

CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSION

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The first three decades of the twentieth century English novel were dominated by the Modernist novelists. They were called the first generation of the novelists. The second generation of the novelists included Graham Greene, Henry Green, Evelyn Waugh, Anthony Powell, C.P. Snow and many others. These novelists did not follow the technique of novel writing practised by their Modernist predecessors. They turned instead to the nineteenth century novel.

The Modernist novel was the novel of sensibility and subjectivity. They experimented in terms of plot and characterization. The novelists of the second generation turned to the traditional plot construction and characterization.

The Modernist novelists followed the symbolist aesthetics which emphasized myth, symbol, abstraction, angle of vision, point of view, stream of consciousness. Their intention was mainly impressionistic. The novelists of the second generation followed the aesthetics of realism which emphasized plot, character, setting, theme, denouement and discovery.

There was a marked difference in the situation of Modernist novelists and their successors. The Modernist

novelists were brought up in the late Victorian period, the period comparatively peaceful and stable. They were having the memory of a settled civilization, but with the World War-I the settled civilization shattered; and the 'tower' began to lean. Though they were conscious of the 'leaning tower', they felt it firm beneath. They have had the self-confidence that came from the 'knowledge of a settled civilization'. They believed in the mind's ability to make the world respond to its desires, and could make a new structure from those shards. Unlike modernists their successors were brought up in a different situation. They were matured during the First World War and its aftermath. They had to work under the influence of the change and the threat of war. They did not and could not have the sense and experience of a settled civilization. The difference in the situation made the modernist aesthetics unavailable to the writers of the second generation. These novelists shared a sense of the soul's inability to reshape the world that distinguished them from the modernists. Their novels cannot offer the modernist prospect of unifying the world's fragments. The absence of that unification suggests a crucial difference between modernists and their successors.

For George Lukacs the novel is built upon the irrevocable split between subjective consciousness and the objective world. E.M.Forster thinks that the traditional

novel is built around the difference between the life in time and life by values. But with Henry James, the novel began to deal with 'the adventure of interiority' in a way that subordinated the world to the soul.

Roman Jakobson argues that realistic prose fiction is largely metonymic. The narrative is forwarded by contiguity and thus suggests an entire world. But a different law that of metaphor governs poetry which works through similarity. Malcolm Bradbury argues that Modernism relies upon the metaphor, and follows the logic of metaphor and symbol. David Lodge thinks that Modernism's reliance upon metaphor extends to the novel.

Like <sup>the</sup> modernists, the second generation novelists were also acutely 'tower concious' and concious of their background which shaped their vision. And though concious of the distortions they can do nothing about them. They were instead filled with sense of their own impotence before history, of their inability to control their own circumstances, that seems the exact opposite of the confidence enjoyed by the Modernists.

The Modernists made detailed 'explorations of their characters' interior lives; an exploration the terms of which differ from those of their predecessors. They used stream of consciousness technique, a new concept of time, a

new methodology, new inventions of psychology, myth, abstraction, point of view, symbols, images, metaphors at random and forsaken conventional plot, characterization, linear logic of story and history. The second generation novelists renounced newly won freedom of novel writing and returned to the linear logic inherited from story and history as if life were indeed 'series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged' with which Virginia Woolf said modern fiction would not be concerned. They do not emphasize the soul and interior life at the expense of the external world. Their theme is instead the failure to achieve satisfactory relationship between individual consciousness and objective reality in society and with an art suspicious of the values, the relevance and even the existence of the interior life in modern age.

Wyndham Lewis thinks that the modern civilisation which has made men into things, requires that a writer should treat his characters not subjectively but objectively through their machine-like actions. In the same way the characteristic art of that civilization must of necessity be comic. Lewis's concept of comic, Michael Gora <sup>x</sup> assets, is applicable to Powell's art. G.U.Ellis points out that Powell maintains a 'complete objectively of approach to his characters which allows him to describe a series of alternate forms of experience, none of which is more

preferable than any other, one moment leading into another, and another, a 'series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged'. Powell maintains throughout his career his commitment to the point of view of development to which the life by values is relevant only insofar as it is contingent upon and conditioned by the revelation of time itself. For him truth is unveiled by Time and not by soul. He cares only for the life in time, for the world and not for the soul.

After producing five novels in 1930s, Powell produced twelve volume novel A Dance To The Music of Time between 1951 and 1975. It is built into four trilogies; each of them by covering a different phase in the life of the narrator Jenkins, describes satirically the middle class English society between two great Wars.

The first trilogy Spring comprising A Question of Uprising (1951), A Buyer's Market (1952) and The Acceptance World (1955) covers the formative years of Jenkin's adolescence and his young manhood. We see him first in the year 1921 at his public school, we follow him to Oxford and then into the fashionable bohemian London of the late twenties, to a variety of parties and steadily widening his circle of acquaintances, culminating in his first serious love affair with Jean Duport.

A Question of Upbringing selectively and metonymically chronicles the degenerating middle class English society and its liberated and sexual behaviour during the twenties. It also portrays the public school life and the university life where the degeneration had already started and high values had begun to degenerate. It also looks into the diminishing and disintegrating aristocratic world after the First World War and describes the business activities in 1920s. It portrays the circle of four adolescents - Peter Templer, Charles Stringham, Nicholas Jenkins and Kenneth Widmerpool, going through many incidences and living at many places, burgeoning into youth by the end of the volume. In this opening book Powell has laid the foundation of the great edifice.

Powell uses the first person narrative method, and does not present or describe the stream of conscious of his characters like the modernists. Jenkins is the narrator and at the same time central figure of the novel. He selectively and objectively describes the incidents, and thus chronicles the middleclass English society between the two great wars.

In narrating the story Powell mainly relies upon Jenkins's memory and reminiscences. But Time and memory are not philosophical problems to him like modernists. He lacks that modernist confidence in the soul's ability to reshape

the world. He wants only to comprehend the objective world whose operations seem incomprehensible. He uses memory only to suggest the pattern to Jenkins's experience, which lies in the objective world itself. Jenkins, unlike his modernist counterparts, is less introspective. He does not explore the inner world of himself, on the contrary, he guards much of his private experiences, even his childhood memories are mostly of other people. His gaze is always directed outward.

Powell does, like a modernist build his work upon a metaphor. He has used the image of Poussin's painting of Seasons near the beginning of the novel not to circumvent, like modernists the linear logic taken from story or history, but rather to understand the operations of times' inescapable linearity.

A Buyer's Market, the second book of the novel, describes selectively the world of fashionable and bohemian middle class English society late in 1920s when the traditional social and moral patterns of English life have been shaken badly by the First World War and outrageous behaviour was cultivated for its own sake.

Jenkins after completing upbringing, moves into the fashionable, bohemian artistic and aristocratic London society late in 1920, to a variety of parties, steadily widening circle of his acquaintances. Parties are the

places of offering. The conscious choice begins in this volume. James Tucker thinks that Jenkins is not at parties, he is at dance in this book. Socializing has him in thrall. Jenkins attends four parties in this book and notes social comedown. The book is highly selective reporting of life in a realistic way. Powell's intention is naturalistic and not impressionistic like the modernists. But his naturalism is different from that of Zola and Gising.

By employing varied narrative point, Powell tides over the inherent limitations of the first person narrative technique. Though the novel chronicles the period of over fifty years and moves forward in time; it does not simply follow the chronological order as eighteenth and nineteenth century well plotted traditional novel. Powell uses in plot construction some characteristic modernist devices like time-shift and memory. He is not methodically and technically modernist in matters of plot construction. He only frees plot from cumbersome chronological order. So far as plot is concerned, A Buyer's Market falls between well plotted traditional novel and modernist stream of consciousness novel. In characterization, Powell differs from the modernist novelists. Most of his characters are types and presented objectively through their outward appearances and 'machine like actions'. Templer and Stringham are representatives of the middle class English society. They

are types in social comedy. Only Widmerpool is fully drawn individualized character in traditional way. Jenkins is a detached observer of the social comedy.

Most of the action of the book takes place in living rooms or at parties. It is the symbol of impotence. Only Widmerpool has will, the rest are virtually impotent. In Powell's comedy there is general awareness of the sadness of life, an awareness to which his characters except Jenkins remain totally blind. They have no will and executive power to assert, but they are men and women to whom things happen. They lack the modernist confidence in confronting a situation and ordering it to fit their own desires. Jenkins's every statement is tentative.

The Acceptance World is set in the period of the Great Depression of 1931-32. The title of the book is derived from an expression used to describe Widmerpool's new job as a bill-broker, working for credit houses which "accept" debts owed to business. This technical use of the phrase also covers the fact that the main characters of the book, now in their middle or late twenties find themselves "accepting" what life offers to people of their particular character and circumstances. It suggests what all characters are doing not only in business, in love, art, religion, philosophy, politics, in fact in all human activities. The whole world

is the Acceptance World as one approaches thirty; when at least some illusion discarded. Against this background, the narrator Jenkins enacts his love affair with Jean.

James Tucker thinks that The Acceptance World is a very much political book. St. John Clarke and Quiggin have a symbolic significance. They are butts here. Clarke's dismissal of Mark Members seems to Jenkins as a landmark in the general disintegration of the society in its traditional form.

At the end of the book grotesque and plodding Widmerpool succeeds by putting, charming and intelligent but drunken Straingham, to bed. This suggests to Jenkins social upheaval; a cosmic change in life's system.

In this way Anthony Powell's first trilogy Spring marks an important deviation from the modernist novel and paves a way to the post modernist novel that was taking shape during the sixties.