PREFACE

The main objective of this study is to explore how writers of the Indian subcontinent depict conflicts in their works to express their disapproval of it and to sensitize readers towards it. It has explored the concept of conflict as a product of the experiences, thoughts, feelings and interactions of characters in their efforts to come to terms with life. Some of the novels taken up for this study directly foreground and handle the theme of conflict. Some others highlight different types of conflict and the authors’ attitude towards it, expressed implicitly or explicitly through the text. There is the conflict of war, but there is also conflict that we find in our daily lives and relationships, conflicts that are more intimate. The selected novels have been examined in detail with the aim to study these intimate conflicts as they are played out in inter-personal relationships, in the family and in the society as a whole. The study has made use of concepts and ideas from theories of sociology and cultural studies taking into consideration issues of identity, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and the general contours of conflicts in society as represented in novels selected for study. Concepts and ideas from postmodernism, postcolonial theory, feminism, theories of diaspora, Queer theory and other appropriate theoretical perspectives have been employed to study the selected works, thus creating a flexible theoretical framework. The study has engaged in a close reading of the selected novels so as to examine the manifestations of various types of conflicts that preoccupy the writers of the Indian subcontinent. In addition to this the scholar’s own individual perspective has been utilized for a worthy analysis of the authors, their contexts and their views on humanity.
Chapter I of the thesis lays the basic framework under which the study has been conducted. The Indian Subcontinent, which is also more popularly known as South Asia, especially in the academia is a contested idea; a broad perspective on how this idea is perceived is presented. The issues that trouble a nation and its literature like language, the question of authenticity, and the writers’ place in the global context has been explained briefly here. The chapter also briefly lays out the various theoretical and philosophical ideas that constitute the perspective through which the select novelist and their works are examined is briefly laid down.

Chapter II studies the works of three contemporary Indian writers and their select works; namely, Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kiran Nagarkar’s *Ravan and Eddy*, and *The Extras* and Rohinton Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*. The works focus our attention on alienation, displacement and exile, exploitation, economic inequality, fundamentalism, insurgency, immigration, loss of identity, loneliness, multiculturalism, poverty and racial-discrimination. One of the major concerns in postcolonial literature that is examined here is the problem of displacement and its consequence resulting in the loss of home.

Chapter III examines the works of three prominent Pakistani fictionists: Mohsin Hamid and his novels *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Nadeem Aslam’s *Maps for Lost Lovers* and *The Wasted Vigil* and Kamila Shamsie’s *Kartography* and *Broken Verses*. Pakistani writers are more politically engaged than their Indian counterparts and these novels examine the political involvement of their authors. The framing of Islam and the representation of Muslims in the post-9/11 environment is a major concern in the
modern context. These writers attempt to present an alternate and varied representation of Muslims as opposed to the monolithic idea that media presents.

Chapter IV looks at the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, the displacement it spawned, and the preoccupation with the civil war that is so distinct in the works of contemporary Sri Lankan novelists. The works of Shyam Selvadurai that are examined here are *Funny Boy*, and *Cinnamon Gardens*. Both the novels narrate the obstacles that plague the quest for alternate sexual identity in a homophobic society. This struggle is negotiated in a country traumatised by ethnic strife. The other novelist studied in this chapter is Romesh Gunesekera. Three of his novels *Reef*, *The Sandglass* and *Heaven’s Edge* are examined to study the contours of conflict portrayed in them. Gunesekera’s works bring the ethnic clash more closely and in greater traumatic details. He also portrays the pain of the diasporic condition that many Sri Lankans have to experience in exile.

Chapter V analyses the works of novelists in Bangladesh and Nepal who are pioneers in their own rights, as they are the first generation of Bangladeshi and Nepali writers in English. The novels that are studied in this chapter are *A Golden Age* and *The Good Muslim* by Tahmina Anam, *French Lover* by the ever controversial Taslima Nasrin and two novels by the Nepali writer Manjushree Thapa: *The Tutor of English* and *Seasons of Flight*. Like their counterparts in the Subcontinent these writers are also concerned with issue of globalization, and ethnic and civil strife in their respective countries. In *A Golden Age* Anam portrays the Bangladeshi War of Independence, memorializing the event long expunged from official memory.

Chapter VI is the conclusion where the findings of the study are recorded and the prospects for further study suggested. Countries of the Indian Subcontinent share a great
number of similarities ranging from their economies to the social structures and the challenges confronting them. In correspondence to this many commonalities are perceived in the varied works of writers from varied countries. Their engagement with the political turmoils within their countries is evident across all writers. Negotiation of identities in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, class and caste is also a feature found among these writers. Problems of multiculturalism, globalization, diasporic consciousness and problems of representation in general are themes common among the diasporic writers.