

CHAPTER - I

BILDUNGSROMAN

I

A novel is 'a sustained story which is not historically true but might very easily be so. The novel has been made the vehicle for satire, for instruction, for political or religious exhortation, for technical information, but these are side issues. It's plain and direct purpose is to amuse by a succession of scenes painted from nature, and by a thread of emotional narrative.'¹

If we trace the development of novel as a form of literature, we see that in some novels a particular pattern is followed, in which the development of the central character from childhood to maturity is followed. This type of the novel is termed as Bildungs roman.

Bildungs roman is "a novel concerning the youthful life and development of a major character. The term Bildungs roman is a combination of German Bildung (formation, development) and French Roman (novel)".² Thus the term Bildungs roman can best be translated as the novel of development or as the novel of growth. In the term itself we can recognize the care of the meaning. It refers to a novel which has as its subject the story of a young man or young woman who goes through the struggles of growing up. In the end, he or she reaches maturity, a point at which he has sufficient understanding of life. Now there is a surity to bring the career

under control, free from the mistakes of past.

This kind of novel has a very strong appeal for readers as the experience is common to us all. The appeal is not only to young people but to everyone, for we are always, all our life long through the process of maturing. We are always learning from experience. We are always seeking to understand life around us. We are always wrestling with problems that affect our destinies.

These novels have a theme of passing from innocence to knowing. The usual sequence is to bring the hero or heroine from birth up through adolescence. But the important point is that the struggle of understanding must be dominant and the movement must be from confusion towards control. In defining the character of the Bildungs roman is the series of ordeals and learning experiences through which the hero passes as if going through initiation rites at the brink of manhood.

In historical terms, one can see that there has been a close relationship between the rise of individualism and the bildungsroman. The popularity of novel form is connected with its serious concern with the daily lives of ordinary people. It is dependent upon general conditions, in the words of Ian Watt." The society must value every individual highly enough to consider him the proper subject of its

literature; and there must be enough variety of belief and action among ordinary people for a detailed account of them to be of interest to the other ordinary people, the readers of the novel."³

Before Reformation, the royal people were the only themes of literature. Common man had no place in it. The society possessed homogeneity of medieval christendom. This picture changed with the Reformation and the rise of national states. In the famous words of Maitland, " for the first time the Absolute State met the Absolute Individual." The structure of the society was transformed as an individual social and economic one, its cause being the development of industrial capitalism. Immediately after the Glorious Revolution, the commercial and industrial classes achieved a greater political and economic power. This power was also reflected in the domain of literature. It began to view the individual, trade, commerce and industry in favour.

The cause of the modern 'Individualism' lies in the rise of modern industrial capitalism and the spread of Protestantism. Now the individual alone was responsible for determining his own social, economic political and religious role. Though the modern novel does have the classic social or moral out look and the philosophic preference for the universal, it is also allied to Realism

and Individualism.

The purpose of a novelist is to give a first measure of reality to his characters and their actions; and to induce in the reader certain life rhythms. Life is a progress through action to knowledge in the end of which we earn some glimpse of its meaning. Time is an important factor in the growth of a character. In the novel, merely chronological succession becomes informed with the operations of cause and effect. "The paradigmatic novel that is performed through time and pre-formed by time is the Bildungsroman".⁴ It is the novel of education in which the process of a young life is projected as the shape that will govern its remaining years.

The Bildungsroman has been defined as the "novel of all-around development of self culture" with "a more or less conscious attempt on the part of the hero to integrate his powers, to cultivate himself by his experience."⁵ The origin of this hero is traced in the hero of the old moral allegories, in the picaresque hero, in the Parzival figure learning slowly through trials and in the Renaissance man bent on exercising to the full his many talents. The Bildungsroman has produced some clearly marked variants. The Entwicklungsroman is a chronicle of a young man's general growth. In the Erziehungsroman, emphasis is given on the young man's training and formal education. The Kunstlerroman

is a tale of the orientation of an artist. The English Bildungsroman has no such broad variations. It is a novel of youth or apprenticeship. It is frequently a Kunstlerroman. Its hero often emerges as an artist, a prose writer like David Copperfield or Ernest Pontifex, a painter like Lawrence's Paul Morel or Maugham's Philip Carey or a poet like Stephen Pedalus. Most such novels depict the struggle of a sensitive artistic child to escape from the misunderstandings and bourgeois attitudes of his family and youthful acquaintances'.⁶

Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre ^{Lehrjahre} was the most familiar model of the Bildungsroman before the later novelists. Wilhelm's object was to seek self-realization in the service of art, to make the German theatre a primary agent of cultural art. This novel will be discussed in detail later, here the main point is that it has established itself in literary history as the prototype of the Bildungsroman. In the nineteenth century French novelists, the work of Stendhal deserves attention. His work had an autobiographical self-consciousness and a sharpened focus on the motivation of the hero. His Vie de Henry Brulard is a detailed account of his own childhood and adolescence with much detachment and objectivity. It has been considered as the only real Bildungsroman of the century in France. Henry is a rebel, a lonely child, sensitive to suffering, aware of social

hypocrisies, who emerges gradually as a wise human syⁿtic. All that matters to him is the larger truth to temperament. A similar temperament dominates the whole dramatic action of The Red and the Black. Julien Sorel, is alienated from his illiterate father. After the experience of adultrous love and the discipline of a provincial seminary, he sets out for Paris to make his debut on the stage of the great world. There he recognizes the weakness and corruption of the society and manipulates them to his own advantage and advancement. He learns the importance of self assertion and self-creation through defiant action and courageous gesture. Julien is the existantialist. To him, life's meaning must lie in the gallant response to the absurd challenge.

The English Bindungsroman differed sharply from its both German and French predecessors. Each of the English Bildungsroman has its own distinctive style and substance, though it has the broad outlines of a typical Bildungsroman plot and principal characteristics of the genre. Its theme is, generally, a typical one. A child of some sensibility grows up to find constraints, social and intellectual upon the free imagination. His family, especially his father, is hostile to his creative instincts and new ideas. It proves antagonistic to his ambitions. His first schooling may be frustrating. Sometimes he, at a quite early age, leaves the repressive atmosphere of home to make his way

independently in the city. He prepares for a career there and has a direct experience of urban life. He is involved in love affairs or sexual encounters. Here his real 'education' begins and he reappraises his values. After painful soul-searching, he decides what sort of accommodation he can make to the modern world. By the time he leaves his adolescence behind and enters maturity. The English Bildungsroman has some principle elements. They are childhood, the conflict of generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-education, alienation, ordeal by love, the search of a vocation and a working philosophy.

Childhood, the psychology of a growing child is an important matter in the writing of a Bildungsroman. To Fielding, Byron, Keats, the young child was more than the small adult. The authors of the Bildungsroman considered that the child was an entity in himself responsive to experiences. They might alter the entire direction of his growing mind. Eventually they may influence his whole maturity for better or for worse. In the words of Keats, "The imagination of a boy is healthy, and the mature imagination of a man is healthy; but there is a space of life between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick sighted...."⁷. The writers thought that childhood makes the instrument, youth tunes the strings, and early manhood

plays the melody.

There is a certain quality of this growing protagonist, he is often orphaned or fatherless like David Copperfield, Philip Carey in Of Human Bondage. If he has a father, he doesn't guide him but mistrusts and seeks to thwart the strongest drives and fondest desires of his son as was the case with Paul Maurel, Stephen Dedalus and Richard Feverel. The loss of the father, either by death or alienation, usually symbolizes or parallels a loss of faith in the values of the hero's home and family. It inevitably leads to the search for a substitute parent or creed. Thus there is a connection in the hero of a Bildungsroman and the hero of romance and classical literature where the fatherless son must make his own way resolutely through the forests of experience.

This journey is in some degree the flight from provinciality. He enters the city in a bewildered state of mind. To him, the city is both the agent of liberation and a source of corruption. It may give the long cherished freedom to the hero, but at the same time it may corrupt him. In the Bildungsroman the city which seems to promise newness and variety, also, often brings a disenchantment. This emotion, this frustration can be, at times, more alarming and decisive than any dissatisfaction with the narrowness of provincial life.

One of the recurring themes of the early English Bildungsroman was the making of a gentleman. But in the struggle for survival in a modern city, good manners are seldom valued. Now to make good is to make money. If the hero's financial sources are limited, he is less respected. Money, therefore, assumes a new and pervasive importance in the Bildungsroman. Thus Stephen Pedalus makes efforts to resist the menace of a real poverty. The Morel family in Sons and Lovers is worried by money problems. Money is more desirable than health or reputation to Mr. Overton, the narrator of The Way of All Flesh.

The hero of the Bildungsroman has to undergo many tests before he achieves maturity. He goes through trials by parents, by money, by the city. He has to undergo further testing before his initiation is completed. The central conflict in each Bildungsroman is different as its origin is totally personal. The problem lies in the hero himself. Each of these young men experiences moments of insight, epiphanies, spots of time. It is then that the fog of delusion is cleared, and the reality breaks through. Then each is guided by a sense of duty to the self and to others. But, then, even when he sees his errors, it is not sure that he will be granted joy and solution of his problems. Some of these novels end with the death of the protagonist. Some leave us speculating on the defeat of all positive emotion. Some conclude with an open question about the

hero's final choice. Only a few like David Copperfield, Of Human Bondage and The Way of All Flesh reach a happy ending. But the readers found this happy ending somewhat unsatisfactory. Thus there is a difficulty in ending the Bildungsroman with conviction and decision.

The relation between a Bildungsroman and the author's own life is worth consideration. The typical novel of youth is strongly autobiographical so the author's experience can intrude the novel at any time. Of course, there are degrees of identification and detachments between the author and the hero. Maugham, in his comments on Of Human Bondage wrote, "It is not an autobiography, but an autobiographical novel; fact and fiction are inextricably mingled; the emotions are my own but not all the incidents are related as they happened and some of them are transferred to my hero not from my own life but from that of persons with whom I was intimate." There are certain differences between the autobiographical novel and the autobiography. Usually the autobiographical novelist is a young man. He is nearing initiation into adult life. But at the same time he is quite aware of the pains of adolescence. The autobiographer is often an self-conscious old man. As he can describe his experience only from his own point of view, his self-portrait is partial. The autobiographical novelist is freer to reveal or conceal his past. In this way he has a distinct advantage over the autobiographer. But as a

novelist, it is his special responsibility to make his novel aesthetically independent of himself. Both the strength and the weakness of the Bildungsroman lie in its autobiographical element. We must know something of the author's life if we are to understand and appraise his book.

In the light of all these view points, some examples of Bildungsroman are discussed in the following section.

II

The thematic pattern of the Bildungsroman itself is very old. For example, the maturing of Telemachus is an important part of Homer's Odygsey. But the pattern does not turn up often until the Romantic Movement, when self-conscious became common practice in literature.

Goethe with his Wilhem Meister's Lehrsche (1795-6) set the pattern of the Bildungsroman. It is the story of a quest for wisdom and experience. Goethe's deepest preoccupations are reflected in it. In the first draft of the novel, the theatre signifies the fleeing of a perceptive soul from the drab prosaic confinement of the bourgeois world. In the latter version, the issue of life and the theatre is enlarged to include the humanistic education of the whole person ~~to include the humanistic education of the whole person within the world of the bourgeois society.~~ The hero knows well that only the theatre can completely develop his human capabilities. He places the individual and the fulfilment and development of his personality, in the very centre of the novel. Here Goethe places before us the attainment of the completely developed personality as a concrete experience of concrete people in concrete circumstances, a fulfilment nearly dreamed of by the Renaissance and Enlightenment in a bourgeois society bound always to remain utopian.

Thomas Mann's Tonio Kroger and The Magic Mountain belong to the traditionally German genre of the Bildungsroman. Tonio Kroger is the story of a poet, his upbringing. From childhood, Tonio Kroger has been alienated from his environment. Here Mann subscribes to the notion propounded by the Romantics that the artist is a chosen one. Tonio Kroger loves his friend Hans Hansen, who is poles apart from him. He loved Ingebard Holm but they could not communicate. Sudden deaths in the family frustrate him. He leaves his native town and leads an abnormal and undisciplined life. He gives his life to art. He thinks that an artist is not a human being but something different, singular and strange. His friend Elisaveta asserts that he is simply a bourgeois^e who has gone astray. He admits that the source of his inspiration will always be what is human, alive and commonplace. This is what will make him a real poet, not merely a literary man.

In writing The Magic Mountain, the model before Thomas Mann was Goethe's Wilhem Meister's Lehrjahre. Hans Castrop, the protagonist, arrives at an awareness of his problems on a level and in depth far surpassing the average person. Nothing in him augured genius. His Achilles' heel was an early sympathy for death. At one particular time, when opportunity presented its self, he said "Yes" to death, to illness, to love, to freedom. In his case, disease was to

heighten the powers of his intellect. At the beginning of the book Castrop expresses himself hesitantly, imperfectly. Earlier, in this novel love is connoted with lust and decay, and was a blood brother of disease and death. Later it signifies a constructive force, a spiritual power - the opposite of death. Finally Castrop departs from the Mountain and goes to the battlefield. Here we see the evolution of the character of Castrop. The action centres around the spiritual evaluation of Castrop.

David Copperfield is Charles Dickens' Bildungsroman. It is unique among his novels for its deeply personal tone. It is the history of Dickens' emotional life. David had to undergo many tragic situations since the death of his father. His mother married a wicked person, Mr. Murdstone who, at first puts David in a school run by a ferocious sadist and then to work in a ware house after his mother's death. Somehow he manages to go to his aunt and with her help joins a good school. After completing the education he decides to become a lawyer. Misfortunes follow him everywhere. Then, at the age of twentyone he marries Dora and begins a second career that of a fiction writer. After the death of his wife and son, he spends three years in the continent to forget this tragedy. There he meets a proper girl, Agnes and marries her. This entire story is told by David, a grown up man and a successful novelist. In this novel the development of David's personality is pictured and along with it

we also have a social picture. There is indictment of bad schools. His interest in the enlightened treatment of the lunatic is displayed. The problem of prostitution is dealt with. The law and lawyers have their share of satire. With all these aspects encircling David, he develops himself. An orphan, with his hard work and sincerity, becomes a famous novelist. We can call David Copperfield the first important English Bildungsroman though before it Tom Jones and Tristram Shandy were in the same vein. Here Dickens gives the message which can help everyone who wants to grow, to develop, that is, "Have confidence, be cheerful; the world belongs to those who set out to conquer it with a sure heart and a good humour "

The Ordeal of Richard Feverel by George Meredith is another novel in this tradition. Richard is not a traditional hero, he is an egoist of a romantic nature. His father, Sir Austin, also is an egoist, with a scientific nature, wants to shape Richard's life. Sir Austin has determined to play providence in his son's life. The son accepts it, submits to it in a bironic-chivalric-fatalistic manner. This clash of personalities brings tragedy in its wake. Here we see Richard working against nature and natural will. Both the women whose admiration Richard accepts as a matter of course - his bride Lucy and his cousin Clare - perish as a result of his inability to throw off the heroic pose.

Similarly Sir Austin ^htwarts nature by first imposing a System upon his son and then imposing a mask upon his own perpetual feelings. Here we can trace the formation of Richard's character. Never, before Meredith, was the effect of the society on the protagonist so clearly portrayed. The society and its rules separate each individual from the other. Man also wears a psychological mask which keeps him from understanding himself. Here all these aspects are portrayed by Meredith in this novel of development.

A contemporary of Charles Dickens, Thackeray also wrote a Bildungsroman, The History of Pendennis : His Fortunes and Misfortunes, His Friends and His Greatest Enemy. The novel opens with young Arthur Pendennis' getting engaged to an actress older than himself. Here starts the painting of a truthful portrait of a typical young man of good heart but healthy appetite somewhat in a manner of Fielding's Tom Jones. He proceeds in life, falls in and out of love many times, commits blunders and in the end we see Arthur Pendennis or Pen as a prosperous businessman, a successful writer and a Member of Parliament. Thackeray says goodbye to his hero with the words :

"..... knowing how mean the best of us, let us give a hand of charity to Arthur Pendennis, with all his faults and shortcomings, who does not claim to be a hero but only a man and a brother."

Few writers have so thorough exposed the shams, pretences, snobberies and hypocrisies that beset the career of a young man in the materialistic society.

Maughm's Of Human Bondage is purely in the tradition of Bildungsroman. Here we see Philip Carey, as a young man, through the storms and stress of youth, adolescence and early manhood into a reasoned and mature outlook on life. He is presented as a person with "two strikes" against him from the start, for he is both an orphan and a cripple. These two forces dominate his life. He realizes very early the negative forces that are found in the world and is accustomed to them long before most boys ever feel them. He had some compensating factors also. He is a very intelligent person and he is talented in the world of art. These virtues carry him over the hardest part of life when he is penniless and nearly defeated in the life's struggle for existence. In his relations with Milfred Rogers, we have a startling view of his obsession which can dominate a person. We call it passion, not love. Love is made of finer stuff and passion is coarse, brutal and frustrating. In the end he finds Sally, his real partner. When he asks her for marriage, all the frustration of the past life is wiped away by her answer, : "There is no one else I would marry " Life has been cruel to him at times but it has been most generous at other times. The past has come to an end and the the future is just beginning.

Samuel Butler's The Way of All Flesh indicated a new iconoclastic spirit. Butler's aim in writing this novel was to extricate himself from his age - the Victorian age. The work was intended as an attack upon Victorianism. In this novel, the developing Earnest Pontifex and his older cynical patron Overton are presented. The novel is an attack upon the various hypocritical masks worn by the Victorians. "If people would dare to speak to one another unreservedly," reflects Earnest, "there would be a good deal less sorrow in the world a hundred years hence." Butler intended his hero to defy the laws of environment and hereditary determinism and settle down to, "a quiet, unobtrusive life of self-indulgence." But the social and physical laws operating against the hero - the economic necessity, the workings of the unconscious sexual impulses - work against the belief in vitalism. Here Earnest seems predestined to become Overton. The development of Earnest is traced with the awareness of the society. The novel is nostalgic. Earnest is pleased to see himself having turned out the best. The Way of All Flesh is undeniably an important document in the emergence of modern sensibility.

Look Homeward, Angel, by Woolf is almost a classic example of the Bildungsroman. He recognized that the novel of development was actually another form of the journey novel - with life as the journey and a certain

psychological geography as the ground to be covered. He recognized, too, the sense of quest in the reaching out toward maturity. Look Homeward, Angel contains all the experiences that the apprentice hero usually passes through, except the religious ordeal. The story presents the struggle of Eugene Gant, to free himself from his environment and particularly to break free from a possessive mother. He passes through common childhood experiences, in conflict with his brothers and sisters. He opens up his imagination through the world of books. He develops sexual curiosity. He reaches out for wider horizons under the guidance of sympathetic teachers in school. He gets his first job. He finds new intellectual freedom and bewilderment in College. He undergoes sexual initiation. He is introduced to alcohol. He falls in love and endures loss of love. He makes the break from love and as the book comes to a close he reaches an interpretation of life. He finds a way of life that he can follow. This novel is one of the great examples of the Bildungsroman.

There are various novels written in the vein of the Bildungsroman. Here, the aim of this thesis is to study thoroughly two novels of this type, the first of them being D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers and the second James Joyce's 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.'

