

## **CHAPTER-I**

### **THE SOCIOLOGY OF LITERATURE: THEORETICAL PREMISES**

#### **1.1. Introduction:**

The sociology of literature is a specialized area of study which focuses its attention upon the relation between a literary work and the social structure in which it is created. It reveals that the existence of a literary creation has the determined social situations. As there is a reciprocal relationship between a literary phenomena and social structure, sociological study of literature proves very useful to understand the socio-economic situations, political issues, the world view and creativity of the writers, the system of the social and political organizations, the relations between certain thoughts and cultural configurations in which they occur and determinants of a literary work. The present chapter attempts to discuss the theoretical premises of the sociology of literature. It consists of the nature and scope of sociology and its relationship with literature, the historical development of the sociology literature, the nature of the sociology of literature, its theoretical approaches and methods and the areas and determinants of literature.

#### **1.2. The Nature and Scope of Sociology and Its Relationship with Literature:**

While introducing the theoretical premises of the sociology of literature, it is felt necessary to discuss the nature and scope of both sociology and literature. Generally, 'sociology' is defined as the scientific study of society, more specifically human society. As the major concern of sociology is society, it is popularly known as the 'science of society' (Shankar Rao 17). Like all other social sciences, it is concerned with the life and activities of man. It also examines the origin, structure, development and functions of human society, scientifically. It also tries to

determine the relationship between different elements of social life and discovers the fundamental conditions of social stability and social change. It analyses the influences of economic, political, cultural, artistic, aesthetic, geographical, scientific and other forces and factors on man and his life and throws more light on the various social problems like poverty, education, social class, religion, and others. Taking into account of all these aspects Alan Swingewood states: “Sociology is essentially the scientific, objective study of man in society, the study of social institutions and of social processes; it seeks to answer the question how society is possible, how it works, why it persists” (1972:11). He further points out that the social structure is constituted through the rigorous examination of the social, political, religious and economic institutions in the society. Lucien Goldman also admits: “sociology is a science based on an aggregation of categories forming an intellectual structure, then these categories and this structure are themselves social facts that sociology brings in to relief” (qtd. in Boelhower 55). In the New Oxford Encyclopedic Dictionary sociology is defined as ‘a study of human, especially civilized, society; study of social problems, especially with a view to solving them’.

Etymologically, the term ‘sociology’ is derived from the Latin word ‘socius’ meaning companion or associate and the Greek word ‘logos’ or ‘ology’ meaning study or science. According to H. K. Rawat “literally, sociology is the study of companionship, meaning social interaction and its resultant relationship that exists between companions or groups of human beings” (3). Moreover, this view does not make clear the nature of sociology, because the other disciplines such as; anthropology, political science, psychology and economics study society scientifically, focusing its various factors and features. In the same way, the different social thinkers have defined ‘sociology’ in diverse ways. As

a result, the questions such as; ‘what is sociology, what is the nature of sociology, what is the function of sociology, what is the relationship between sociology and literature are not answered precisely and comprehensively. For the comprehensive understanding of the nature of sociology, the following definitions of sociology given in H. K. Rawat’s *Sociology-Basic Concepts* (2007) would prove useful and helpful:

1. One of the earliest dictionaries of sociology, edited by H. P. Fairchild (1955), defined sociology as; “the study of the relationships between man and his human environment” (Rawat 3).
2. According to the *Penguin Dictionary of Sociology* (1994), “sociology is the analysis of the structure of social relationships as constituted by social interaction” (4).
3. H. M. Johnson writes: “Sociology is the science that deals with social groups, their internal forms or modes of organizations, the processes that tend to maintain or change these forms of organization and relation between groups” (5).
4. *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology* edited by Johnson defined Sociology as; “the study of social life and behaviour, especially in relation to social system, how they work, how they change, the consequences they produce and their complex relation to people’s lives” (4).
5. P. A. Sorokin defines: “Sociology is a generalizing science of socio-cultural phenomena viewed in their genetic forms and manifold interconnections” (8).

All the above definitions emphasize that ‘sociology’ is the scientific study of man and his society, social actions and interactions, social institutions and processes, and the structure and system of society. Sociology is really a long discourse about human society that seeks to

answer the questions such as; how society is possible, how it works and why it persists. In fact, the structure of specific society emerges through the rigorous examination of economic, political, cultural, religious, academic, familial and other social institutions. Man as a social being is conditioned by these social institutions and accepts his respective social role in this social structure. Therefore Emile Durkheim defines sociology as “the science of institutions, their genesis and their functioning” (45).

Sociology as an independent discipline of social science emerged only around the middle of the eighteenth century. Prior to the middle of the eighteenth century, the study of society was dominated by social philosophers rather than social scientists. However, August Comte (1798-1857), a French philosopher, made a systematic attempt to establish ‘sociology’ as the scientific study of society. He introduced the word ‘sociology’ for the first time in his work *Positive Philosophy* (1839) and defined it as the science of social phenomena. Sociology is thus the investigation of the action and reaction of various parts of the social system. Comte concentrated his efforts to determine the nature of human society and the principles underlying its growth and development. In short, Comte gave sociology its name and laid its foundation as “an identical branch of social science” (qtd. in Swingewood, 1972: 40-44).

Like Comte, Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) contributed a great deal to the establishment of sociology as a systematic discipline. In his *Principles of Sociology* (1877), Spencer explained the major fields of sociology and laid emphasis on the sociological study of community, family, social control, politics and industry. He also mentioned the sociological study of art and aesthetics. His emphasis is mainly on the inter-relations of the different elements and factors of the society. Karl Marx (1818-1883), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Max Weber (1864-1920) also contributed to the establishment of sociology as a systematic

and scientific discipline. Karl Marx placed his emphasis on the economic base of society. According to him, economic base influences the general character of all other aspects of culture and social structure. Emile Durkheim analyzed social life in terms of social facts and claimed that social facts are nothing but collective ways of thinking and feeling about society. For Max Weber, the individual is the base unit of society. He devoted much of his efforts to expound a special method called the method of understanding (*verstehen*) for the study of social phenomena. In addition to these founding fathers, a large number of modern sociologists and thinkers contribute significantly to explain the nature of sociology. Besides these thinkers, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and the intellectual ideologies such as individualism, socialism, positivism, humanitarianism, colonialism, and the growth and developments in modern natural sciences contribute to the emergence of 'sociology'. However, the credit for establishing sociology as an independent discipline goes to August Comte, Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber who took a leading role in making sociology a scientific discipline of social science. Therefore, sociology is defined as 'the scientific study of human society' (Rawat 17).

Sociology as the science of social relations studies the society and gets its subject matter from different sources, literature being one of them. As a social product, literature reflects human society, the human relation and the world in which we live, interact and move. Literature, like sociology, critically examines the realistic picture of human life. So it has been called as the mirror and controller of the society. Sociology tries to study the literary facts and their impact on social relations. So the sociologists such as M. C. Albrecht, Rene Wellek, and others agree with the argument that literature is an institution, and sociology is the study of this institution. Today, sociology is firmly established as a distinctive

discipline. Unlike other social sciences, it is interested in almost all aspects of man's social life. The new generation of thinkers and scholars has invented new concepts and methods of sociological research. As a result, we get new branches of sociology. Sociology of literature which studies literature for understanding society and its forces is one of them.

Like sociology, literature too is pre-eminently concerned with man's social world, his adaptation to it and his desire to change it. In fact, man and his society is the material out of which literature is constructed. So, literature is regarded as the expression or representation of human life through the medium of social creation viz. language (Wellek 94). In the words of W. H. Hudson, "literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. It is thus fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language" (10). In short, literature grows out of life, reacts upon life, and is fed by life.

The society and individuals are the materials of literature. The outer world gets transformed within author's mind and heart and these transformed elements become reality in literature and a source of our pleasure. However, it is hardly possible to define literature precisely because the different critics and scholars from Plato down to the present age have defined literature diversely. These diverse views state different theories of literature. In *Theory of Literature* Wellek and Warren attempt to focus the several ways of defining literature and finally come to the conclusion that the nature of literature can be understood through the particular use of literary or connotative language. They define literature as the reproduction of life. While defining the nature of literature they remark: "Literature is a social institution, using as its medium language, a social creation . . . literature represents life; and 'life' is, in large measure,

a social reality, even though natural world and inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary imitation” (94).

One of the major problems related to literature is its relation with society. To New Critics, the inner structure of literature is more important than the social structure. They are very hostile to biographical and sociological approach to the study of literature. However, some other modern critics and sociologists have made attempts to explain the correlation between sociology and literature. Men of learning in different countries of the world have talked a lot either in favour or against this issue, but majority of the critics and scholars believe in the reciprocal relationship between literature and society. According to them literature and society are always dependent on each other. The most important reason of this interdependent relationship is that literature is the social institution and it uses the medium of language, a social creation. It depicts life and life is a social reality. In the words of Hudson, “literature grows directly out of life is of course to say that it is in life itself that we have to seek the sources of literature, or, in other words, impulses which have given birth to the various forms of literary expression” (10). In short, the base of both sociology and literature is alike and their stability is conditioned by the major social institutions. The changes in the form and content of literature are caused by the changes in the society and the society changes due to the current of fresh and new ideas provided by literary works. The sociology of literature studies this correlation between literature and sociology.

There are different norms of behaviour in different societies and they are reflected in their respective literature. This reflection shows the reciprocal relationship between literature and society. Literature, in fact, is a social phenomena and it differs from one social system to another because social institutions and forces directly influence literary works.

Every society has its own characteristic structure having norms of behaviour, values, ideas, and problems. These norms provide different ideas, themes, symbols, images and other aspects of literature. Therefore, a literary work of one country differs from that of other countries. The root cause of this difference is the impact of the particular social structure.

The great literary works contain social, political, environmental, religious, economic and domestic values of the day. The form and style of literature change with the changes in the temper of the age and society. So literature is regarded as the expression of society. The relationship between literature and society is a two way. It influences society and gets influenced by the society. For instance, the society provides the raw material to the writers, but the same type of raw material does not produce the same type of literary works. In fact, the nature of literary form and style depends upon the worldview and creativity of the writer.

The geographical environment and scientific developments also, in some way, influence literature and determine its shape and character. The geographical environment provides images while scientific inventions provide new thoughts and ideas to literature. The modern scientific inventions have enormously changed the entire social structure and brought about new trends in literature. The twentieth century novel has reflected these changes in cultural practices in society. For instance, the renaissance movement brought humanistic trend in literature where as the industrial revolution in modern age has made literature more inclined towards materialism. As the literary work is the result of the entire social structure and social forces, it can not be excluded from society. Therefore, any attempt to analyze and interpret literature excluding society and life will not give justice to literary works.



The relationship between literature and society has been very close and inseparable from the very beginning. So far as the history of literature is concerned, it is found that the earlier literature was mainly concerned with the conflict between right and wrong or virtue and vice. In fact, god or virtue was at the centre in the literary works of the past. However, such virtue centered literature got changed in later half of the eighteenth century. The place of god or goodness was taken by man and his environment in the romantic age and its credit goes to the French Revolution. With the rise of capitalism and industrialism the place of man was again replaced by the 'base' and 'superstructure'.

The contemporary literature has become more reader centered and the emphasis is laid upon economic, material and environmental conditions of man. Previously, it was believed that the philosophical doctrines supply materials to literature but in the modern age it is considered as an account of the changes in the social structure caused by industrialism, capitalism, communism and totalitarianism. It has become more materialistic in approach. It reveals human actions in the contexts of economic factors, especially on the mode of production. It also experiments with the surroundings on human mind. The early literature laid emphasis on ethics and believed in the needs of reforming society, but with the development of new scientific ideas, the shape of literature is changed by giving importance to man and his environment. As a result social order is at the center in modern literature. Therefore its importance can not be ignored while judging literature.

Sociology and literature are quite distinct areas of research. However, at the most basic level, that of content, they share similar conspectus (Swingewood 1972: 11). In sociology, one gets the descriptive and scientific analysis of the entire social structure. As an integral part of the society, literature not only analyses society but also

shows the ways in which men and women experience society as feeling. Thus, the novel as the major literary genre of industrial society can be seen as a faithful attempt to recreate the social world of man's relation with his family, with politics and with state. It also delineates man's roles within the family and the other institutions, the conflicts and tensions between groups and social classes. While explaining the reciprocal relationship between literature and society, Swingewood quotes Hoggard as; "without the full literary witness the students of society will be blind to the fullness of a society" (13). This view of Hoggard shows that literature and sociology are complement to each other. Sociology of literature emerged through this complementary relationship between literature and society. The literary critics and social thinkers have focused this complementary relationship in their respective critical works.

### **1.3. The Sociology of Literature: Historical Development:**

The sociology of literature has long and distinguished history. The several critics and scholars from Plato down to the present have discussed the different theories and methods of sociological approach to literature. They believed in the simple conviction that literature is a social product, and thoughts and feelings found in literature are conditioned and shaped by the cultural life created by the society. The early critics did not doubt the reciprocal relationship between literature and society. Plato, who started the discussion of the relationship between literature and society, raised some questions about social implications of literature. However, his concern was primarily for social hygiene. He thought that poetry could make man sentimental and impair his reason. But Aristotle's answer to Plato's objections established the sound ground for the sociological approach to literature. During the eighteenth century, it became more sound and powerful with the emergence of novel. Accepting de Boland's Maxim that literature is 'an expression of society'

the modern social critics and novelists considered the novel as the realistic picture of the society. Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* also extended the fact that literature can not be adequately understood without its cultural and social context. The romantic spirit of the nineteenth century rebelled against the classical aesthetics and paved a more favourable ground to sociological perception of literature. However, it was H. A. Taine who tried to systematize the sociological approach to literature in a scientific way. His *History of English Literature* (1886) is really the landmark in the history of the sociology of literature. Karl Marx, Frederic Engels and their followers made the valuable contribution in sociological criticism. They looked at literature as economic infrastructure of society, and gave a new turn to sociology of literature. However, sociology of literature has gained its special place in the history of critical theory in the late twentieth century in the hands of Lucien Goldman, Leo Lowenthal, Robert Escarpit, Alan Swingwood, Diana Laurenson John Hall and the several social thinkers and critics. The survey of the literary study shows diverse views and theories of literature and its function in society. In order to understand the theoretical perspectives of the sociology of literature, it is necessary to see the historical development of literature through the contribution of the major social critics.

### **1.3.1. J. C. Herder (1744-1803):**

Jonathan Herder, a German philosopher and critic, is best known for his contribution to the philosophy of history and culture. In his *Idea for Philosophy of History for Mankind* (1791), he displays ambivalence towards the goals of rationalism and enlightenment. According to him man, as a creature among creatures, plays out his unique destiny in proportion to the 'force' or 'power' resulting from the interaction between individual, institution and environment. He believed that certain

social and geographical environment, race and customs, and cultural and political conditions in particular areas are responsible for the emergence and development of literature. His writing is a challenge to the ideas of Immanuel Kant who argues that a sense of beauty could result only from a purely disinterested judgment. He believes in social structure as the base of literature. Kant gives importance to aesthetic qualities of literature where as Herder gives importance to social aspects of literature. Alan Swingwood comments: “Herder argued that each work was rooted in a certain social and geographical environment where it performed specific functions and that there was no need for any judgment of value: everything is as it had to be” (26). In short, Herder’s ideas about literature imply that there is the casual connection between literature and culture, race, customs and social institutions.

### **1.3.2. Madame de Stale (1766-1817):**

Madame de Stale, a French-Swiss writer and an early champion of women’s rights, is considered as the first woman who contributed to infuse new ideas and methods into French literature. Like Herder, she relates literature to climate, geography and social institutions. She examines the influence of social and political institutions on literature. James H. Bernet observes:

The intellectual roots of the sociology of art are to be found in the number of the nineteenth century Europeans. Accounts of the beginning of the social interpretation of art invariably cite the writings of Madame de Stale, especially her *De la literature Consideree dans rapport avec les institutions sociale (On Literature Considered in its Relations with Social Institutions)*. Published in 1800, this volume discusses the relation of race and climate to literary style and the effects of women and religion on art (621).

According to M. C. Albrecht her book influenced the European writers to search for the relationships between art and society (ix). As a result the European scholars developed sociological approach much earlier than their counterparts in America.

Madame de Stale's concept of literature is somewhat broad. According to her, everything that involves the exercise of thought in writing is literature and it is characterized by climatic situations and national character. For example, the novel form does not get popularity in Italy because of its licentious nature and little respect for women. She believes that national character is the result of complex interactions between religious, legal and political institutions. In this context Swingwood writes: "Madame de Stale has an interesting observation here, arguing that the novel form could develop only in those societies where women's status was fairly high and when strong interest in the private life existed" (1972:27).

Stale's works show positive sociological insight. Besides the awareness of the role of women, she grasps the importance of a strong middle class for the growth and development of literature. She thinks that both women and middle class produce virtue and liberty, the important pre-requisite of literature. To her literature is the expression of the national character which seems to mean simply 'the spirit of the time'. Her emphasis was mainly on climate and national character. Her ideas about the relation between literature and society are empirical. She wanted that literature should portray important changes in the social order, especially those that indicate movement toward the goals of liberty and justice. According to Barnett "She believed that the rising republican spirit in French politics should be reflected in literature by introducing the figures of citizens and peasants into serious works, such as tragedies, rather than relegating them to comedies (621).

### 1.3.3. Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893):

Hippolyte Taine, who for the first time tried to provide a systematic formula of 'race, milieu and moment' to comprehend and analyze literature in the context of sociology of literature, is regarded as the father of the sociology of literature. He attempted to interpret literature in a rigorously scientific way by the application of his famous formula of 'race, milieu and moment'. His *History of English Literature* (1871) contains an awareness of the basic problems which face any literary sociology. The book begins with the expression : "A literary work was no mere individual play of imagination, the isolated caprice of an excited brain, but a transcript of contemporary manners, a manifestation of a certain kind of mind"( Vol.I:1).

Taine regards literature not as the expression of personality, as explained by the romanticists, but the collective expression of society embodying the spirit of the age and formative factors behind the emergence of this expression are 'race, milieu and moment'. The interaction of this triad produces a speculative mental structure which leads to the development of the 'general ideas which find expression in great art and literature. So Alan Swingewood states: "In the history of the sociology of literature Taine's is the first real theory, far more systematic than those of Madam de Stale and Herder, and constituting rather more than a collection of haphazard and random insight" (33). His method of studying the problems was naturalistic, empirical and rationalistic in its approach. His outlook to literature as the combination of 'race, milieu and moment' is systematic and scientific. He believes that literary works are the national monuments because they represent the consciousness of the society and the spirit of the age. In *History of English literature*, Taine remarks, "a work of art is determined by an aggregate which is the general state of mind and surrounding circumstances" (Vol. I: 30).

Taine defines 'race' in terms of innate and hereditary characteristics and suggests that these characteristics are acquired from the soil, the food and the great events in the society. He calls these events as the original stock which the literature of the day faithfully reflects. By 'milieu' he means the totality of the surrounding, physical environment, social conditions, climatic situations and the like. The next element 'moment' is defined in terms of spirit of the time. There are certain dominant intellectual ideas in each and every age and they are reflected in literary works of the day. For instance, classical spirit was dominant in the age of Dryden and Pope where as the romantic spirit was dominant in the age of Wordsworth. Here the term 'moment' can also mean certain 'literary tradition' and the writers of the age make use of this literary tradition in their works. In order to explain Taine's concept of literature as a social document or national monument, Alan Swingwood says, "Taine wrote that a literary work was no mere individual play of imagination, the isolated caprice of excited brain, but a transcript of contemporary manners a manifestation of a certain kind of mind (32).

While explaining Taine's views on the interaction of 'race, milieu and moment', Edward Henning quotes:

A race is found which has received its character from the climate, the soil, the elements, and the great events which it underwent at its origin. This character has adapted it and reduced it to the cultivation of a certain spirit as well as to conception of a certain beauty. This is the *national soil*, very good for certain plants, but very bad for others, unable to bring to maturity the seeds of the neighbouring country, but capable of giving its own exquisite sap and perfect efflorescence when the course of the centuries brings about the temperature which they need. Thus was born *La Fontaine* in

France in the seventeenth century, Shakespeare in England during Renaissance, Goethe in the Germany of our day. For genius is nothing but a power developed and no power can develop completely, except in the country where it finds itself naturally and completely at home, where education nourishes it, where examples make it strong, where character sustains it, where the public challenges it (354).

Taine categorizes the novel as a portable mirror reflecting all aspects of life and nature. To him novel is the dominant genre of industrial society. His discussion of literature in the *History of English literature* makes it clear that he gives special importance to the 'milieu' that produces 'the state of mind' necessary for artistic creation. His *Lectures on Art* lays emphasis on the social conditions of the time. He believed in 'race milieu and moment' as the major determinants of literature. In this regard W. H. Hudson argues, "Taine's interest in reality was not in literature as literature but in literature as a social document in the history of national psychology" (39). Due to this noteworthy contribution, Taine is regarded as the father of the sociology of literature.

#### **1.3.4. Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Frederick Engels (1820-1895):**

With the spread of the ideas of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, the sociological approach became a scientific method of literary interpretation. Taine argues literature as the expression of 'race, milieu and moment', but Marx and Engel view it as epiphenomenon of the social structure. They were more concerned with purely economic factors and the role played by the social class. They thought that the essence, the nature and function of art and literature could be understood by relating it to the prevailing social conditions and by analyzing the social system as the whole. Literature and art, as considered by them, are forms of social



consciousness and social change is bound to create changes in literature and art. Therefore, James Barnett says:

The writing of Marx as early as 1845 provide a more specific thesis concerning the relation of art and society. Marx held that the system of production in existence in given time determines both the content and styles of arts of the society. On the basis of this type of analysis, plus his commitment to the doctrine of the inevitability of class conflict, Marx argued that every art preferences differ according to class position and outlook. Thus, for example, the English yeomen sang and danced to folk songs at the time when the aristocratic scorned this type of music in favour of the madrigal (621).

Both Marx and Engels analyze literature in terms of material foundations. Their main concern is to demonstrate the relation between the material and aesthetic modes of production. It is in this context they talk about the relationship between base and superstructure. Their ideas in *The German Ideology* explain that productive relations and productive methods determine the character of culture. The forms of consciousness are determined by the social being of men. The economic structure is the foundation, on which rise the superstructure comprising legal and political constructs at a given time, and the social change or the social revolution is brought about by the complex process of mutual action and reaction of the base and superstructure. This view clearly shows that literary, religious, political, philosophical and legal development in the society is based on the economic development. They also state that the real source of art is found in the economic structure of the society. The nature and mode of economic production create social relations in which men enter to form class relations and these class relations become the ideology of the society. Literature tries to stabilize this ideology.

Marx and Engels give importance to economic structure of the society. While explaining the economic casualty of literature, they say:

In the social production of their inner life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their well relations of productions which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. (363).

The influence of Marx and Engels on literature and literary criticism has been tremendous. The major contributions of these scholars in the field of the sociology of literature are: *On Literature and Art*, *Selected Works Vol. I*, *The German Ideology*, and *The Holy Family*. However, there is no fashioned theory of relations of literature with society but some hints or dogmas in their writings. Nevertheless, their followers tried to develop a theory. The scholars who tried to contribute the Marxist approach towards literature are Plekhanov, George Luckacs, Goldman, Terry Eagleton and others. These scholars contributed greatly in the development of the sociology of literature.

### **1.3.5. George Plekhanov:**

Plekhanov was highly influenced by Engels' notion of social mirror and the concept of type. His approach towards Marxists was remarkably eclectic. He argues that art figuratively expresses the feelings and ideas developed under the influence of surrounding. He thinks that literature is bound to the means of production and property but at the same time, he is aware of the aesthetic function of literature. Plekhanov introduces the notion of an inborn sense of beauty, which leads man to

accept great art, and enjoy it for its own sake. In his *Art and Social Life* (1912), he constantly reiterates literature as the reflection of social life with his nonsocial aesthetic instinct. He argues: “Art has significance only when it depicts or evokes or conveys actions, emotions and events that are of significance to society” (108). Literature to Plekhanov is the reflection of the class struggle. So he remarks: “Cultural history is nothing but the reflection of the history of its classes and their struggle” (164). In order to explain his concept of reflection of the history he gave an example of the eighteenth century French drama. According to him, the French tragedy under Louis XIV stemmed from the demands of the courtly aristocracy introducing the characters from high social status and the dramatists who lacked the conventional dose of aristocratic superiority would never have won applause of the audience of the day, however great his talent. However, with the rise of bourgeois class at the end of the century a new dramatic model viz. ‘sentimental comedy’ in which an idealized man of the middle class was at the centre made its appearance became very popular among the audience of the day. Therefore, Plekhanov insists that the theatre is the direct expression of the class struggle. Thus, his concept of literature is that all literature is class bound and great literature is incompatible with bourgeois dominance.

### **1.3.6. George Luckacs:**

The most prominent Marxist theoretician of literature after Plekhanov is George Luckacs. He accepts the Plekhanov’s concept of literature as the reflection of class struggle. In *The Historical Novel* he writes: “The historical novel in its origin, development, rise and decline follows inevitably upon the great social transformations of modern times” (17). He argues that literature that implies socialist perspective is written from the point of view of a class. He criticizes a literary work which denies socialist perspective, according to him the writer who rejects

socialism closes his eyes to the future, gives up any chance of assessing the present correctly, and loses the ability to create other than purely static works of art. (60). This loss of socialism/humanism leads literature to subjectivist outlook in which man depicted as alienated, isolated, and essentially morbid, lacking any meaningful relation with the social world. For example, in the works of Beckett, Joyce, and Proust man is portrayed as fragmented and partial. However, we get perspective of all-sides of man in the works of Balzac and Dickens. So Luckacs admires bourgeois realists or socialists perspective and admits that the great writers are those who, in their works, create 'lasting human types', the real criterion of literary achievement. He argues that the 'type' flows out of the artist's awareness of progressive change. It constitutes the totality of relations in flux (56-57). So like Engels, he insists that all literature must be measured by bourgeois realism. The major contributions of George Luckacs in the history of the sociology of literature are *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (1963), *The Historical Novel* (1963), *Writer and Critic* (1970), *The Theory of the Novel* (1971), and *Studies in European realism* (1972).

### **1.3.7. Lucian Goldman:**

Goldman's contribution in the history of the sociology of literature lies in the introduction of dialectical materialism, the sophisticated method of linking art and society. He borrowed the concepts of 'totality' and 'world view' from Marxists, especially from Luckacs, and argued all great philosophical and literary works embody these concepts. The term 'totality' refers to the entire socio-historical process and offers a critical level of interpretation with respect to the ideological perspectives of plural subjects. 'World view' on the other hand, describes a particular group's projection of this totality as an effort to respond to the problems posed to it by other groups and by the natural environment. The concept of world view explains the documentary level of a literary work and, in

doing so, distinguishes the particular task of any aesthetics having sociological aspirations. It exists not only outside of the work of art, but becomes the very principles of its artistic structuration, and acts upon the reciprocal relations between its components and the global meaning of the artistic sign. In short, Goldman's approach towards the sociology of literature is highly idiosyncratic, fusing structural analysis with historical and dialectical materialism

Goldman evolved his theory of genetic structuralism to analyze literary works. According to genetic structuralism, the literary work is a constitutive element of social consciousness and is less related to the level of real consciousness of transindividual subjects. His essay "The Sociology of Literature: Status and Problems of Method" presents some observations of genetic structuralism. According to him, the first general observation on which genetic structuralist thought based is that 'all reflection on the human sciences is made not from without but from within society'. The second basic idea of genetic sociology is that human facts are responses of an individual or collective subject. He further points out that the essential relationship between the life of society and literary creation is not concerned with the content of these two sectors of human reality but only with the mental structures and those mental structures are not individual phenomena but social phenomena (493-495).

Goldman's conception of the sociology of literature is concerned to structure created and transformed by human activity. To him structures were made through the 'praxis' of the human subject. This subject is nothing but a collective category of a social group that constitutes the true source of cultural creation. This collective subject is a significant structure. All major cultural forms embody a significant structure, a worldview that expresses the collective consciousness of a significant social group. The worldview unites the various elements and levels of a

cultural form into unity and coherence. He thinks that since the artwork expresses the tendencies, actions and values of the collective subject, it bears a functional relation with it. Thus, to understand the totality of a literary work, it is necessary to explain its historical genesis. His major contributions in the field of the sociology of literature are: *The Hidden God* (1956), *Towards a Sociology of Novel* (1964), *The Sociology of Literature: Status and Problems of Method* (1967), *Cultural Creation in Modern Society* (1976), and *Method in the Sociology of Literature* (1981).

### **1.3.8. Leo Lowenthal (1900 –1993):**

Lowenthal was a German-Jewish sociologist usually associated with the Frankfurt School. He became a leading expert of the sociology of literature and mass culture after joining the Institute for Social Research in 1926. He, then, conducted seminar on the sociology of literature and wrote essays and books for the sociological study of literature. The notable among them are: *Literature and the Image of Man* (1957) and *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society* (1961). In his introduction to *Literature and the Image of Man* he states:

Creative literature conveys many levels of meaning, some intended by the author, some quite unintentional. An artist sets out to invent a plot, to describe action, to depict the interrelationships of characters, to emphasize certain values . . . The writer indeed develops believable characters and places them in situations involving interactions with others and with the society in which they live. It is the task of the sociologist of literature to relate the experience of the writer's imaginary characters and situations to the historical climate from which they derive. He has to transform the private equations of themes and stylistic means into social equations(X).

James Barnet refers this book as the most stimulating contribution to the sociological study of literature. He further states that Lowenthal's study applies imagination to significant sociological problems and is concerned with the unique and value-relevant rather than with the repetitive and measurable aspects of this art form (629). Such a study is certainly beneficial to the sociologists who try to study novels of any writer. Lowenthal's most inspiring essay "sociology of Literature in Retrospect", published in *Critical Inquiry* throws light on the several aspects of the sociology of literature.

### **1.3.9. Robert Escarpit (1918 - 2000):**

Robert Escarpit was a man of many accomplishments comprising an academician, a renowned writer, a professor of comparative literature, a literary historian and a specialist in publishing. He wrote on a variety of topics but his major critical works on the sociology of literature is noteworthy. After the tremendous success of *The Sociology of Literature*, an intentionally provocative book, which exceed 100,000 copies in France and which was translated into 23 languages, he was interviewed by John and Anne-Marie Deveze Laulan in July 1992. In this interview Robert Escarpit says:

A little book I published in 1948 in Mexico, called *History of French Literature*, there is a paragraph in the preface called: the three dimensions of literature, where I say: we know very well, in literature there are writers (there is much talk of their biography), there are the works (there is much talk of works of course) and there is a third character that is never discussed is that the reader (Escarpit interview).

Escarpit was of the opinion that the literary act is an act of communication. In order to study the problem of communication through

writing the book and its role in communication, he was asked by Julian Behrstock the director of the 'UNESCO Book' to write a book called *The Book Revolution* (1965). This book also has a huge success. Since its publication the book is translated into twenty languages. His major works in the field of the sociology of literature includes *A Handbook of English Literature* (1953), *The Sociology of Literature* (1958) and *The Book Revolution* (1965).

Escarpit's major contribution in the sociology of literature is in production and consumption of literary works. In his famous essay "The Act of Publication: Publication and Creation", he points out the publication system that selects, prints and distributes literary creations is very essential for that the reward of the writer's efforts. By giving the history of the publication and the different roles played by the publishers he states: "Reduced to their material operations, publisher's functions can be summed up in three verbs: choose, manufacture and distribute" (1970:400). In his article "the sociology of literature" published in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* he explains that the sociological approach to literature is by no means an easy one. It conceives the concept of literature first as a socio cultural fact and not an aesthetic one. To the cultured mind the study of the writer as a professional man, of the literary work as a means of communication, and of the reader as a consumer of cultural goods is vaguely mocking. A true sociology of literature appeared only when literary critics and historians, starting from literature as a specific reality, tried to answer sociological questions by using current sociological methods. While explaining the sociology of reading he states that no sociology of literature is therefore possible without sociology of reading and of cultural consumption in general. Much has been done in that direction since Schucking's pioneer work on the sociology of literary taste.



### **1.3.10. Alan Swingwood:**

Alan Swingwood is a lecturer in Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. In *Myth of Mass Culture* he points out: “The aristocratic theory of mass society is to be linked to the moral crisis caused by the weakening of traditional centers of authority such as family and religion” (5). Another book *Cultural Theory and the Problem of Modernity* (1998) gives a comprehensive account of different sociological theories of culture. In it he discusses in detail the concepts and theories of culture such as hegemony, force field and cultural materialism. His sociological approach to the study of literature is developed in the social and cultural context. In *The sociology of literature*, the most influential book written with Diana Laurensen, he presents the approaches and method of the sociology of literature. In its “Preface” he writes: “This book has been written in the hope that it may serve to introduce the idea of the sociology of literature both to those who believe that social science is simply the study of facts and to those for whom literature is a unique subjective experience which defies scientific analysis” (vii). He also applies this theory to the works of Fielding, Sartre, Camus and George Orwell. His *Marx and Modern Social Theory* (1975) offers an account of the rise of sociological thought from its origins in the eighteenth century. It examines the paradigms of functionalism cultural theory and the problem of modernity, critical analysis of the relation between sociological theory and recent debates in cultural studies. In his *A Short History of Sociological Thought* (1984) Swingewood throws light on the several aspects and theories of sociology from its origin to the modern development.

### **1.3.11. Some Other Modern Critics:**

Like Escarpit and Lowenthal the several sociologists and literary critics throw light on the theoretical aspects of the sociology of literature.

For instance, Richard Hoggart's works focus English literature and cultural studies with a special concern to British popular culture. His *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) is the most cited work which interprets the loss of an authentic popular culture and the imposition of a mass culture by the culture industries. While working as a Professor of English at Birmingham University (1962–1973), he founded the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Laurence Learner, a South African born British literary critic, discusses the determinants of a literary work, the psychology of art, the relationship between literature and society and Lukac's theory of realism in his *Literary imagination* (1982). In the 'Preface' of this book he states: "To study the single work without raising general questions about its genre, its social, political or even merely human functions, its aesthetic value or its linguistic form, is narrow; but to discuss literary theory without making significant contact with the experience of reading actual works is barren"(x). Rene Wellek collaborated with Austin Warren over a period of years to produce a landmark text *Theory of Literature* (1963) which encompasses "definitions and distinctions" of the natures and functions of literature; literary theory, criticism, and history; and general, comparative, and national literature. Both have discussed an extrinsic approach to the study of literature from the perspectives of biography, psychology, society, ideas, and other arts. In 'Literature and Society' they focus on the sociology of the writer, the relationship of the writer with the readers, publishers and the patrons of literature. While discussing the relation between literature and society they write: "The question how far literature is actually determined or dependent on its social setting, on social change and development, is one which, in one way or another, will enter into all the three divisions of our problems: the sociology of the writer, the social content of the works themselves and the influence of literature on society" (96).

The most important work and the land mark in the history the Sociology of Literature is John Hall's '*The Sociology of Literature*' (1979). In it Hall explains in detail the several approaches of the sociology of literature, the major determinants of literature, the sociology of the writer and the role of the reading public in the creation and success of a literary work. Like Hall, Raymond Williams' *The Long Revolution* (1961), M. C. Albrecht's *The Sociology of Art and Literature* (1970), Levin Schucking's *The Sociology of Literary Taste* (1941) Elizabeth and Tom Burns eds. *Sociology of Literature and Drama: Selected Readings* (1973), and the issues of *Critical Inquiry Vol. 14* (Spring, 1988) and *International Social Science Journal, Vol.XIX, No.4*, ed. Peter Lengyel, UNESCO, contributed greatly in the development of the theoretical perspectives of the sociology of literature.

The historical development of the sociology of literature from Herder and Stale to the contemporary critics and social thinkers shows not only the complementary relationship between literature and sociology but also the several stages in the theory of the sociology of literature. It also provides a comprehensible base to areas, approaches and methods of the sociology of literature.

#### **1.4. The Nature of Sociology of Literature:**

The sociology of literature is an outcome of the complementary relationship between literature and society. Literature written in a certain period of time is directly connected with the norms, customs and traditions of the day. So, literary work is regarded as the segment of the society. However, the earlier critics analyzed literature only in the context of socio-cultural conditions of the day ignoring the author's worldview and ideology of the gatekeepers of literature. Ignoring these determinants of literature is like denying their role in the creation and success of literature. It is the sociology of literature that lays emphasis on the study

of the social contexts and the social determinants of literature. Being a specialized area of literary study, it explains the relationship between a literary work and the social structure in which it is created; examines literature in cultural, economic and political context in which it is written or received; and explores the relationship between the artist and society. It also examines the sociology of the writer and analyses the conditions of creation and production of the book and of mass literature. So it is defined in *Concise Oxford Dictionary* as ‘a branch of literary study that examines the relationship between literary works and their social context, including patterns of literacy, kinds of audience, modes of publications and dramatic presentation and social class positions of authors and readers’. This definition emphasizes the role of the social context, sociology of the author and gatekeepers in the creation and success of a literary work.

Literature is always fed by personal and impersonal forces within society. The traditional critics believe ‘life’ as the true force or impulse behind a literary work. “The great impulses behind literature” writes W. H. Hudson, “may be grouped under four heads - 1) our desire for self expression; 2) our interest in the people and their doings; 3) our interest in the world of reality; and 4) our love of form as form” (11). H. A. Taine also writes: “A work of art is determined by an aggregate which is the general state of mind and surrounding circumstances” (30). Taine believes in ‘race, milieu and moment’ as the true determinants or impulses of literature. The Marxist critics, on the other hand, claim ‘base’ and ‘superstructure’ as the determinants of literature. With the advent of psychological theories we get ‘neurosis and collective unconsciousness’ as the impulses behind literary works. The contemporary sociologists, who give importance to the consumption and production of literary works, claim that the writer’s world view and the ideology of gatekeepers

comprising publishers, distributors, readers, critics, and public libraries play a dominant role in the creation and success of literature. The sociology of literature is the synthesis of all these views and ideas. In short, the sociology of literature believes in the totality of society. It can not isolate any single element in society and call it as the final determinant of literature.

Although sociology of literature is very essential for understanding both literary works and society, it was not an established field or academic discipline till mid twentieth century. However, the several critics after 1970 devoted themselves to develop the theory and methods of the sociology of literature. The Vol.14 of *Critical Inquiry* (1988) devoted to give the institutional and intellectual base to the sociology of literature. In the editorial introduction of this issue Priscill Ferguson states: “We use the sociology of literature here to refer to the cluster of intellectual ventures that originate in overriding conviction: the conviction that literature and society necessarily explain each other” (421). The intellectual roots of this conviction are to be found in the works of Robert Escarpit, Leo Lowenthal, Lucian Goldman, Terry Eagleton, John Hall, and other scholars who have tried to develop its new approaches and methods. So sociology of literature is regarded as a growing body of critical theory that studies literary woks in the context of social institutions and factors, the world view of the writer, and the ideology of the gatekeepers of literature.

As a social product, literature reflects human society and culture. So it is regarded as the mirror of the society. Both literary critics and sociologists agree that the sociological practice is essential to interpret literary works, but they differ in their theories and methods. The literary critics look at texts, writers and readers and speculate about creation, reception and interpretation of literature. Social scientists, on the other

hand, discuss books and literary institutions and dwell upon production, distribution and consumption of cultural products. The focus of social scientist is mainly on organizations and markets, centralized and decentralized publishing, laws and censorship norms, strategies of diffusion and reading habit of particular social groups. The literary socialists and historians are concerned with the relationship between individual authors and the circumstances of social and cultural era in which they live and write. In this regard Terry Eagleton writes: “There are two main ways of in which an interest in the sociology of literature can be justified. The first form of justification is realist: literature is in fact deeply conditioned by its social context and any critical account of it, which omits this fact, is therefore automatically deficient. The second way is pragmatist: literature is in fact shaped by all kinds of factors and readable in all sorts of contexts, but highlighting its social determinants is useful and desirable from a particular standpoint” (469). The sociology of literature, thus, combines both the ways and studies literature in its totality. Along with the study of the subject matter, form, style and *rasa* and *bhava* (sentiment and emotional fervor), it studies the interaction between the author, reader, patron, publisher and distributor of literature.

Although a relation of literature with social structure has a long history in all over the world, the sociology of literature is relatively recent approach. This approach emerged in the eighteenth century. By the middle of the century Montesquieu, Gibbon, Voltaire, and others attempted to interpret the political events with race, climate, population, legal and political systems. These ideas remained a part of the intellectual background to literary works of the day throughout Europe. However, the search for the relationship between literature and society really began with Madame de Stale and H. A. Taine. There was a slow development in the sociology of literature up to the mid twentieth century. In 1954, the

American Sociological Association included a special session on 'The Sociology of Art' for the first time in their annual meeting. In 1968, the sixth international congress on aesthetics, held in Sweden, took as its theme 'Art and Society'. Since then many scholars continued to focus on the work of art, in an attempt to improve our understanding of it from the sociological point of view.

In order to explain the nature of the sociology of literature UNESCO published a special volume of *International Social Science Journal* on 'Sociology of Literary Creativity' in 1967. In it Lucian Goldman, Jacques Leenhardt, G. N. Pospelov and others explained in detail the nature, methods and stages of the sociology of literature. As a proponent of genetic structuralism, Goldman asserts: "The essential relationship between the life of society and literary creation is not concerned with the content of these two sectors of human reality, but only with the mental structures, with what might be called the categories which shape both the empirical consciousness of a certain social group and the imaginary universe created by the writer" (495). He further points out that a single individual can not create the significant categorical or mental structures because these structures are not 'individual phenomena, but social phenomena'. In order to study these social phenomena Goldman suggests the genetic structuralism as the best method of the sociology of literature. In the second article entitled "The Sociology of Literature: some stages in History" Jacques Leenhardt gives the detailed history of the sociology of literature from Madame de Stael to Lucian Goldman. According to him the expression 'sociology of literature' studies literature as consumer product as well as an integral part of social reality (517). G. N. Pospelov in the next essay explains the relationship between literature and sociology and states that sociology of literature is a socio- historical study (659).

Like the *Critical Inquiry* and *International Social Science Journal*, the *Proceeding of the Seminar on Sociology of Literature* (1980) explains the nature of the sociology of literature. In its 'Preface' V. D. Gupta points out that during the discussion in a seminar some of the participants raised the objections about the phrase 'the Sociology of Literature'. They were not satisfactory with title. Therefore, they suggested renaming it as 'Sociology through Literature' or 'Sociological Study of Literature'. However, majority of participants did not agree with those objections. After the arguments and counter arguments, the two parties reached a consensus that sociology of literature is the proper name because it implies the several questions such as, how does the work come into being? How does it reach the reader? How is it published? Who is the patron of the author? What are his interactions with different social groups and his public? Why is it accepted by the public? How do certain literary waves exit in a particular period? How does a literary taste develop? How do readers accept or reject certain themes? (v). This view asserts that literary study of the earlier literary scholars is one - sided because they regard literature as an expression of society or ideas of self. The literary sociologists, on the other hand, think that like other institution, literature has its own structure which is the result of its interaction between authors, readers, publishers, patrons and critics. There are certain values, traditions, ideologies, currents of new thoughts and norms in which they work and interact and as a result literary work comes into existence. Hence, like the other established branches of sociology, the sociology of literature has importance.

There are the diverse views about the nature, areas, methods and approaches of the sociology of literature in different countries. For instance, in the departments of sociology in American universities, the sociology of literature has deliberately adopted an empirical approach.



This approach lays emphasis on the case studies of particular literary institutions such as publications, booksellers, journals etc. Like contemporary critical theories, this empirical approach ignores the social context of literature and emphasizes the determinant of literary works. However, the European school of sociology of literature encompasses a broader range of humanistic understanding and facilitates the interdisciplinary perspective that is essential to any sociological analysis of literature. The scholars like Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes and Raymond Williams use their work to address issues of broad intellectual and social significance.

During the late nineteenth century in Europe, ‘the sociology of literature’ gathered momentum from the combined forces of Romanticism, realism and positivism. These forces contributed in rethinking of literary relations to the social institutions and forces. However, the primary impetus to the sociology of literature came from Marxian theory of knowledge and society that grounded literature in the social, political, economic and ideological structures of the contemporary society. The Marxian division of society into intellectual superstructure and economic base correlate literature and the writer with specific social milieu. Marxism sees literature as the reflection of the economic infrastructure of society. In the words Ferguson “Marxist theory and practice rested upon and ratified the mirror as a model for criticism and as a metaphor for the relationship of literature and society” (427).

The sociology of literature reveals that the existence of literature is determined by the social structure of the day. According to Alexander Kern “thought is conditioned by society . . . the writer seeks the relationship between certain thoughts, forms, and the cultural configuration in which they occur” (554). So it is hardly possible to understand literature without full witness of the contemporary social

structure and institutions. Besides the study of the social structure, the sociology of literature studies the relationship between production and consumption of literature. According to Leenhardt “The expression ‘sociology of literature’ covers two very different types of research, bearing respectively on literature as a consumer product and literature as an integral part of social reality, or, considered from another angle, bearing on society as the place of literary consumption and society as the subject of literary creation” (517). This shows that the production with a view to consumption and distribution through the channels of distributors and libraries is the major phase in the process of a literary work. In the very process the role of readers and critics is very important. The sociology of literature studies the relation of the individual author with the socio-cultural context of the age and the gatekeepers of literature.

The study of culture is an integrated part of the sociology of literature, so it is called as a subfield of cultural sociology. Sidney Finkelstein argues: “To understand literature, we must know not only individual works but also the cultural life of which they are part because a literary work of any writer is conditioned and shaped by that cultural life” (9). In fact, the cultural study is not a unified movement but a group of tendencies, issues, and questions. According to Guerin “arising amidst the turmoil of 1960, cultural studies is composed of elements of Marxism, new historicism, feminism, gender studies, anthropology,...those fields that focus on social and cultural forces that either create community or cause division and alienation” (240). The cultural studies, thus, transcends the confines of a particular discipline and analyses the means of production of literature and other arts. It also raises the several para literary questions such as: Who supports a given artists? Who publishes his or her works? How are these books distributed? Who buys these books, and how are they marketed?

The sociology of literature is, thus, not only an interdisciplinary but also a multidisciplinary endeavor. It studies the social, political, economic, and cultural institutions and explores the varied fields, people and their life and behaviour. So it is described as a collective action of the advances in cultural sociology, dialectical Marxism, reception theory, genetic structuralism and mass communication. Being a micro discipline, it concentrates on the several social factors which determine the creation and existence of literature. For example, with the invention of printing press in about 1450 in Germany the numbers of books were published to satisfy the demands of the reading public. The structure of society was also changed and feudalism was replaced by commercialism and the publishers and distributors become the patron of literary works. They perform the triple role of choosing, publishing and distributing books. They also inspired writers to adopt particular themes and genres of writing and thus influence the development of a type of a literary interest among the readers. So it concentrates on the relationship between the writer and the social factors which determine the existence of literature. In short, the underlying idea of the sociology of literature is that the literary work is determined and shaped by surrounding, circumstances, dominant cultural values of the age, the world view of the writer, the ideology of the gatekeepers and the several social factors and institutions. In order to know its true nature, it is necessary to discuss the major areas and determinants of literary works.

### **1.5. Areas and Determinants of Literature:**

The most important factor of the sociology of literature is the social determinants of literary works. The content analysis of any literary work does not focus the personality and creativity of the writer, the relation of the individual author to the social and cultural circumstances of the era; the effect of the author's gender, class and his political interest on the

form and content of literature; and the contribution of gatekeepers in the emergence and success of literary works. The sociology of literature studies all these areas and determinants. So it is described as the study of the entire structure of the society.

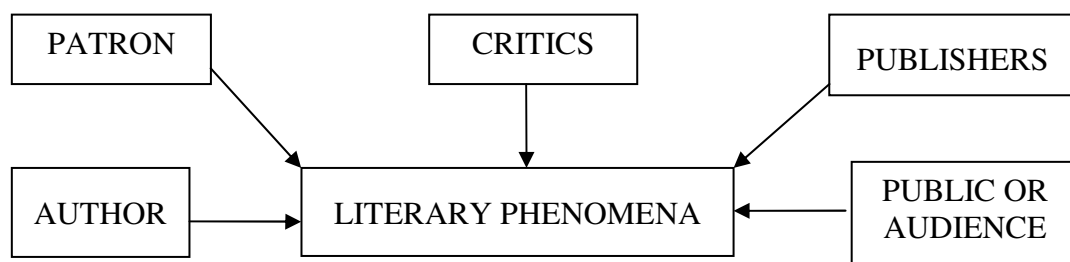
The sociology of literature believes that a work of literature does not arise automatically. It is shaped by the dominant cultural values and connected with cultural and political organizations. Its earlier approach focuses the documentary nature of literature. The critics who supported this view gave importance to the mirror image approach to literature. H. A. Taine gave importance to the 'race, milieu and moment', but ignored the world view of the writer, ideology of the gatekeepers and other social determinants in the existence and success of literary works. The Marxist too failed to discuss the contribution of these social determinants. However, the twentieth century critics lay emphasis on the socio cultural circumstances of the day, social and political organizations, personality and creativity of the writers, the response of the gatekeepers and other social determinants.

In fact, the discussion of the areas and determinants of literature begins with Robert Escarpit's *Sociology of Literature*. It explains the profession of authorship, production, distribution, and consumption; and the commodity aspect of literature. Subsequently, the scholars piously urge the need for more information about the machineries and the material process by which literary works are produced, reproduced, distributed, marketed, merchandised, and consumed. In order to support this view John Sutherland gives an example of Robert Darnton's *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* in which Darnton emphasizes the need 'to know more about the world behind the books' and presents "a new set of question":

How did writers pursue careers in the Republic of Letters? Did their economic and social condition have much effect on their writing? How did publishers and booksellers operate? Did their ways of doing business influence the literary fare that reached their customers? What was that literature? Who were its readers? And how did they read? (John Sutherland 574-75)

The Sociology of Literature eventually makes an attempt to answer these questions through the discussion of the gatekeepers of literature.

The most popular formula of the determinants of literature is found in George A. Huaco's "The Sociological Model". In it he presents two highly simplified sociological models, one macroscopic, the other middle level, which he uses for the historical analysis of film art but which are equally applicable to the fine arts (Albrecht 531). It is a modified version of the original conflict model of Marx. The second model illustrates visually five social structures, or conditions that impinge on the literary work. Here Huaco states that literary phenomena are surrounded by five specific social structures, as shown in the following diagram:



**(Huaco's The Sociological Model)**

This model clearly shows that the author, readers, critics, patron, and publishers are the major areas and determinants of literature (Huaco 551). In the words of Albrecht "for those who are more interested in interactional pattern, it is tempting to take his model and draw lines and arrows between author and patron, critic and audience, and between other

structures, in order to represent the interactions of the total system as an ongoing institution. Nevertheless, Huaco's scheme makes explicit these different social variables that in some way contribute to the style and content of a literary work, and to historical changes" (532).

Like Huaco, Laurence Learner also gives his three fold formula of the areas and determinants of literature. According to him 'tradition', 'individual' and 'society' are the major determinants of literature. While explaining the nature of this three fold formula, Learner writes:

From already existing literature certain ways of telling a story, certain character types, plot structures, metrical forms, image patterns and rhetorical devices offer themselves as elements in each new works: that is the literary tradition, either explicitly formulated as conventions, or half- consciously followed as habits. From the personal life of the writer certain concerns, preferences, emotional needs, aspirations, disappointments and personality traits push themselves forward and lead to the choice of particular subjects or particular ways of treating them: that is the individual element, and it too can function at varying levels of consciousness. And every work is produced at a particular time and place; in a particular society... (01).

In order to support his view about the determinants of literature he gives several examples. According to him Dickens' Mr. Micawber and Thackeray's Colonel Newcome are the modern versions of Don Quixote. Regarding the 'individual' he states that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* belongs to a very old literary kind, as found in *the Odyssey*, *the Aenied* and *Divine Comedy*, but the personal origin of *Heart of Darkness* lies in Conrad's trip to the Congo in 1890 which has many resemblances to the story, and which he regarded as perhaps the crucial experience of his life. The novel is mainly about colonialism but it is based upon the personal

experience of the novelist. The same is the case with *Burmese Days* by George Orwell. It is about tyranny of imperialism but it is based upon Orwell's personal experience in Burma. For the 'social context' Learner gives the examples of Auden's poetry and Victorian novels. The sense of totalitarianism in Orwell's later novels is also the social context. So far as Orwell's novels are considered, it is found that they are determined by tradition, individual and society.

The structuralists may challenge to the ideas of Learner because they claim that critical inquiry should concern itself with how the reader constitutes literary discourse, rather than with the determinants of individual works. But the fact is that literary discourse is really the results of the ideas or thoughts. So Learner thinks that ideas should be regarded as the fourth determinant of literature. But finally he concludes:

The ideas which lie behind a work of literature may already have been incorporated in literary practice, as a set of conventions; may derive from the personal philosophy of the writer, in which case they will be the result of his personal concerns, and will be part of his biography; and may be formulations of forces in the society in which the work was produced, in which case to study them is to study the society (18).

Thus, three-fold formula of 'tradition, individual, and society' is the major force or determinant behind the emergence of a literary work.

John Hall also suggests more comprehensive formula of the areas and determinants of literature. While discussing the nature of the sociology of literature he states that the social context, the sociology of the writer, and the role of the gatekeepers are the major areas of the sociology of literature. Like Hall, Robert Escarpit, Lucien Goldman, Diana Laurenson, Rene, and Leo Lowenthal have also discussed the

major areas and determinants in their respective works. In *Theory of Literature*, Wellek and Warren have discussed in detail the sociology of the writer. Escarpit's *The Book Revolution* (1960) and *The Sociology of Literature* (1970) analyse the conditions of production of the book and of mass literature. The sociology of literature studies all these determinants of literature and explains their role in the existence and success of literary works. The major determinants of literature are:

### **1.5.1. The Social Referent or Context of Literature:**

The term 'social referent' was used for the first time by John Hall in his *The Sociology of Literature* (1979) as a reflector of social reality (32). According to him the detailed analysis of the text is essential for its generalization but this analysis should be done in the context of the entire social structure, so that one can specify the link between literature and society. Hall is of the opinion that the popularity of the text depends upon the close link between the text and context. As the New Criticism deliberately ignored this link, it became a challenge to the sociology of literature. In fact, social referent makes literature a social document and the study of such social referent is regarded as legitimate social evidence. It also serves as an aid in understanding both society and literature. Hall relates the importance of social referent to the sociology of the author. According to him "the sociology of the author is likely to be of great help in understanding the relation of the particular texts and society . . . the discussion of the sociology of the author is of considerable help in explaining the change in the novel form from realism to modernism"(47). He further points out that the literary work is shaped by the dominant cultural values of the age. In fact, literature is the result of social action and in turn, gives rise to social actions. The action and reaction of this social action is studied in the sociology of literature. So the study of social referent is essential to understand literature. Along with the social



referent, Hall discusses the role of the world view of the writer, the reading public, patron, critics, publishers, censors, distributors, and public libraries in the creation and success of literature.

The socio-cultural referent of the day plays an important role in the creation of the particular form of literature. In the words of Learner:

Every work is produced at a particular time and space ;in a particular society, whose beliefs, assumptions, problems, conflicts and habits set limit to what can and can't be expressed, and how it will be treated: that is the pressure of society stresses consensus, we shall look at the shared assumptions of the whole society, and say, this work is the product of eighteenth century England or the Greek city state; if it stresses conflict we shall look more at a particular group, sub-culture or social class, and say this work is the bourgeois, clerical or by a women (1).

As a social institution, literature represents social reality. It originates in close connection with particular social institutions. In fact, literature is not a part of social institution, it itself is a social institution. Like his works, the writer is also a part of society and he expresses his experiences and conceptions about life and society in his works. In the words of Wellek “the artist conveys truth and, necessarily, also historical and social truth. Works of art furnish documents because they are monuments (qtd. in Learner 95). He believes that literature is not only the reflection of the social process but also the very essence of the society.

### **1.5.2. The Role of the Writer:**

There are two basic approaches of the role of the author in the creation of a literary work – an imitator and a visionary. Both these approaches have a long history. The great Greek philosopher Plato and his disciple Aristotle emphasized the concept of an author as an imitator,

but the romantic critics laid the emphasis on the visionary power of the author. However, the modern critics viewed author differently. Freud's theory of neurosis tells that the author indeed is a man of genius but the price of such genius is neurosis. Here the author is seen both as a 'visionary' and a 'mad'. The greatest weakness that the Freudian view presupposes is that the imagination is not a part of normal psychic functioning. This discussion of the author is mainly confined to the content of a literary work and not to the social position of the author nor his creativity and personality. It is the sociology of literature which discusses about the sociology of the writer.

So far as the origin of authorship is considered it is found that the earlier writers were regarded as the prophets or creators because they were much more integrated into the social groups than the estranged writers of the present age. For instance, the epic writers like Homer and Virgil were closely involved with the values, fears, aims and goals of the people expressing their world view. But with the breakdown of organic social solidarity (units) the writers moved away from their integrated position. The rise of capitalism accelerated this process and the fresh genres evolved with the changing economic and social conditions. Throughout history, social factors affected the evolution of literary genres such as the epic, lyric poetry, the essay, drama (comic and tragic) the mime, the courtly romance, the picaresque tale and finally the novel. The important thing to note from the point of view of the sociology of literature is that the early authors were in close touch with their audience, whether court or people. They shared their worldview, and consequently achieved 'totality' in their works, avoiding fragmentation. But when the capitalistic modes of production were adopted, the writers lost their social integration, and their text became more esoteric and partial. As their works did not reach the bulk of the society, they were forced to rely on

the intermediaries such as publishers, distributors, critics, patrons or sponsors and public libraries. The sociology of the writer studies the social influences upon the writer and his works. It suggests clues to the questions concerning to the responsible factors for the writer's interest in specific form of literature, social provenance and status of the writer, his social ideology, social purpose of his works, his family background, the economic position of the writer, the social allegiance, attitudes and ideology of the writer and the role of the patron in their life.

Besides the social influence, the study of social position of writers is very important to study their works. Diana Laurensen has done such a research work:

Throughout the history of literature many writes have held second jobs. Dr. Johnson has been called the first professional man of letters, Milton the first professional poet, and Defoe the first professional novelist: these writers were able to dispense with patronage by means of supplementing their income by journalism. Others started in or continued alternative professions: Sterne began his career as a parson, Smollett as a doctor (133-34).

Laurensen further points out that very few writers like Scott were entirely dependent upon their writing. The writers such as Charles Kingsley, Newman, Sidney Smith, Keble, G. M. Hopkins, William Barnes and George Macdonald were priests or ministers while Walter Pater, Ruskin, Mark Pattison and Charles Reade were academicians. The writers such as Arthur Clough, Matthew Arnold, Macaulay, Lytton, Trollope, J. S. Mill and Thomas Love were public servants. The women writers usually had alternative means of support from family or husband. Considering the social position of the writers, it is found that up to the Elizabethan times most writers came from gentry class. Their

homogeneity strengthened by ties with Oxford and Cambridge. The period 1530- to the Restoration age contained an increase of writers coming from the families of tradesman, merchant and craftsmen; the link with the university continued. But from 1680 to 1730 more writers came from middle class professional background and the period 1730 to 1780 shows more representatives from tradesman, farmers and craftsmen. From 1780 to 1830 we see the emergence of the women writers. This data shows that the majority of the writers came from the middle class professional families most of whom had university education and second jobs. As they were from middle class, the middle class mentality gets expression in their works. The novel became the popular form of literature during the eighteenth and nineteenth century due to the patronage of the middle class (Laurenson133-138).

As every writer is a part of society, his biography can be studied to interpret the social relevance of literary work. The biographical study gives an account about the social provenance, the family background and the economic positions of the writers. However, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, raise a question: 'Does social provenance prescribe social ideology and allegiance?'(96) They think that the social origins of a writer play only a minor part in the production of literature. For example, outside Russia, most communist writers are not proletarian in origin. In the same way with a few exceptions, all modern Russian writers before Chekhov were aristocratic in origin. However, the ideology of the writers and their social and political views play an important role in creativity of the writers. This problem of ideology leads to a sociology of writer as a type or type at a particular time and place.

The sociology of the writer also studies the role of the patron, the response of the audience, the role of the critic, government policies, the economic conditions of the writer and the reward systems. The history of

literature shows that the artists or writers in the early stage depended closely on the favour of the patrons and the public. For example, the great classicist Virgil, Horace and Ovid were dependent on the bounty and goodwill of Augustus and Maecenas. This role of kings has been replaced by the publishers in the modern times. Like publishers, the audience also plays an important role in the rise of both the writer and his works. According to Wellek and Warren “a study of the economic basis of literature and of the social status of the writer is inextricably bound up with a study of the audience he addresses and upon which he is dependent financially” (99). They also point out that the dependence of the author on the audience was prevalent in greater number in earlier society. The works of the writer never transmit unless it pleases the audience. However, this author-audience relationship gets affected when the other intermediaries like critics, censorship and Medias increased. Like these intermediaries, government also supports and fosters literature by offering different facilities to the writers. In fact, the most obvious cause of a work of literature is its creator, and hence the discussion of the life and personality of the writer is very essential for the study of literary works. Besides the sociology of writer, the patronage and the reward system play a crucial role in the development of the writer's creativity.

### **1.5.3. The Role of the Patron:**

Patron is one of the important gatekeepers of literature. The writer gets the protection and support from the patrons. In return to these benefits he offers them loyalty and fame. In fact, it is hardly possible to give the exact identity of the patrons due to their changing roles and identity. In the past the court or king was the patron but the place of king was taken by the publisher, booksellers, censors and readers in the course of time. While explaining the relationship between the author and his patron Laurensen states:

The central aspects of patronage relevant to sociology of literature is that it constitutes an exchange relationship between a pair of persons of unequal statuses; one of these, the patron, giving the other, the author, the certain material or protective benefits which enable the literary work to be produced and distributed in an uncertain or even hostile environment (97).

This view makes it clear that the author gets from his patron the necessary leisure for the gestation and creation of books.

As a manipulator of linguistic symbols, the writer has a significant role in the society. He provides both pleasure and teaching through his works. With the rise of capitalism, his position has become very hazardous and marginal. So he prefers to please patrons for the fame and recognition. Like authors, the role of patrons is also risky. He has to invest a lot in a risk. Often he has to support both his clients and the writers. The ambiguous messages of the writer sometimes contain threats to the structure of the society. In such a situation he has to work very sensibly. The history of literature shows that patrons play an important role in creation and success of literary works. Before the rise of capitalism, the artist performed a two-fold task: the expression of the need of his social groups, and the ordering and structuring of his own experience of social reality. As a result they were honored and respected by the patrons. This two-fold task of the writers got intertwined in the ancient world. The writers upheld the values of classical temper promoted by Augustus. In England this system of patronage continued till the nineteenth century, but with the rise of mercantile temper, it was decayed.

Considering the history of patronage, it is found that between 1688 and 1721 a peculiar type of patronage, which placed writers in a peculiar position, became prevalent. Ministers of state, in particular Harley and Bolingbroke for the Tories, and Dorset and Montague for the Whigs paid

authors well to write polemics, and to celebrate or denigrate suitable events and personage. The House of Commons was very powerful institution, with Ministers in a dominating position employing authors and rewarding them with regular salaries and pensions, lucrative posts and protection (Laurenson 111-112). However, these political patrons expected from the writers satire and lampoonery useful for their party, and the needy writers write for their patrons. But after the death of Queen Anne in 1714, the political patronage of writers declined. So the writers turned to a new type of literature which was in demand by the rising middle classes especially leisured women. Thus, the publisher, the booksellers and journals became the new patrons of the writers.

The relationship between patrons and writers is a crucial social factor because it affects the scope, content and even genre of literary works. There was the close relationship between the patrons and writers during the 18th century. The growth in the circulating libraries and a swelling new middle class, and improvements in printing, publishing and transportation made this relationship very close. The writers were able to develop more prestigious image among the readers by catering their tastes. They also looked towards the interests of not only the readers but also the publishers and distributors. But, by the end of the 19th century, the circulating libraries lost their hold on the readers due to the emergence of cheap novels. As a result, the average literary remuneration declined and the writers once again became unprotective and open to the dictates of competitive market. When the influence of these libraries ended; their place was taken by book clubs and bookshops, public libraries and mass marketing.

The emergence of novel is the most important event in the history of English literature. Instead of catering the taste of the aristocratic class, and depending upon the patrons, the writers like Defoe, Richardson, and

Fielding wrote nonreligious tales of dreams and romance for the new middle class. As a result new reading public responded novels. Their taste was also fostered by the family magazines like *The Tatler*, *The Rambler*, *The Spectator* and the circulating libraries of the day. The improvements in education also increased the total number of literate people in the lower middle class and upper working class. The Copyright Act of 1709 gave authors property rights over their products. Printing and binding were also refined. In 1860 the Web Press was introduced printing on a continuous roll paper. In 1870 the practical type setting machines appeared and at the same time more papers were produced. As a result the price of papers dropped. The export duty on papers was also removed. Due to the advancement in each and every field the books became more attractive, cheaper and mass produced. As a result, the writers got less remuneration and publishers became more powerful. They employed authors and printers, and organized their business on bureaucratic and contractual line. They regularly contracted with the booksellers, agents and critics. So the role of agents and critics also developed. The writer also got an opportunity in the field of literary criticism. The *Edinburg Review*, *Westminster Review*, *Quarterly* etc. took services with intellectual and often political perspective. Thus the writing became a branch of English commerce during the nineteenth century and the writers became the suppliers of the products. In short, the patrons performed the role of the savior of the author and the tastemaker of the readers.

#### **1.5.4. The Role of the Gatekeepers:**

One cannot think of a text without gatekeepers. It is the gatekeepers who produce the text and make it available to readers. While explaining the concept of gatekeepers John Hall writes:



The concept of the 'gatekeepers' has been developed by the mass communications sociology to refer to those whose role is to that of selecting the type of communication that the audience is to receive. This concept can usefully be applied to the sociology of literature; indeed that the concept needs to be applied can be seen from the general tentativeness of the discussion and from the complete absence of any discussion of literary agents and literary prizes (101).

He further points out that gatekeeper of literature can exercise their function both positively and negatively. Positively they can uphold the writers and their works and make the specific genre as well as work popular. They may influence the reading public by displaying the qualities and merits of the text and make the specific text available to every reader. The gatekeepers, on the other hand, can influence the text negatively. For instance the publisher can prevent manuscripts reaching the market, the critics can prejudice the reading public by focusing the shortcomings of the text, and the distributors can create the problems in reaching the text to the readers. In short, the fate of a literary text depends upon gatekeepers. The major gatekeepers of literary works are: publishers, distributors, censors, critics, and public libraries and all of them are interdependent on one another.

#### **i. The Role of the Publisher and Distributor:**

The social position of the writer rests upon the complex structure of publishing, distributing and reward system. The publisher gives the writer security, fame and financial support. If the publisher is a man of developed taste and exacting standards, the writers are fortunate; if not, they have to please him at the expenses of their artistic integrity. In this regard the publisher has considerate influence on the work of the writers. Milton Albrecht observes:

The publisher is the crucial figure in the distribution of an author's work, and his enterprise, resources, and generosity affect the size of rewards for all concerned. Authors frequently move from one publisher to another in an attempt to maximize their income or to find more congenial relations, but, ultimately, writers are entirely dependent upon some publisher unless they are able to pay for publication of their work (350).

In short, the fate of both the writer and his text thoroughly depends upon the ideology of the publisher. The sociology of literature studies all the problems and questions concerning the writer-publisher relationship such as; how do publishers affect writers and their works? How does a book get published? What is the role of the publisher in the creation of the book? What is the relationship between the writers and publishers?

As an individual, the publisher spends time and money in bringing the physical existence of book in market for public purposes by taking the risk of the costs of manufacture and distribution. In fact, his business is highly risky and cautious. While producing a book, he has to perform the different roles concerning to contacting and contracting the author, copy editing, printing, proof reading, fact-checking, type setting, graphic designing, cover designing, photography and image selecting, paper quality, binding methods, advertising, marketing and distributing. Besides these technical aspects, he has to follow the legal stages such as agreement with the writer, royalty rates, copy rights and licensing of photograph form photo gallery. He also performs the role of the patron of the writer. While publishing a book he has to think of the taste of the readers, and artistic sense of the writer. In fact, his role is the mediator between the writer and the reader. Although a publisher performs different roles for production and distribution of literature Robert

Escarpit reduced his functions in three words-- “choose, manufacture, and distribute” (1970: 400). In the very process of publishing the publisher has to spend time and money.

The major task of the publisher is to maintain the good relations with the distributors and the circulating libraries. In order to maintain these relations he has to think of desires and tastes of the reading community, and the possible demands of the distributors and the circulating libraries. He must take into account the aesthetic and moral systems of the society. The author makes his literary work available to publisher who polishes that work for the marketplace, produces it attractively and appropriately for its audiences, and places it in the hands of as many buyers as possible through effective marketing. While describing the relationship between the author, publisher and reader, Robert Escarpit observes:

Caught between the author's desires and the public's demands, whatever he imagines them to be, the modern publisher does not limit himself to the passive role of conciliator. He attempts to influence his authors in the interest of the public and the public in the interest of the author; in a word, he tries to induce a compatible writer-public relationship (1970: 401).

This writer-public relationship is studied in the sociology of literature.

Until 1880, the position of the writer was comparable to that of salary earners. For instance, George Eliot earned £ 800 as the copyright for *Adam Bede*. The successful writers got benefit from their patrons or publishers. But at the end of the nineteenth century the position of the author got declined. The publisher began to issue the cheap one-volume edition of three-decker at a very low price. The public was becoming interested in a free type of literature. As a result, the shorter and cheaper novels were very popular. The publishers also denied giving royalties in

advance. These changes brought insecurity to the author, and the gap between writer and publisher widened. The role of the publisher in the nineteenth century shows that the writers were thoroughly dependent upon the publishers (Laurenson 132).

So far as the author –publisher relationship is considered it is found that author-publisher relationship is collaborative and not adversarial. It is true that the publishers publish the novel by considering the public opinion and by the power of the great circulating libraries. In order to cater the taste of the readers, they insist the writers to change and revise the passage and sometime ask to drop the passage which excites the sensual desire of the readers. According to John Hall the Victorian publishers though very powerful were not free to ignore public opinion, especially if the feelings of that opinion were interpreted for them by Mudie, the head of the most important circulating libraries. In order to prove this he states: “In 1851 Chapman rejected Eliza Lynn's novel *Realities* since she would not revise passages which excited the sensual nature and were therefore injurious” (103). In order to fulfill the demand of the reading public, the publisher persuades the writer to change or revise his ideas. Sometimes under the fear of libel action the publisher dares not to publish the literary work. The acceptance or the rejection of the literary work is thoroughly in the hands of the publisher. V. D. Gupta observes: “One’s rise and fall and even the recognition as a writer depends upon the publisher or editor... the publisher remains the most important unit regarding the publication and distribution of literature. This makes the study of writer-publisher relationship much important” (75). He further points out that the interest oriented relationship between the writer and publisher, the role of publisher in the production of literature, the rise and fall of the popularity of the writer, the impact of the negative attitude of publishers on the sensitivity of the writers and his

works, and the attitude of the writers towards the publisher are the most relevant aspects to be studied by the sociologists of literature. In short, the attitude of the publisher really affects the writer and his works.

Though publisher plays a vital role in the existence of the book, its fate thoroughly depends upon the distributors and this distribution of literary works among the masses is an important aspect of study in the sociology of literature. During the Victorian period the distribution of books was mainly done by the circulating libraries. They exercised considerable power over both publishers and authors. When the influence of these libraries ended, its place was taken by book clubs bookshops, public libraries and mass marketing. In fact, the success of both the writer and his works depends upon the role of distributors because they persuade the reading public towards the specific books, and make manuscripts of the literary works available to the readers.

The role of publisher is risky but the role of distributors is very profitable. The writer gets maximum 10 to 15 percent remuneration for each sold book but the distributor gets 30 to 40 percent profit for each sold book. In order to get this profit he makes contact with the readers, book lovers, librarians of schools, colleges, universities, and different academic and cultural institutions. In short, the role of the both publishers and distributors is very important in the creation and success of the literary work. We can not think of a literary text by ignoring the publishers and distributors. The sociology of literature studies the different strategies of the publishers and distributors.

## **ii. The Role of the Critics:**

The main task of the critic is to educate the general public in matters of artistic taste and discrimination. The general task of the critic during the eighteenth and nineteenth century was the appreciation and evaluation of literature. So they were called as 'men of letters'. Their

main role was to preserve learning and taste of the learned people. As the taste of the increased reading public developed, the level of critics raised and they became the tastemakers of the readers and performed the role of interpreter and guide. Moreover, this specific role of the critics has been changed in the contemporary period. According to Judith R. Kramer “the social role of the literary critic, defined here as mediator between artist and audience, and primarily interested in shaping literary judgments, has undergone a number of important changes since its emergence in the eighteenth century” (437). He presents the detailed data of the social role of the literary critic in both England and America during the past three centuries. His data shows that the modern critic, in both England and America, occupies a special place in the art institution. He now writes for a select group of his literary peers. He is not devoted to the advancement of literature or with raising the level of literary taste. The modern critic is supported chiefly by universities and foundations, and he regards his work as a specialized type of ‘literature’.

Terry Eagleton, in *The Function of Criticism*, gives us a comprehensive overview of the history of criticism, from the *Spectator* to Post-Structuralism. He points out that the eighteenth century critic was not a specialist, but more of a companion to the reader. Samuel Johnson made literary criticism popular for a general reading public. Focusing on what he called “common sense,” Johnson saw the role of critic as that of teacher. In the early nineteenth century the role of the critic became more political, reflecting the revolutionary mood of the developing class struggle in society. The critic was not then a literary “specialist,” but often a political commentator whose criticism was informed by ideological interests. Matthew Arnold, in his essay “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,” considered literature as a substitute for religion. T.S. Eliot, echoing Arnold’s idea of the poet as moral guide and

instructor, sees the role of the critic as an upholder of public morals, and in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of criticism* he writes that every serious critic of poetry is a serious moralist as well. The role of literary criticism has been changed dramatically since the time of Eliot. Criticism today is seen either as part of the public relations work of the literary industry, or an internal matter for academics. Accordingly, criticism today lacks all substantive social function that we get in the time of Addison and Steele. In a similar vein, Ronan McDonald, in his book entitled *The Death of the Critic*, laments the passing of the high-profile critic, such as Eliot, who has become a rarity in the twentieth century, and claims that this comes at a time when the critic is needed more than ever to shape public taste. The popular widening of criticism today, where everyone can be critic, and where every blogger can express an opinion on literature and the arts, has meant the death of the critic and the voice of informed authority, to be replaced by a proliferation of voices of mediocrity. Any person from type-writer to the reader is regarded in the sociology of literature as a critic. For instance, a librarian while distributing or lending a book gives the information of book to the reader, a book-seller while selling it suggests the buyer about the specific books, even the teachers in the schools and colleges persuades their students to read particular books. The discussion of books in the conferences and seminars and even among the friends is also a part of criticism of books. All these critics play an important role in the success of literary works, their role should be discussed while analyzing and interpreting the works of literature. The sociology of literature studies the role all these mediators a literary work.

### **iii. The Role of Libraries:**

Libraries played an important role in catering the literary taste of the reading public and distributing literary works among the masses. John Hall remarks “No study of the role of gatekeepers is complete without

some comment on public libraries since these, especially since the important act of 1919, are designed to provide access to books for all the population” (118). The libraries not only distribute the books but also affect the structure, plot, style, and even imaginative world of the novel. As the owners of the private circulating libraries during eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were acting both as a censor and the controller of the literary products; the subject, scope, and morality of the novel was controlled by them. In this regard Laurensen states: “Until the 1880s the lending libraries- Mr. Mudie’s in particular- employed the writer on contract to produce three-decker novels to be rented to families with leisure on their hand” (119). He also points out that the circulating libraries knew the taste of the readers which they communicated to the writers. In short, the libraries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries played an important role in the name and fame of the writers and their works.

Historically, public libraries have a strong tradition in Anglo-American societies. The earliest public library in England was established at the London Guildhall in 1425. During the 17th century, many famous collegiate and town libraries were founded throughout the country. At the turn of the 18th century, libraries were becoming increasingly public and were more frequently lending libraries. The establishment of circulating libraries by booksellers and publishers during the Victorian period provided a means of gaining profit and creating social centers within the community. The circulating libraries not only provided a place to sell books, but also a place to lend books for a price. These circulating libraries provided a variety of materials including the increasingly popular novels on subscription.

The increase in secular literature encouraged the spread of lending libraries. In the mid-eighteenth century the commercial subscription



libraries were established. Steven Fischer estimates that in 1790, there were 'about six hundred rental and lending libraries, with a customer of some fifty thousand. The mid to late 18th century saw a virtual epidemic of feminine reading as novels became more and more popular. Another factor in the growth of subscription libraries was the increasing cost of books. Apart from the increase in the prices there was a difficulty to procure books outside London, since local booksellers could not afford to carry large stocks. Commercial libraries, since they were usually associated with booksellers and a greater number of patrons, were able to accumulate greater numbers of books. The United Public Library was said to have a collection of some 52,000 volumes--twice as many as any private subscription library in the country at that period.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, libraries were part of an awakening consciousness that saw education as an instrument for social change. After World War II, mainstream libraries gradually started to extend their services to community groups and, by the 1960s, a special focus was set on reaching marginalized groups. In the following years, libraries played an important role in national literacy campaigns. These centres began to explore new relationships with their users, valuing local culture, supporting community development, and preserving indigenous knowledge.

Today the role of libraries and professional librarians is changing worldwide. They are no longer passive keepers and preservers of books; rather, they have evolved to become facilitators of information and lifelong learning opportunities with an emphasis on service. It is true that the role of the libraries and librarians is crucial in the emergence and success of the writer and his works. Besides the role of the libraries, the readers also play an important role in placing the fate of the writer and his works.

#### **iv. The Role of the Reading Public:**

The term 'reading public' suggests both 'the ability to read' and 'the habit of reading' and both ideas have importance in the sociology of literature. In the middle ages reading public had neither social status nor even the mark of necessary achievement for the members of the nobility. But with the rise of the middle class the reading ability got a mark of social status. During the 15th century the spread of reading habit among the middle class supported a periodical literature. This support of the middle class was mainly responsible for the rise of the English novel. According to Hall, "During the course of the century the reading public grows sufficiently to support nearly eight hundred journal and periodical. This growth continued in the next century and was helped significantly by the serializing of novels" (126). The impact of this practice resulted in many countries. As a result the production of books increased and the writers could earn tremendous sum. "In England", says Hall, "the growth of the reading public can be seen from increased book production: 100 books appeared in 1600; 600 hundred in 1820; and 2600 in 1850" (126).

The reading habit was basically limited to the middle class and their purpose of the reading was amusement and instruction. While comparing the reading public in the middle class with the aristocratic class in England, John Hall quotes Gedin as: "In this country there probably are not less than 2, 00,000 persons who read for amusement and instructions, among the middling classes of society. In the higher classes there are not as many as 20,000" (14). The sociological study of the reading public shows the reading habit of the middle class reader has flourished the publishing industry and created the significant literary culture in the history of literature and the major responsible factor for the rise of the new reading public is the rise of capitalism. In this context Diana Laurenson observes:

The rise of capitalism produced a structural shift in society. Division of labour increased and the new middle classes emerged. Entrepreneurs, merchants and shopkeepers increased in number, and new professions were born: doctors, accountants, businessmen, bookkeeper, clerks, engineers, factory managers; many were nonconformist in religion and outlook... they set up homes in wives, daughters and servants had leisure on their hands in a world where leisure pursuits were circumscribed. Here was a potential audience for the new novel (123).

This shows that the new reading public responded instantly to the novels of notably domestic setting and adventures. As a result the novel form flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries and its credit goes to the reading public. As the reading public plays a determining role in the creation and success of literary works, it should be studied while evaluating a literary work. It is in the sociology of literature that we get the study of the reading public as a determinant of literature.

Taking into consideration the role of the gatekeepers in the creation and success of literary works, it is found that a literary work is surrounded by the gatekeepers as shown in the following diagram:



### **1.6. Theoretical approaches of the sociology of literature:**

The major concern of the sociology of literature is the relationship between literature and society and this relationship has been conceived in different ways by the sociologists, historians and the literary critics. They discuss different theoretical approaches and methods of the sociology of literature. In his *The Sociology of Art and Literature* M. C. Albrecht points out that the sociology of literature encompasses a variety of viewpoints of the sociologists, historians and critics rather than a clearly defined subject matter or general theory. Their views about the sociology of literature have been manifested mainly in two ways. The first way is historical, the effort to describe historical trends in art or literature, to trace their growth, achievements and changes over time. The second way is an attempt to discover how the forms of art come into being and to account for their qualities and styles. It assumes the influence of the various conditioning factors on the world view of the writer and his works. For the better understanding of the theoretical approaches these ways are broadly divided into: the realist and pragmatist.

The first and the most common approach to the relation of literature and society is “the study of works of literature as social documents, as assumed picture of social reality” (Wellek & Warren 102). As a social document, literature can be made to yield the outlines of social history. This mirror image approach has a long and distinguished history. The critics like Madame de Stale, De Bonald, H. A. Taine, Richard Hoggard and the early Marxists advocated this documentary aspect of literature arguing that through the careful reading of any nation’s literature one can tell the identity of that nation. This approach states that literature is the direct reflection of various facets of social structure. The conception of literature as a mirror of the society provides a fairly accurate picture of the increasing trends such as industrialization,

marxism, capitalism, globalization, and commercialization. It also reflects values, the standards of behaviour, attitudes towards working and middle classes and aspirations of the people.

The second pragmatic approach to the sociology of literature deals with the relation of the individual authors to the socio-cultural circumstances of the era in which they live and write and the conditions of the creation and production of literature. It lays emphasis on the world view and creativity of the writers and the role of gatekeepers in the creation and success of literature. For instance, Robert Escarpit's *The Sociology of Literature* (1970) explains that the literary production and consumption affect the form and content of literary works. The social position and the role of the writers in the past were based upon the patronage and reward system. But this patronage system is now replaced by the publishers and distributors. The growth of the middle class readers has also shifted the writer's position from one of dependence to one of a profession. With the rise of the middle class reading public, lending libraries, cheap publishing and commercialization of literature, the writer's position in a mass society has become extremely important. The pragmatic approach of the sociology of literature studies all these factors. The works of the new generation of critics support this approach. Jane Ruth and Janet Wolff have discussed the approaches of the sociology of literature in five broad conceptions. It might be useful to look at these approaches to understand both society and literary works.

### **1.6.1. The sociologically aware study of literature:**

The preliminary step of interpreting a literary text as explained in *Sociology of Literature: Theoretical Approaches* by Jane Ruth and Janet Wolff is the sociologically aware study of literature (3). The major focus of this study is on social context of literature. The sociologists like Hoggard, Herder, Taine and Madam de Stale and the early Marxists

discuss the social contexts such as race, milieu, and moment, base and superstructure to the study of literature. The development of sociological theory is not at issue in this type of study. The findings and concepts of sociology are generally used for the study of literature. Bradbury's *The social context of literature* (1971) and Raymond William's *The Country and City* (1975) are the best examples of this approach.

The hermeneutics tradition is also seen as an example of the sociologically aware study of literature. To explain the nature of hermeneutics Janet Wolff states: "Hermeneutics is the study of understanding, especially the task of understanding texts" (19). The sociological study of literature presupposes an understanding and interpretation of the literature studied in the context of society. In order to study literary works in the theoretical approach of hermeneutics one has to undertake a survey of the selected authors and his social background, or a novel and its conditions of production and reception.

Gadmer, the founder of hermeneutics, explains hermeneutics as the basis for creative reexamination of literary interpretation theory. There are two theories of hermeneutic approach: The first theory is illustrated by the works of Palmer and of Gadmer and the second by the writings of Betti and of Hirsch. Gadmer's work explains that the subject and object of a literary text are historically situated and the meaning of a literary text is bound up with the socio-historical situation of its genesis. According to him the meaning of the text is not constant. The interpretation changes with the situation of society and period of the interpreter. So interpretation is always reinterpretation. However, the second theory of Betty and Hirsch explains the valid interpretation or sets limits to comprehension. According to them there can be determinate meaning--the hermeneutic autonomy of text. These approaches emphasize on the socio-historical situations of the text (Wolff 18-29).

### **1.6.2. Literature as a Kind of Sociology:**

According to Jane Ruth and Janet Wolff literature has been used by some writers as a kind of sociology (3). Sociology is generally regarded as the science of society. It studies social institutions scientifically. Literature also studies social institutions scientifically. So it is used as a kind of sociology. In this context Routh and Wolff state: “Literature is seen as a source of data, often data of a type which would not otherwise be accessible to a sociologist, and as a carrier of crystallized values and attitudes, as well as information about institutions” (3). They further point out that Lewis Coser’s collection of excerpts from novels in *sociology through literature* (1963) is the best example of this approach. This book of Lewis illustrates that the description of concepts like bureaucracy and deviance are only found in works of literature. The sociologists study these aspects of social life through literature. They get some hints from literary works to study the social life adequately. Like sociology, literature too is the study of social life. The fact is that we are likely to confirm the validity of literary evidence by sociological and historical facts. The best example of this view is Rockwell’s ‘Fact in Fiction’ (1974). In short, both sociology and literature are not far apart as one might think. The only difference between them is that unlike sociology literature is concerned with generalized reality of society. The sociologists take this generalized reality as a source of data and transform it into a specific expression.

### **1.6.3. Social Genesis of Literature:**

The main theoretical problem at the centre of the sociology of literature is the social genesis of literature. The major question discussed here are: how does a literary work arise in society? The answer of this question is found in the works of Escarpit and Lucian Goldman who have

studied social forces affecting literary production. Escarpit's works such as *The Book Revolution* (1960) and *The Sociology of Literature* (1970) analyse the conditions of production of the book and of mass literature where as Goldman articulates the social genesis of literature through structural concepts. In this regard Goldman states:

The essential relationship between art and social life doesn't reside in the content of a work of art offering a description of the events and characteristics of that life. Rather, the relationship rests in the categories which organize both the day to day consciousness of a social group and the imaginary universe created by the writers" (151).

Goldman believes that the mental structure is the base of literary works, but this mental structure is not an individual but social phenomena. As this structure has its genesis in social action, it is not located in individual consciousness but in trans-individual subject i.e. non-conscious structure. While explaining Goldman's concept of structure Jane Ruth quotes "Goldman maintained that the structure of the writing, painting, conceptual thought and so on of certain exceptional individuals might coincide with the mental structure corresponding to one of the transindividual subjects to whom they are linked" (152). The views of both Escarpit and Goldman clearly show that society is the base of all literary works. An individual's thought or feeling can only be understood in the context of social forces and the structures of collective consciousness.

#### **1.6.4. Literature as a Social Product and Social Force:**

The critics like Terry Eagleton conceive literature as both social product and social force. Literature is situated and limited by certain socio-historical forces and at the same time it involves in the process of



social development. He explains this twofold nature of literature in his essay “Two Approaches in the Sociology of Literature”. In order to prove this Routh and Wolff State:

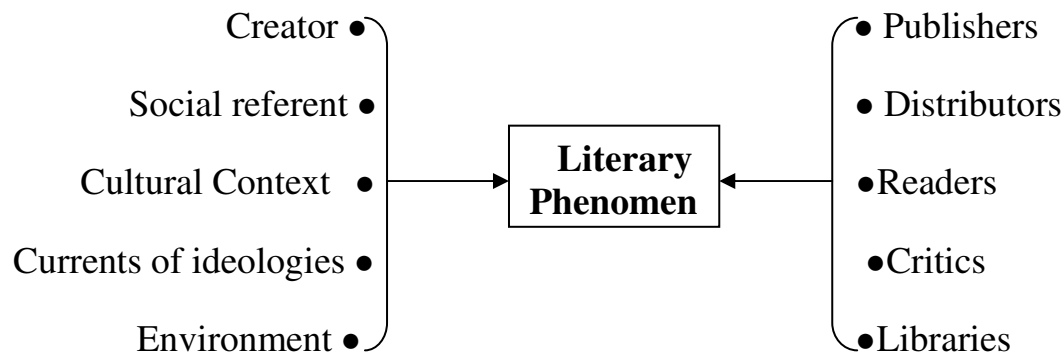
On the micro-social level of the writer and the reader, the work of Walter Benjamin has emphasized the nature of writing as production, which is both socially and historically situated and limited, and at the same time capable of political education and social transformation (04).

It is also found that the writer as a social product is recognized both determined and determining. The Marxist approach shows that literature is both a social product and social force. The pragmatic approach believes the ideology of gatekeepers as the social force.

**1.6.5.** The final approach focuses on the ways in which literature may affect society and effect social change. This approach can be perceived as a social problem. For instance, the literary works concerning obscenity or pornography may affect society. However, Brecht sees it as a positive feature of literature that committed socialists must use to advantages (Ruth and Wolff 5)

The above mentioned approaches of the sociological study show that the sociology of literature is very essential for the analysis and interpretation of literature. In fact, these approaches and method are not developed in a single period. The several critics and social thinkers contributed intensely and seriously in the development of this theory. The theoretical premises of the sociology of literature from Madame de Stale to the modern sociologists and literary critics show that one can not assess and analyse a literary work without the socio-cultural context, the sociology and psychology of the writer, and the social institutions and determinants of literature. Sociology of literature is, thus, a cluster of the

currents of different ideologies. It shows that a literary work is not an individual but a collective phenomenon. It is shaped by the several social aspects as shown in the following diagram:



In a nutshell, sociology of literature studies the role of these aspects in the existence and success of a literary work. In order to know the sociology of Orwell's novels it is necessary to examine these aspects. The major objectives of the succeeding chapters of this research are to find out the role of the social aspects discussed in this chapter in shaping the ideology or worldview of George Orwell and the creation and success of his novels.

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