PREFACE

There is a renewed interest in Commonwealth Studies in India these days. New courses on Commonwealth Literature are increasingly being offered in Indian Universities at both the graduate and post-graduate levels. A life-member of the Indian Association for Canadian Studies (IACS), I was fortunate enough to attend some of its annual conferences where deliberations on Canadian literature were made by eminent Canadianists from India and abroad. In March 1992, I attended a month long workshop on Canadian Studies held at M.S. University, Baroda. The faculty for the workshop consisted of such stalwarts in the field of Canadian art and literature as Dr. Dennis Duffy, Dr. David Williams, Dr. Minko Sotiron, Mr. Brian Mulvihill and Mr. Michael Century. My exposure to Canadian literature through these experts in the field has been one of the compelling factors to decide on a Canadian author for my research project. The establishment of the Asian Association for the Study of Australia (AASA) a few years ago was like a shot in my arm when I set out to work on an Australian poet too.
Despite the generous support lent by various agencies, not much work has been done so far on either Canadian or Australian literature by scholars in Indian Universities. Although some of our universities have introduced Canadian and Australian literatures as components of post-graduate "papers" on Commonwealth literature, there exists a discouraging scarcity of books and other relevant materials in our country. This however did not prevent me from deviating from the established tradition of choosing subjects from the British, American or Indo-Anglian areas only and I decided to work on Canadian and Australian poetry. My humble attempt is to probe and analyse the thematic concerns of two major writers from the Commonwealth - Dorothy Livesay (1909-1996) and Judith Wright (b1915 - ).

A poet of wide thematic range, Dorothy Livesay is one of the internationally reputed Canadian poets. She has twenty-five books of poetry and prose to her credit. She has received many awards for her writing including the Governor General’s Award for poetry in 1944 and 1947, the Lorne Pierce Medal from the Royal Society of Canada in 1947 and the Queen’s Canada Medal in 1977. She holds honourary doctorates from
several Canadian universities and was declared an Officer of
the Order of Canada in 1987. Throughout her life, Livesay has
worked actively for peace, women’s rights and social justice
of all kinds. She died at the age of eighty seven in 1996.

Apart from the many essays and articles scattered in
different books and journals and the special issue of A Room
of One’s Own devoted to a study of Livesay’s writing, no
serious book has emerged so far tracing her development as a
poet. Paul Denham has come out with a deft analysis of her
poems in Dorothy Livesay and Her Works. Benita Sharma’s
M.Phil dissertation, Why We are Here: Changing Perspectives in
the Poetry of Dorothy Livesay submitted to the SNDT Women’s
University, Bombay in 1989 is probably the first major work
on Livesay’s poetry undertaken by a scholar from India. The
present thesis, it is hoped, will add to the not-so-rich critical
material on Livesay’s poetry available in India today.

Judith Wright is undoubtedly one of the leading
writers of Australia today. Probably the most womanly of the
Australian poets, she does not confine herself to poetry writing
alone. Her interests are varied. Inheriting her love of the land
and deep concern for conservation issue from her father, Judith
Wright fights brazenly for the rights of the Aborigines. A founding member of the Aboriginal Treaty Committee she is heavily involved in the campaign for justice for the Aborigines. Sugathakumari, a noted Malayalam poet and a relentless supporter of the cause of environmental protection, has rendered some of Wright’s poems into Malayalam. It was in fact these translations which took me ultimately to the original. Judith Wright is known to most poetry-lovers of Kerala as one of the recipients of the coveted Asan Prize for poetry.

Though Wright has around twenty five volumes of prose and poetry to her credit, there is a serious dearth of critical material on her poetry. Though she has written prolifically both as a poet and a literary critic, she has not received the critical attention she deserves. W.N. Scott’s *Focus on Judith Wright* (1967), R.K. Sadler’s *A Critical Evaluation of Judith Wright’s Poems* (1971), P.G. Kemeny’s *Notes and Commentary on Judith Wright’s Poetry* (1972), A.D. Hope’s 36-page monograph *Judith Wright* published in 1975 in the *Australian Writers and their Work* series and Shirley Walker’s full length study, *The Poetry of Judith Wright: A Search for Unity*

This research paper consists of a Preface and six chapters. Chapter I is introductory in nature and surveys the growth and development of Australian and Canadian verse in the twentieth century. Love has remained a major theme with both Livesay and Wright throughout their poetic careers. Chapter II therefore has been devoted to a study of the poets' treatment of love. An attempt has also been made to trace the feministic concerns of the two poets.

Poverty, racism and war have dominated the thinking of both Livesay and Wright. Chapter III has been earmarked for a study of their treatment of war and violence. They have never felt any qualms about voicing their protest against war, violence and injustice of any kind perpetrated even by their own countrymen. Both Livesay and Wright have been vehemently alerting people to the folly of ravaging the environment which nurtures and sustains us. They have consistently displayed a serious concern for the protection of
Nature with its myriad flora and fauna and defended the rights of the Aborigines. Chapter IV therefore is a study of the local strains in their poetry which reveal their abiding interest in nature, environment and the Aborigines.

Both Livesay and Wright have written poems with a strong philosophical content. In Chapter V, an attempt has been made to examine the metaphysical and mystical strains in their poetry. Chapter VI, the concluding chapter, highlights the principal inferences made from the research carried out in the preceding chapters.

The method of study resorted to is mainly analytical.