

## I. Introduction

This is a short research focused on Arthur Koestler's famous novel *The Gladiators*. It tries to analyze the political disillusionment and the vision of politics in *The Gladiators*.

### Arthur Koestler as a Novelist

Arthur Koestler was born in Budapest on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1905. He was the only child of a Hungarian father and a Viennese mother. His father was a prosperous industrialist until he went bankrupt during the inflation following the First World War. Upto 1914 they lived in Budapest; during the war years partly, and after the war permanently in Vienna.

Koestler's earliest memories group themselves around three dominant themes: guilt, fear, and loneliness. He states, "All my earliest memories seem to group themselves about three dominant themes: guilt, fear and loneliness. Of the three, fear stands out most vividly and persistently. My formative experiences seem to consist of a series of shocks" (36). And so Koestler's reminiscences of childhood are almost invariably unhappy.

His parents were both of Jewish origin, but completely estranged from the Judaic religion and tradition, and he was brought up in the same assimilated, liberal spirit. Nevertheless, as an undergraduate, he joined a Zionist dwelling fraternity, and became one of the founders of the Austrian branch of Jabotinsky's league of Zionist Activists. Thus he came to Judaism from outside, as it were; a volunteer, rather than a victim of persecution. A few months after he broke off his studies, he set out for the Holy Land to join one of the early Kibbutzim Heftzeba, on mount Gilboa – to till the soil of Utopia.

While the conflict between Koestler's parents was at its height, the First World War broke out, ruining his father's business. The family left the spacious apartment in Budapest and moved to a boarding house in Vienna. From then on they never had a permanent home moving between the two cities and staying in a succession of furnished lodgings. No doubt the boy's loveliness and unhappiness had accelerated his intellectual while retarding his emotional development. In his early teens he was fluent in German, French and English as well as Hungarian.

Arthur Koestler, with half a dozen novels to his credit has made a mark in the world of literature as a political novelist. By a political novel is meant a novel in which political ideas dominate and in which the political atmosphere of the time is the dominant setting. The novel of individual sensibility has been raised to pinnacle of its glory in our time, but the novel of public affairs and politics is of no less importance and writers like Andre Malraux, Ignazio Silone, Arthur Koestler, George Orwell, John Dos Passos etc. have lent great popularity and respectability to the political novel in modern times.

The role of politics has become so dominant in society in modern times that it led Thomas Mann to think that the destiny of the modern man has its meaning in political terms. He says, "The question of the human conscience includes the political question: it is a part or phase of it. Yes, we may say that today the question is presented to us essentially in its political form perhaps more than in any other epoch of history, it wears a political face" (240). As nobody can overlook the importance of politics in man's life, nobody can ignore the claim of political novel as a major achievement of artistic creation. Stendhal rightly says:

"Politics in a work of literature is like a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert, something loud and vulgar, and yet a thing to which it is not possible to refuse one's

attention” (33). A political novelist may not explore the uncharted regions of individual’s mind, but he attempts at a bigger problem of mapping out the malaise of the society caught between different political ideologies of the time. Needless to say that he does not overlook living in that society, for it is through them that the novelist works about proper intensification of the general theme.

Arthur Koestler is a peculiar writer of the modern times and his life clearly bears cut the impact of the powerful political and social forces of his time. Born and brought up in Hungary, he moved from place to place in the pursuit of his career. He spent his youthful days in Germany, France, Middle East, Egypt and England. Born in a traditional Jewish family, he was fired with the spirit of Zionism during and immediately after his student career. But the faith of his ancestors could not satisfy him for long and he launched on his quest for an enduring faith that could sustain him in life. But seldom he found an enduring faith. He was also drawn to communism – the most attractive ideology for the enlightened Youngman in the thirties and he remained a communist for seven years. But he has finally disenchanted. His disillusionment from communist Russia left a bad taste in his mouth, out of which are born most of his political novels.

Arthur Koestler was in one way or the other connected or concerned with most of the political events that took place in Europe in the second quarter of the century. He went to Palestine as a Zionist volunteer and to Spain during the civil war as a journalist. He fought in the Second World War as a member of the British Pioneer Corps. He was imprisoned thrice as a political suspect also. Obviously these experiences sharpened his realization of the political malady of modern times. Linguistically, he was a polyglot. He knew Hungarian, German, French, English.

By discipline he was a scientist and by circumstantial involvement, a political activist. Thus we find that he was a most qualified writer to write on political theme.

Koestler with his various and varied experiences and multiple interest occupies a remarkable position in the political and intellectual life of modern Europe. He incorporates in himself the spirit of the age and prospects it in his works with intensity and integrity. He impresses us as a very successful novelist, journalist and popular philosopher. His political novels cannot be dismissed as mere topical writing, for they are concerned with ultimate issues and values. In a way he is concerned with the survival of mankind on this earth.

Koestler has ever been observed with the problem of an enduring faith. He is a crusader in search of a cross. He has moved from Zionism to communism, from communism to humanism, from humanism to spiritualism, from spiritualism to enlightened empiricism. He began his career as a student of science. Then he burnt his certificates to go to Palestine to work on Jewish Commune. And after long years of political activism he came back to his interest in science. Thus we find that Koestler covers a wide spectrum of ideologies and experiences. But his political experiences have played with him more enduringly and inspired his creative writings more prominently.

It is possible for a journalist to possess the detachment and impartiality of an artist. In reporting the events he can exercise restraint and remain objective. It is only when he destroys the balance between objectivity and involvement, between dramatized narration and over preaching, between the topicality of facts and their values, that he violates the norms of artistic creation. Malraux has rightly pointed out that "it is not emotion that destroys a work of art, but the desire to demonstrate something; the value of such a work depends neither upon its emotion nor its

detachment, but upon the blending of its content with method of its expression.” (11)

In the preface to *Promise and Fulfillment* Koestler takes a similar stance on the question of objectivity:

It is a poor sort of impartiality which stands outside the parties untouched by their emotions; the good judge, like the play wright and historian, absorbs the subjective truth contained in each of the conflicting pleas, and his verdict is a synthesis of their part-truths, not their denial. In other words, ‘objectivity’ is a state of balanced emotions, not an emotive vaccum. (8)

But he has not always been able to maintain the balance between the opposing forces; he has not always been successful in blending emotion with detachment, the content with the form. Although he knows that detachment and restraint are essential values in art, the conflict between action and contemplation logically led into the conflict between art and propaganda. “I have spoilt, “he says, “most of my novels out of a sense of duty to some ‘cause’; I knew that the artist should not exhort or preach, and I kept on exhorting and preaching” (100). This shows that he has been fully conscious of the tension in himself between his tendency towards easy journalism and disciplined artistic creativity. The forces that promoted him to introduce a strident note in his art were rooted in his social, familial and personal life and made “detachment appear a crime, restraint a shameful escape” (99-100). Koestler has always felt himself to be a persecuted being who has had to fight for survival sometimes against heavy odds; and he chose to fight against the forces which threatened his mind and his very being. Naturally his writings have reflected the intensity of this fight.

Koestler views his creative writing as a form of militant action and he uses his artistic talent to defend his people, himself and his values. The comparison between Orwell and Koestler is appropriate at this point. Orwell attacks his own social class and seeks to destroy its values based upon apathy, insincerity and hypocrisy. He also attacks imperialism and the social injustice it generates. Koestler's experiences are more varied and more intense than Orwells. Koestler, confronted with the physical destruction of the cultural stratum from which he came, attacks Fascism and Communism alike. All this goes to show that Koestler's individual made of journalistic propaganda springs from the logic of his living experiences, and to the extent that journalism gives expression to human desires and passions with honesty and intensity, it is indistinguishable from creative art. Koestler's journalism of this kind should not be denounced as inartistic. The critical viewpoint that underlines this thesis is that Koestler's importance as an artist is not diminished because of some element of propaganda in his writing. This significance is not because of but in spite of the propaganda in his novels.

Koestler has been important enough to draw critical attention of writers like J. Nedava, John Atkine, Jenni Colder. The primary intention of Nedava is to defend Koestler against the charge that he is a journalist. He writes, "Koestler's novels should be regarded as an adequate seismograph engaged in a process of recording the social tremors of our generation... To deny Koestler the description of novelist is like denying a Surrealist the title of artist painter because he does not conform with the old schools" (10).

Nedava does not however, analyze and value Koestler's creative works to the extent it is desirable for his general judgements to be persuasive and convincing. Atkins does not concentrate on the evaluation of Koestler's novels as works of art, he

is chiefly concerned with Koestler as a political writer as an ideologue, of his changing faith. Jenni Colder's book, 'Shronicles of Conscience' juxtaposes Koestler with Orwell and interprets their works in the light of their faiths and beliefs.

Koestler was sent to Paris on a double assignment as a cultural correspondent to write feature articles and as a probationer in the *Ullstein News Service*. He had access to virtually all the confidential political information that arrived in this important nerve centre of the Ullstein Trust. This was of great value to the communist leaders. So, Koestler passed this on weekly to his apparat contacts. One morning, his assistant presented an ultimatum that if Koestler did not allow him to hand the letter of confession to the managing director, he would shoot himself. Though Koestler tried his best to convince that Youngman, he had not broken the law, but he was rigid in his decision. In the end Koestler gave the letter back to the boy. A few days later the Ullsteins dismissed Koestler quietly and gave him a lumpsum in compensation for the remaining term of his five-year contract. The communist leaders dropped him without ceremony. But he was still anxious to get to Russia.

Since Koestler's idea of the USSR had been formed by the rosy compound of Soviet propaganda and wishful thinking, he fully expected that at the frontier he would 'change trains for the twenty-first century and enter a paradisial super-America vibrant with activity, efficiency, and enthusiasm. But as the train crossed across the Ukrainian steppe towards Kharkov, he was at every station hordes of ragged peasants offering ikons, linen and other household treasurer – in exchange for bread, the women holding up to the compartment windows, their stick-limbed, pot-bellied, starving infants. The great famine of 1932-33, the product of the forced collectivization of farming and the ruthless implementation of the industrial Five Year Plan was already raging. But Koestler knew nothing of this, perhaps the Russians on

the train who told him that those wretches were anti-social misfortune upon themselves by resisting collectivization actually believed this explanation themselves.

However, the intellectual in Koestler could not totally submit to the demands the Marxist Orthodoxy. Even at the peak of his communist career his critical mind could not overlook the gap between promise and fulfillment. Soon after his arrival in the land of his heart's desire the process of disillusionment set in. Contrary to his expectations, he found poverty and hunger staring in the face of common people. The compulsory collectivization and rigid centralization of industry had forced people to leave their home and become vagrants. There was a lack of incentive to work. Koestler has recorded some of the nerve-wracking sights in his autobiography.

You could see an old woman sitting for hours with one painted Easter egg, one small piece of dried up goat's cheese before her, or an oldman, his bare feet covered with sores, trying to barter his torn loofs for a kilo of black bread and packet of Mahorka tobacco. Some of the women had babies lying beside them on the pavement or in their laps, feedings the fly-ridden infant's lips were fastened to the leathery udder from which it seemed to suck bile instead of milk. (55-6)

The moral level of people was equally low. Trams and public places were packed with swindlers and pickpockets. On his first boarding a tram, Koestler's belongings were stolen. He also discovered great inequality in social hierarchy.

The revolution left a bad taste in his mouth. His virginal thirst for a sort of worldly utopia remained unquenched. Talking about his experience of the communist Party he says: "I went to Communism as one goes to a spring of fresh water, and I left Communist as one clammers out of a poisoned river strewn with wreckage of flooded cities and corpses of the crowned" (15). Koestler's first three novels are born of his



mood of disenchantment from the communist movement. After his break with the Communist Party, Koestler's life undergoes another change.

A mystical streak is perceptible in Koestler's personality even in the midst of his political pre-occupations. His craving to unrated the mystery of the universe, on scientific or spiritual plane, consorts well with his utopian ideals. As he says, he experiences a mystical ecstasy at an early age of fourteen: "One of those states of spontaneous illumination which are so frequent in childhood and become rarer and rarer as the years wear on. In the middle of this beatitude the paradox of spatial infinity suddenly pierced my brain, as if it had been stung by a wasp" (51).

The story of Koestler's spiritual transformation is very interesting, though not quite convincing. At the time of France's revolt in Spain in 1936, Koestler went to Spain as a correspondent of the *News Chronicle* of London and *Pester Lloyd* of Budapest. In reality it was a spying mission planned by Muenzenberg to assess the extent of German and Italian aid to the rebels. He visited the rebel Head Quarters at Seville and collected confidential information. Through he escaped from there in time, he was later arrested by the Fascists at the Asidalusian Front. Condemned to death by the Fascist Military court, he spent one hundred fateful days in Franco's prison at Seville, expecting to be killed any day. Protests from England saved him from execution, and he returned to England in exchange for another prisoner. His imprisonment at Seville, besides giving a first hand invaluable for his novels, gave birth to a new faith in him. His *Dialogue with Death* is devoted entirely to his experience of Franco's jail. The mystical experience that came upon Koestler in Franco's jail in 1937 completed his spiritual regeneration. While face to face with death he was suddenly led to an ecstatic state in which not only death but even 'self' lost its value. "Then I was floating on my back in a river of peace, under bridges of

silence. It came from nowhere and flowed nowhere. Then there was no river and no I. Then I had ceased to exist” (352).

We feel that Koestler’s spiritual conflict was a pang without birth. The ‘Oceanic feeling’ might have given him some solace in the moments of despair, ‘a cover from a pointed gun,’ as they put it, but it did not give birth to any lasting spiritual faith, which a genuine mystical experience is said to produce: “Thus a genuine mystic experience”, he himself avers, “may mediate a bonafide conversion to practically and creed, Christianity, Buddhism, or Fire Worships” (353).

Koestler’s journey to the land of the lotus failed like his previous journeys to the promised land and the Land of Promise. And now he has returned to the world of science which had attracted him in the very beginning. In the preface to *Beyond Reductionism* Koestler admits that for the “last ten years my main interest has been the history and present state of science and its impact on our view of the world” (7).

Koestler’s interest in science, psychology, para-psychology is evinced in his writings of this phase of life, such as *The Sleep Walkers’ The Act of Creation, The Ghost in the Machine, Beyond Reductionism, The Care of Midwife-toad, The Roots of Conscience*.

But Koestler feels that it is only through synthesizing science and metaphysics man can achieve a real enduring faith. While science needs faith in the eternal principles of existence, religion is in the need of a new expression. Koestler avers:

My own guess and hope is the spontaneous emergence of a new type of faith which satisfies the “great sober thirst” of man’s spirit without asking him to split his brain into halves, which restores the navel cord through which he receives the saps of cosmic awareness without

reducing him to mental infancy which relegates reason to its proper  
 humer place yet without contradicting it. (250-51)

One argument in defence of Koestler may be that he does not hold religion and science diversely opposed to each other, as they are commonly held, but complementary to each of them. Although the basis of the one is rational speculation and of the other unquestioning reverential faith, in his typical vein he tries to arrive at a synthesis. In *The Sleep Walkers* he argues that the pioneers of scientific revolution were all devout men who did not like to banish the deity from the universe, but gradually science and religion parted ways.

Thus we see that Koestler is a man of colorful personality, varied interest and rich experiences. His life is mot eventful and fascinating. But we are here primarily interested in him as a novelist.

### **Critics on *The Gladiators***

*The Gladiators* is the only book Koestler wrote that was received with unanimous praise by the critics. Arthur Koestler was enabled from the publishers to embark on an ambitious historical novel on the slave revolt in the first century BC in Rome. *The Gladiators* which eventually became the first of a trilogy of novels on the ethics of revolution. He was immersed in writing *The Gladiators* when the Spanish civil war exploded and made the horrors of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia temporarily fade into the background. When Koestler was how ideologically free to follow the course of his thoughts, *The Gladiators* took now more clearly the form of a reflection on means and ends in a revolution.

The novel deals with the political disillusionment of Arthur Koestler by brining to light the drawbacks of politics. *The Gladiators* was Koestler's first published novel, an historical novel set in the ancient Rome and narrating the revolt of

Spartacus, a slave a gladiator that escaped, succeeded in collecting several thousands of fellows and building up an independents state in the south of Italy that was able to survive of a few years. Apart from the historical character of Spartacus, that Koestler studied at length, the book was largely inspired by the reflections that he was varying on about the ethics of revolution, thoughts that lead in the very same period Koestler quitting the communist party.

*The Gladiators* darkness at moon, and *Arrival and Departure* were later described by Koestler as a trilogy about the conflict between end and mean, specifically in politics. These novels have contributed immensely to establish Arthur Koestler as a political novelist. *The Gladiators* has drawn attention of many critics. Malcolm Cowley considers, he Gladiators as a fable for our own times, which implies that ‘every revolution must be abortive or betrayed and that any revolutionary leader, after becoming a dictator by the logic of his position, must end by destroying those he is fighting to serve’ (13). Author Koestler himself has analyzed *The Gladiators* in the introduction, ‘The events historically known as the Slave war, or Gladiators war took place during the years 73-71 before Christ’. He further says, ‘I wrote first in Hungarian, then in German; and from 1940 onwards, when I settled in this country, in English. *The Gladiators* belongs to the end of the German period. It was translated by Edith Simon, then a young Art student, who has subsequently become one to the most imaginative practitioners of the art of the historic novel.’ (319)

*The Gladiators*, Arthur Koestler’s first novel, set in the late Roman Republic, tells the story of the revolt of Spartacus and man’s search for utotria. The first of three novels concerned with the “ethic of revolution; it addresses the age-old debate of whether the end justifies the means and argument continued in his classic novels *Darkness at noon* and *Arrival and Departure*” (blurb).

Having been familiar with the political disillusionment of Arthur Koestler,

*Sunday Times* Writes:

*The Gladiators* is a philosophical novel dealing with the nature of revolution; a melancholy commentary on his failure of politics to respond to man's inner needs..... Koestler is revealing to us the dialectic of history, with a moral, if we choose to take it for our own times, But he is never didactic and his story...in as vivid in action as in argument. (blurb)

Likewise, another critic Sean O'Faolain views:

In *The Gladiators* this episode in Roman history is lifted out of the text books by a novelist of unusual sympathy and understanding. In a gripping, ominous, impressive style he extracts the human story from the record, and re-creates, finely, with a modern's appreciation of motives and symptoms, the social life which evoked this extraordinary revolt. (blurb)

Summing up, some of Arthur Koestler's works of art are saturated with political perspective through which his disillusionment with politics is justified. *The Gladiators* exposes the disenchantment and disillusionment from the communist movement. Author Koestler records political ideas as a most sensitive seismograph in his *The Gladiators*.

However, the above responses from various sources will display the richness of the novel, *The Gladiators*. A novel can have multiple interpretations. The present investigation concentrates on the Koestler's personal beliefs, and psychological drives in his *The Gladiators*. And this research paper will attempt to examine these issues

more specifically from the Marxist perspectives, first by developing a theoretical modality in the coming chapter & then by applying it in the text, *The Gladiators*.

## II. Marxism and Literature

Marxism is a highly complex subject, and Marxist literary criticism is no less so. Towards the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Karl Marx, in association with Frederic Engels invented radical economic, social and political theories. Views of Marx and Engels on art and literature have been drawn up on differently by various scholars and interpreted and developed in divergent ways. The same theories, which are known as Marxism today, Marx formulated the most revolutionary and scientific theories in the time of tremendous socio-economic changes resulted from the scientific discoveries and establishment of large scale production industries. His theories clearly disprove the bourgeois, economic, social and political system establishing the philosophy of proletariat the lowest stratum of the society. They initiate the movement of the proletariat, against those who possess abounding amount of wealth without much labour. The emancipatory movement initiated by Marxism aims at abolishing the concentration of wealth in the hands of tiny minority by seizing political and legal power from the hands of bourgeois class. As Marx himself clearly stated that "philosophers have many interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it" (In Selden, 24). Thus, Marxism is a political theory that advocates class struggle of the proletariat against the ruling class until the political power is seized and socialist emancipatory society is established.

Marxist literary criticism is related to sociological theories of literature in that it treats literature within a larger framework of social reality. Similarly, it has something to do with the mimetic theories of literature. Transcendental mimetic theories like Plato and Aristotle talk of idea and essence respectively, and work of art a mere prototype of that transcendental. Plato and Aristotle discuss about art as proper or improper reflection of reality. Plato, in Book X of Republic, makes a full

scale examination on the nature and value of imaginative literature. He views poetry as a collection of copies of the ideas, or forms that it mentions. The poet, according to Plato, "is an imitator and therefore, like all other imitators, he is thrice removed from [...] the truth "(In Daiches 15). Poetry, therefore, according to Plato, is far removed from truth. It is the product of an inferior part of the soul. It harms by nourishing the passions, which ought to be controlled and disciplined. Plato, thus see poetry as not corresponding to reality to truth. But the paradox in Plato is that he sees the poetry far removed from truth and product of a futile ignorance, at the same time "it is by every kind of poetic device -metaphor, symbol, fiction - that Plato puts his own philosophy across [...]" (Daiches 210).

Where Plato shows imaginative literature to be false, trivial and harmful. Aristotle takes it as true, serious and useful. In Poetics, Aristotle refutes Plato's charges against art. He strongly argues that all the fine arts are founded on the principle of imitation although they differ in manner and medium, they successfully imitate the original. He compares history and poetry in their presentation of reality and states that history is limited as it is created on some specific past happening, but poetry enjoys absolute freedom and it expresses universal truth. However, the very premise of Marxist literary theory is to defy any transcendentalism in general. In Marxist criticism social class and class relations function as central instruments of analysis.

Marxism treats literature as expression of socio-economic life and judges it on the basis of how far it has fulfilled this function. Its struggle stresses literature should be useful to life. Although Marxism is primarily a theory of social, economic, political and revolutionary activities, it treats art and literature with special case. Disproving the early concept of them. Marxist theoreticians have developed their own theories,



which are known as Marxist theories of art and literature. Majorities of these theoreticians believe that literature has social as well as political implications and it must be committed to the cause of people. It should be used for advancement of society.

Literature, from a Marxist point of view, is treated as the reflection of the socio-economic life. When we talk of the socio-economic life of a society, we can find distinct classes in struggle for the economic, political as well as social advantages. And "a history series of class struggle between the class". (Communist Manifesto). So, literature, for a Marxism should reflect this dialectical totality of a society and the value of literature is judge on the basis of how far it has done this function. Marxism is different from the movement of "art for art's sake." It stresses the need that literature should be useful to life. It denounces the modern trend of writing which concentrates on minute subjective picture of the world. Disproving the early concept of art and literature, Marxist theorists of art and literature. They believe that literature has a social as well as political implications and it must be committed to be cause of people. It should aim for the betterment of society.

Although Marx and Engels have not left any systematic works entirely centered on art and literature, however, they have raised some basic questions about them to their discussion about 'base' and 'superstructure'. So the interpretation of the relevance of Marx's theory to literature is a matter of dispute not merely between Marxists and non Marxists [sociologist literature critics, philosophers] but has been and is still the subject is bitter controversy between those claiming to be Marxists." [Slaughter 21]. Therefore we find contrary views about art and literature among the Marxist critics and theorist themselves. Lukacs treats literature as the reflection of outside reality. Adorno sees it as the negative knowledge of the actual world, talks

about revolutionizing the whole sphere of art and literature and puts all efforts on bringing newness in theatrical production. Even so they all agree on the point that "literature can be properly understood within a larger framework of social reality (Forgacs 167).

The distinction between Marxist and non-Marxist sociological realistic criticism is not so sharp. Till nineteenth century all criticism was sociological; therefore Marxist criticism is often said to have organized from quite earlier. Of course, it is closely associated to biographical, sociological and historical criticism the fundamental difference between them is that the Marxist criticism examines how far a literary work embodies ability in altering human existence and lead it in the path of progress, prosperity and emancipation whereas others give emphasis on interpretive function and examine whether a work is successful in interpreting life and world appropriately. For this type of criticism interoperation is the primary function of art and literature. But Marxism aims at revolutionizing the whole-economic life establishing new political system led by proletariat. Orthodox Marxist theory of literature strongly insists that a work of literature should reflect the class relation and be committed to the cause of working class people. A writer's success or failure should be judged on the basis of his works which exhibit his insight of the socio-economic situation of the epoch. It demands the author's to produce reality objectively with special attention to class divisions especially the exploitation of the lower class by upper.

So, literature, instead of rendering outward superficial appearance of reality, should explore the inner causes. But it is not so easy task. In order to capture reality successfully, an author needs to have deep intellectual power and penetrating vision of the historical forces of the period. Outwardly, superficial depiction of the things

likes that of naturalism and modernism which bracket off all the inner causes can never lead to reality. Literature, for Marxist critics, should be auxiliary in spreading ideology of working class.

According to the century, Rene Wellek, is known as the most influential critic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, refuses to recognize any of the new trends in criticism as aboriginal. In his essay, "The main trends of the 20<sup>th</sup> century criticism." He observes that much of the criticism written today cannot be accepted as he writes "we are surrounded by survivals, leftover throwbacks to older stages in the history of criticism." In the same essay, he argues that the new trends of criticism, of course have also roots in the past, are not without antecedents, and are not absolute original" (Wellek 115). According to Wellek in the beginning Marxists criticism was rather unorthodox from the point of view of later Soviet dogma. Both Mehring and Plekhanov recognize a certain autonomy of art and think of Marxist criticism rather as an objective science of the social determinates of a literary work than as a doctrine which decides aesthetic question and prescribe subject matter and style to author." (Wellek 115)

George Lukacs, one of the most important Marxist critics, sees literature as a reflecting reality outside it. Reflection of reality is the key idea of his theory of art. Art for him is socio-historical phenomenon. But the reality in literary works and the reality in the actual world need not have one to one correspondence. Artistic representation is not photographic as the artist is not a machine. A photographic machine presents everything indifferently as it can't react, whereas, an artist is a sensitive creature, he feels and reacts. So, a picture presented in a literary work like novels, dramas, poems etc. ultimately passes through the active and sensitive mind of the author. The previous experience and his own liking and disliking influences his

interpretation of the world. For Lukacs, the world is chaos from where an artist picks up the required materials. During this process of selection he may give priority to one aspect of reality neglecting the others. Similarly, the objective external reality is mingled with the artists' feelings and emotions which are purely subjective. In the process of creating work of art, the objective reality which lies in the chaotic state is given form and arranged in sequence. David Forgacs in his essay *Marxist Literary Theories* observes thus "To be reflected in literature reality has to pass through the creative form giving work of the writer. The result, in the case of correctly formed work, will be that the form of the literary work reflects the form of the real world" (Forgacs 171).

Thus, for Lukacs, literary creation is a process of putting selected matters together. This process of selection and combination imposes bound to the chaos of objective reality. Forgacs says, in Lukacs' view form is "the aesthetic shape given to content, a shape manifested through technical features such as time and the interrelationship of characters and situation in work" (Forgacs 171).

Lukacs denounces the romantic concept of art that separates it from social realities and its utility. For romanticists art has no more scope and aim than expressing the purest feelings of the creator. For Shelley, a poet is a nightingale who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds. For Wordsworth, the creation of poetry is nothing more than "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, emotion recollected, in tranquility" (quoted in Daiches 887), hence romantic poetry is less about mankind, more about nature. In Lukacs' view, the poems that are about mankind are quite subjective. Thus, the romanticism that entirely excludes the mimetic and pragmatic function of art was clearly a reactionary movement.

In opposition to Lukacs, the "Frankfurt school" of German Marxists, especially Theodor Adorno and Marx Horkheimer, lauded modernist writers such as James Joyce, Marcel Proust and Samuel Beckett, proposing that their formal experiments by the very fact that they fragment and disrupt the life they "reflect", establish a distance and effect a detachment which serve as an implicit critique or yield a negative knowledge of the dehumanizing institutions and process of society under capitalism. Adorno's theory of literature is markedly different from others as it openly criticizes them in favour of modernism. Frankfurt School which he belonged to criticize the formal laws of literature and argues that the reality in the real world is formless. Unlike Lukacs and Macherey, Adorno sees literature as alienation from reality. Adorno, regards literature, as negative knowledge of the real world, and gives definite value to the works of the modernist authors. Interior monologue or the stream of consciousness as literary technique as much criticized by Lukacs. Adorno, however, emphasizes "the interior monologue, far from cutting the literary work off from reality, can expose the way reality actually is "(Forgacs 188). But, for Adorno this reality is not photographic as for Lukacs and at the same time the duty of the author is not to give shape to the objective reality pre-existing in the society. However, according to David Forgacs, Adorno by negative knowledge "doesn't mean non-knowledge, it means knowledge which can undermine and negate a false or reified condition" (Forgacs 189).

Thus, Adorno emphasizes the negative and critical role played by the works of the modernist writers as Proust, Kafka, Beckett, Joyce etc. As stated by Forgacs Adorno "opens up modernist writing to Marxist theory by showing that a different kind of relationship between the text and reality is possible" (Forgacs 190).

Ramon Selden observing the theory of Adorno in Contemporary literary theory, states that for Adorno "literature unlike the mind doesn't have a direct contact with reality" (34). Adorno is of the opinion that art and reality are not alike. Inverting the reflection theory of Lukacs he claims "art is set apart from reality; its detachment gives it its special significance and power" (34).

Ramon Seldon, on his discussion about "Soviet Socialist Realism" states that "the doctrine expounded by the union of Soviet writers (1932-34) were a condensation of Lenin's pre-revolutionary statement as interpreted during the 1920" (Seldon 27).

Soviet intellectual literary scenario was highly dominated by linguistic and literary theory known as Russian formalism immediately before and after October Revolution. As stated by David Lodge "the focus of Russian formalist upon the medium rather than the message of literary artifacts brought it into conflict with the official ideology of post Revolutionary Russia and under Stalin, it was suppressed. Most of its exponents were silenced, or forced into exile" (Lodge 15-16).

Professor Seldon is of the view that the theory of art and literature propounded by Soviet socialist writers against formalist theorists was founded upon the nineteenth century tradition of Russian realism. So it was not aboriginal. He explicitly states that, "The combination of nineteenth century aesthetics and revolutionary politics remained the essential recipe of Soviet theory" (Seldon 27).

After the success of Russian Revolution, Marxism drew much attraction in politics. It spreads not only in Asia but also in Europe and America. According to Wellek, American intellectual activities were much influenced by Marxism during 1930s. Granville Hicks and Bernard Smith were two early Marxist critics from America. Similarly Edmund Wilson and Kenneth Burke were Marxist for certain period of their development. Later especially after Second World War, Marxist

political as well as intellectual activities were much discouraged in America and they gradually feel in shadow.

### **Marxist Ideology and Politics**

In the 1960 the influential Marxist critic Louis Althusser assimilated the structuralism then current into his view that the structure of society as a whole is constituted by Ideological state apparatuses including religious, legal political and literary institutions. In his famous essay entitled *Ideology and Ideological state Apparatuses* Louis Althusser remarks Marx's notion of Ideology.

an imaginary assemblage, a pure dream, empty and vain, constituted by the 'Days' residues from the only full and positive reality, that of the concrete history of concrete material individuals materially producing their existence [...] represents the imaginary relationship of individual to their real conditions of exercise. (153)

Althusser develops- ideology as an imagined representation of reality, it is false, distorted by definition. He means that art can not be reduced to ideology: it has, rather, a particular relationship to it. Ideology signifies the imaginary ways in which men experience the real world, which is of course, the kind of experience literature gives us too what it feels like to live in particular conditions, rather than a conceptual analysis of these conditions. In the same essay, Althusser remarks that ideology is bound up with the constitution of the subject that man is an ideological animal by nature - meaning that people constitute or define themselves 'as human' through ideology. As he writes, "the category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology in so far as all ideology has the function of constituting concrete individuals as subjects" (160).

The implication of this idea is enormous because it means that 'ideology' goes to the heart of the personal identity of how we conceive ourselves as subjects in the world and all that this involves. Althusser avoids a reductive opposition of ideology and reality by suggesting that ideology makes our reality in constituting is as subjects. Ideology, Althusser argues, "hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects" (162). For Althusser, the functions of Art is, as he remarks in *A letter on Art*, "to make us see, and what it allows us to see, what it forces us to see, is the ideology from which it is born" (204). What is most terrifying and compelling about this is the fact that being a subject feels so real, so natural-and yet, as Althusser remarks, "This very 'reality' or 'naturalness' of being a subject is itself as 'ideological effect'" (204).

For Poststructuralist critics, the notion of ideology is fundamentally suspect, since it appears to rely on classical opposition of true and false, of reality and false consciousness which such critics would question. Hence, by this view, ideology appears too easily as a master term for totalizing readings of literary texts.

Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey, in the important essay, *On literature as an ideological form argue* "literary texts produce the 'illusions of unity' and that a 'material analysis' needs to look for signs of contradictions. Which appear as unevenly resolved conflicts in the text" (87). Hence they mean that, literature begins with the imaginary solution of 'implacable ideological contradictions'. "Literature is there because 'such a solution is impossible" (88). In capitalist society, literature itself is an 'ideological form' both produced by and producing ideology. They further argue that the task of the critic would be to look beyond the unity that the literary text' strives to present, and forcefully to explore the contradictions, embedded within it. In this book *Literary Theory*, Hans Bertens observes Tony Bennett's view:



A thorough going Althusserian criticism would not simply restore or reveal the contradictions that are already in texts: rather, it would read contradictions into the texts' in such a way that it would 'effect a work of transformation on those forms of signification which are said to be ideological. (163)

Hence, in this respect, an ideological criticism is not one that understands the reality of a text of better, rather it is a criticism that changes the text. Hans Bertens further remarks Benett's view "there can be no notion of 'the text' underlying any reading: texts have historically specific functions and effects [...] change is time, and what changes them is reading" (163).

Literary texts, however do not simply or passively 'express' or reflect the ideology of their particular time and place. Rather, they are sites of conflict and difference places where values and preconceptions beliefs and prejudices, knowledge and social structures- all the complete formations of ideology by which history articulates itself- may be produced and, finally, transformed.

Pierre Macherey, a French Marxist theoretician, rejects literature to be reflection of out side reality. In this essay, *Literature as an Ideological Form* written jointly with E. Balibar, writes, "Literature is not fiction, a fictive knowledge of the real, because it cannot define itself simply as figuration, an appearance of reality. By complex process, literature is the production of certain reality, not intended [...], an autonomous reality, but a material reality, and of a certain social effect [...]" (66).

Hence, he views literature is not able to produce realistic picture of the given society; however, the text produces 'reality-effect'. He opposes the concept of fiction and realism and also presupposition of outside reality as the 'anchoring point.'

For Macherey, the author of any text does nothing more than working out with already existed materials such as language, genres, ideology etc. The production of literature, for him is inseparable from social practices. Macherey is of the opinion that creation of literature basically is a linguistic phenomenon. Macherey with E Balibar remarks:

Literature submits to a threefold determination; 'linguistic' 'fictive' and pedagogical [...]. There is a linguistic determination because the work of literary production depends on the existence of a common language codifying linguistic exchange, both for its material and for its aims in so much as literature contributes directly to the maintenance of a 'common language'. (63)

According to Macherey literature produces ideological effect and the material for literature are the 'ideological contradictions' which are political, religious etc. as he states that the fundamental material for literary text is "contradictory ideological realization of determinate class positions in the class struggle" (68). Regarding the effect of the literary text, Macherey states that it provokes "other ideological contradictions which can sometimes be recognized as literary ones but which are usually merely aesthetic, moral, political, religious discourses in which the dominant ideology is realized" (68).

David Forgacs in his essay *Marxist Literary Theories* discusses Macherey's theory of literary production under subtitle - the Production Model. According to Forgacs the specialty of his theory lies on the concept of ideology. For Macherey, ideology, as it enters the text and settles with other elements, it loses its prior meaning. For Macherey, as Forgacs observes "a text contains gaps and silence; and "writing is necessarily a partial or incoherent reading of reality" (181). In his opinion

the texts are incomplete and the reader has to bring to the text theoretical knowledge the text and its author didn't possess (180). Thus, in his theory the role of the readers or critics is of great importance. For him reading of any literary text is not interpretation of what a text already contains but the critics task is to seek out the principle of its conflict of meanings, and to show how this conflict is produced by the work's or text's relation to ideology.

### **Political Disillusionment**

Koestler a Marxist had the mortification of witnessing the disastrous collapse of the German communist party, which had seemed to him to be the only effective and militant opposition to the Fascist regime. As a central European intellectual in exile he had seen nations fall victim to Hitler's design for enlarging his sphere of influence. Only a few months after the Hitler - Stalin non-aggression pact in 1939 came Hitler's attack on Poland which let loose the monster of the Second World War. These events were of particular significance to Koestler.

Millions of Jews had already been killed and the rest were in danger of being exterminated. Koestler himself did not fare well. When Hitler attacked France, the first thing the French Government did was to arrest the Political 'emigres' with communist or antifascist activities to their credit, and put them in concentration camps. Koestler himself spent a few months in the internment camp of the Vernet. His *Scum of the Earth* gives hair-raising accounts of life in such Camps. Anyhow Koestler, after his release from Le Vernet, escaped to London to enlist himself in the British Pioneer Corps. On way to London, he stayed in Lisbon for six weeks always in danger of being arrested. Once there, he came across people of different nationalists all fleeing from Nazi occupied areas. Koestler describes the Nazi terror vividly in the closing portion of *Scum of the Earth*. "And the procession of despair

went on and on, streaming through this last open port Europe's gaping mouth, vomiting the contents of her poisoned stomach" (245).

It was one of the worst political great floods that ever swept Europe. Talking about its effect in France, Koestler says, "It was a peculiar sadistic irony of Fate to have turned the most petitbourgeoise, fussy, stay-at-home people in the world into a nation of tramps" (165). Koestler was a witness to the complete failure of democratic forces before Hitlerism. Koestler was faced with two alternatives, to get into a neutral country like the United States, where he had been offered a visa, or to go to England without a visa and get arrested. He knew, however, that to run away from Europe would mean both an escape from the realities of the time and acceptance of defeat at the hands of the Nazi power. Man's loss of faith in bearing values of life is a recurrent motif in all novels of Koestler. He attributes this faithlessness of modern man to the preponderance of reason in him, which instead of giving meaning and coherence to his life has landed him in no man's land. In a typical Koestlerian vein Julien declares;

The only, the one and only hope of preventing this is the emergence of new transcendental faith which would defect people's energies from the social field to the cosmic field - which would re-establish direct transactions between man and the universe and would act as a brake on the motors of expediency. (137)

Some critics hold that the writer has exaggerated the state of disillusionment and disappointment. Jenni Colder says, "In *The Age of Longing* the bitterness and shoulder shrugging is empty, not backed by any solid experience. In attempting to translate his own convalescence from the demands of political commitment into fiction Koestler has failed" (222).

Mr. Weightman expresses a similar view, ".....his lack of faith gives him such a feeling of inferiority that he enormously exaggerates the decadence of the west. The atmosphere in France is anything but reassuring. Yet never in my blackest moods have felt it to be as bad as Koestler implies" (442).

Thus, Koestler's involvement with communism had been intense and personal, not only because of his private motives, but because the times demanded intensity. But Koestler escaped in grip: many of his friends did not. Some were arrested in Russia. Koestler had been writing some of his novels during the days when Europe was moving towards war and the strain of disillusion was strong. There were about eight million political arrests in Russia between 1936 and 1938. Communist ideology was most fascinating ideology in 19<sup>th</sup> century. But this enchanted ideology became gradually disillusionment by various incidents in the life of Koestler which turn into negative expectation.

### **Conclusion**

Marxism, as a broad concept, was propounded by Karl Marx in the 1840s. In course of time, it established its dominance in several branches of human knowledge like literature, politics, economy, sociology and other social activities. Karl Marx borrowed the idea of Hegelian dialects but reversed the relation of consciousness and material condition. In his formulation, it is materiality that determines consciousness, not the consciousness that determines materiality proposed by Hegel. Systems, institutions and several branches of knowledge all are dependent upon material base. Marxism also plays vital role for the exposition of dialectical relation between two classes of the society. There is ongoing and unending conflict in the society between oppressor and oppressed class.

Marxism has deep rooted relationship with different disciplines of knowledge. Broadly speaking, literature is the important discipline of knowledge and it has also close relationship with Marxism. We apply Marxist theories to analyze literary text and literary text also exposes Marxist waves of thinking. Several novels, dramas and other genres of literature deal with Marxist proposition of class struggle, dialectical relationship between social classes and Marxist's concept of ideology. Literature one of the component of the superstructure can only be properly understood within a larger frame work of social reality. In one sense, Marxism to literature is the indicator of social reality.

Through the means of ideology, the objective knowledge of the society is distorted in capitalism. Surplus value of the production is grapped by the capitalist from the creation of ideology. Literature is clearly situated within a larger ideological along with other institutions such as religion, philosophy, politics etc. Ideology, as superstructure can be charged by capitalists but it does not bring any transformation in production relation. Thus ideology is representative in the relation with literature.

At the peak of Koestler's Communist career his critical mind could not overlook the gab between promise and fulfillment. Soon after his arrival in the land of his heart's desire the process of disillusionment set in. contrary to his expectations, he found poverty and hunger staring in the face of common people.

Koestler's strict support to the party ideology has left him disillusionment of the success of the revolution. This is focused on the chapter - III Political disillusionment in *The Gladiators*. Koestler requires us to look more closely at the individual end to discover that his actions are motivated not merely by the economic interests of the class to which he belongs but that the motivation is the product of many mixed strands.

### III. Political Disillusion in *The Gladiators*

Koestler's career as a novelist begins when he was already on his way out from the Communist Party. Although he retained the hang-over the Marxist ideology for some years more, he had a very bitter experience of the Communist movement in many of the European countries. In '*God That Failed*' he narrates the story of his attraction to and disenchantment from the Communist Movement. This very experience informs his first three novels namely, *The Gladiators*, *Darkness at Noon* and *Arrival and Departure*.

*The Gladiators* was begun in 1934 and finished in 1938. Many things happened during those important years, things that effected his break with the Communist party. That is why Koestler feels that the political dialogue in the novel now read "like a log book reflecting a pilgrim's progress to inner freedom" (262). Talking about its basic theme, he says, "*The Gladiators* is the first novel; of a trilogy (the other two are *Darkness at Noon* and *Arrival and Departure*) whose leitmotif is the central question of revolutionary ethics in general: the question whether, or to what extent, the end justifies the means" (316).

*The Gladiators* is a socio-political treatise and it deals with abortive Revolution gone stale or decadent. Koestler certainly keeps his eye open for modern parallels, but these are confined to situations, not to solutions. Undoubtedly historical situations have remained fairly constant – class attempts to replace class but techniques and therefore solutions have changed. The dominant class in *The Gladiators* is the senatorial aristocracy. If the book has a historical message, it is that the only way to deal with the aristocracy is to kill it straight away, before anger cools and indignation evaporates. If you hesitate, you will be lost. The aristocracy will immediately begin to charm you, chiefly by flattery, the mere flattery of accepting

you, recently an inferior, as an equal – but for the time being only. Once the charm begins to work you will be enslaved. You will never have the benefit of anger again. The aristocracy is meanwhile waiting its chance. It knows it will come, when it does, it will strike. There will be no sentimentality, none of the pity you have shown. It is the secret of aristocratic power. In the same way, Thurium, the city of merchants, accepts the slave state while it has to but dismiss it when the alliance no longer serves its purpose.

*The Gladiators*, Koestler's first novel, was conceived in this very mood of disenchantment from Communism. This experience of the failure of the Communist movement in Germany and his impression of the Russian tour might have led him to write this novel. "My Progressive disillusionment with the Communist Party," he admits, "reached an acute state in 1935 – the year of Kirov murder, the first purges, the first waves of the Terror which was to sweep most of my comrades away. It was during this crisis that I began to write *The Gladiators* – the story of another revolution that had gone wrong" (316).

In the Invisible writing Koestler provides what Henry James calls the 'germ' of the novel:

The day after my career at INFA came to an end. I was moved by a moment curiosity to look up the name 'Spartacus' in the Encyclopedia. The German Communist Party is the offspring of revolutionary group that called itself 'Spartacus – Bund', and was founded in 1917 by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. The name 'Spartacus, was accordingly a household word among Communists, but like most Communists, I had only the vaguest notion who Spartacus was. (261)



Spartacus, a Roman prisoner of war from Thrace, having fled with seventy of his comrades from *The Gladiators'* school in Capua in 73 B.C., occupied Mt Vesuvius, defeated the Praetor Varinius, and saw his following grow to 70,000 men. He took the possession of southern Italy and defeated the Romans four times, until in 71 he fell at Petelia, together with 60,000 slaves, to the Praetor M. Licinius Crassus.

The revolution of Spartacus is in itself an interesting theme for a novel. Koestler admits that he was first attracted by its picturesque and romantic aspect, but soon his interest shifted “from the picturesque façade to the historical and moral lessons of the first great proletarian revolution,” for the discovered great similarities between the first century B.C. in Roman history and the present century. He hoped that the knowledge of the one would help him greatly to understand the other.

Expatiating upon his interest in the revolution of Spartacus Koestler says:

It was not so much an escape as a form of occupational therapy which helped to clarify my ideas; for there existed some obvious parallels between the first pre-Christian century and the present. It has been a century of social unrest, of revolutions and mass – upheavals. Their causes had an equally familiar ring, the breakdown of traditional values, the abrupt transformation of the economic system, unemployment, corruption, and decadent ruling class. (317)

The failure of the revolution of Spartacus and the factors responsible for the failure were quite exciting to the imagination of a man who himself was actively engaged in promoting the interests of a revolutionary party. Koestler was intrigued by the fact that thought all the conditions enumerated in the text-books of revolution as necessary and sufficient for the success of a revolution were present, it failed miserably.

*The Gladiators* is concerned with an analysis, in the light of Koestler's own preoccupations, of the causes that led to the defeat of the revolution. In spite of the spectacular initial successes and favourable circumstances, the revolution met with a sad end, and the attempt of Spartacus to liberate the slaves and peasants from the age-old sufferings, to enthuse them with the ideal of a free state, failed disastrously. The reasons advanced by Koestler to explain the failure are rather tentative and exploratory; they are suggestive of his desire to accommodate all the possible political, moral and psychological forces that make for the dynamics of revolution in human history; and the dramatic quality of the novel lies in the interplay of these forces. The narrative design, the sequence of events and incidents in the novel all serve to bring out those forces which will recur in other revolutions in human history.

The means employed by the leaders of the revolution to achieve their ends undermine and destroy, the ends themselves. The compromise and treaties contracted by Spartacus force him to deviate from the straight path of struggle and liberation. Spartacus is led to sacrifice his principles to expediency; he is compelled by the logic of the situation to confuse the moral bases of the revolution with the political urgencies of the moment. Koestler is a sort of puritan revolutionary who maintains that the purity of ends must match the purity of means. And the moral springs of revolution must never be sullied by the political exigencies.

While riding the crest of the revolution Spartacus is in perfect tune with the masses. He is their natural leader, the mouthpiece of their common unvoiced feelings. Both the leader and the followers have sipped from the cup of freedom and are equally intoxicated. It is only when the Essence acquaints him with the prophecies about the 'son of man' and fires him with the ideal of Slave Republic based on the socialistic principle of what is mine is thine and what is thine is mine that Spartacus

begins to drift apart from his comrades. The words of the Essene turn Spartacus away from violence and destruction to consolidation and construction. But the horde is still in the word of destruction and revenge.

The crisis in the revolution is dramatized in the failure of the leader and the horde to understand each other. “What had he done wrong, “asks Spartacus, what had he omitted, to allow the horde to wriggle from this hold, so that his words meant nothing to them” (114). On the other hand, the horde is puzzled at the attitude of Spartacus: "what did he want of them? Had they offended him by settling account with the masters and slave drivers? If we do not kill them, they will kill us” (114). Spartacus does not see eye to eye with the member of the horde and fails to understand the psychology of his men. After all, the rebels are a motley crowd of runaway slaves who had maintained their existence on the subhuman level for generations; hunger and sex, plunder and violence must have been their natural instincts. Their reaction to the curbs and controls which Spartacus intends to impose on them is natural. A slogan that could have canalized their natural instincts and harnessed their natural impulses – even their baser impulses – might have activated them. But Spartacus thwarts their instinct for revenge by visionary socialistic programmes. The march to victory has been stopped to build the Sun City. Instead of marching into the city and taking by force what his men want, he enters into an alliance with the principality of Thurium on the fatal condition that the corporation of Thurium will provide him with food and building materials, and his men will not take its houses and will not incite its slaves. Thus the revolution is stayed for the sake of the Sun City. When the men of the horde need a passionate revolutionary credo, Spartacus feeds them with the principle of restraint; when they are crying for revenge, he makes them build the Sun City. The Sun City appears to be an abortive experiment

in Socialism with no psychological preparation, no solid foundation. In the background of all round hostility it appears to be an impracticable programme, a sentimental dream.

### **Political Disillusion of Spartacus the Protagonist of *The Gladiator***

It is obvious that the Sun City of Spartacus is a most impracticable programme in the existing circumstances. He simply diverts the victorious march of the revolution in the wrong direction. He leaves the straight road and makes a detour. But he does not strictly follow the law of detours either. When the Germans and the Celts are in a mood to rebel against the Crucifixism of the thirty comrades responsible for the destruction of metapontum, he fails to take stern action. He can easily eliminate the dissidents by bloody massacre but he is overtaken by pity and fellow-feeling.

“For their own good he would have to have them slain; thus decreed the law of detours. But within him another law, fed from a different source, demanded his silence, demanded that he signaled Crixus to climb up beside him” (232).

He allows the dissidents to leave the Sun City under the leadership of Crixus, and thus allow his ideal republic to disintegrate. Koestler considers this lack of ruthlessness in Spartacus to be the main factor in the failure of the revolution:

The reasons of the failure were, of course, of great complexity, yet one factor stood out clearly: Spartacus was a victim of the ‘law of detours’, which compels the leader on the road to utopia to be ‘ruthless for the sake of pity’. Yet he shrinks from the last step – the purge by Crucifixion of the dissident Celts and the establishment of a ruthless tyranny; and through his refusal he dooms his revolution to defeat.

(377)

This brings us to the core of Koestler's dilemma, the ethics of ends and means. In *The Gladiators* the revolution goes astray because the leader is not ruthless enough, in *Darkness at Noon* because of the ruthlessness of the leader.

*The Gladiators* is a work of historical imagination, but the imagination is based upon the recorded history as it has come down to us. The historical documents have enabled Koestler to build up this solid background for Spartacus's revolution but the characters in the foreground, the working agents in whose hands fell the reins of the revolution, only nebulously recorded in history, have had to be imaginatively created by Koestler. The extent to which *The Gladiators* is an historical document may be debatable, but the merit of Koestler's hypothesis about the birth and death of revolution needs to be analyzed – chiefly in the light of his preoccupations and prejudices. The novel is based upon two axes, the axis of recorded history and the axis of imaginatively recreated action and events. The basis of Koestler's interpretation of the revolution is apparently Marxian, but with radical differences. Unlike the Marxists, he stresses the human, i.e., the subjective factors as much as the economic or social, that is to say, the objective factors. Indeed his hypothesis is that the success of revolution can be ensured, no matter how it has begun, only by creating a revolutionary mystique powerful enough to appeal to the irrational in man. It would appear that were reason and logic undermine and finally precipitate the failure of the revolution. A revolution to Koestler is an eruption of the deep - seated irrational forces, a sudden cataclysmic explosion from below the conscious. This is significant point of difference between the Marxian view of revolution and Koestler's. In *The Gladiators* the sudden violet upheaval is not sustained for a long time for the reason that the hero, Spartacus, fails to provide the masses with a definite revolutionary mystique. He reasons, he hesitates; whereas if unreason mass hysteria, and passion

could have been harnessed by him towards the determined demolition of the Roman Republic, his programme might have had a better chance of success. A powerful section of his followers rebels against his leadership for the reason that Spartacus is imposing drastic control over their deep – seated impulse to wreak vengeance on the institutions of the past and the people who controlled the institutions. Revolution then eats its own children. It becomes self-destructive, it fails.

The historical documents have enabled Koestler to build up the solid background of Spartacus's revolution, but the characters in the foreground, the working agents into whose hands fall the reins of the revolution, only nebulously recorded in history, have had to be imaginatively created by him. He introduces into the novel a multitude of characters both colourful and variegated. Drawn from different nationalities and classes, three characters exhibit conflicting attitudes and ideologies, and the drama grows out of their conflicts – conflicts between the two contending classes, between the two possible leaders of the revolution, between the leader and his followers, and the conflict within the psyche of the leader himself.

Koestler does not glorify Spartacus as a revolutionary hero. He is a fighting soldier, not a political theoretician, for he lacks a sound political philosophy. After the initial success of the revolution, he fails to provide the horde with the cue for which it has been waiting. When he is groping in the dark, it is the Essene that provides him with a dream, with an ideal of revolution. The Essene himself is neither an intellectual, nor a theoretician, but he has the wisdom of a sect behind him. He inspires Spartacus with the Judaic prophecies and the stories of some successful attempts to establish a republic of freedom and justice.

Spartacus's greatest weakness is his inability to be ruthless. Although he realizes that the leader must be pitiless for the sake of pity, he refuses to act

accordingly this emotion and conviction are at variance with each other. He is torn with inner conflict, "There must be but 'one' will, the will of the knowing. For he alone can see the goal, the end of bad detours, and the progress in apparent retrocession. He must force them upon the road so that they may not be scattered about the earth; ruthless to their sufferings, deaf to their cries" (222-23).

But the piteous screams coming from the crucified men make him humorless. Sweating all over, he shuts his eyes and tries to harden himself against the attack of soft sentiments, but he finds himself emotionally too vulnerable to bear the sufferings of his own men. In his restless state he does not seem to have any power over his own actions.

This psychological conflict enriches the personality of Spartacus. In his refusal to act ruthlessly he resembles Rubasov in *Darkness at Noon* who, in course of his party activities, is overcome by humanitarian feelings. But the awareness of the importance of human values in Spartacus is sporadic. The callous mystique of revolution does not let this consciousness grow consistently in him. But Rubashov's realization of the importance of man above mankind invests him with a richer dimension. Spartacus was not a crank but nor was he a product of a School of Revolution. He belonged to a period when Revolution had not yet learnt to move on scientific tracks – or even when Revolution had not yet evolved out of Rebellion. Spartacus succeeded in collecting several thousands of fellows, "only against this background could it be understood that a band of seventy circus fighters could grow within a few months into an army, and for two years hold Italy under its sway" (317). Fortuitous circumstances produced fortuitous leaders, who remained leaders just as long as the luck held. Throughout this novel the point is emphasized that Spartacus is

little more than a sleepwalker. He has vision, but it is blurred; we admire his resolution, but it is blind.

Crixus with his sullen look and uncouth behaviour, insatiable lust for women and sardonic pleasure in destruction is one of Koestler's unique creations. Unattractive in appearance 'a fatman with drooping moustaches and eyes of a fish', he looks like a 'sad seal'. Not intended to be shown in the round, Crixus made memorable by such physical details. But these physical details do not exhibit Koestler's bias against him, rather in the background of the life he has led till now, his pleasant look and behaviour, his weakness for worldly pleasures and proneness to violence seem quite natural. With his down – to – earth approach to the rebellion, he is not motivated by lofty ideals but by the vile passion. When Spartacus is trying to determine what to do, Crixus is thinking of women: "If the two of us went off now, he said, shorting audibly, 'they'd never catch us. We might go to Alexandria. There are heaps of women in Alexandria. The man with the fur-skin looked at him attentively" (33). Crixus does not forgo the immediate pleasure for the sake of an uncertain future. And for him "the death of life means death to all desires. Only swelled – headed fools care a straw for the will be" (263). Crixus represents the destructive spirit of revolution, and all those who prefer violence and destruction – the Gauls and the Germans and all the others who harbour in their hearts the unhealthy longing – "felt drawn to him in a different turbid way to which they could give no name, they saw in him the dismal embodiment of their fate" (207). He is unlike Spartacus. He decrees no laws, issues no commands, does not negotiate with foreign ambassadors, yet for many he seems mightier than Spartacus himself.

The Roman world has not been represented elaborately as the slave world. As Koestler's emphasis falls chiefly on the internal factors that lead to the failure of the



revolution, he concentrates more on the members of the horde. The Roman characters have been utilized primarily as the background material. But Howard Fast in his *Spartacus* has built the Roman background more massively. Besides portraying the corruption of the Roman aristocracy, he has also distinctly hinted at those virtues that finally determined the defeat of the revolution.

Crassus is the most important Roman character in the novel. Though there is little scope for depicting the gradual development of his personality, Koestler, aided by Plutarch, firmly brings out the significant traits of his character. With his in untraditional approach to political and military strategies, he is an interesting character. He has amassed wealth by cunning ways, and at the time of Spartacus's revolts he is the richest man of Italy,

The man who in those days saved Rome and destroyed any hopes for a new order in the world: that man was no general and had never distinguished himself with martial feats. He was the banker Marcus Crassus, who was hard of hearing, stocky and fat in appearance. Like all deaf or half-deaf men, he was of gauche and distrustful demeanour and, because of his monstrous wealth, he was dreaded by all and loved by few. (268)

When his contemporaries and rivals quarrel for leading communists in Spain and Asia Minor, Crassus, aiming to seize power one day, turns almost exclusively to financial affairs, Pompeius, his rival, outshines him during the military campaigns in Spain but Crassus beats him elsewhere. It is the happiest day of his life when Pompeius comes to borrow money from him. Thus Crassus discovers the power of money, not as

When Pompeius left the house, his athlete's face fiery red with mortification, tripping and nearly falling over the doorstep, Crassus locked himself in his study and burst into tears. He was thirty-three years old, and this was the first happy day of his life. The scale fell from his eyes. He and all of his kind knew all about the use of money, but no one had so far drawn the obvious conclusion. Crassus did so now. The conclusion was: money is not the means to profit and pleasure, but the means to power. (279)

He knows that unless one can hardly call himself wealthy. And actually when the Roman power has been shaken to its foundations by Spartacus, Crassus takes up the challenge and finances the whole operation out of his own pocket. His dream is realized when he defeats Spartacus, although, even in this hour of glory, Pompeius manages to steal the show by destroying a small band of fugitives, and earning the distinction of stamping out the very roots of revolution.

Koestler's portrait of Crassus has been adapted from Plutarch, with a significant difference. Plutarch grants him sufficient distinctions in battles, but the moment of glory is always tarnished by his avarice and sordid means of making money. Although hungry for glory, he barter away glory for wealth. It is a human portrait after all. Fast also invests Crassus with military acumen and foresight. Unlike Plutarch and Fast, Koestler makes him out to be an inexperienced general, although the strategy that he attributes to him bears the mark of a clever efficient leader of the army. Koestler, unprofitably, deprives Crassus of partial distinction and charm of personality. He cannot resist the temptation of stressing his deafness, his ungainliness, his distrustfulness, his stocky figure and his asthmatic symptoms. Koestler's

technique of outlining personality in physical terms seems to have been overdone in case of Crassus.

What Koestler ungrudgingly grants Crassus, however, is the vision of a great economist. With an air of superior knowledge of economic principles, he explains to Cato the cause and effect of the agricultural crisis in Italy. Owing to the wrong import policy work has lost the capacity of tempting anyone in Italy and thus the productive powers do not develop. He says,

Rome has literally become a parasite state - the "Vampire of the world, "as one of our excitable young poets describes it. As work has lost the capacity of tempting anyone in ITALY, our productive powers don't develop either; the Gallic Barbarians' agricultural equipment is technically far superior to ours, and in most of our provinces industry has reached a far higher stage of development than here; all we ever invent are war-and gambling machines. (282)

He holds that the economic factors not the moral degeneration, are responsible' for the deplorable state of affairs. In the confrontation that Koestler arranges between Crassus and Spartacus on the eve of their final battle, there is not much drama but superb, though slightly lengthy, economic analyses. He accuses the builder of the Sun State of sheer ignorance of the way the wheels of political economy run and contemptuously dubs him as "the debtlante of revolution" (282). Mere abolition of slavery will affect production, hence the progress of the world. As long as no one comes along Crassus asserts,

and invents a new god who desires the Barbarian peoples of to be on equal footing with us and forces them to produce at the same price as we, as long as that has not been attended to the real champions of

progress are and remain, inspite of everything, those two thousand Roman aristocrats and idlers who let the rest of the world work for them and yet enforce progress without knowing how they are doing.  
(290)

The minor character in *The Gladiators*, mostly cluster round Spartacus. The members of the horde, such as Zozimos, Fulvius etc., have been created to represent different, sometimes contrasting, attitudes towards Spartacus and his rebellion; whereas the Roman characters have been used to provide the background of the decadent aristocracy in the light of which the rebellion, its quick success and ultimate failure, can be better understood. Jenni Colder points out that Koestler “seems to have same scheme whereby individuals are given particular prejudices, longings, like and dislikes” (146). However, these minor characters enrich the texture of the novel and impart fullness to the life depicted in it. The Roman reality of the rich and the corrupt on the one hand and the poor and the exploited on the other is vividly brought home to us through them.

*The Gladiators* is, perhaps, the most satisfying of his novels in its simple novelistic traits, partly because of the distancing in time which enables the writer to view things without direct personal involvement. Koestler’s imagination works freely on an event that took place two thousand years ago. Spartacus kept silent and contemplated,

The clouds of Mount Vesuvius, the prophetic babble of the age masseur, the hoarse lectures of the little lawyer-all of that had no reality inside this tent, in the face of the cut, polished inkwell; it was blotted out by the stuffed silence. When you looked at the generalissimo's plump hand curving round his deaf ear, everything said

or thought down there beyond the earth work seemed absurdly unreal and indigent. (287)

Spartacus's defeat is a recorded fact, but the details are missing. Hence Koestler gets a free hand to interpret the events in his own way. In *Darkness at Noon* his imagination is restricted by the fact the Moscow Trial is a very recent event.

Another reason for the success of the novel is its wide scope for action; unlike *Darkness at Noon* and *Arrival and Departure* the canvas here is sufficiently large. The unique historical event itself provides scope for exciting incidents. Koestler presents some exciting episodes vividly, for instance, the fight at the Fannins's inn and the campaign on Vesuvius, but as he is chiefly concerned with an investigation into the cause of the failure of the revolution, he alternates violent action with analysis and introspection, dialogue and debate, and thus brings out the political meaning of the historical event. The hundred and forty roped men sat quietly side by side and they listened, "Blessed are those who die at the hand of evil, babbled old Nicos. The man built towers crash to the ground, and the angel punished the bold one who climbed the ladder by dislocating his hip" (309). The Essene's prophecy about the son of Man, Spartacus's obsession with the law of detours, Fulvius's analysis of the failure of Spartacus give ideological value to the simple historical event.

The technical devices adopted by Koestler are adequate to the historical theme and the multiple points of reference that relate it to the ideology of revolution as effected in contemporary Russia. Koestler blends straight forward historical narrative with reflections on the moral and political value of the bit of history under narration. The narrative renders the history, and the reflections lend to it the weight of an ideology. Koestler through Fulvius's analysis and Apronius's free – association thought process succeeds in revealing to us one representative aspect of the privileged

Roman society. This balances well against the writer's pre-occupation with the slaves and their society. In other words, the technique adopted by Koestler in the novel functions smoothly in distributing his sympathies well in terms of exposition and dramatization, although not as rich and developed in scope as the portrait of aristocratic Rome in Howard Fast's *Spartacus*. Thus *The Gladiators* is a most successful novel of Koestler from its style point of view particularly. The prologue, Epilogue and the Interludes are written in the historic present. This gives the narrative a strong sense of immediacy, enhanced by the actualness of the writing, sustained throughout. The style is economic and masculine.

One of the important characteristics of Koestler's art of characterization is to present them in the contemporary political situation and in the light of his own experience of having lived through those situations naturally they are coloured by his personal experiences and values. Another complicating factor is that it is important in the context of time and place for Koestler to present and explain an individual's political role as well as his private personality and actions.

#### IV. Conclusion

Basically, political experiences of Koestler inform his *The Gladiators*. He has run through the political passions of our generation through mainly Marxism and the practical experiences have permeated in his writings. He seems to have been struck up with his experiences with the communist movement in Europe. He has been detracted from a steady and detached contemplation of the whole man with all his complexities of interests and motivations, thoughts and feelings, passions and desires. It is apparent that the protagonist, Spartacus, of *The Gladiators* becomes the victim of the ideology of revolution. *The Gladiators* explores the political destiny of the modern man. Arthur Koestler dramatizes the moral meaning of the human life in terms of the political ideologies of our time.

We can safely say that in his chosen field Koestler is an outstanding writer. His *The Gladiators* ensures him as high a reputation as enjoyed by the political novelists like Marlaux, Silone and Orwell. The variety and intensity of Koestler's experience was such that the quality of his thought has been spread by rigorous exposure. His commitment determined the nature of his interests and the depth of his response.

Koestler has moved from zionism to communism, from communism to humanism, from humanism to spiritualism, from spiritualism to enlightened empiricism. So, he is intellectually changes. It is second nature for him to generalize about events; he is politically trained, and likes to be politically covered. How much in his writing is personal experience and how much is an intense imaginative identification with people he describes, is not important only the identification is important. The use of language was not for him so intimate an experience. This is

partly due to the fact that he twice changed his language of literary expression. From Hungarian to German and German to English.

Arthur Koestler was born in Budapest and educated in Vienna, he wrote first in Hungarian then in German; and from 1940 onward when he settled in this country, in English. *The Gladiators* belongs to the end of the German period. Thus the events of *The Gladiator* historically took place during the years 73-71 before Christ. *The Gladiator* concerns with the ethics of revolution. It is an abortive resolution because humanity lies under the party politics. *The Gladiator* is the story of Koestler's self disillusionment with the communist party.



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