CHAPTER IV

VARIETIES OF EXILE

SECTION 1: STAYING-ON

In Paul Scott's tetralogy The Raj Quartet (1972), whose action is spread over the period 1942 to 1947, almost all the major characters seem conscious of hovering on the brink of a great historical divide. A premonition about the end of the empire stirs them out of their complacency. The impending change is presaged by the political upheavals resulting from the Indian demand for Independence and the Second World War. Not only does fiction represent this altered mood, but a historian's account also corroborates this change in the ethos. Dennis Kincaid in 1938 records this changing ethos:

Times have changed rapidly for them since 1918 - ... Indianisation proceeds apace and Indian independence has become a practical possibility rather than the extremist's dream. The spacious days when the Englishmen, be he Governor-General or District Officer, was supreme in his own sphere have vanished; to-day may be looked on as a transitional change.¹

From the twenties onwards the British had begun to think of India as a transitory home. Once Independence was declared most members of the British community decided to go
back. A few chose to stay on for they had been away too long, they no longer had any foothold in England and would be exiles there upon their return. The predicament of those who stayed on in India was fraught with various tensions. This becomes the theme of quite a few novels which will be analyzed in this chapter.

Even those who returned to England did not always have an easy time. Their attitude to India as well as to England remained equivocal for a while. In spite of their nostalgia for the lost glory of the empire and the difficulty of maintaining the same living standards in post-war Britain, they did not actually want to return to India. Margaret Macmillan in her study The Women of the Raj analyses their predicament thus:

Curiously few of the women who looked back on India with fond nostalgia wanted to return even for a short visit. Perhaps, having been disillusioned with a home-coming once, they did not want to risk it again. India, their India, was better in their memories. Perhaps, too, they did not want to go back as ordinary tourists to a country where they had once been important. 2

Those who stayed on had to confront different kinds of problems in India. Politically they no longer belonged to the elite ruling-class; historically they had cast their lot
with a race with whom it was difficult to integrate. Fictional representations of the British men and women who stayed on in India tends to render them as sad and pathetic figures. Most of them are old, therefore marginalised in any case. Shorn of their earlier importance they feel exiled and neglected. Recollecting the past seems to be their major preoccupation. For some of them loneliness is accentuated by the absence of children. Their problems fit very well into the situation described in a sociological study of ageing and ethnicity.

... the double jeopardy hypothesis predicts the double disadvantage of being old in an ethnic minority group... This places emphasis on deficits due to minority status... Related to this is also the "age as leveller" hypothesis that predicts a decline in old age of the relative disadvantage of minority persons since ageing brings about deprivations that cut across social or ethnic lines. 3

Anglo-Indian novels that portray the situation of the elderly British people in contemporary India are - Noble Descents (1982) by Gerald Hanley; Staying On (1977) by Paul Scott; Hot Water Man (1984) by Deborah Moggach. Some of Ruth P. Jhabvala's short stories also illustrate the case of the white expatriates. A Scent of Apples (1972) by Harold Geach and The Dark Goddess (1956) by Hallam Tennyson depict young English people exploring India.

Nayantara Sahgal uses an elderly British character in her novel Rich Like Us but the situation of Rose is
different because she is married to an Indian. She did not come to India as a representative of the ruling class, and thus the transfer of power does not alter her status materially or psychologically. However, in this novel as also in *Staying On* the image of a house almost becomes a metaphor for colonial occupation. Entry into and eviction from a house assume figurative significances. Because of Rose's forcible entry into her Indian husband's family her stepson condemns her as a colonial aggressor with an insufferable ethnic arrogance. Similarly, in *Staying On* while evicting the Smalley's Mrs. Bhoolabhoy, their landlady, reminds her husband that they are now paying off the colonial debt. Because others perceive them as usurpers, these British characters can hardly lay claim to India as their adopted home. In the novels of Hanley, Scott and Jhabvala we see the recurrence of certain Indian characters who look upon the sufferings of these elderly British people in India as divine retribution. Not all Indians feel like this, but the younger people who think of their problems and would like to redress the injustice are helpless before their rich and powerful compatriots.
It would be interesting to explore why this elderly ethnic minority group acquires importance as subject-matter for novelists. Such people, as fictional characters, become specific and individual case studies of a larger historical process. The story of exile, cultural confrontation, acquisition and loss of power - all these get concretized in the predicament of the people who outlived their political conquest. In their predicaments history and psychology converge, because the individual adjustments in their lives were being done against the backdrop of colonial history.

We shall also try to understand through these novels what happens to those people who clinging to their separate racial identity continue to be uncommunicative with the local population. They compound their exile with silence, but do they possess the necessary cunning to survive through their alienation?

Finally, I shall try to analyze how much of the particular predicament of the white minority group is a result of their old age and would have been similar in England. The habit of fantasizing and drawing upon memories could also be the weapon for survival of the aged in any society. Was there anything distinct or unique about the older British people who stayed on in India?
In the Dark Goddess, (1956) Hallam Tennyson claims that the spirit of renunciation and selfless service can forge a common meeting ground for East and West. He reasons that either the westerner's fierce sense of independence or the alone Indian's meek submission is unsuitable for changing human destiny.

To prove the validity of his observation he guides Joan Raydon, the novel's white protagonist, through experiences that accentuate the contours of her personality. Her initial Western rationalism, subsequently tempered by love and dedication, makes her emerge as a mother-figure. The author makes the simple villagers perceive in her the powers of the goddess Kali, and Joan Raydon is seen to struggle hard to accept both the terror and beauty of India.

Joan's personality is complemented by that of Krishna Bannerjee, a Bengali intellectual aspiring for an India free from superstition and inertia. As Joan plunges into her work of bringing sanity and sanitation to the teeming Indians around her, Krishna is alternatively critical or supportive of her.

Despite his Oxbridge education and his vision of a new India Krishna seems to lack the necessary energy to bring about any concrete reform in his familiar world. He has to wait for somebody like Joan, a product of London School of Economics, who can show him the shortcomings in his personality.
Even after eight years in India Joan finds the country unresponsive to change. Apart from the ignorant masses and her complacent university students, Joan also has to contend with the members of the Communist party. Nagen Dutt and his colleagues try to make political capital out of her drainage project in slums. She does admit that her initial plans in slum development were turned into a valid project with their technical knowledge, otherwise the scheme would have collapsed. But despite their contribution to her work, she treats them suspiciously and avoids them.

Finally, her drainage project is taken up actively by the municipality and the media praise her involvement with the work. Although she comes to know that Krishna's cunning manipulation of the situation is responsible for this, she does not publicly or otherwise renounce her glory.

In a bid to prop up Joan, the author seems to imply that communism (although a political force from West), is unsuitable for the Indian situation, even though it may be embraced by well-meaning Indians. The western values India of needs are the democratic and liberal kind, nurtured on British soil. The author also hints at a certain measure of corruption in the novel's communists since they try to sabotage Joan's mission.

Like the communists and the urban middle class, Joan's students also resist being drawn into social commitments unless they benefit from these. This motif of shrewdness, employed by the author, seems to suggest that the task of India's upliftment again lies with the conscientious British.
Granting political independence to Indians did not bring an end to the British sense of responsibility. Since Kipling's times, Anglo-Indian novelists have projected the western-educated Indian as corrupt and wily who cannot be trusted to help his own brothers. In contrast, village India is perceived as noble and dignified, unpolluted by ideas. Recent theories of colonial discourse have analysed the need for this bi-polar perception of Indian reality by the British, and the valorisation of one over the other. The rural Indian can be romanticized because he is distant, and obviously the 'safe Other' as far as the British ruler is concerned.

During a visit to Krishna's village, Joan gets involved in the starving peasants' distress. She finds these villagers responding to her energy unlike her urban students as if to illustrate the theory of rural superiority.

Although a total stranger, she can identify the source of their problems and make a success out of her mission. She sets up a fishing co-operative to render the villagers economically independent. She gradually frees them from the hideous clutches of religious superstition, or so she thinks. With the crashing of the goddess Kali's idol in the temple the villagers symbolically see her as their new goddess who can protect them against Kali's wrath. In a sense, their religious orthodoxy is now extended to Joan, who fails to recognise the identity grafted onto her.
The fishing co-operative starts functioning despite many obstacles. Joan is torn between her university life and her new-found role as a reformer and mother-goddess to the peasants. Probably she never admits it to herself but the emotional vacuum in her life is filled up with larger than life functions.

Even then, Joan cannot overcome the terror and despair that Kali represents and these mingle with her conception of India. Repelled, she wants to return to England where there is no oppressive sense of mystery where events can be rationally explained and categorised.

Krishna reveals to her the mercy and benediction that the Goddess showers on her worthy devotees. Unless she accepts this benign image of Kali her knowledge of India will remain incomplete. She protests that reality is so amorphous in India that it loses all significance. In other words, the admiration of peasants satisfies only one aspect of her personality while the other part continues to hunger for recognition. Krishna's proposal of marriage at this juncture can be seen as a narrative strategy to retain her in India. The other seems to urge her to organise her chaotic impressions of India into a coherent whole for her own as well as others' benefit.

A Scent of Apples (1972) depicts two English men, Gavin Tomlinson and Canford in post-colonial India who can be said to represent broadly two typical British attitudes towards India. Canford possesses the ruthless, tenacious mentality of a successful colonial. His plans to modernize
his tea estates are not so much philanthropy as a challenge to others who might question his authority and his passion for progress. He harbours in himself the Prospero complex so common in the colonial administrator. Gavin, on the other hand, is sensitive to the needs of the local people and perceives that material development need not necessarily bring in change in the lives of the people.

Gavin finds a hint of apple scent in freshly crushed tea leaves in Assam. Apart from this passing sensation, he seems to be devoid of any nostalgia for England. Canford is a lonely man whose wife and son are away in England and probably do not intend to return to India. It could be that in order to mask his sense of isolation he tries to reshape his tiny world of tea estates into his own fiefdom.

Gavin is cast by the author in the mould of the typical Indophile who tries to integrate himself into India through his work and emotional attachments. But Phuleshwari, an Assamese woman, to whom he is attached, regards her secret mission and community service as more important and pressing than a fulfilled emotional relationship with Gavin.

Canford and Phuleshwari stand at opposite ends of the rainbow dream of development. Political power for Canford is the magic wand ushering in rapid changes. Phuleshwari believes that the local people, oppressed by outsiders, can determine better the blueprint for their own progress. He executes development plans which uproot helpless ancestral sites. The Assamese woman gets involved in underground
terrorist activities with Naga rebels to restore the exploited peasants to their rights. The only point of similarity between the white man and Phuleshwari is their self-denial in matters of love or family life. In their haste to fulfil their goals they refuse any kind of emotional attachment.

Gavin silently questions Canford's policies but as a subordinate does not dare to oppose him openly. An engineer by profession, sensitive in his nature, Gavin blunders in his public life. Probably it is his gentle attitudes that embroil him in the petty traps of tea garden politics. Bereft of the kind of aggressiveness that both Phuleshwari and Canford possess, his intervention in crucial issues sparks off either communal tension or labour unrest, or aggravates his relationship with Canford.

Gavin's incapacity to represent himself despite his best intentions draws a caustic response from Phuleshwari. She calls him a western windbag, a squirrel man busy burying his ideas and dissuades him from entering her life.

By placing Gavin at the centre of misunderstanding and local turmoil the author probably tries to draw the readers' favourable response to him. Gavin is even warned by an Indian well-wisher not to grow his roots in India. He casts in doubt Gavin's capacity to withstand the rude shocks of the land.

The author probably does not succeed in rendering Gavin into a fully realised character. He merely performs the role of a misunderstood Indophile, clumsy and forever bungling.
The novel unfolds at the level of physical action, dialogue, plethora of hair-raising escapades, secret missions without giving the readers sufficient insight into the psychological complexity or upheavals of the characters. Although Gavin is propped up blatantly to emerge as a hero, his various images as a novice in business, as a lover who can win Phuleshwari only by turning into a terrorist, as a cunning muscleman who defeats miscreants too easily in the end-- do not cohere together to project an integrated personality.

In the end Canford is a defeated man; his tea estates are plundered by local insurgents in a bid to oust him from his land. Gavin faces the tragedy of Phuleshwari's death who suddenly dies in an accident. This sudden removal of the Indian woman from the arena may be seen in terms of the fear of miscegenation that many Anglo-Indian novelists subconsciously share with many of their readers.

The dream of making India their home may still persist or lie ruined. In this open-ended novel the lingering impression is one of sadness.
SECTION 3: MEMORY & FANTASY

In "Miss Sahib" a short from the anthology Like Birds, Like Fishes and Other Stories (1964) by Ruth P. Jhabvala there is an aged British character: Miss Tuhy. She was an Indophile earlier and with the encroachment of old age and depleting bank balance grows increasingly disillusioned. Her bitterness is more concentrated than that of the normally aloof white man because she expected and demanded too much from India. Mannoni in his book Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization describes the two approaches that Europeans adopt towards the colonized or the local inhabitants. The first group of Europeans draws a line between the civilized and the non-civilized on the basis of some vague notion of racial inequality. Then they get convinced that the non-civilized cannot be raised beyond his primitive stage. The second group of Europeans asserts that all men are equally endowed with reason and refuse to see the differences caused by cultural conditioning. Mannoni describes the convergence of the two attitudes thus:

... thus these two attitudes, which at first seemed dramatically opposed to each other, finally coalesce in the single belief that the mentality of the native is incomprehensible, that there is therefore no point in wasting any time on it, and that since our way of thinking is the only right one we should impose it on the rest of the world in the interests of reason and morality. 4
Miss Tuhy's gradual disillusionment with India reflects the weak foundations of her earlier complacency and blind adoration for India and Indians. Her constant comparison in the past of British people and Indians shows a marked predilection towards India. Even British climate used to repulse her. Unlike Lucy Smalley in Paul Scott's _Staying On_ and Iona Gracie, Miss Tuhy made a deliberate choice to stay on because she genuinely preferred the country. As long as she considered herself an insider and almost an Indian she never minded her surroundings or could ignore the people subtly exploiting her. Once she fathoms the far-reaching consequences of such deception she becomes an outsider. Her landlady's death becomes a symbol of Miss Tuhy's ultimate despair—fear of her own death, especially in an alien land. Her morbid anticipation of death is not necessarily an old age fear but rather an acceptance of her loveless, now unhappy existence in India amid filth and squalor.

The last line of the short story captures the irony of her situation. She does not have enough money for the cheapest route back to England. Trapped in this situation,
Miss Tuhy's mode of escape is her daydreaming about mountains and pine trees. The English climate which repulsed her so much earlier now appears so benevolent that it can obliterate the Indian reality. We see in her an enthusiastic Indophile slowly turning cynical with old age, unfulfilled maternal love and monetary problems. Lucy Smalley in Staying On frets about India bringing out her worst quality; Miss Tuhy also complains about the callousness of Indians and India that corroded her personality. Thus whatever be the starting point - enthusiasm about India or a superiority complex about race, those who stayed on eventually tended to converge towards an experience of disillusionment.

Paul Scott's Staying On can be read as a coda to The Raj Quartet because the Smalleys were minor characters in its third volume The Towers of Silence. In this later novel and Scott's final one on India, the Smalleys are given an independent life. In The Raj Quartet the Smalleys would always be left stranded on the club verandah after a party or some social function because somehow no tonga turned up to reach them home. Nor did any white member of the raj offer to drop them home on his own. The image of this childless couple waiting in the semi-darkness for an
opportunity to be secure, abandoned by their own people, is further worked out in Staying On.

This novel portrays the hill-station Pankot in the throes of a new birth during the crucial period of Indian history in 1972. The Bangladesh War is just over and India Gandhi is concentrating on expurgating India of corruption and nationalizing banks, mines, etc. Against this backdrop of rapidly altering socio-political and economic scenario the Smalleys are the last representatives of the colonial British. They are zealously protecting their racial identity against an onslaught of Indianness around them. Lucy Smalley's silent monologues spurred on by her memories and fantasies indicate that she and her husband often feel like museum articles preserved by the hill climate of Pankot. Her reminiscences may be taken as a narrative technique for exploring her and Tusker's state of mind. The silence of the other important characters and their habit of ignoring the Smalleys make Lucy's prolonged monologues more poignant.

Unfortunately the Smalleys suffered in British India because they were not high up in the hierarchy; their ordeal continues as they remain neglected in modern India. Scott
focuses through this average British couple the structure of class and privilege inherent within the British community. Unrelenting pressures were built up to remind such officers of their duty to the raj and to goad them into placid compliance. British policy in India discouraged any individuality within and outside its ranks as a potential threat to its imperial might. Whatever amount of ambition Tusker might have nurtured the colonial hierarchy systematically snuffed it out. Lucy recalls Tusker's transformation from a dapper young army officer to a defeated man taking refuge behind endless files. Corroborating Scott's view of repression of energy within the ranks a historian Paul Johnson writes:

With rare consistency, the English throughout their history have chosen to buy stability: but they have always had to pay a heavy price for it, in the suppression of energy, the denial of natural genius, the frustration of dynamic forces within their society, in hopes deferred and opportunities missed.

... The English have picked their way prudently and safely through the tumults of change: but they have drawn the penalties which must befall those who fail to invest in adventure, experiment and risk.5

The author here describes how the system as a whole discouraged initiative and individuality. Tusker Smalley as a minor cog in the giant wheel of British Raj, gradually
lost all ambition and became a total conformist. Lucy Smalley tried to transpose the liberal social values of inter-war England which chiefly moulded her, to the colonial situation in India. But the scale of values of colonial India was retrogressive, and the tension maimed her sensitivity. She realised that the British in India did not live by tenets of liberalism and equality, and here she could only be judged according to her class and husband's position. Eventually India turns out to be as flat and disappointing as her London office. India's exotic glamour, she feels was only for upper class British people whose condescension made her squirm. The discord in their marriage at one point seems to be the result of the peculiar political and cultural ethos of British India. She openly accuses Smalley of having deprived her of the fullness of her life so that he could support and sustain his insignificance. It is possible however that Lucy is making her husband a scapegoat for a marriage that was destined to be dull.

To alleviate the bitterness of her memory and her past frustration Lucy indulges in all kinds of fantasies. At the eve of her life Lucy keeps remembering a stranger who awakened her first teenage sexual awareness. Her
unfulfilled passion creates a permanent void in her life and lends its bitterness to her memories of British India. Her desire to relive her youth and fulfill her gray life through fantasies leads her to elaborate exercises in play-acting and repeating dialogues from movies fancying herself in the heroine's position. It is as though she can recreate herself anytime, untainted by an asphyxiating marriage in an alien land.

Contrasted to Lucy's flights of fancy, Smalley's world is entirely tethered to the present, and this highlights their lack of communication. He is only conscious of an impending doom and conveys it to Lucy through a long letter. It is the only letter that is ever exchanged between them and comes to symbolize the agony of an individual so oppressed by life's circumstances that he could never dream at all. Lucy's fantasies do not alienate her from reality or even dim her memory. The novel is structured so as to project alternately her imagination and confrontation with reality. Other characters' views are placed strategically to bring into relief the qualitative differences in her views and their opinions.
When India became independent Lucy felt that it would now be a better place to live in, she would be able to relish the status of a memsahib and its accompanying privileges when most of her other compatriots were gone. She still assumed an unspoken consensus on British superiority. To her the new power group emerging in post-colonial India still had to prove their competence, the capability of bearing responsibilities. T.O. Lloyd, a historian describes in the following lines the British skepticism towards the Indians' ability for self-rule:

During the war Indians had risen to the highest ranks in the army and the civil service; in 1939 it might still be asked if they could run the system of government, but by 1945 the question was whether the Indians who were already running a great deal of the system could retain their administrative impartiality under the immense strain to which they were being subjected.⁶

Lucy shared this skepticism, and hence did not expect that her experience with this new elite would be a repetition of what she had undergone with the British community. It has a smaller hierarchy, an exclusive apex and petty condescension for those below, be they brown or white. Eventually Lucy also begins to see the colonial paradigm replicated by the brown elite and the international jet-set tycoons in India. The process of industrialization
that the British began ultimately has a negative effect on the people of Smalley's type, who could not cope with the cult of the new consumerism and had little tolerance for the nouveau riche.

There is a pervading sadness in the novel. Lucy's comments on India are gloomy and her condemnation of the landlords, the Bhoolabhoys, is ill tempered and shows her up as a person who has ceaselessly hankered for glory and suspected those who have achieved it. Hence we have a series of oppressions woven into the structure of the novel. The Smalleys are wronged both by the British and the Indians. Mrs. Bhoolabhoysy thrives on ruining the Smalleys and tyrannising her husband; Mr. Bhoolabhoysy is snobbish and discriminatory towards Susy, the Anglo-Indian hair-dresser; Susy who has been ignored by the British is overlooked by Indians and shunned by her own Anglo-Indian community because of her impoverished, unmarried status. Susy and Lucy appear to be equally ill-fated but both initially hesitate to befriend the other because it would mean an open acceptance of their deprivations. Unable to socialise with the upper-class Indians, or even befriend them because of their supercilious attitudes, Lucy feels later on during
Tusker's illness that Eurasians or converted Christians may be safer to associate with. She imagines what the Indians must be thinking of people like herself and her husband:

Yes, you're nice. You can be fun, you make us laugh, you're always welcome, but you're an Englishman so you represent the defeated enemy.

Lucy attempts to read these prejudices in every gesture of the Indians, which shows how she is slowly developing a persecution complex. Lucy is specially critical of the Bhoolabhoys whose wealth and arrogance signify to her an obnoxious business mentality and dark transactions. The novel revolves around an eviction notice that the Smalleys have been given because the Bhoolabhoys want to demolish their bungalow to construct a modern hotel. Like Lucy and Col. Smalley Susy gets evicted from her rented bungalow unceremoniously. The original rootlessness of these people is accentuated by this motif of actual spatial dislocation. The substitution of colonial bungalows by multi-storyed buildings indicates the shift in the ethos of the country from the graceful, spacious colonial life-style to a brisk modern and functional rhythm. Susy, being young and more indigenous, can adapt to the change better than the Smalleys.
The eviction notice asking the Smalleys to quit the premises triggers off Smalley's cardiac attack. Mrs. Bhoolabhoy removes it from his dead hands so that for lack of evidence no charge can be brought against her. Ironically, this shrewdness on her part saves Lucy from being homeless, illustrating a hopeless tangle between landlord and tenant, white and brown people, the aged and the privileged, the mercenary and the victim. Scott found in the lives of these ordinary elderly British couple significant fictional material because it helped him to probe into the psyche of those who had to wait in the wings forever, while watching others occupy centre stage in the colonial game.

In another short story entitled "Two More Under the Indian Sun" How I Became a Holy Mother and Other Stories (1981) Ruth P. Jhabvala attempts a variation on this theme of old age and its accompanying ills. Margaret sees her remaining life in India rightfully dedicated to philanthropic work. It becomes apparent soon that it is only a facade for her tantrums, and imperious habits formed during colonial times as a civilian's wife. She expresses jealousy towards Elizabeth married to an Indian much in the
same way as Etta resents Judy, in A Backward Place. As the title suggests, Margaret's and Elizabeth's behavioural patterns seem to be influenced by the tropical sun which distorts whatever calm their English climate had once bred in them. The word 'more' in the title gives it a clinical touch of a case study where the individual volition is subordinated to larger forces of history and geography.

Margaret's friend and spiritual mentor, Babaji is a religious man whom Jhabvala creates more as an individual than as a type. His equanimity has a tranquil influence on Margaret's ebullient personality. Jhabvala portrays a paradoxical situation in which Babaji, despite his physical stillness, commands psychological power. Margaret tries rather painstakingly to perceive in him the Hindu concept of the self-realised yogi who is at once immobility and whirling action. With age Margaret is growing hypersensitive but wants others to acknowledge it as refinement of spirit.

Elizabeth, meek and unprotesting, accepts Margaret's interference in her private life, upholding her as superior. Elizabeth's husband Raju, conscious of Margaret's condescension towards others, avoids a confrontation.
Probably Margaret does not appreciate the way Elizabeth has really accepted India as part of her life while she had always kept it at a distance. For her India is an object of philanthropy, for Elizabeth it is a source of inner happiness and calm. Babaji and Raju represent two Indian reactions towards elderly British people in India. Babaji makes no distinction between Indians and British, and treats them all as normal people seeking happiness from life. Raju is suspicious of the foreigner's attempts at seeking Indian solutions to her problems.

Margaret accepts Babaji's decisions only because they are in compliance with hers. At the end of the story she is seen basking in the afternoon sun happily with Babaji. Jhabvala implies that the tropical climate agrees with her because it resembles her temperament—scorching or mellow depending on the time of the day. Metaphorically in the afternoon of her life she has found peace with the spiritual aspect of India.

This short story is the only fictional text about an English character who stays on in India that ends on a positive note. There may be shadows lurking in the corners, but this woman has the faith that the tropical sun will
dispel them. Coming from Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, celebrated for her double-edged irony towards Indians and foreigners in India alike, this is a surprising testament of her positive potential.

Noble Descents (1982) though written after Staying On depicts a much earlier phase of Indian independence. Set in the early fifties, this novel structures itself around middle-aged characters in an imaginary ex-princely state Induspur, somewhere north of Delhi and close to Kashmir, which is now under the Indian Dominion. The novel at one level is a deeply reflective and complex book attempting to grapple with the philosophical and cultural dimensions of the Indo-British encounter, yet at another level ends up falling into predictable grooves about the sensational, feudal and exotic images of India. Due to this dichotomy the novel lacks either a cohesive pattern or a central statement.

The narrative presents both the British and the erstwhile maharajah Chandra Gupta, stripped bare of their power and glory, leading shabby lives without vitality and commitment. The two British couples, the Brett-Turners and the Tones, disillusioned with marriage, had somehow
maintained a façade of propriety. With the withdrawal of British hegemony this façade crumbles. The dwindling British community discards their pretensions and watches their lives either disintegrate or find a new significance. Iris Tone turns into a psychopathic character. Megan Brett-Turner leaves her husband to save herself from degeneration. Col. Bingham, even at the expense of remaining isolated from his community, chooses to assimilate with India. The author seems to imply that being integrated into India is the only way to tackle the impact of a different culture on one's personality. The author Gerald Hanley was in India during the Second War serving in the British army and did not return ever to consolidate or revise his opinions about the country. He wrote two novels about India - Noble Descents and The Journey Homeward (1961). The latter is taken up for detailed discussion in the sixth chapter of this dissertation. His brief association with India probably did not allow him an intimate knowledge of the country and its people hence his Indian characters appear unhinged, lacking authenticity or concreteness.

In contrast to Bingham who becomes part of India, Chandra Gupta the erstwhile Maharaja can belong nowhere. He
has not been able to internalize his western education and
influences, nor can he merge his life with Induspur. The
death of his son and his Italian wife alienates him even
further from the reality around him. Bingham can be seen as
the author's persona, withdrawn from the scene of action,
observing the fate of Induspur and all those who are
involved with it. Bingham fears to delve into his memories;
he also dreads to fantasize about his future because he
might lose his hold on the present. Thus if the author
conveys the opinion that detachment is a necessary condition
for creativity and for analysing the present, then he also
exaggerates the negative effects of fantasy. Those in the
novel who fantasize and live on memories get detached from
the present and end in a limbo. If we compare Noble
Descents with Scott's novel where almost every character's
strategy of survival is through day-dreams we see the
difference between Scott's perspective and Hanley's. When
fantasy is sold as a commodity - as illustrated by the
example of American film-makers in Induspur wanting to shoot
a film on the local royal family, and Megan who churns out
romantic pulp literature - Hanley can manipulate its impact
on his fictional characters. With the arrival of the
American crew Megan and the Tones seem to find a new lease
of life as their activities and the tempo of the novel increase simultaneously.

Prior to the arrival of the film-makers, the Tones are shown as psychopathic characters, full of acrimony towards Indians and their own compatriots who shun them. Iris Tone and her husband end up as perverted characters clamouring for recognition and justice. The adoption of Indian customs and habits by other British characters strike fear in their heart about the future. Wally Brett-Turner finds post-war India inconceivably stifling where the values inculcated by his upper class British education seem irrelevant. All three of them slowly turn neurotic, groping for some clue to power and recognition. Delving into this sort of psychosis Freud had once commented:

... whether a man is a homosexual, a hysterical suffering from anxiety, an obsessional neurotic cut off from society... the impelling motive of his condition is that he wishes to assert himself, to overcompensate for his inferiority, to remain 'on top', to pass from the feminine to the masculine line... the self-preservative instinct will try to profit by every situation; the ego will seek to turn even illness to advantage. 7

The neurosis of these fictional characters is compounded by their paranoia that if they choose to go back they would become exiles even in England. Forsaken by his wife Megan, Wally is terrified of what injury India can
inflict on him further. Iris' constant threats to abandon her husband drive Tone to acknowledge along with Wally, their double exile - from their homes and from England.

Megan turns to writing romances to recover from the trauma of her personal life. Her female audience mostly belongs to England's lower-middle class who seek psychological relief in pulp literature about the splendour, drama, political intrigues of the Moghul and the British Raj in India. It may be argued that the British female readership may not be interested in Moghul court and nineteenth century British India but only in romances that are set in remote time and place. The charm of the exotic and the faraway has a special position in the romantic tale which has to sustain the reader's interest by providing him with the unfamiliar and the fascinating. Walter Scott's novel *The Surgeon's Daughter* set in Tipu Sultan's India must have offered to his contemporary audience a vista of the grandeur of India. Although Megan comes a whole century later yet her publisher's exhortations to write about India's past splendours involving white characters explains the western woman's appetite for such romances. The escapist tendency of the average underprivileged woman in
Britain is explained further when we turn to Ann B. Snitow's article on the appeal of mass romances in the western book market. Snitow sums up the situation succinctly:

One of our culture's most intense myths, the ideal of an individual who is brave and complete in isolation, is for men only. Women are grounded, enmeshed in civilization, in social connection, in family and in love... While all our culture's rich myths of individualism are essentially closed to them. Their one socially acceptable moment of transcendence is romance. This involves a constant return in imagination to those short moments in the female life cycle, courtship...

The pivotal word in Snitow's argument is 'transcendence' - which implies that romances offer salvation, however briefly, to its female reader. Megan views herself as the arbiter of this salvation, the provider of the literary manna which succours underprivileged women. Hanley exposes how Megan turns literary fantasies into a saleable commodity. She is satirically projected as a passionate professional with a bank balance who skims the surface of other people's existence, rather than plunge into their depths. The proposed film on Induspur is another focal point for Hanley's satire. The film is scrapped finally because Koltz and Croon, heading the film crew speculate that India may not after all be such an excellent imported item for western consumers. They decide
to minimise their commercial risk and shoot it, retaining all its exotic shades, in Hollywood studios.

The author exposes the new generation of westerners who manipulate their talents for mass market profit, to create an artifact out of India. His way of tying up the loose ends of the novel reveals his romantic notion of India, its passion and dynamism bubbling under the surface. One wonders if Hanley himself does not fall into the same snare of presenting a sensational image of India, an art for which he criticises Megan.

Deborah Moggach's novel Hot Water Man (1984) has a cameo portrayal of an old British widow living alone in a dilapidated house in Karachi. Iona Gracie's story begins where the account of Lucy Smalley's life ends. She is a lonely widow living in reduced circumstances with a faithful Indian servant. Her case is similar to the widowed Lucy's who at the end of the novel is left at the mercy of a servant and a small pension.

Like Lucy who is adversely affected by the multinationals opening up a chain of hotels in Pankot and devouring Smith's hotel in the process, Iona Gracie also suffers from the onslaught of multinationals. She does not
accept defeat humbly but lashes out at their wily corruption and slow encroachment on human values. Mrs. Gracie's stable of donkeys is situated on a site which the Trumplux chain of hotels fails to procure for political reasons. The reader learns along with Iona Gracie that her individual militant agitation, her efforts to build up barricades against enemies are of no avail.

Like the other elderly British who stayed on in the subcontinent, Iona has to slowly accept the fact that the Indian elite treats her as a peripheral member of their society. By clinging to her racial identity, she maintains her mental equilibrium and tackles a hostile climate and people. As a consequence she develops the habit of fondly reminiscing about her past in British India and is so out of contact with contemporary reality that her ignorance becomes pathetic. Her happy memories prevent her from admitting that she is caught in the tides of history. The waves have receded and she finds herself stranded. Her mission of providing the donkeys with shelter and her abrasive term "asses" for people around point to the alienation of her childless and friendless life.
Donald, the British manager of Cameron Chemicals, gets drawn to her because she represents the old-world values of colonial India cherished by his grandfather who had served in the British army at Karachi. Donald's complaints about his wife Christine's feminism and missionary zeal about self-assertion have no meaning for Iona and her misunderstanding of the terms creates a rare humour in the otherwise tragic depiction of her old age. She takes feminism to be a synonym for femininity and missionary zeal as the idealism of Christian preachers in India. Iona cannot conceive of a woman insisting on being fiercely independent and she fails to comprehend Christine's personality. She confuses Christine's self-assertion with the familiar transgression of her time - mixing with the natives. Christine's intelligence signifies for Iona her domestic skills and not the young woman's university degrees. Donald's genuine appreciation of Iona's quaint and graceful lifestyle makes us realise that they both possess a conservative outlook where white women are expected to be conformists.

His psychological affinity with Iona, his dissatisfaction with England because it suffocates
initiative and his pleasure in his newly-acquired authority in Karachi hark back to a colonial mentality. The British imperialism was not only a product of a particular moment in history, it is a state of mind that can be generated even in a politically free land where a young Briton tries to recapture the ambience of a past of domination. In this case political power has been replaced by superior management skills and technological know-how. The principal condition is domination, whatever be the manifestations, that leads to the assumption of power and hegemony.

SECTION 3: CONCLUSION

The elderly British people staying on in India invariably resort to comparisons. Chiefly they compare the present situation of India with colonial India, but they also set present day Britain against pre-war Britain and their Indian neighbours with the white neighbours and friends of earlier times. They talk nostalgically of the elegance of their past life style while struggling hard to keep up a decent appearance. Whatever be the topics of discourse - politics, economics, race relations - these are always inserted into an unarticulated discourse about loss of power.
The novels discussed in this chapter, hint that England would have offered these characters better prospects, but not unalloyed bliss. Old age in western communities also lead to a marginalised existence. It is probably a curious coincidence that most of these characters examined here are women, either widowed or unmarried. It is only Margaret whom Jhabvala shows to have accepted India in her old age. Lucy, whom we see as a widow at the end of the novel clings to Susy, the Anglo-Indian hair-dresser fearing for her bleak future. Iona Gracie in Hot Water Man does not succumb to the pressures of either old age or the ruthless political power game around her. Miss Tuhy's life in 'Miss Sahib' seems to be even more melancholy than Lucy's, for the English teacher had dearly loved India and its people but was undeservedly betrayed by them. Megan Brett-Turner, in Noble Descents, despite her glamour and wealth and a succession of lovers remains a lonely and unfulfilled woman. She ignores the Indian reality around her and lives in a world of make-believe. Probably Megan cannot be counted among these people who turn redundant yet she too is past her prime and is likely to fall into the category of single childless women whose prospects in life is diminishing in
scope. The encroaching emptiness of old age as people are stripped of their roles is a recurring theme of the narratives discussed in this chapter. Such predicaments have been analysed by the sociologist Havighurst as geriatric inevitability:-

In short, the retired older man and his wife are imprisoned in a role-less role. They have no vital function to perform such as they had in rural society. This is doubly true of the husband, because a woman as long as she is physically able retains the role and satisfactions of homemaker: Nor are they offered a ceremonial role by society to make up in part for their lost functional role. 

Havighurst's analysis corroborates the argument put forth by Jhabvala, Scott, Hanley and Moggach in their fictional rendering of role-less aged people. However much these people attribute their peripheral existence to the post-colonial situation in India, it is doubtful if a return to England would have restored them to any central position. As elderly members of a capitalist society they would, in any case, have been marginal to the mainstream, especially because they were returning after a period of absence.

Childlessness is common to all these characters and intensify their isolation even more. The child becomes the medium of reaching out to the future, acculturing oneself to the alien land. This barrenness adds a special dimension of
sadness because they refuse to adopt a child. Moreover, the absence of a strong inner life also accrues to the psychological aridity of these characters. Ironically, in Staying On, when Lucy goes to church to overcome her loneliness through prayers, she drifts into memories of her adolescence.

These characters' reminiscences can be valued for providing unsifted information for the historian. Never having acted centrestage during the political drama of colonialisation and liberation they have squirreled away an amazing mass of impressions of backstage events. These characters therefore offer important footnotes to a crucial chapter of Indo-British history.