

CHAPTER IV.

CONCLUSION

1911

After the Second World War a new generation of writers emerged to which John Updike belongs. He wrote regularly for The New Yorker in which a number of other American writers such as J.D. Salinger, Mary McCarthy, Frank O'Connor, Saul Bellow, Eudora Welty and Powers wrote regularly. The New Yorker stories are characterized by brief reportorial anecdote and autobiographical reminiscence. Updike's stories were first published in The New Yorker,

In novels and his short stories Updike has always tried to portray the common middle-class suburban society. Olinger a fictional New England town resembles his native town Shillington. Critics have always praised his ability in making the town seem real. From his very first short story "Friends from Philadelphia" he has been dealing with the same common man and his problems. The names are different, the situations differ but it is the same common man. His characters grow up in suburban atmosphere and complete the routine education. They have meagre ambitions and they stick to them. They are not men of high ambitions. Their marriage is usually a happy one in the beginning. Some years pass happily, they have children and the picture changes. They get bored with

spouses. Then there are quarrels. Nothing rash or sensational occurs. There are no curses, no abuses, no climactic scenes. It all goes on in a middle-class sophisticated style and there enters a mistress. The mistresses in Updike's fiction have always been dominating and sexually powerful. On the other hand the wives are protective and motherly towards their husbands. There are no villains like popular fictions. Only this typical triangle is found. Updike loves this triangle through which he shows the middle-class suburban man and his society. ( ?

On the basis of this thematic study, which has addressed itself to the three major aspects of Updike's stories, namely his portrayal of a suburban American society, his analysis of man-woman relationship in the context of marriage and family and his exploration of the world of innocent children certain tentative conclusions seem to be possible. These conclusions form the core of Updike's fiction.

1) The adults in Updike's fiction are usually lonely. They are at odds with their marriage partners. They are so bored that they want to run away. The failure of their marriages have some genuine reasons. They are bored born out of their differences in opinions and temperaments and sexual frustration. A kind of frustration seems to be prominent in these characters. These characters are in search of pleasure and happiness. They want fulfillment. Out of this desire extra

marital affairs are born. They seek this pleasure in the other men or other women. For a time being they appear to be happy with their extra-marital affairs. Then a sense of guilt brings them back to their senses. The guilty-conscious makes them unhappy. Then they begin to feel that they have deserted their family for no good and that they should go back. Sometimes this guilt produces unexpected result and the character seems to realize something very important which gives him momentary pleasure and fulfillment. The reasons behind their seeking the pleasure outside remains the same. The adults in Updike's fiction often tend to be reminiscent of the joyful moments spent in the past. They find cherished memories of happiness in their treasure of precious moments.

These adults in Updike's fiction are not happy. They are not unhappy either. Sometimes they draw happiness from their miseries. In Updike's words his characters enjoy 'the mixed blessing of marriage'. Happiness and unhappiness, love and pain are blended together in these mixed blessing.

2) Childhood is the happier period so Updike explores it through his child character in his fiction. One sees the complexity of the suburban America in relation to

to his child characters. Updike's adults often become nostalgic and muse over the childhood experience. They find moments of sheer joy and also seeds of many of their beliefs rooted deeply in that happy period.

Updike's child character is his attempt to look at the world through the innocent eye. He has tried to seek the answers for age-old queries of mind through the child's eye. The questions about God, afterlife, churchgoing are discussed at length and a child's answer is sought through these stories. It is a deliberately developed strategy to create a vision of innocence in the midst of a crisis in contemporary American life.