

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION:

Society is an ever-present institution which shapes and moulds human life. Humans are born into a society and they grow up in a society; they live in a society. Throughout our lives, everyone gets influenced by the society in every way. The importance of society is undeniable as it formulates certain rules and regulations for each and every human being, thereby, makes it necessary for every individual to control their instinctive behaviour so that peace can be maintained in the society. The set rules and norms work as the binding principles which not only control human movement but also guide them and give them a direction. Therefore, individuals, devoid of their instinctive behaviour, form a whole and make a peaceful communal life possible.

However, at the same time, the individuals can feel that their genuine rights have been taken over by the society by defining limitations to their movements. The individuals are required to follow the conventions if they are to be part of the society. The conventions basically deal with the social behaviour, the social role, proper emotional display etc. of the individual. Therefore, the individuals might feel that it is, in a way, an unnecessary control on them by the society. Because the roles are defined, because the behaviour is controlled and because all the aspects of human life are more or less defined by society, it becomes difficult for individuals to live on their own terms. It is very often seen in Indian culture that society is given priority over individual choices. People in India tend to give priority to other's concept about oneself. This

particular aspect of Indian society has possessed much control over individual life. Starting from education, job, marriage, to basic behaviours, everything is looked at through societal perspective. In Indian societies, marriage is probably the mostly socially viewed aspect of an individual's life. The convention defines clearly whom one can marry and whom one should not. Social standards, financial condition, and several other ritualistic similarities are considered necessary more than the feelings of the two people about to get married. Likewise, in other parts of the world too, there are certain conventions controlling certain aspects of human lives. Due to all these reasons, it becomes crystal clear that society at times, hinders the movement of individuals. Therefore, the struggle of individual with the society becomes imminent.

Individual versus society can be understood as a theme of Camus' *The Stranger*. No doubt that this novel is embedded with existential philosophy but the struggle of an individual with the society serves as the basis of understanding the sociological issue in the novel. Meursault's action and behaviours are odd to the reader because of the pre-conceived idea everyone holds regarding human behaviour which is obviously fed by the society. It is not that only the society in the novel finds him odd but the readers also tend to blame him for his unexpected behaviour. The analysis of the novel has made it clear that an individual's position in a society is always compromised. Meursault does not follow the conventions and lives on his own terms but he is accused for that and ultimately treated as a monster.

On the other hand, an individual, who is ready to follow all the conventions, does everything that the outside agencies instruct to do; he/she also ends up miserably. The society is not a safe place for a person who listens to everybody, because, the powerful people, who hold the power of the group, exploit that person to their need.

Ellison's *Invisible Man* ends up living in a basement because he has finally realised that the society is not a haven for a person who listens to everybody and is considerate. An innocent person's innocence and humbleness is not a strength in a hypocrite society but is a liability which makes him/her vulnerable and people tend to use that person without considering his/her consent. The protagonist of Ellison's novel does everything others say but is never rewarded for all the personal sacrifices he made. Despite of being there always, he is ignored, used and judged. He is treated as nobody and thus, he remains invisible throughout.

The reason behind this imminent struggle is the feeling of infringement on the part of the individual who feels that his/her individuality is not safe since an intruder like society is ever present out there. The mode of struggle can be different depending upon how the individual decides to react. However, it is a fact that an individual is never free from the clutches of society. For example, Meursault's life long indifference and withdrawn has not given him any prize but only condemnation. Again, total agreement of any form is equally harmful. For example, Ellison's protagonist, even after all the sacrifices he had made, is used by the people for their gain. Therefore, it can be understood that in both the ways, there is no way out for an individual.

The novelists' use of the title in both the novels appears equally significant in this regard. Both the titles refer to the individual involved and both define the individual's position in relation to the society. Camus's 'The Stranger' refers to the man who behaves 'strangely' and not like everyone else in the society. He lives in the society but due to his difference, he is looked at as a stranger, an outsider by the society. Similarly, Ellison's title 'Invisible Man' refers to the protagonist of the novel who is invisible throughout in relation to the society. He is present always but his position is

invisible in the society as his existence as an individual is denied by everyone and is exploited by everyone for their gain without considering what he wants. Therefore, the title becomes very significant while discussing the individual's position in the society.

The movement of Meursault is of total withdrawn from the society. He moves back to his personal space and focuses only on what he wants without considering what others might make out of his behaviour. But the movement of Ellison's protagonist is forward towards the society and he wishes for total inclusion. In the process, he has to pay a heavy cost; he loses his dignity, his past and his identity. And his final withdrawn from the society to a manhole, his literal invisibility from the society is what has made him realise his worth.

In both the novels, the struggle of the individual is resolved in an interesting manner. The removal of the individual from the scenario is the ultimate solution offered by the writer. Meursault's condemnation to death and Invisible Man's hiding inside a basement are the ways of solving the issue of the struggle which makes the understanding even stronger that there is no place for an individual who intends to keep his/her individuality intact even within the society. The removal of the individuals in both the novels clearly indicates that in such cases, the solution is removal which indicates the surrender of the individual or the winning of the society.

Both the authors have resolved the imminent struggle between individual and society in more or less similar ways. Camus's Meursault is ultimately removed from the society on account of his stance against society. No doubt that he did not react violently but his direct refusal of the convention, his uninterestedness in lying to appear agreeable are the ways in which he sticks to his individuality and protects it. But this is what exactly the society is not ready to accept. In a society, where everyone displays

(irrespective of personal choices) similar type of attitude, Meursault's arrival threatens this integrity. Everyone was confused regarding his nature and ultimately, he is trialed for a murder but is condemned for his indifference rather than on legal terms "In our society any man who does not cry at his mother's funeral is liable to be condemned to death" (Camus, 2010, 118). The issue of the struggle is resolved by removing the individual from the scenario which clearly indicates that there is no place for a person who is distinct and different from others, who is not ready to go with the flow and who has decided own way of life.

Ellison has made the narrative in retrospect. The prologue tells that the protagonist is living in a basement hiding from everyone but is still fighting with the people. The final withdrawal of the protagonist from the society to a hidden place is indicative that a person who is too considerate and is always ready to accept whatever others have to offer will end up losing his/her essence. Such individual's value will be determined by others and once he/she has been exploited fully, there will be no place for him/her. The protagonist realises his value only after getting into the manhole and he says "I was whole" (Ellison, 2016, 551). In the epilogue, the protagonist says that he has lived invisibly for long and from now on, he will take up his social responsibility but following his invisibility. Like Camus's novel, here also, the individual has been removed from the society at the end. Even if he is going to take up his social responsibility, he will continue to live invisibly.

The problem between the two has been resolved by removing the individual from the scenario which is indicative of the authority of the society over the individual. The authority is found to be held by the society and not by the individuals. The society has ultimately decided what to do with Meursault and it made the Invisible Man to go

literally invisible. In both the cases, social control has been exercised by the society and the result of such control is not always beneficial for individual. In the case with Ellison's protagonist, the control is seen, when he defines his position in relation to everyone around him. His understanding of himself, his value and his worth is determined by the society. He looks at his "self as a reflection of group definition", his conception of himself is "the reflection in his consciousness of how others regard him, how they have defined him, what they conceive his role to be..." (Roucek, 1956, 38). Therefore, his dependence on the group is imminent.

However, the social control exercised upon Meursault is religious as well as ethical control. No matter what kind of process involved, the basic objective of all forms of social control is "training the individual mind for the uniformity of behaviour" (Roucek, 1956, 102). Religious control refers to a kind of control on human behaviour that is done by referring to religious aspects. The Chaplain's insistence on God and the Magistrate's calling him 'Anti-Christ' are the fine example of religious control tried to be exercised upon him. In terms of ethical control, the prosecutor's constant emphasis of the fact of how inconsiderate son Meursault was along with repeating Meursault's way of behaviour can be taken into account. Meursault was attacked directly following the code of ethics. Those who do not conform go through the punishment of non-conformity. Meursault has been removed from the social scenario at the end which is the kind of punishment he got due to his non-conformity.