risk is “pro-active”, which means their decisions on risk/ problems are based on past experiences to carefully decide on future plans.

The degree of change is long term following the incremental change for adaptive capacities and radical change for transformative capacities. The outcome of both capacities is different from each other. In the adaptive capacities, the outcome is a secured way for the future plans, and in transformative capacities it is an enhanced way to look into present and future plans.

Sabina Knight in her essay, “The Realpolitik of Mo Yan’s fiction” writes about the characteristics of Resilience helping to outlive each character just as the real world-

The power of Mo Yan's works lies not in his chronicling of events but in his probing stories of individual resilience in the face of relentless forces of instinct, sexuality, and history... Yet even as Mo Yan's characters succumb to these forces, they also make genuine choices in deciding their lives. The tenacity of human will expresses a vital life force that powers Mo Yan's narrative arcs. (98-99).

Mo Yan started writing while he served as a soldier in the Army. He was very much influenced by the village life and folklore, and wrote his work with the essence of China with themes like violence, class conflict and struggle. *Red Sorghum: A Novel of China*

(1986) gives an overall view of his style- use of folktale, magical realism, and plot with an ironical jibe at the society of that time.

In the beginning of the novel, Mo Yan pays tribute to his fellow villagers who once fought in the war. He lays his heart as an offering to their deprived and aggrieved souls wandering in vast, bright, Red Sorghum fields. The novel is set in the 1930s of Shandong Province in China. The author narrates the story of a multi-generational peasant family, living in the imaginary place of North-East Gaomi Township (similar to that of author's village- Shandong) facing hardships, war, banditry and adventures. The narrator (grandson of the family) begins with the story of the ambush of the Japanese troops and the other resisting troops.

The narrator narrates his family history beginning with the marriage of Dai Fenglian (Grandma) and a leper (Shan Bianliang) whose Sorghum wine distillery has given employment to several villagers. Unhappy with her marriage, she plots his murder with Yu Zhan`ao (Granddad) who was her bridal palanquin carrier and also a local bandit. Later both of them become lords of the property. All is well, until the county is threatened by the invading Japanese troops which soon start the Sino- Japanese War. In the beginning of the novel, the narrator gives an account of suffering of "our species" as they "defended their country in a valiant" way (Yan RS 04).

When the Japanese arrive, the existing harmony within the villagers is disturbed, because some villagers accept being slaves fearing death, while others try to fight against oppression; the first among them being Uncle Arhat, the caretaker of the house and wine distillery of Dai Fenglian. He is forcibly taken as a slave to work for the Jiao- Ping

highway and later when he tries to escape with his mules, he is caught and put to a brutal death by being skinned alive before the villagers.

The serious episodes of Japanese troops' cruelties fall on the villagers from then on. At first, their barbaric brutality in extracting work from men and cattle for constructing highways leads to the gory act of the skinning of a man (Uncle Arhat) alive by a butcher while the villagers watch the scene in disgust and their guts in their throats, whereas the Japanese officer enjoys the scene with a sneer across his face.

Sun Five started at the point on Uncle Arhat's scalp where the scab had formed, zipping the knife blade down, once, twice,....one meticulous cut after another. Uncle Arhat's scalp fell away, revealing two greenish- purple eyes and several misshapen chunks of flesh.....,shouts and gurgles continued to emerge from his shapeless mouth, while endless rivulets of bright-red blood dripped from his pasty scalp.(Yan RS 37)

Lewis Coser identifies conflict in functionalistic perspective further dividing it into two- internal conflict and external conflict. Internal conflict takes place within the system/group and external conflict which happens outside of the group. The internal conflict within the group happens because there is tension between groups which has same goals or social system; and they also tend to fight often at intervals (Coser TFSC 41).

In the novel, *Red Sorghum*, there are three groups fighting the Japanese troops (Pocky Leng's Detachment, Jiao- Gao Regiment, the Iron Society). They are eventually fighting for domination and power amongst themselves, creating an inner conflict within the villagers. Commander Yu Zhan'ao and Detachment leader Pocky Leng's troops have the

same goal to fight against Japanese Aggression together but have trust issues with each other. The troop leaders, Yu Zhan'ao and Pocky Leng, plan to attack the Japanese troops having mere forty guerilla soldiers (a motley army of deaf, mute, and crippled included) at their command.

The first encounter they have with Japanese troops is when the soldiers of Iron Society are laying low waiting for the Japanese soldiers to cross the bridge in the trucks, when they started firing. The interference of local people initiates the strike and bullets whiz through the freshly grown Sorghum stalks, hitting Dai Fenglian (Grandma) who has brought food supplements for the Iron Society soldiers. She dies in the middle of sorghum field, thinking about her deeds in the final moments of her life. Though Dai Fenglian dies young, her grit and determination leads all the villagers to take part in the war against Japanese aggression.

While men die fighting till their last breath in the sorghum fields, the women stood guard for the safety of their households. Mo Yan gives utmost courage and strength to his women characters that are not afraid to die. Grandma becomes the alpha woman who instills courage in other village women to take up fighting for their defense. As the troops are getting ready to fight, the villagers support them, provide them with food and even sing a song for them to feel patriotic. "The sorghum is red, the sorghum is red, the Japs are coming, the Japs are coming. The nation is lost, our families scattered. Rise up, countrymen, take up arms to drive out the Japs and protect your homes...." (Yan RS 54).

The Sino- Japanese war lasted for more than fourteen years (1930 to 1945); it was started by the Japanese troops invading the northeastern part of China and Shanghai

known as the “Chinese war of resistance against Japanese Aggression”. The first half of the war was fought internally among the provinces and the troops, later in 1937 the war turned into national front involving the armed forces led by KMT (Kuomintang) government and CPC (Communist Party of China) putting up a fight with the guerilla warfare until Japan’s unconditional surrender in 1945 (Communist Party).

As per historical records, the Japanese gained control over many provinces including Hunan, Shandong County by the end of 1937, but they underestimated Chinese troops who over powered them and the Japanese suffered a serious defeat. It was estimated that three lakh civilians were slaughtered, eighty-thousand women raped and some peasants uprising were inhumanly suppressed.

Mo Yan has taken events from the Japanese Aggression, modified them and presented them in a heart wrenching manner. The events in the novel like the villagers’ resistance against the Japanese troops, internal fight amongst Chinese puppet soldiers, suffering and torture of villagers at the hands of Japanese guerilla fighters, are all similar to the real events during the Sino-Japanese war. The beginning of war and the novel is based on a bridge incident. The war gained momentum when the Japanese force used Chinese peasants to manufacture Luguo Bridge, the incident happened on July 7th 1937, the novel speaks about the Japanese troop constructing Jiao- Ping highway which had consequences following the war.

In the novel, Commander Yu Zhan’ao musters courage in the local villagers to pick up the fight against the guerilla troops, Japanese soldiers. As they start, they are betrayed by their fellow troop members (Detachment leader Pocky Leng) leaving them void of

armory. Surrounded by more than four hundred Japanese soldiers, they go to the Sorghum fields as their hideout. Gun shots are heard wheezing through neck high sorghum stalks. Savaging through sorghum fields they hide, attack, bury the dead, live, and even smuggle cartridges through goats. Here the stalks of Red Sorghum became their cover, seemed like even Mother Nature is helping them in their fight for freedom.

Women and children become mere objects for the pleasure seeking Japanese soldiers. They are raped en masse, hoisted on bayonets, their bodies left for days to bloat in water, to stink and left for scavenging by the village dogs. They also become a menace to the living villagers, being drawn to stench of human blood. There is also a mention of man-animal conflict in the chapter “Dog Ways” in the novel.

Understanding resilience in *The Red Sorghum*; though the whole novel is based on the war, and its cause and effects, some characters show resilience in their nature. Social Resilience is divided into three- coping, adaptation, and transformation; where the first strategy is to find the way to cope up with risks. The second capacity is to see the time taken to understand the situation and the last strategy is to assimilate the solution through the process of transforming the social structures. As the world is dynamic in nature, it keeps evolving in every walk of life. The characters in the novel like Commander Yu Zhan’ao, Douguan, and Beauty also to an extent even the county of Northeast Gaomi Township show all the three signs of Resilience.

The coping capacity is one where the solution to the problem is only momentary; Commander Yu Zhan’ao fails in the beginning of the battle, but when the whole village came to support him his hope is restored. Commander Yu Zhan’ao is able to cope with

his first defeat with the Japanese Troops, when help arrives through the villagers. He feels dejected as he lost most of his men to Japanese artillery; Douguan tries to console him and also promises him to help him in the battle.

Then both the father and son go around collecting the dead, also ensuring a peaceful death to some soldiers who were seen struggling. When they are about to give up on manning the boundaries, they see torches hoisted on the heads of people walking towards them. Feeling ecstatic, Yu Zhan'ao shouts to his son: “ “Douguan”, he shouted in his ear, “Douguan! Wake up! Wake up! The villagers are coming for us, they're coming....” ” (Yan RS 99).

Yu Zhan'ao gathers his soldiers and warn them of impending battle, he along with his son smuggle themselves into the place across the border, where they receive ammunitions and bullets in the tightly sealed bodies of sheep. The trouble with Chinese Puppet soldiers and the other troops lead into frequent breakout within them, Yu Zhan'ao and Detachment Leader Pocky Leng decide to end the rift between their troops and concentrate on one main enemy troop (Japanese Troops). They prepare for the final battle with the villagers, and the remaining soldiers of Iron Regiment. Together with the villagers, Yu Zhan'ao and Douguan perform the task of collecting the dead soldiers along with Dai Fenglian's mortal body.

Shelley Chan in her work, *A Subversive Voice in China* comments on Mo Yan's way sketching the character of Commander Yu Zhan'ao as binary personnel, which makes an overall change during the course of the novel. He comes under the resilience category, as he rises from adversity. She writes,

“Mo Yan’s image of Granddad was nothing short of iconoclastic in China in the 1980s precisely because this character blurs and even erases these moral boundaries.

Interestingly, the paradoxical characteristics of good and evil found in the Granddad character actually enhance this figure’s charisma” (33).

The villagers of Northeast Gaomi Township are the embodiment of adaptation. They are quick to react against the Japanese invaders than any other county in Shandong district. The villagers stand along with Commander Yu Zhan’ao and Dai Fenglian when they put everything to risk -their homes, their fields in order to defend the invaders. They help the Iron Regiment soldiers and other troops to gather the dead and give a proper and stately funeral. There is an instance where an old man says,

“... If one million of us fought them to the death, they’d be wiped out, but there’d still be three hundred million of us. That makes us the victors, doesn’t it? Commander Yu, this was a crushing victory!”

“Old uncle, you’re just saying that to make me feel good.”

“No, Commander Yu, it really was a great victory. Give the order, tell us what to do. China may have nothing else, but it’s got plenty of people.” (Yan RS 133-134).

The final capacity of resilience, transformation, is seen in the second generation. The son of Commander Yu Zhan’ao and Dai Fenglian, Douguan along with Beauty (Douguan’s wife and narrator’s mother), live their life in peace for which their parents had fought for. After the Japanese Aggression, things change and they forget the historical sacrifice of the people of the land.

In the novel *The Garlic Ballads*, Mo Yan brings about the historical event of Peasant's Revolt which happened in Shandong Province. The novel opens with a command given by the Communist Government to plant the crop of Garlic to the poor peasants hoping that, this crop cultivation would halve their worries and debts. When they harvest the crop and wait for the government to take in their crop, the corrupt officials deny their produce which causes an uprising leading to vandalizing of the government property. Mo Yan points out that the novel was based on real incident of garlic glut in Shandong County. In the afterword of 2009 edition of the novel, Mo Yan says the incident, “impelled me to put aside the family novel I was working on, and in 35 days, I wrote this novel filled with indignation” (Duran & Huang 39).

According to the regional news in China, the real incident was reported in mid July of 1987 in a county about 400 miles South East from capital Beijing called Cangshan. Cangshan County, to this date has its name to the finest garlic crop grown in all of China. The riots happened when the then government failed to stabilize the market prices of a bumper harvest of garlic of about 50,000 tons, due to which the prices began to fall and the peasants had to watch their wilting garlic produce in horror. The newspaper read: “The garlic peasants burned with anxiety as they gaped at the rotting, unsellable garlic and cries of discontentment filled the air. Some of them cursed the county government head and the local Communist Party secretary by name.”(UPI).

Termed as “Cangshan Garlic Incident” it had its effects from the beginning as the peasants were disappointed with the plummeted sales, they carried the garlic crop to the city center and staged a protest on 27th May , 1987. A few of the peasants staged a protest inside the premises of local People's Congress by hurling bundles of garlic at the building,

some shouted names of officials to let them know the reason for the price fall. When none of the officials turned up, peasants started ransacking the official documents, smashing the doors, windows in order to seek attention. The riot was then brought to control by the arrest of main instigators. The outcome of the problem was that the head of county and the Communist Party secretary were dismissed from their positions due to lack of proper governing skills.

Though the novel is named *The Garlic Ballads* relating to a poetic treatise of ballads, it does some justice to the character of Zhang Kou, the blind minstrel, one among the crowd who sings his verses before the people about the ongoing events in the county. Zhang Kou is bold enough to reveal his frustration through his verses in the beginning of every chapter. His lines enlighten the villagers and also act as a pre-cursor to the events which are to unfold.

Ping Du and Lili Zhang, in their paper published in a journal of Purdue University, titled: “Rewriting, Ideology, and Poetics in Goldblatt's Translation of Mo Yan's *The Garlic Ballads*” justify the character of Zhang Kou as, “Blind but clear-hearted, with an abhorrence of sin and a strong sense of justice... He is arrested, threatened, and physically abused by the police, but he does not bow to violence and continues his ballads after his release from prison...” (Du 03).

Thomas Chen in his paper, “The Censorship of Mo Yan's *The Garlic Ballads*” talks about how the original credibility of the plot is lost when the work goes through a lot of editing under the name of censoring. He recounts the number of editions of the novel released during the period 1988-2009 due to the incident of Tiananmen Square massacre

in July 1989. He says, “Just like Mo Yan’s *The Garlic Ballads*, Zhang Kou’s ballads were “banned in his homeland.” (Duran & Huang 46). As the author’s novel was banned after Tiananmen riot, Zhang Kou is silenced by police officers, but he sings his ballads until his death.

The novel’s timeline is reversed by portraying the effect of the incident portrayed before the actual cause of it, beginning with the arrest of perpetrators of garlic incident on 28th May, 1987. Zhang Kou exclaims in his ballads “*Arrest me if that’s what you want.....I won’t shut my mouth just because you put me in jail....*” (Yan GB 221). The perpetrators are identified as Gao Yang, a family man who is there out of anger, when the crowd vandalizes the government property; Gao Ma, a rebel peasant whose whole investment has failed due to poor sales of garlic and Fourth Aunt, a widowed woman who is there to seek justice for her husband’s death, killed by a speeding government vehicle.

These characters face difficulties which they fight for in their own accord and later get justice at the end. The novel has an alternate narrative of Gao Ma and Gao Yang’s lives starting with the arrest of Gao Yang. He conspires with Gao Ma to escape from the trap of police.

The tension mounts for months and got out of control during the riot. The government which had set up Co-op storehouses brought in the garlic from the farmers. When the cold storage is filled up to its brim, the officials close the market leaving hundreds of farmers stranded. Having no alternate opinion, they are told “...take your garlic home with you. What you do with it is your business. If you can sell it, well and good. If not, eat it yourselves!” (Yan GB 225).

Though the riot is the ultimate conflict in the novel, there are some instances where internal conflict, social class stratification and discrimination occur. Internal conflict between Jinju's brothers regarding property and frequent clashes with Gao Ma, as he is Jinju's love interest. The novel also shows stratification through the intake of garlic produce, when Gao Yang and Fourth Uncle reach Co-Op Storehouse to sell garlic.

The peasants have to start a day early with their crop to reach the storehouse. After travelling non-stop, they line up to pay the highway toll for carts, commodity tax, and to sanitation inspectors either with money or with garlic. This inclusion of capitalist method to gain profit in a communist run state makes things worse, as the cold storehouse is closed and the farmers who are left stranded start throwing their produce at the door. They are helpless knowing that their crop has no use any longer.

There is a lot of discrimination in the novel; Gao Yang suffers much initially because of the memory of his mother's cremation. Coming from a rich family of landlords, they had strict rules to follow due to the Communist propaganda. When his mother dies, being ruled by the Communist party, a landlord would not be given any luxury even in death so he had to bury the dead. But, due to rains Gao Yang cannot bury the corpse and he secretly has it cremated.

This is later found out and he is tortured at the hands of a local villager. He tries to analyze and accept the situation he is in, during the journey with Fourth Uncle to the cold storage. He gets to talking about Gao Ma and the bet and also convinces Fourth Uncle to accept his friend, Gao Ma. Understanding class conflict in the county he says:

When the old man up there made people, he used different raw materials. The good stuff went for officials, the so-so stuff for workers, and whatever was left for us peasants. You and me, we're made of scraps, and we're lucky just to be alive... The same rule govern all living creatures. That's why you have to endure... (Yan GB 187)

The Old Man in the quote can refer to either god or the communist government who had set up the social structures. Here Gao Yang talks about situation of peasants like him, who endured all this and wait for change.

Gao Ma and Fang Jinju's plot is one kind of adhesive romantic melodrama that keeps the style of ballads in the novel. Their love for each other makes them cross boundaries and a condition placed on Gao Ma, that in order to marry Jinju, he has to produce a particular amount of money. Due to the revolt, he turns into a fugitive, running away from police makes him realize his responsibilities towards Jinju who is due to deliver their child.

When Gao Ma comes to town to visit Jinju, only to see her dead. He finds her hanging from the doorframe, eyes bulging out, the sight of her full pregnant belly sagging makes him guilt-ridden. Gao Ma feels dejected ask the villagers to prepare for Jinju's funeral, he blames himself for the situation and acts strange by killing the parakeets hovering around the courtyard. The Fang Brothers accuse him of destruction of their family and at last he is arrested and joins the other perpetrators of the riot.

Charles R. Larson, Professor at American University, in his review in the Chicago Tribune titled, "Mo Yan's ballad of Dignity, frustration, and the price of Garlic in China" says, "The farmer's revolt becomes Mo's commentary on what it takes to drive the average worker, the typical law-abiding citizen to say enough is enough" (Larson).

Gao Ma was one among the rebels against the officials who refuse to address the angry crowd, when they demand to see the civic county official- Zhong Weimin. He refuses to come out; this angers the protesters who charge in with all force. Once arrested they face worse jail conditions; they are tied to trees until their arms became sour and numb, the police officers uses electric prods to silence misbehaving inmates, dirty-dungeon kind of rooms, putrid sanitation conditions, and rude jail inmates. Fourth Aunt and Gao Yang suffer the worst.

The characters show a considerable change, be it positive or negative, during the moment of distress. When the villagers are told to plant garlic crop, it brings in hope promising a bumper harvest with good money. The Coping capacity is seen in most villagers who hope to turn their miseries into happiness. Knowing the storage's closure, they try to cope up with the situation, finding a way to sell the rotting crop in market. Gao Yang and his pregnant wife discuss the possibility of delivery after he harvest the garlic and got some money out of it. She manages to say "I'm not tired. I just worry the baby might come... I hope it waits till the harvest is in, at least" (Yan GB 70)

Individual Resilience in a person helps him/her to be flexible in a stressful situation and he/she learns to adapt from the past experiences. It is a positive adaptation of viewing adversities that can impact the wholesome development of a person (Trkulja 52) .Gao Yang is one prominent character who has such strong resilience and undergoes a complete change during the course of novel. When he is arrested, he keeps on telling to himself, "Gao Yang, your tears may flow, but you are not crying" (Yan GB 08).

Letting Gao Ma escape when police tries to arrest him, for which he receives a punishment. His hands are tied to a tree until numb, he is electrified for asking too many questions according to the officers. Once he lands in the jail, the scenes he sees are too horrid which put his resilience at true test. He is made to drink his own urine, gets sick due to the conditions, and is made to puke the “good stuff” which he had just had for dinner.

His earlier memories of not being able to give a proper funeral to his mother, being hit by the villagers, and the arrest sadden his spirits, but he remains strong and is quick to come out from it, adapting to the situation. The riot perpetrators are taken to court for a hearing, the court listens to the reason behind the garlic riot as “...the peasants have been called upon the shoulder even heavier burdens : fees, taxes, fines, and inflated prices....Over the years these trends have gotten out of control, which is why, I believe, the Paradise County garlic incident should have come as no surprise.” (Yan GB 268).

In the case of Gao Ma and Fang Jinju, the resilience reaches till adapting capacity. It is then faltered when Jinju commits suicide. Her hope is lost when Gao Ma is arrested and her father dies in an accident. Due to the riot, her mother (Fourth Aunt) is also arrested, leaving her alone with a growing belly. She loses courage to fight anymore, but at least tries to adapt the situation until she is left alone. Gao Ma works hard to live a life with Jinju but, after her death Gao Ma is unable to forgive himself.

When he is produced at court, he makes a statement which is the thought of every person in Paradise County: “ It’s not socialism I hate, it’s you. To you socialism is a mere sign-board, but to me it’s a social formation- concrete, not abstract. It’s embodied in public

ownership of the means of production and in a system of distribution. Unfortunately it's also embodied in corrupt officials like you. Isn't that right? (Yan GB 241).

Gao Yang shows transformative capacity as he adapts to the situation, when he is arrested and presented before court he retells the incident of riot. The court orders judgment for both sides. Both Gao Yang and Gao Ma are sentenced to a few days in prison because they were the perpetrators. Both accept their punishments and looked forward for the change in their life after release.

Mo Yan's *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* has six decades of history and conflict of China depicted in it. Starting from the Boxer Rebellion of 1900s to the Cultural Revolution of 1950s; tracing the political and industrial side of Modern China with a central character called Shangguan Lu or Mother. Though the novel is narrated by her only son, Shangguan Jintong (Golden Boy), the centripetal attraction is on his mother who single handedly takes care of every situation that the Shangguan household suffers.

Sometimes there are similarities of Mother's character to Ursula Iguaran, the matriarch of Buendia Clan from the novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The Bildungsroman type of characterization is done covering her childhood till her last days. This explains Mo Yan's influence of Marquez in his novel. Both the novels are a social comment on their own country's state.

Big Breasts and Wide Hips is a political satire including historical facts as independently used by the author, portrays the Shangguan family of Northeast Gaomi Township, Shandong District living in a transitional era of China witnessing political turmoil within the county, War of Resistance with the Japanese, frequent battle between Nationalists and

Communists fighting for “the throne” of Felicity Manor, violent nature dislocating people to places, bearing hunger, famine and at last the change to Modern China in the making.

The characters’ suffering is lined up with the people of China.

The novel talks about the turbulent years in Chinese history from Boxer Rebellion to Chairman Mao’s Cultural Revolution. Mother whose birth name is Lu Xuan’er is a little child when her parents hide her in a flour vat during the Boxer Rebellion, which killed them along with thousands of people. The rebellion was to drive the foreign missionaries out of the country. Though the novel does not mention much of the event, it roughly starts the timeline of Chinese history from 1900s till the end of the novel which is the end of Cultural Revolution in 1950s. The novel is consistent to change tracing China’s political cause and effects done to a normal family, the Shanguans.

The War of Resistance with the Japanese in the 1930s has been mentioned in the novel *Red Sorghum* also, which covers the main plot throughout. Here in BBWH, the historical events just have an influence on the characters and their situations. The beginning of the novel has two instances of Japanese soldiers having an encounter with the villagers.

When the whole village is vacating, the Japanese troops invade into the village, fight the villagers, kill them and move forward stomping on the bodies with horse hooves.

The Shanguan family expects two deliveries, one from their mule and the other from Mother giving birth to her Eighth child. After a long wait, help comes from the hands of a Japanese doctor who finishes the necessary life saving treatment to Mother and her children for diplomatic reasons. Quoting the scene from the novel, “...a doctor was performing his life saving procedures on mother and children, a journalist was taking

photographs from various angles. A month later, these photographs would appear in a Japanese newspaper back home to bear witness to the friendship between China and Japan.” (Yan BBWH 46)

The other incident is when Sha Yueliang, prime member of the Black Donkey Musket Band and an anti- resistance Japanese fighter, prepares to fight with the marching Japanese soldiers; he along with other troop members set a trap to blow the bridge off with explosives which is successful. Due to this incident, he becomes famous, and elopes with the eldest daughter of Mother, Shangguan Laidi. inspite of Mother’s objection to it. Both of them leave their child in the care of Mother, as Sha Yueliang travels with the Japanese Convoy.

When the situation at home is well, they return as a celebrated Japanese turncoat and as a brigade leader to Japanese troops. Shangguan Laidi comes to get her, but Mother refuses to give her away saying, “Think how you dumped her on me back then. Well, I spared nothing in raising her this far, so don’t you think you can just come and take away...All I know is, I raised Zaohua, and I ‘m not about to hand her over to somebody else.” (Yan BBWH 183).

Before Sha Yueliang can re-enter the scene, there are several commanding troops who also protect NGT from external forces from occupying. These troops wait to kill the traitor (Sha Yueliang) for his betrayal towards the anti-Japanese troops led by Commander Lu Liren (Shangguan Pandi’s husband) and Commissar Jiang who had taken over the Shangguan residence. This frequent battle against Mother’s sons-in-law, be it between Lu Liren, a staunch Communist and Sima Ku, a Nationalist along with their

troops does not end, which in fact is a reality check of China's political conflict that went on for years.

After the Japanese war of Resistance, China fell into the never ending political turmoil between Kuomintang Government and that of Communist. In the era of modernization, both the parties were fighting to lead China into her future. Mo Yan sets the novel situation just as its state, which is rather confusing. The characters are symbolic to China and its people; Shangguan Lu, the Mother, is depicted as China herself because she takes care of all her children and her grandchildren even in the worst of adverse situations.

Shangguan family daughters may depict the provinces and counties in China, which are spoken of for their beauty and richness of wealth (here, the richness is symbolized as women's beautiful shape- as the name of the novel goes- *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*). The sons- in -law of Shangguan family depict each event that had happened to China- from the mention of Sha Yueliang to Babbit, all have come to claim their way into Shangguan family.

Shelley Chan in her phenomenal work, *A Subversive Voice of China* says, "Being punished for nothing, Mother and her children are merely victims of political struggle, and the bodies being tortured serve to mock the ridiculousness and irrationality of this struggle." (130). As each political battle is fought among the Communist and the Nationalist troops, the people become sufferers bearing through famine, flood, and homelessness, driving them to a life of destitution. Mother and her children too are stranded with no money and no food; she has no choice but to sell one of her children to feed others: "...we scrounged up some rotten greens to eat, steeling ourselves to go over

to human trade section, where Mother hung straw tallies around the necks of my fifth, sixth, and seventh sisters, then waited for a buyer to come along.” (Yan BBWH 158).

Among all the events that happen, the Shangguan family and other villagers suffer trauma of dislocation. Starting from the twelfth- month gruel for which they have to walk miles in the cold weather to losing Third Master Fan, the one who led them in the march. Then, due to battle they are forced to find a different place to live in and survive through the flooding of Dragon River which claims lots of lives. There is also an evacuation done for the impending battle of the Communist leaders, which leads NGT “into a vast battlefield, and not to evacuate is suicide” (Yan BBWH 296).

As the civil war is led by Lu Liren and Shangguan Pandi (fifth sister), they suggest the villagers to take refuge high in the mountains until the war ends. Shangguan Jintong, the narrator, tells his experience of the night where the refugees took shelter from war and nature: “Our family owed its survival to the unusual low trees... that protected us.... The hours after midnight were the worst. The rumble of artillery fire to the south only increased the stillness of the night; people’s moans cut deeply into our hearts and made us tremble.” (Yan BBWH 308).

When the episode of civil war gets over, a national level disaster awaits them – the Great Leap Forward which happened in the late 1950s. Also known as The Great Famine which claimed over 45 million deaths across China happened due to torture and execution of people. It was in fact introduced to lessen China’s tumbling economy to steady Agricultural and Industrial sectors. Though the idea was borrowed from the Soviet nation, it did not work in China due to humongous population and lesser outcome of goods. The

Chinese Government started employing more labor into its industrial sector which in turn had after effects, the peasants underwent terrible experiences. The failure of Great Leap Forward led to the era of Cultural Revolution found by Chairman Mao Zedong (McKenna).

In the novel there is an influence of Russia to show the beginning of Great Leap Forward. The teacher at Jintong's school is Russian who creates so much passion among students to learn Russian. Shangguan Pandi also changes her name to Ma Ruilian for better mingling between them. The effects of The Great Famine came along to NGT, the government sends people to work in the fields, to sow and reap the crops for them to fill up their coffers. At this time, Nature ironically sweeps up all the thrashed grains with a hailstorm leaving the peasants helpless.

This dreaded scene is explained beautifully. When Jintong comes home after working from afar, he learns from his mother about the death of his sisters and how she had taken up work at a commune mill. She narrates how she used to steal some of the dried beans which she swallowed in order not to be accused of stealing but she had to make a living. When she came home, she would use chopsticks to puke -“transfer” the contents into a vessel then wash them, grind them and present it before her children. She says, “I do what has to be done, son. Don't laugh at me. I've done many bad things in my life, but this is the first time I've ever stolen anything.”(Yan BBWH 440).

The last historical event in the novel, the Cultural Revolution, took place in 1966-1976, which upturned the cultural bed of China from a country following ancient traditions into a staunch Communist country under the leadership of Chairman Mao Zedong who

released an instruction booklet which had to be followed by the “Red Guards”. Kenneth G. Lieberthal in his article on Cultural Revolution, talks about China’s need to develop its own stately style which made the whole country go “red” with communism. As ordered by Chairman Mao the Red Guards started attacking the traditional values and the institutes built upon them were demolished. They started harming elderly people for their intellect; hence there was no basic knowledge on the future aspirations of the country. The misled youth had started well but had been left stranded in midway not knowing their destination (Lieberthal).

The novel also shows some snippets of Cultural Revolution, where the Red Guards attack the “all class enemies” (Yan BBWH 443) with only one popular slogan- “Knock all class enemies to the ground, then step on them” (Ibid 451). This brings in the mention of class conflict, also the oppression done by the Red Guards. All the Revolutionaries, Nationalist members either killed or paraded in a procession with slogans. Mother and her grandchildren are harassed and paraded in the village wearing a dunce cap with the wordings, “Mother Scorpion Shangguan Lu” (Ibid 445-446). She keeps her children close and sees to it that no harm is done to them, adding another similarity to the imagery of a female Scorpion which carries her little ones on the back for protection.

The Resilience characteristic is unbeatable and very prominent in Mother’s character. She strides through adversities of her life, no other character shines better than her; the narrator glorifies her beauty, strength, courage and willingness to live on. Jiayi Wei in her thesis, “Rewriting History- A Comparative Analysis of Mo Yan’s *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* and Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* , says, “... the strength of Mother shown through her experience in the political unrest further

suggests that women are not weak and object-like by nature, but rather they are powerful agents.” (35). Similar to the quote, Mo Yan writes in the novel celebrating women, “Are women really wonderful things? Maybe they are. Yes, women definitely are wonderful things, but when all is said and done, they aren’t really “things.” ” (Yan BBWH 384). This makes one understand with what intensity the author creates his characters to last forever.

The Coping Capacity is seen when the Shangguan family goes through a difficult phase of time due to the internal battle between the sons-in-law, who wanted to capture Felicity Manor. Mother and her children are given priority to live with them, but when they lose battle with each other, the family suffers dislocation and are left destitute. Due to Mother’s farsightedness, they are able to store their cellar with food when winter comes in. Mother had previously instructed the girls to do quality work in picking fresh turnips and store them in large number. Her only thought is: “Life is hard, and the only way to survive is through hard work.” (Ibid 108). Shangguan family’s adapting to the situation is done well.

There is one particular point when Mother finds herself at crossroads of life; wanting to die as she could not co operate with the adverse situations anymore. After spotting 19 heads of Sima Family hanging on a rope, she fears if that would be the end of her family too. She tries to feed the children soup infused with poison, later flinging all the bowls from her children’s hands crying hoarsely she says: “We’re not going to die! If death doesn’t frighten a person, then nothing can!” (Yan BBWH 142).

This perspective of losing hope in life, then finding it again and living on, is Mother's strength, but this resilience is what Fang Jinju lacks. Fang Jinju from *The Garlic Ballads* also loses hope when both, her mother and lover are arrested; she is led into darkness that she overlooks she pregnancy which could have been her hope to survive. The serious phase of losing one's hope and finding it again makes a person strong willed, depicting their skills to adapt to given adverse situation.

On the overall comment on the character of Mother being symbolized as the country China herself, Shelley Chan says,

All of Mother's children and grandchildren, including a boy with no biological connection to Mother but whom she raised..., begin identifying and learning about the world from this woman. Because she has sons-in-law with different political backgrounds—Sha Yueliang, the commander of a guerrilla band against the Japanese, who turns out to be a “traitor”; Sima Ku, an anti-Japanese hero in the nationalist army, who was executed by the Communists after 1949; and Lu Liren (鲁立人), a Communist officer- Mother's life is heavily imprinted with historical and political complexities (Chan 49).

Mother transforms her life from the lessons taught by her aunt, who had taught her to look forward in life. She says: “Always let your thoughts rise up to heaven, or go down into the ocean, and if all else fails, let them climb a mountain, but never make things hard on yourself.” (Yan BBWH 132).

The fourth novel, *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out* shows Buddhist ideology of transmigration of soul of a local Chinese landlord-Ximen Nao into six lives of domestic

animals and a child who remembers his previous incarnations. This novel was instantly famous after the declaration of Nobel Prize for its “merge of folktales, history and hallucinatory realism” It leads readers into the life of China from 1950s till the millennium, which completes the annals of history along with the previous novel, *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* which covers from 1900s to 1950s. As each novel leans on a particular event of China, *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out* is about the Land Reform Movement and Cultural Revolution.

Though the country fought with both Nationalism and Communism, the events were the after effects of the policies put up by both the national leaders. Along with natural disasters came the reform laws which not only changed the country geographically but also socially. After the nationalization of China, the Agrarian Reform Law or Land Reform Movement was passed. It meant that the agricultural land, properties of rich landlords were to be listed as general property or were to be distributed to the low-class or the peasants who tilled their land on behalf of the owners.

This was to stabilize the economic crisis raised due to privatization of lands on the national front by the landlords, few were even listed not to own any piece of property, and they were even killed or were to live like the peasants. This role reversal led a new way towards industrialization.

In the novel, Mo Yan talks about the landlord's (Ximen Nao) transition from a person content with his life, family, and property, who is suddenly shot dead at a point blank range just because he was a landlord. His afterlife is shown in hell where he pleads to be sent back after being fried alive- the ultimate torture in hell; Lord Yama agrees to his

wish to seek revenge for his innocent death. But on an ironic note, Ximen Nao is sent as a donkey, an ox, a pig, a dog, a monkey and at last in the form of a child. The lives of Ximen forms are closely viewed by the narrators who witness the developing commune in Gaomi County of Shandong province.

Ximen Nao, a rich landlord had “plundered people’s wealth” therefore according to the rule of land reform, he is stripped of his properties and was “dragged to the outskirts of the village and was shot” (Yan LDWMO 23). In his defense he was a “man of dignity, charitable, and open-minded” (Ibid 11). After his unfair death, he comes back as Ximen donkey in the same household of Lan Lian, Ximen Nao’s former head servant who inherited a part of agricultural land and also marries Yingchun (Nao’s first concubine). After Nao’s death, his properties are divided to the peasants and his family members are sent off with someone who married them. His first concubine, Yingchun is married off to Lan Lian and his second concubine, Wu Qiuxiang to Huang Tong.

During the first phase of the Land reform Campaign, Nao’s wife Ximen Bai is accused of hiding the treasures in her home after her husband’s death. The Reform Movement makes Hong Taiyue, a local peasant get all the attention as a landlord. His stand denotes the class stratification in Gaomi County, in the novel when Hong Taiyue comes to accumulate the wealth left by Ximen Nao, he says,

...the tables have been turned on you, and we poor peasants have had a change of luck. We’ve floated to the top. By settling accounts with your people, all we’re doing is retrieving the riches you have accumulated. I’ve reasoned with you more times than I can count...Ximen Nao, you and your family lived off of our labor (Ibid 45).

Ximen Nao comes back to the human realm in order to seek revenge on his unfair death, but after hearing the reason of his executionist, he provides a statement to defend himself and clear the situation. He justifies that if Hong Taiyue had looted the landlords due to the reform movement then the death of Ximen Nao was due to class conflict and not for any personal gain. Nao exclaims the social discomfort for each other raised due to class conflict and validates the situation as,

“...as a member of the revolutionary masses, you and I are irreconcilable foes and I am obliged to eliminate you. This is not personal hatred, it's class hatred. As a representative of a class that is marked for elimination, you could have shot me dead, but that would have made me a revolutionary martyr.....As far as I'm concerned, living on like this would fill me with all kinds of meaningless grievances. There are too many things I don't understand,...so dying is better.” (Yan LDWMO 47).

Lan Lian is found at the temple stairs when Nao takes him to be his domestic help; he is often referred as blue face in the novel and he lives his whole life as an independent farmer though the whole of Gaomi County changing to commune. The friendship between Lan Lian and the Ximen Donkey, Ox shows their tenacity to fight off the commune people to revive the independent farming culture. They are made easy targets of disgust, and are mocked, but it does not lower their esteem. Lan Lian is often made a target of mockery until he leads his family to join the commune.

The first death after Ximen Nao due to Land Reform is of Ximen Donkey, who had helped Lan Lian survive the merger of Gaomi Township with People's commune. Ximen Donkey is considered a very dear friend of Lan Lian as he sensed any danger for him.

The people's commune flourishes with the whole of Northeast Gaomi Township gathering grains in storage, but due to the famine the commune's coffers become empty, turning people into hunters and killing every domestic animal they can find.

Like a pack of hungry wolves, they attack Lan Lian's compound, taking all the grains and even kill Ximen Donkey for its meat. The irony is that the people's commune was developed so that none from the society would go hungry during famine, but the commune people were forced to attack the coffers of Lan Lian- the independent farmer.

Austin Ramzy in The New York Times recalls the Cultural Revolution after fifty years. He writes, "Mao Zedong unleashed the Cultural Revolution, a decade- long upheaval that had dramatic, often violent effects across China." (Ramzy). After the land reform movement, came the Cultural Revolution which lasted for ten years started by Chairman Mao. It had started from the effects of Great Leap Forward which was supposed to give great economy from the merger of agricultural and industrialization of China but resulted in famine. Chairman Mao formulated the new set of rules and consolidated it in the "Little Red Book" which was like the Communist Manifesto that changed the fate of China then on.

Chairman Mao's ideology was to move away from the ancient process of thinking, in order to wipe out old traditions, culture and way of living. To attain this goal of his, he deployed the youths who were known as "Red Guards" who targeted anyone who followed the old traditions, and abused them. They were also sent across the whole nation to teach people about the class enemies, and elite living. There was a death toll of 500,000 to eight million people. The Cultural Revolution came to an end after a decade

following the death of Chairman Mao in 1976, which changed Country's political stand. China opened up itself to the world during the era of modernization.

The novel, *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out* also cites the event of Cultural Revolution. After the famine, the people's commune was strengthened with Red Guards all over the place. They even paraded the last independent farmer- Lan Lian with his face painted red. Lan Jiefang, son of Lan Lian and Yingchun narrated the incident where Lan Jinlong smears the red paint on his foster father, seeing Lan Lian rubbing his eyes hysterically to get the paint out from his eyes, no one comes forward to help him.

As they stride across the streets carrying banners in the name of People's Commune, Ximen Ox is also paraded alongside his master, the banner hung on his horns which he tugs. Days later Ximen Jinlong, now a prime member of People's commune who had sworn to convert Lan Lian into a member of Commune is held responsible for torture till death of Ximen Ox, as he made Ximen Ox till the commune field When Ximen Ox made no movement, Ximen Jinlong started striking him.

Mo Yan uses Buddhist ideologies in the plot, quoting from the novel, "... it's a Buddha who has borne all this suffering to lead people who have gone astray to enlightenment. People are not to tyrannize other people...they must not force other people.. to do things they do not want to do." (Yan LDWMO 213).

Chi-ying Alice Wang in her paper- "Mo Yan's *The Garlic Ballads* and *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* in the Context of Religious and Chinese Literary Conventions" discusses Lan Lian's relation with Ximen Nao's animal incarnations. She exclaims, "In *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out*, Lan Lian is the one who follows the way of Earth

throughout his life until his final return to the earth. His roots in the Earth also give him the unique insight into the reality behind the apparent as he never fails to recognize Ximen Nao in his reincarnations.”(Duran and Huang 135).

Lan Lian and Ximen Ox’s tenacity and resilience to bear through the hard times made them popular but it comes with a cost of life. The Last Independent farmer, Lan Lian is stripped of his possession of one-third of the land and his ox. Just in front of his eyes, Ximen Jinlong tortures Ximen Ox to death. Lan Lian is also seen sharing the suffering, “Ximen Ox, who would rather die than stand up and pull a plow for the People’s Commune. I saw my dad throw down his hoe and sprawl on the ground, facedown, as he dug his hand deep into the soil. He was quaking like a malaria sufferer, and I knew that he was sharing the ox’s agonies.” (Yan LDWMO 214). Ximen Ox dies on the one point six acres of land belonging to Lan Lian “clearing the minds of people who had become confused and disoriented during the Cultural Revolution” (Ibid 215).

Yuhan Huang in his paper titled, “*Mo Yan's Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out in a Cultural and Visual Context*” says, the death of Ximen Ox is rightly timed on the death of Chairman Mao which brings the end of Cultural Revolution too. “The cruelty of persecution and the stubbornness of the silent resistance depicted in the ox’s death are not alien to those who experienced the movement.”(Duran and Huang 117). Their life symbolizes strength and courage which makes them more resilient than others.

Along with the class conflict, the animal forms of Ximen Nao also depict Man-Animal Conflict in the novel, where Ximen Jinlong thrashes Ximen Ox (his own father’s incarnation) for not working on the commune field, later Ximen Ox dies on the field that

it ploughed his entire life. There is also an instance when Ximen Pig along with other animals in the Apricot Garden Pig Farm revolt against the humans and leave the place to live in the mountains.

In the chapter-, “Pig Frolics”, Ximen Nao’s soul is born as the sixteenth pig which sees luxury in this life, as the People’s Commune plans to set up a Production Brigade of developing a state renowned pig farm called- Apricot Garden Pig Farm. They raise funds, hold ceremonies to develop the farm’s production. The talking pigs hold up a communion in order to curb the involvement of humans in their affairs. From the novel, “On the farm it wasn’t just humans pitted against humans; pigs were also pitted against pigs, and these swine struggles comprised the production’s central conflict, with humans as the supporting cast.” (Yan LDWMO 328). This would even remind people of George Orwell’s timeless classic, *Animal Farm*, where the pig named Stalin gathers his friends to revolt against the owner, showing yet another Mo Yan’s intertextual feat.

Ximen Pig cites a situation of resilience, where the people of Northeast Gaomi Township have invited the Commune people to witness the grandness of Apricot Pig Farm where they hold themselves back to any comment passed against their effort. Ximen Pig exclaims, “...I was proud of the Ximen villagers for their high degree of consciousness, or, should I say, their degree of self –control. ... I knew those looks represented complex feelings, I admired the people nonetheless. Holding back like could not have been easy.” (Ibid 262).

The novel characterizes Lan Lian, Lan Jiefang, and Ximen Ox to be very resilient in nature, bearing all the cruel happenings done by the commune leaders. When the people’s

commune was formed and Ximen Nao's properties were usurped, Ximen Donkey copes up with the loss as he is unable to do anything. His birth as a donkey is itself a shock to him but he steadies himself as long as he is near his house and family. In case of Lan Lian, he too tries to survive the merger of independent farm lands with the Commune, but Huang Tong and Jinlong trouble him, make him lose his family to Commune, and even parade him in whole of village with banners and curses thrown at him for being an independent farmer.

In analyzing Individual Resilience, Tanja Trkulja states that the people who resilient in nature, are exposed to lot of stress due to external factors may show a little distress or even none, they are able to cope up with such events without affecting their routine (Trkulja 52-53).

When Lan Lian is stripped of his three-fourth of land and is ordered not to till the soil or work during the day, he adapts himself to work at night under the moonlight. In his monologue addressed to the moon, he thanks the moon for being his lantern all these years because of which he had tilled the soil, sown the seeds and reaped harvests in his light. He toasts a glass of liquor in the honor of moon that stood by him and he will be always a debtor to the moon. He says, "I have nothing against the Communist Party... I'm not opposed to the People's Commune of to collectivization. I just want to be left alone to work for myself." (Yan LDWMO 305).

Looking at the transforming capacity, Lan Lian stands tall against any difficulty that comes. He engages in a one on one conversation with Hong Taiyue. Lan Lian working

under the moon in his field talks to Hong Taiyue about his principle to be an independent farmer has been successful and how he has borne it well for thirty years.

After the death of Ximen Ox, he single handedly works in his farm, gathering strength to speak up, he says, “ “ you sank your teeth in me like a mad dog for half my life, but you can't do anymore.. I struggled to bear the weight for thirty years, but now, at last, I can stand up straight...I held out long enough, and now I can work my land in the light of the day...”(Ibid 351-352).

Mo Yan's *Frog* is the most controversial and interesting novel covers China's history of One Child Policy. The novel is set against the backdrop of 1970s to 1980s of China, where the political turmoil has settled down. But to reduce the growth of population, a reform is passed that the people of China should have one child per couple but the peasants are allowed to have two children. This was to curb the mushrooming population nearing one billion in 1970s. In the novel, the narrator, Xiao Pao, commonly known as Tadpole writes snippets of his aunt's (Wan Xin or Gugu) life in the form of letters to his mentor-Professor Sugitani Akihito who had got interested in her story which is at last written as a play.

One-Child Policy was started to limit child birth in each family unit to be one. In order to implement the rule, China began to spread awareness and started to campaign for birth control and family planning in 1970s. After the death of Chairman Mao, the situation was changed and announced that the number has been reduced to one child per family in the year 1978. In the rural areas of China, the enforcement of the law was unwelcomed due to their traditional belief system. But because of the available schemes as employment in

government, financial assistance, and free contraceptive methods the policy was brought in.

Though the policy was prioritized, there was the case of infertility in many rural areas. But there were times when the policy was strictly undertaken, many people who violated the policy underwent forced sterilization, and abortions. And those who opted out of these medical treatments had to suffer later in life to get proper education or even work. Due to the cause of one-child policy, the effect was decreasing sex ratio as male children were preferred, there was also increasing number of old age people who were an hindrance in growing economy. It was in 2000s when Once-Child Policy saw its end.

Lanlan Du exclaims in his paper, “Abortion in Faulkner’s *The Wild Palms* and Mo Yan’s *Frog*” that Mo Yan chooses the rural China to show the intensity of One-Child Policy. He writes: “In *Frog*, Mo Yan focuses on the tensions of rural citizens and this form of state intervention. It delves deeply into some rural families' defiance when the state’s birth policy was executed with relentlessness.” (Duran and Huang 67).

Tadpole, the narrator and the playwright writes his aunt’s life story- Gugu/Wan Xin, the great village obstetrician who helped mothers deliver the Sweet Potato kids and who has performed more than ten thousand deliveries abolishing the traditional methods of childbirth. She is an honorable member of Commune, overtaking the task of curbing pregnancy and performing forced sterilizations, and abortions to the couples who plan to have children more than one. Going against the traditional methods and the country’s need of people, the Chinese Government proposes family-planning policy due to the considerable pressure of Population Explosion in 1965.

The ideology of people was to “labor hard to produce people for the nation” (Yan FROG 65), to strengthen it with more children in order to serve the nation. But after one-child policy, there were endorsements, campaigns from the government to curb population. During this time, Gugu is appointed as the director of health centre’s Obstetrics department and she is given the task of overseeing county’s family planning process. Though she was popular for her medical skills, the villagers turn against her every time she speaks on loud speaker on family planning. Her only words to this behaviour are: “... And Chairman Mao has said: We must control our population! With no organization and no discipline, at the rate we’re going, mankind is doomed.” (Ibid 67).

Gugu’s job is to report to the county headquarters on the number of vasectomies and sterilizations done, due to the falling number of surgeries conducted in a day. She instructs the Party Cadres to undergo the procedures and involve as many people, if the party cadres refuse to do so they would be sent out of the party and would lose their jobs. The problem did not seem huge until one suffered from it. Gugu’s family too starts having trouble with family planning, when Xiao Pao’s (Tadpole) wife Wang Renmei becomes pregnant for the second time. This comes as a surprise which turns into a shock as even Xiao Pao is not aware of his wife’s decision. When Gugu finds out, she suggests performing an abortion but Wang Renmei runs away in order to avoid it.

According to the rule, a government employee could not have more than one child, or if he or she plans to have the child then they should resign from the service and live the life like peasants. Gugu says:

“I am a member of the Communist Party...How could you expect me to be the first to break the law?.. I suffered unjust treatment, my heart is as red as ever, and will never change. Alive I’m a Party member, dead I’ll be a Party ghost... I’ll burn incense before delivering babies for those who follow family-planning, but I’ll deal mercilessly with those who go beyond one pregnancy- every last one of them!”. (Yan FROG 103)

In Lanlan Du’s words, “...Fervent desires to be mothers and the poignant agonies of those Chinese women who have been forced to have abortions, Mo Yan explores the dilemma of China in the pursuit of modernity.” (Duran and Huang 68). The mothers’ desire to have a second child was considered unnecessary and they were forced to terminate the pregnancy. Gugu herself man hunts many hiding pregnant women and performs abortions on them. In the novel, Gang Xiulian, Wang Dan and Wang Renmei are the women who suffer under Gugu and Little Lion, they also lose their lives trying to have a second child.

The episodic narration of capturing Gang Xiulian, who is five months pregnant, is intense, as she jumps into the water to save herself from Gugu and Little Lion. But this has an adverse effect as she had spent all her energy swimming. Due to continuous swimming and loss of breath, she passes away in spite of all the finest treatment and best medicines. After the death of Wang Renmei, Gugu wishes Xiao Pao to marry her assistant Little Lion, who is psychologically affected during all these years performing abortions. Now she wishes to start a family with Xiao Pao but is unable to have a child. Gugu feels dejected at the loss of Wang Renmei, but still supports the policy saying, “...a little pain and making a little sacrifice you are contributing to the nation at large (Yan FROG 158).

Gugu does not stop even after death of two women, while aborting fetuses, she still follows the rule and when someone tips about Chen Bi's child, she goes there to perform the surgery but to her surprise, Chen Bi's wife- Wang Dan is already in labor. When Gugu arrives, Chen Bi is hiding on the boat and instructing his wife to have the baby now, so that it would not be terminated. Seeing the scene, Gugu advances near Wang Dan to help her deliver the child. "This isn't the hand of a fiend, it's the hand of an obstetrician." (Ibid 206). All the past memories of delivering children come to the mind and she has a change of heart.

This was the third case of hunting women of illegal pregnancy. But in Wang Dan's case Gugu allows her to give birth, before she dies of loss of blood. This is the turning point for Gugu, first as a caring obstetrician then after Mao's Communist rule she became a "pregnancy terminator". After which she changes into a life saver. Gugu is made a pawn of Communist Government ideology, uses her knowledge in terminating lives. But, she changes and stops conducting practices. This change makes her a different person altogether, she even repents for her sins by marrying a clay doll maker- Hao Dashou, helping him to make clay dolls with the faces of the children she had terminated through abortion. This also indicates the end of Cultural Revolution.

The resilience characteristics is seen in Xiao Pao/ Tadpole, who watches Gugu 's life from greatness to fall. He manages to write a play at the end of the novel in celebration of Gugu's life. He follows Gugu's direction of his life, when Wang Renmei dies of loss of blood, he does not blame Gugu for the death but understands her stand as a party member and a leader of County's family- planning committee. Tadpole gives his reasons to his mentor Sugitani Akihito who motivates him to write about such a fantastic woman. He

writes, “*I could describe her life using such potent metaphors as ‘surging forth magnificently’ and ‘rife with twists and turns’.*” (Ibid 04).

Though Gugu has performed her duty, the sin of killing fetuses takes a toll on her and Little Lion, both suffer from guilt. Here Little Lion is left childless and Gugu suffers from insomnia, sometimes dreaming of Children’s faces that she had killed. Quoting Lanlan says, “ Mo Yan's story indicates that no one is justified in killing anyone—himself, herself, any other person—no matter the purported reason, since it is a sin that is impossible to be redeemed. Notably, the narrator Tadpole's name provides a persistent reminder of the fragility and brevity of life.” (Duran and Huang 74).

Giving an overall comment on Mo Yan’s style of involving Violence in the novel forms, Shelley Chan says, he uses Violence as one of the key element to show the situation in which the country was, she writes:

“To Mo Yan, violence is an external form of human evil that causes suffering and renders reality absurd at best and sinister at worst. Violence is pervasive, unavoidable, and universal, and it resides primarily within the human soul; therefore there is no end to it. When violence as an individual force is approved by society and turned into a collective social force, it becomes a power with the ability to destroy, a power beyond knowledge and reason (Chan 177).

As discussed earlier on the functions of conflict in society, either makes it thriving or puts a stop on certain activities. But looking at the overall working process, the society as well as its individuals surely suffer under conflict by various means. The individuals/ characters though find their responsibilities and when they work towards it, fighting

against conflict; they endure it with individual resilience. The characters psych themselves to harden their will against unpleasant situation; the best illustration to term from the novel is Gao Yang- *The Garlic Ballads* and Mother (Shangguan Lu) from *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*.

While the conflict engages the whole of society, resilience too becomes social when the seeing the individual others also follow his/her path. If one individual can learn to endure through the struggle and show ways to address others of the society then it leads to transformation. The next chapter deals with the Societal Change happening in the novels and shows how it is carried out by the characters.