

## **Chapter IV**

### **Societal Change**

Change in any form is inevitable; it is a law of nature that is universal and prominent.

Social structures are subjected to incessant changes which lead to calamity at first when the changes are seen in the perception of society and its people. When society transforms, some people take it positively while others tend to react negatively. An individual strives for stability as society is ever growing and renewing itself. The concept of change does not restrict itself only to sociology but also in the development of art, literature, music, science, economy, and politics. One of the greatest societal changes was seen during the Renaissance in Europe.

Social change refers to an observable difference in any social phenomena over any period of time, noting that any conflict is resolved through the passage of time, during which the evident characteristics of social change are observed. It can be noted that social change is a universal phenomenon involving a slow and gradual shift in the methods of social structure which need a facelift. The rusted and biased social structures existing with conflicts are resolved with new ideas which take time in bringing equilibrium in society.

Social change does not restrict itself to the life of individuals; it is a communal process through which the changes are felt by society as a whole. As any community is vast and stretches far and wide, social change takes time in reaching out. As the speed of social change is gradual and slow, it can take ages to convert into a new era of change.

Sometimes if the society is in need of change, it becomes a necessity and can be instantaneous as well. As society and its needs are ever evolving, change becomes “a law of nature” that is bound to happen. Like many Sociological theories, social change also has its cause and effect in society- a kind of chain reaction sequence which brings alterations in people’s lives and the social system. If there is a change in any system, there is a corresponding reaction in the other parts of society also.

There are many leading sociologists who have their own ideologies on social change.

These ideologies cite various definitions of change and divide it according to the stages in which changes take place. One such definition provided by Gillin & Gillin states, “ Social Changes are variations from the accepted modes of life; whether due to alteration in geographical conditions, in cultural equipment, composition of the population or ideologies and whether brought about by diffusion or invention within the group.”

(Schermerhorn 568).

There are various definitions for social change given by sociologists who base their readings on methods that are conducive to the situation or era. For a basic understanding, there are four methods/theories of social change that any social theorist would look up to, namely- cyclic, evolutionary, functionalistic, and conflict. The cyclical theory of change was developed by a German philosopher, Oswald Spengler, and noted British Historian,

Arnold J. Toynbee. According to them, societies, organizations and even the global civilization change through a cyclic model of rise and decline of societies.

They argue that societies also follow the same module of the life cycle of organisms- birth, adolescence, adulthood, old age and death. Societies too, are formed, gradually grow, break down due to conflict and disintegrate into fragments, finally forming a new society with new proposed interests.

The merger of evolution in Sociology of Change came with the publication of Charles Darwin's *Theory of Evolution* (1859) which changed the outlook of social and cultural aspects. The growth of biological and organic aspects was linked with that of social and cultural development. However, it did not explain the process of change and the occurrences of war. The next theory of change came through a Functionalistic perspective which was treated as a stream line to evolution theory.

The social system was compared to the balanced system of the human body whose peace and equilibrium of could be disturbed when there was external trouble. The Functionalistic theory of Change proposed by Talcott Parsons focused on maintaining social equilibrium and social order so that the peace of society remained intact, but it did not cater to the needs of change in a wide spread society.

Karl Marx's idea of economic and conflict change also played a major role in society's upliftment. The theorists of the nineteenth and twentieth century whose views went against that of structural functionalism, were in favour of a change that played a role in breaking down barriers and setting a working model against social injustice and flaws.

The modern day Conflict Theory has its roots in Marx's idea that conflict is necessary for

social change. Be it economic changes in society that intensify the process leading to class conflict or changes that bring society together. Max Weber believes that for conflict to come into play, the society has to be divided according to power. Lewis Coser says that society is in progress only if it has conflicting groups.

Lewis. A. Coser (1913-2003), a German-American sociologist worked upon the idea of conflict, merging it with functionalism. He attempted to study a conflicting society that could progress into social change. He mentions George Sorel's work to draw upon his idea of Conflict and notifies that a social system is always on the lookout for challenges in terms of conflict so as to renew itself with new ideologies of young minds. Sometimes, organisations formed for the larger benefit of human relations in workplace can create conflict (class struggle, stratification) or reduce it; but there is only a small probability that such organisations can use conflict for technological advancement.

According to Coser, conflict helps society to stay close in unity; even if society disintegrates due to external factors, the core structure remains strong. In his work titled *Social Conflict and the Theory of Social Change*, he talks about the importance of conflict in a social system, and how once there is a conflict the individual works to change it. He writes, "A social system, he (George Sorel) felt, was in need of conflict if only to renew its energies and revitalize its creative forces." (Coser SCTSC 197). Karl Marx says conflict not only changes the relations in society but also transforms it. Social change does not always imply evolutionary change; it also brings prominent shifts in the economic form of society.

Society may face a change of systems but there is also a link between the past, present and future; there is a string of continuity in the realm of social systems. Some sociologists believe that change is not something that comes and goes like how biological organisms live and die. It is “re-establishment of equilibrium” in society after a progressive conflict has happened that leads to a better established society.

Lewis Coser cites the example of a natural disaster like an earthquake occurring on earth’s surface that shifts the tectonic plates way below into the earth’s core. He says, “A quake is the earth’s way of maintaining its equilibrium.” (Ibid 201) Though quakes are lethal, they bring changes to the geological settings in parts of the earth. Through the years, the events in history have brought transformations that are abrupt and inconsistent, but society changes gradually in a slow process with an understanding that takes time. The overall change of society happens in due time when there are improvements in small sectors. Conflict changes society and the new resulting governance will work on the “resistance to change” (202).

Any rigid system of society that resists any form of change brings turbidity of society (violence in governing people, people’s non trust in government). The culmination of such turbulence due to resistance of change in the governance of society can happen when there is an understanding of why change is needed and a shift of authority happens. It is only then, that society can open up to new ideologies.

Doug Reeler, a Social Facilitator, working in the Community Development Resource Association of University of Cape Town has published articles regarding social change practices and its collaboration in organizing firms. His book, *Barefoot Guide to Social*

*Change*, has guidelines for organizations to create and learn through practice. In his work “A Theory of Social Change- and Implications for Practice, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation”, he talks about the necessities and implications of social change.

According to him, there are three types of social change – emergent, transforming, and projectable change. Unlike other theories, instead of just existing of paper, this theory is practiced in developing part of the society (Reeler 07).

As society changes, its social structure has various ways of handling conflict. Some stress on a complete breaking away from old rigid laws or some try to fit into the new shift in the social system. In a society, when a group conflict occurs, the individuals who suffer from it need to de-stress from the situation. Individuals have their own ways of “acting out” ( Coser 204) to a situation that does not favour them. Individual reactions to conflicts and change vary as one may take time to accept the situation while another may deviate as per his/her understanding of the situation. This characteristic will be used in detail to study scenarios of change in the novels.

It is not only the change of behaviour in an individual or group that is noticeable, but also a change of patterning in the social structure that modifies the current structure or existing conflict. In Coser’s words, there is a social change that relieves conflicts and happens in two methods. First, a situation in which the conflict is small enough to adjust its occurrences and effects into a flexible social structure therefore leading to change within the system. Second, a situation in which the conflict is big and an individual is unable to adjust within the system thereby leading to the birth of new values which act as major powers in overcoming the resistance by the existing interests of society.

Lewis Coser refers to the ideology of Karl Marx when explaining the effect of group behaviour on conflict. According to him, when conflict occurs, the group's unity is tested through events of conflict and only then their identity as a group that has borne difficulty is created. After changes are brought in, there is the formation of a new group or the existing one is altered to strengthen the new system. Because of this, there is a chance of development of bitter relations and varying interests of resistant groups and changed groups.

Both, the existing groups and the newly formed ones, try to establish a strong working condition but there is always a source of strain that hinders the relation and this strain which is termed as "tension- release behaviour" (Ibid 205) will result in failed action. The conflict within a group brings about 'deviation' resulting in "new patterns and reward systems apt to reduce the sources of frustration" (Ibid).

When there are possibilities of reoccurrences of conflict within the groups due to tension behaviour, these stressful interests are to be let out and allowed to be heard. They are to be acted upon instead of avoiding them, which in turn eases out the growing conflict and pacifies its members to form a better working condition. Quoting Lewis Coser's words:

.. the emergence of such new groupings or the strengthening of old ones with the attendant increase in self-confidence and self-esteem on the part of the participants will lead to a change *of* or *within* the system will depend on the degree of cohesion that the system itself has attained. A well- integrated society will tolerate and even welcome group conflict; only a weakly integrated one must fear it." (Coser 205).

Therefore, an established society which has seen the formation and division of its members will withstand change of any sort and even if it breaks up, it is capable of forming an esteemed society to live in. Society changes gradually. When a person undergoes a basic transformation, then by mutual adjustment, others can change one by one, thus transforming society.

In the previous chapters on Interactionism, Social Conflict and Resilience, the novels of Mo Yan were studied to show how conflict enters the system and that it is only then that the de-stabilised society looks forward to a change amidst the chaos and confusion. In the novels chosen for study, there are scenes in which the conflict brings a sort of uncertainty and vagueness in the characters. The social events highlighted are given a proper finish with not much of delving into the past and a post modern touch of open-ended thought. After the conflict ends, the characters are left free to choose their destiny and are not bound to any external sources of livelihood.

This chapter is concerned with the endings described in the selected novels, focusing on the social change after the events. In the novel, *Red Sorghum*, the narrator re-visits his ancestral village of Northeast Gaomi Township after many years to pay homage to his predecessors who once were the renowned fighters against the Japanese army in 1930s to 1940s. The narrator's visit and recollection of his ancestors' past is a kind of honour given to them in the beginning of the chapter as Mo Yan "invokes the aggrieved souls of Northeast Gaomi Township, lays an offering of minced heart in the sorghum field for a good health." (Yan RS 01).



The residents of Northeast Gaomi Township who fought against Japanese for their motherland, have managed to keep their dignity intact through the years. Though the township has changed, their stories of bravery and valiance resonate in the villages. The narrator is seen as the symbol of change here, as the main perpetrators of the war are dead. He listens to the episodic narration of war, though the war ended the people died fighting for freedom.

The narrator's visit can also be interpreted as showing how much the existing generation is grateful for the freedom that the past generation died fighting for. Also, at the end of the novel, when the narrator visits the tomb of second-grandma, he wonders that the land, the natives and even the sorghum stalks lack that essence of freedom for which his grandparents fought. He says that the present community lacks the vigor of the past.

Veronika Slováčková in her thesis, "M. H. Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Mo Yan's *Red Sorghum* in the Context of the World Literature" says, *Red Sorghum* appeals to universal oneness "as not having to be read as a story about China in the past or contemporary China or any China at all but the possibility to comprehend the text's moral message on a completely universal level, delivering a warning about any kind of totalitarianism, oppression and injustice of any time." (36). The inclusion of Mo Yan's works in World Literature is to familiarize his writing style that gives an essence of unity during distress at world level.

The novel is about the transition of society through the years, involving memories of the past. The resistance fighters who stand against the Japanese soldiers and the common villagers who fight against the bandit culture are proof of how the narrator's

ancestors were bold enough to fight for their freedom and for their land. It is therefore unfortunate that the present generation of people have forgotten the rich heritage and pride of Northeast Gaomi Township. The narrator glorifies his ancestors as the heroes of the township. With a worshipful sense of the past he says, "They killed, they looted, and they defended their country in a valiant, stirring ballet that makes us unfilial descendants who now occupy the land by comparison. Surrounding by progress I (narrator) feel a nagging sense of our species' regression." (Yan RS 04). The narrator feels that the present generation including him, are unfit as they do not know the value of such proud villagers.

Through resilience, the characters in *Red Sorghum* manage to fight off the adversities that happened to them because of the Sino-Japanese War. The chapter "Sorghum Funeral & Strange Death" deals with the aftermath of the war, where the narrator's Grandfather, Commander Yu Zhan'ao, and his Iron Regiment take revenge on the Japanese soldiers. The characters after facing their personal tragedies try to find other ways of life. Though it is abstract, the change in them is seen through the passage of time. When the narrator re-visits the township, he recollects their hardships in life; tells the horrific incident that happened to Second-Grandma (Passion).

The narrator re-tells each event in a non-linear narrative, covering events from the Japanese invasion to their defeat. In the novel's final chapter, Mo Yan writes about Second-Grandma's sacrifice to save her child from the ravaging Japanese soldiers who have intruded into Saltwater Gap on the outskirts of Northeast Gaomi Township. The Japanese soldiers enter each house as hungry pack of wolves killing, bayoneting people on their rifles, and harassing women. In order to protect her child, Little Honor

(Xiangguan), she (Second- Grandma) surrenders herself before the six Japanese soldiers, dying at last.

The narrator exclaims at the pain felt by Second-Grandma. The author, addresses the readers through the narrator asking if such violent behaviour of humans is to be accepted:

“Under normal circumstances, it is the power of morality that keeps the beast in us hidden beneath a pretty exterior. A stable, peaceful society is the training ground for humanity, just as caged animals, removed from the violent unpredictability of the wild, are influenced by the behaviour of their captors in time. Do you agree? Yes? No?...”.

(Yan RS 323)

The above lines are directed from the author himself, asking the readers' opinion on such a dreadful matter. These lines are also a take on Mo Yan's address to society where human behaviour changes according to the situation. Along with hundreds of martyrs who lay their lives to defend their county, the family of Commander Yu Zhan'ao is also buried.

The second generation, including Douguan and Beauty, survive the war as the Japanese soldiers are defeated by the guerilla fighters of Pocky Cheng. Due to the internal conflict between Iron Society and Jiao-Gao Regiment troops, Detachment leader, Pocky Cheng, distances himself from them and works individually in defending the county. After the death of its members, he is held captive by the Japanese soldiers, tortured and made an informer to gain advantage over the Chinese troops. After his release, he searches for his family; when he finds them dead, he swears to defeat the Japanese soldiers. While joining his troops, one of the officials says, "...we must be flexible and resourceful. Tolerance

must be one of our stratagems. The only way we'll win this war of resistance is by conserving our strength.” ( Ibid 348-349).

From the earlier mention of three types of social change – the emergent change is based on situational adaptation- learning and unlearning of things that comes inconsistently as it develops. This type of change is suited to individuals and a smaller sect of people, who have the consciousness to handle further changes in society. In the novel, the characters learn to be resourceful in the time of danger. Dai Fenglian assists the troops with delivery of food during the war and Douguan protects the injured soldiers and the dead martyrs from the frenzied pack of dogs who have surrounded the sorghum field due to the stench of blood. Commander Yu Zhan'ao trades bullets which are hidden in the bodies of goats to have sufficient ammunitions during the war with Japanese. Though the characters prepare for the impending calamity, they set themselves into the situation and work consciously towards correcting it.

Due to the crisis, the progress of society is halted in the process of a developmental change. This crisis is an important point of change where the individual has to let go or unlearn his priorities in order to gain greater good. The formation of the resistance fighters in Northeast Gaomi Township happens only when Japanese started intrusive attacks. The continuity of the fight by Commander Yu Zhan'ao and Pocky Cheng finally gains momentum after defeating the Resistance soldiers of Japan. But, this victory is achieved at the heavy loss of family members, troop soldiers and innocent villagers. As Doug Reeler says,

Left alone, crises do get unconsciously resolved over time, tragically or happily or somewhere in-between. But they can also be more consciously and proactively resolved through well led or facilitated transformative change processes ( Reeler 12).

Years later, after the tremendous victory, the ancestors lived in freedom with pride and no stench of hybrid sorghum but the narrator's and his generation's "hypocritical display of affection" (Yan RS 356) is pitiable. The final hallucinatory scenes of the narrator along with Second Grandma are quite impressive. The narrator seems to differentiate between the lives of his ancestors with the present state. He says, "Being surrounded by hybrid sorghum instills in me a powerful sense of loss" (Ibid 358), the purity of man and sense of fulfillment is what the narrator yearns for.

Though society has changed and made itself modern, the value of freedom and pride is only seen in the past. The narrator finds himself in a labyrinth of modern day shackles which "the ghosts of his family" (Ibid 359) pointing a way out from it. At last, he is offered a solution to cleanse his body and soul of all the troubles in the yin and yang of nature and re-energize himself to face the real world of evil but this time with "a symbol of the heroic spirit" (Ibid) of Northeast Gaomi Township. Mo Yan's characters do not act as victims throughout the novel. They are "...brave enough to fight for freedom, the degenerate and inferior to those not afraid to raise their voice under repression." (Slováčková 36).

In the novel *The Garlic Ballads*, the process of change is seen in the whole of Paradise County. After the garlic riot the perpetrators are arrested and put on trial, during which their resilience is tested. The descriptions of the jail scenes are gut-wrenching as

the characters suffer trauma due to the worst possible treatment. They wait for trial, confident in their their innocence and believing in being released in a day. Gao Yang's positive and resilient nature makes him hopeful as the trial brings change in people's lives. Some choose to end lives before seeing it and others strive through it to see things change and accept the new way of life in society.

Focusing on the aftermath of the Garlic Riot, Mo Yan brings in a dash of reality with references to the characters' treatment in jail, the real politics during the riot, the class stratification leading to the difference in the treatment of government officials and the peasants. There are many causes of the riot which was bound to happen, starting from the negligence of officials, the order to plant garlic as an only crop ,the farmers wait to turn their produce in to the cold-storage, to the officials closing it once it is full to its brim.

The officials are not able to provide any necessary relief to the farmers who could not sell the crop, forcing them to wait in despair with anger raging in them. The farmers then revolt against the County administrator, Zhong Weimin who refused to address them, and other officials who seemed indifferent to the problem.

After the riot, the people involved are arrested. The author writes about the extreme jail conditions and its poor maintenance. The main accused of the riot experience harsh treatment from the police officers which makes them bear it with resilience as they anticipate their future. According to Lewis Coser, any organization is built to reduce conflict and to find ways to curb it. In the novel too, the government's rule of planting only garlic crop becomes the catalyst.

It later on becomes the initiator of the main conflict due to which people lose peace in society. In these rough times, when the peasants feel betrayed, they create a chaos, breaking into the office and ransacking things. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, conflict is essential in the process of development so that the society can attain equilibrium.

Based on the ideas of Lewis Coser, individuals 'act out' under stress during group conflict. The reason behind such frustrations can be due to the stress and tension of an uneven society, this stress of dysfunctional patterns of society disturbs the linearity. Then individuals react in deviant manners to bring about a change. "...the strain leads to the emergence of specific new patterns of behaviour of... individuals... who choose...social change ...to reduce frustrations..." (Coser 204).

The characters' resilience towards the situation is well written; they accept their faults and wait for the judgment. It is seen that conflict brings about different reactions in each individual in society. Mo Yan's interplay of three stories in *The Garlic Ballads* also shows different ways of accepting the judgment. It is in people's understanding to take change positively or negatively, it is not similar for everybody. After the arrest, the characters wait for their sentences based on which their life depends.

Gao Yang, during his stay in prison gets reminded of his past- his experience of bullying by the peasants when he was stripped of his position as landlord and his memory of burying his mother instead of cremating according to the rule put up by the Communist Government- it resurfaces, in the prison before he is taken to the trial, he has

nightmares of his mother's death and his subsequent capture by the police officers for burying his mother without permission.

After the riot, when he is taken to trial, he is asked to describe the scenes on the day of riot (28<sup>th</sup> May) when the garlic farmers gathered around the office of the District administrator, shouted slogans and threw garlic bundles at the gate. He recalls how they barged into the compound and demanded to see the officer who \ refused to meet them and how it resulted in the vandalization of the government property. Along with the crowd, Gao Ma, Gao Yang and Fourth Aunt also become participants and are later arrested.

During the trial in the district court, the young prosecutor defends the perpetrators of the Paradise County Garlic Incident, stating that the county's people have full rights to overthrow any government administrator that disregards its citizens or does not work properly, and that the same happened on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1987 when the officials refused to listen to the farmers. After hearing the prosecutor's defense, the judges' verdict is to transfer the district administrator and other officials relating to the garlic incident. Since Gao Ma was seen as the main ringleader who lead the riot and created damage, he is given a short term sentence in a labor-reform camp, along with Gao Yang, Fourth Aunt and a dozen other peasants.

To his surprise, Gao Yang identifies the young prosecutor from the day when he had set out to sell his garlic crop with Fourth Uncle. During the journey, he stops to fetch water in the farm of an old man who in turn was the father of the prosecutor. In a casual conversation with a fellow farmer he reveals his situation of being unable to sell garlic



due to government's heavy taxes and the aftermath of incident. He finds the prosecutor's stand helpful and the verdict also inspires other officials to order a special program for county workers to scrape the rotting garlic and help with economy.

Gao Yang's family visit him in jail, to let him know of the situation outside. His wife says, "I sold the garlic. Don't worry about us. We've broken the law and we'll take our punishment, whatever it is. I can manage things at home, and Xinghua can watch the baby for me. The neighbors have been so helpful..." (Yan GB 258).

Sabina Knight in her work, "The Realpolitik of Mo Yan's Fiction" exclaims that the characters have freedom to take any decision based on their moral dilemma and actions:

The power of Mo Yan's work lies not in his chronicling of events but in his probing stories of individual resilience in the face of the relentless forces of instinct, sexuality, and history.... Yet 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 (Duran and Huang 98-99).

Based on this comment, the portrayal of Gao Yang and Gao Ma are designed in such a way so as to be resilient, and to live on their own. Though Gao Yang wishes and hopes for a new beginning after the completion of sentence, Gao Ma has nothing left to be hopeful of after the death Jinju. He blames himself for not protecting her and the unborn child. During the trial, Gao Ma blames the corrupt officials for the wrong usage of socialism and disrupting the faith of people. He then warns the officials, saying, "shoot me or cut off my head or bury me alive, it doesn't matter to me. I hate corrupt officials

like you who, under the guise of unfurling the flag of the Communist Party, destroy its reputation. I hate you all!” (Yan GB 242).

In spite of Gao Ma’s role as a war veteran, he loses any hope to survive after Jinju’s death. When he hears of Fang brother’s act of performing an underground marriage of Jinju, unable to bear the anger he tries to jump over the wall but gets shot and with a faint voice saying “Jinju” dies.

The novel *Big Breasts Wide Hips* finds its critical appreciation in its retelling of China’s history of first half of twentieth century, starting from the Boxer Rebellion to the end of Cultural Revolution. The novel’s plot follows the Shangguan family’s lives, portraying fifty years of the evidence of social change. The changes in the political, economical and cultural settings of China can be seen throughout in the novel. The characters’ acceptance of changing situations either favorable or unfavorable to them is also shown.

Mother’s statement on change when her First Daughter sees her mother’s difference in attitude towards life:

“ Yes, I’ve changed,” Mother said, “and yet I’m still the same. Over the years, members of the Shangguan family have died off like stalks of chives, and others have been born to take their place. Where there’s life, death is inevitable. Dying’s easy; it’s living hat’s hard. The harder it gets, the stronger the will to live. And the greater the fear of death, the greater the struggle to keep on living.” ( Yan BBWH 379)

Living for up to six decades and looking at a transformed China, Mother has seen all, from her childhood to the parenting of her grandchildren. She has seen the worse days,

including a life of poverty and being stranded in cold and hunger. It is this destituteness of situation that invokes strength to bear through adversities. The members of Shangguan family die in the wave of political changes in China due to war, Cultural Revolution, Great Leap Forward. After seeing the rise and fall of her descendents, she too dies under the care of her only son, Jintong.

Shangguan Lu, the lone matriarch in the developing and challenging systems of China during early 20<sup>th</sup> Century is portrayed as a dominant leader, a strong willed woman who has nine children from different partners due to the impotency of her husband, with the children growing up having different ideologies as the country changes. Each daughter marries a person belonging to a political affirmation for their future benefit and power over Northeast Gaomi Township, which does not last long. In order to save themselves and their ideologies, they leave their children under the care of Mother.

Mo Yan's novels, *Red Sorghum* and *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, are not just narrating history but also making the readers re-live the tale, showing how younger generations fail to live up to their predecessors' expectation.

Chengzhou He in his paper titled "Rural Chineseness, Mo Yan's Work, and World Literature" has a similar idea on "...a historical degeneration in which each generation fails to live up to the preceding one" (Duran and Huang 86). He also says that the eras from the early 1900s of Boxer Rebellion to the falling of Chinese economy of 1990s "the novel portrays the gradual breakdown of traditional rural life in China through a family story" (Ibid). This breakdown that Chengzhou He talks about is seen in the episodic narration of Jintong.

During the famine there is an announcement of twelfth-month gruel for which the villagers are supposed to walk miles to get food. Mother along with her children leaves the house to journey in the rough cold weather to get food for her children, seeing her other villagers too start the journey headed by Third Master Fan. They become destitute with no home and nothing to eat. With little motivation and lots of struggle, they reach the place where gruel is being distributed. The villager's journey is caused by the shortcomings of the government, making them impoverished with no house, no money and nothing to sell.

Mother draws attention away from the failed patriarchy and “the strength of women characters is what gives hopes to the author's gloomy vision” (Yan BBWH xi). The boldness of Mother is immense when her children were taken for questioning; she puts herself before them screaming not to touch them. Her resilience is finely brought out by Shelley Chan who exclaims, “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” (Chan 130).

Along with Mother, Shangguan Pandi (fifth daughter) is also seen as strong enough to hold the Mayor's position under the Communist rule among several other official positions during the People's Republic. She also changes her name to Ma Ruilian (due to Russian influence). All the daughters of Shangguan family inherit beauty quotient from Mother but Shangguan Pandi inherits courage and strength from her mother.

Unlike other narrators, Shangguan Jintong has a tragic flaw of excessive fondness towards breasts and his mother's breast milk. Breast milk was his only food until he aged

seven, but he yearns for it much later too. Mo Yan hand the narrative to Shangguan Jintong, who enjoys whims and fancies when the whole village nominates him to be the “snow prince”. In one moment, Jintong seem to be enjoying the perks of life and in the next moment he is arrested and thrashed for being the relative of a government official. Mother and other family members are taken on a procession during the Cultural Revolution. As a punishment, Jintong has to serve few years in an internal exile.

In order to curb problems arising in every group of society, organizations are formed to reduce conflicts in every industry. *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* has a mention of the People’s Commune, where the work extraction is based on the revolutionary and counter- revolutionary tags. During the Cultural Revolution, Shangguan family members are also forced to take part in the parade. After the loss of all her daughters in war, Mother parts from her son who is charged with murder by the County Security Bureau tipped by the officials of Dalan Revolutionary Committee.

The whole act of Jintong’s imprisonment comes so quickly, that they do not give him a chance to plead his innocence. A diary kept by Qiao Qisha- former colleague who worked with Jintong reveals:

“... the illicit relationship between Shangguan Jintong and Long Qingping . As a result, the County Security Bureau arrested Jintong on charges of murder and necrophilia and, even before the investigation began, sentenced him to fifteen years in prison, which he began to serve at a labor reform camp on the edge of Yellow Sea”. (Yan BBWH 455)

Like the characters, Gao Yang and Gao Ma, Shangguan Jintong also is sent to a labor camp to finish his term. After fifteen years in the reform camp, he finds it difficult

in facing the real world. Jintong searches for his family, with the help of Parrot Han (son to Shangguan Laidi and Birdman Han) and Sha Zaohua (daughter of Shangguan Laidi and Sha Yueliang). He finds his mother and gets a job. Still leading a meaningless life, he tries to adjust in this new modern China developing in technology and infrastructure. The end of the novel signifies a new beginning when Jintong takes his blind ailing mother to church, where he meets a parishioner who looks exactly the same as him. He was Pastor Malory's (Shangguan Jintong's biological father) other son. He says: "“ I have been waiting for you for a very long time, my brother!” ” (Yan BBWH 532).

Though the novel *Big Breasts Wide Hips*, is a celebration of matriarchal prowess, it is also a bold take on China's reformed past. Giving a review of the novel, Li Miao Lovett writes:

Toward the novel's end, the pace of change only accelerates... Jintong, a failed male heir, must learn to survive in a reformed, yet ruthless China. His problems could be blamed on character defects, or in grander terms, on the repercussions of war and patriarchy.

...Although known for his satire, Mo Yan shows a remarkable tenderness toward his main characters, and fallible as they may be, he celebrates their resilience” (Lovett).

*Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* deals with the latter half of the twentieth century. The changes that happened in China during the 1950s to 2000s are all recorded in the novel. The central theme, change or transfiguration of soul, is linked to the reformation of a peasant who is unfairly shot dead, enters hell and after accepting the scariest punishment from Lord Yama seeks justice and requests to be sent to earth. Lord Yama sends him as a domestic animal. Like this, the soul of the peasant, Ximen Nao, is

reborn five times until his desire to seek revenge on his killer calms down and he accepts the way of life. At last he is sent as a human child named Lan Qiansui who has an uncanny memory of all the past lives.

In the previous chapter, based on conflict and resilience, the novel's conflicting areas were pointed and the characters' resilience towards the conflict and their ways to tackle the same were revealed. Though without conflict there is no change and without developmental change there is no equilibrium in society, as the novel is about 50 years of China's political, cultural and economical dimension the changes come in the hands of changing reforms directed by the government under Chairman Mao Zedong. The Cultural Revolution lasting ten years (1966-1976) made various changes in Chinese society, from the base of agriculture to the highest order of governance.

Due to the set up of People's Commune in Gaomi Township of Shandong Province, the landlords are instructed to join the merger of their agricultural lands as a whole, so that the harvest was also divided equally amongst all of the villagers irrespective of their social rank. This policy is badly taken by the landlords who refuse to merge their land. As a result, the commune forcibly divides the lands and the landlords are either killed or made to work in their own farms. Though the idea of People's Commune is well received in the initial years, after the outbreak of famine with the coffers of the commune providing for nothing, the result is the poor peasants' attack on the independent farmers for their supply.

Ximen Nao, the protagonist of the novel wishes to be an independent farmer but is shot dead by the peasants to usurp his properties. He defends his innocence to Lord Yama

who sends him back to Earth, not to seek his revenge but to build tolerance in him. As each incarnation takes place, Ximen Nao's anger to seek revenge subsides and makes him to accept things that come in the way of life. Mo Yan's characterization of the protagonist is to make them believe in the individual self, as said by Sabina Knight, "He (Mo Yan) believes in individual conscience even as he takes seriously the contradictions within individuals.... Yet the characters who might qualify as heroes evince an almost libertarian allegiance to personal freedom." (Duran and Huang 103).

The shift of governance from the beginning of the Cultural Revolution till the death of Chairman Mao left a traumatic memory in the citizens who were victimized and also in the perpetrators. Yuhua Huang cites Liu Zaifu calling Mo Yan to be the "Forerunner of life" (Ibid 116) as his writings were away from the traditional settings of Socio-Realistic Techniques. In the novel *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, the transition from one political era to the other is shown with the death of Ximen Nao's incarnation.

When Ximen Nao, the landlord dies, the peasants are given the top order after which the People's Commune is formed gradually. The death of Ximen Donkey happens when the famine strikes, as the peasants attack the house of the only independent farmer in whole of Shandong District- Lan Lian or Blue face. After the People's Commune, the end of Cultural Revolution is noted, which also marks the righteous death of Ximen Ox- the only friend to Lan Lian. He considers him to be a family member, as Ximen Ox helps Lan Lian till the land left by his master, Ximen Nao. Both followed the idea of independent farming, and had nothing against the ideologies of Commune people.



Lan Lian gives up on his family, letting them go and allows them to follow the society; they choose Commune over him, after which he is given only 1.6 acres of land for cultivation. He surpasses every adverse situation created by Lan Jinlong (son of Ximen Nao), who tries every ounce of strength to make him join the commune. But after the death of Chairman Mao, as every community is disbanded, letting people go astray they do not have any other means to live on.

After the Commune, the prime member- Ximen Jinlong- wanted to convert the Ximen compound into a museum on Cultural Revolution theme, wherein the Independent Farming Museum would house wax statues of Lan Lian and his companion animals- Ximen Donkey, Ox. He even plans to construct an amusement park, all on the budget of foreign investors.

The elders die fighting for a change, but the children dream of a materialistic life. Jinlong discusses the plan of redevelopment with Lan Jiefang (son of Lan Lian), who narrates the parts other than Ximen Nao's soul. Jonathan Spence in a review on the novel says that the change comes with the shift of one era to the other:

“...on to the steady erosion of the collective economy in the new era of largely unregulated “capitalism with socialist characteristics.” At the novel's close, some of the characters are driving BMWs, while others are dyeing their hair blond and wearing gold rings in their noses.( Spence).

The news of Lan Jiefang having an affair with Pang Chunmiao is taken seriously after which his wife dies soon after Jiefang's mother's death. During the funeral, Hong Taiyue and Ximen Jinlong converse on Ximen Village Official post where Jinlong says,

“... Our society has developed along with the changing times, and everything I’ve done has befitted those changes. Tell me the truth, Uncle, over the past decade have the people’s lives gotten better or haven’t they?...” (Yan LDWMO 499). While talking, Hong Taiyue jumps and takes hold of Jinlong in his arms, suddenly exploding into smoke and fire as their body pieces fling in to the foul air. The last words of Hong Taiyue are, “unite for tomorrow” (Ibid).

The transfiguration of Ximen Nao’s soul is in last stage when he visits hell. Lord Yama still finds traces of revenge in Ximen Nao, so he sends him again in a form which is closest to human- in the form of Monkey-after which he is to be reborn as the “millennium boy”. Lord Yama says, “ “ There are too many, far too many, people in the world in whose hearts hatred resides” ”(Ibid 510) Mo Yan also writes about the cyclic nature of life, “Everything that comes from the earth shall return to it.” (Ibid 511). At last, Ximen Nao is reborn as Lan Qian Sui, son of Lan Keifang who has a story to tell about his past life.

The novel *Frog* has an immense element of change happening in the society with pregnant women. Dealing with the sensitive issue of One-Child Policy, this novel has suffered much criticism and backlashes but in the narration of Mo Yan, it only concentrates on the government trying to maintain the rule of one-child. It also presents alternates that the developing China fails to accept. As the traditional Chinese believed in producing as many children one could in order to strengthen the country, when the country asks its citizens to control the growing population by curbing the birth rates, they are unable to accept it easily. This creates adverse effects on expectant mothers who have to terminate their pregnancies according to the regulations of the government.

The protagonist of the novel-Gugu- is a village obstetrician, who has studied modern birthing technology, uses her knowledge to conduct deliveries across the Gaomi Township. But she is made to terminate pregnancies due to the Communist Government's rule of one child policy. Her change from a life terminator to a person of regret, repenting for her wrongdoing is seen. The narration of her glorious life is done by her nephew- Xiao Pao/ Tadpole, who idolizes her and plans to write a play based on her life. The series of letters contain snippets of Gugu's life addressed to Professor Sugitani Akihito.

The process of change is seen with the transition of birthing module from the traditional mid-wife system to a safe delivery through obstetrics learned by Gugu. The pregnant women ditch the old child-birthing methods and torturing mid-wives who used rolling pins and unhygienic methods to deliver the kids and were demanded high prices for the same. Later, during the famine of 1962, there was not a single birth recorded, the famine caused deterioration of health in people. Mo Yan writes of the change came through the plantation of Sweet-Potato crops:

“ In the early winter of 1963, Northeast Gaomi Township experienced the first baby boom in the history of the People's Republic. Two Thousand Eight Hundred Sixty-eight babies were born that year in the fifty-two villages incorporated in our commune alone. According to Gugu, this crop of babies was known as ‘the sweet-potato kids’ .(Yan FROG 60)

During the Cultural Revolution, a rule is formed that a peasant family must have only one child. This rule is evidently followed by the Planning Committee members,

which Gugu heads along with Little Lion. The traumatic experience of terminating pregnancy falls hard on Gugu's life; she wants to be a faithful member of Communist Party for which she tries following every task inspiring others, but being a good Party Cadre at the cost terminating others' lives leaves a huge hollow in her soul. She finally gives in saying she cannot perform anymore of this horrifying crime. She blames herself as a murderer of over two thousand fetuses and claims to remember each of their faces.

Gugu faces a life changing experience when the task of terminating pregnancy replaces the act of delivering a child. She says, "I'll never soil my hands with that atrocious act!...I'd learned enough from delivering all those children to know that a person's core- good or bad- is determined more by nature than nurture. You can criticize hereditary laws all you want, but this is knowledge based on experience." (Ibid 248).

Shelley Chan writes, "although she is worshipped as a child-giving goddess, she also conducts many abortions and is therefore condemned as a baby-killing demon. The internal conflicts experienced by Aunt as both a loving woman and a committed party member result in her marriage, later in her life, to an artisan who is known for making clay dolls."(Chan 198).

Doug Reeler's idea on Transformative Change talks about crisis leading to exploration of new paths in turn which takes to new pattern of change. The Projectable Change comes with a plan making the process of change more stream-lined. In the novel, after the end of the Cultural Revolution, the terminating of pregnancies is stopped and instead caring of the families through governmental program is introduced. Tadpole along with his second wife, Little Lion, visits Sino-American Jiaopao Women and

Children's Hospital whose motto is to provide full care to women from her conception till the delivery of her children. "*We maintain the deepest respect for life beginning at the moment of Conception*" (Yan FROG 255).

On the contrary side of Government's health-care equipment, is the big commercial business of surrogacy in the Township. Tadpole and Little Lion try to become parents on Gugu's request. When they arrive to work on the "Bullfrog Farm", to Tadpole's surprise one of the inmates, Chen Mei, is pregnant with his child. He includes this part of narration as the scripted end to his play, "Frog".

At the end of the novel, Gugu repents for the sin she committed. She marries Hao Dashou –the master clay doll maker, when he saves her from the attacking frogs and she becomes heavily indebted to him. Hao Dashou shows her the way of repentance and the attacking frogs remind her of all the fetuses killed by her. Along with him, she makes clay dolls resembling the dead fetuses and stores them in her house. Also, by selling the dolls at the fertility temple, she hopes to atone for all the sins she has committed. She says, "A sinner cannot and has no right to die. She must live on, to suffer torment, to be like a fish frying in a pan..." (Yan FROG 387). At the end of the play, Gugu is reborn as a new person enquiring about Tadpole's new born baby through surrogacy.

From the changing political scenarios to the amendments of various bills, it is people who are affected much, but they learn to make a living accepting challenges that sometimes make them choose or forced on them. Julia Lovell in her review says, at the end of all the political turmoil China becomes "a country that has lost its way, a land in which a repressive state has rendered individuals incapable of making independent moral

judgments about political, economic and social behavior and in which women continue to suffer at the hands of reckless male politicians and son-fixated husbands.”(Lovell).

Mo Yan highlights the ascending and descending events in life, giving it respect and uses the shift from traditional ideas to modernity very well, making the characters choose their destiny in which they either suffer or come out well. He vouches for the changing time with the experiences from the past. Mo Yan is definitely “a radical artist with a free spirit” (Chan 226) who challenges the tightly knit society of China during 1980s to till date.

Many critics have commented on Mo Yan being a pro communist, mouthpiece of the government, radical artist, but to his defense he always says that a writer speaks through his works. Hence the derivation of the pen name- Mo Yan- from Guan Moye, meaning – “do not speak.” The name was inspired during Cultural Revolution looking at the ideologies followed by the people at that time. The author’s all rounding literary presentation in his works are related to his life directly or by other means, the life-lessons learnt the hard way during the modern Chinese period when it was under Communist reign of Chairman Mao.

The next chapter deals with stylistic approach of the author, who handles technicality of modern literariness and authentic taste of ancient Chinese folktales and myths blending it into the country’s socio-political situation creating a master literary piece.