CHAPTER VI

THE MISSIONARIES AND THE QUESTERS

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

When Robinson Crusoe, the prototype of the colonialist Englishman, converted Man Friday to Christianity, subjecting him to a routine catechism which negated his native faith — he became an emblematic figure of western civilization achieving not only territorial dominance but spiritual control as well.

It is not a coincidence that the missionary enterprise shares the same chapter in global history as the imperial process. Political and economic colonisation as well as missionary activity were different aspects of the west's attempt to control the countries in Asia and Africa. The missionaries claimed to be free from state interference and were accountable only to their parent religious bodies back home. In India the British government kept clear of any involvement with missionary work. Despite this separation the Christian missions came to be seen as the corollary of the imperial mission in India. It is a historic fact that
Christianity has gained in stature with the world-wide expansion of European powers, as Stephen Neill points out:

... The colonizing powers have been the Christian powers; that a whole variety of compromising relationships have existed between missionaries and governments; and that in the main Christianity has been carried forward on the wave of western prestige and power. ¹

In the nineteenth century, British religious sentiment had been shocked by the slave trade, the savagery of the tribes and general primitive conditions of life. This concern...

...was Christian through and through and its real significance was that it marked the beginning of unparalleled growth and development in the missionary venture in Africa ... for on the face of it, this was an entirely selfless preoccupation. ²

We know of many fictional characters in nineteenth century English novels including St. John Rivers in Jane Eyre (1848) who choose the life of a missionary purely out of a religious and philanthropic zeal and opt for a hard life in the tropics because they believe in a cause. Yet, if we turn to Ngugi wa Thiong'o's account of missionary activity in Africa we get a totally different perspective.

...Thus despite protestations to the contrary from missionaries and other members of the religious, intellectual and spiritual armies of imperialism, the aim of any colonial mission is to get at a people's...
land and what that land produces. This can take the form of direct occupation, ... or of indirect control, through a colonial government and administration. The end is the same: to institute an economic structure, and consequently a class system, the colonizing nation can control. 3

Ngugi here pierces the veneer of philanthropy to get at the core of imperialism. He also argues that the education imparted to Africans by the missionary schools was a device for cultural domination. In Anglophone Africa (Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and other countries that were occupied by the British) the government and the missionaries had a much closer collaboration than in India, where there was an agreed policy of delinking the two.

When the Christian missions sent their emissaries to India from 1813 onwards, by the permission of the Parliament, their chief purpose was to spread the message of the Gospel among the heathens. There was a ready belief among them that the penetration of Christian principles could secure for the British in India the upliftment of the poor and the pagan. The East India Company and its supporters looked upon them with serious misgiving because they felt that the policy of religious neutrality would be the safest for British interest in India. G.D. Bearce gives an outline of their position:

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From 1784 to 1828 ... imperial statesmen offered only minimal reforms in India... They carried out or proposed certain economic policies designed to bring improvements in the agriculture, commerce and industry of India where these might serve the empire. They opposed the work of Christian missionaries and reformers as a probable danger to imperial stability.

It was Charles Grant, who influenced by the Evangelical and the Clapham Sect, propagated the idea that the empire could be served by Christianity. Once the elements of western thought infiltrated into the Indian personality, the impact of this phenomenon would undermine gradually the strength of Hindu religion. This controversy reveals that there was an imperial policy involved in the decision regarding the missionary service in India.

In the subsequent decades the missionaries spread their activities in diverse fields like education, social work, medicine, etc. They were generally sponsored and supported by their parent religious organisations in England and thus could be independent of the bureaucracy in British India which continued with its policy of religious neutrality. Nevertheless many Indians perceived the missionary activities as a parallel instrument of the colonial rule.

The life of the missionaries in India was not easy. Apart from the physical discomfort of living in inclement
weather without the material amenities available in Britain, there was the additional problem of encountering a people whose epistemic frames were incomprehensible to them. One British missionary after spending thirty-three years in India made the following observation in 1893:

As a people (the Indians) they are possessed of many virtues ... They are very true to their obligations to relatives, and in this respect, could teach Christian nations some valuable lessons ... Nevertheless they bear many of the marks which always accompany a religion which denies the immediate authority of God, or at least severs the individual from a personal allegiance to God as the Supreme Ruler. 

If in the nineteenth century Bishop Thoburn is so baffled by the values engendered by Hinduism, it is not surprising that the fictional missionaries in A Passage to India continue to echo similar frustrations after a couple of decades.

Old Mr. Graysford and young Mr. Sorley made converts during a famine, because they distributed food; but when times improved they were naturally left alone again, and, though surprised and aggrieved each time this happened, they never learned wisdom.

At regular intervals it was proved that many of those who opted for conversion did so for urgent material reasons rather than for spiritual needs. Also people from the oppressed castes tended to accept more easily the more
socially equitable Christian faith. During famines and pestilence the number of conversions would go up, as testified by Forster's fictional missionaries. *A Passage to India* also underlines the difficult and marginal lives these missionaries led in British India. The missionaries who came to India against considerable odds, had to live in adverse conditions, outside the protective infrastructure of the civil lines. Because they had close association with Indians, the other British people avoided social relations with the missionaries. The responses of the Indians towards the missionaries varied from ridicule (by the upper caste Hindus) to suspicion and occasionally grudging admiration from the converts. Hence, the bearers of the Gospel were exposed to a different social reality in India than what the British administrators experienced who lived a life of privilege. Yet, surprisingly the golden period of missionary movement coincides exactly with the glory of the empire, particularly the period of the consolidation of the empire in India.

The following decades saw the missionary service being slowly denuded of its importance. The later missions had to face competition from other rival secular academic agencies, like social service-oriented foundations, institutes and
universities. Indian nationalism was emerging as a tremendous political force threatening the empire.

By the time India became independent the Christian missions had produced a sizeable middle-class Indian Christian community. However, much the missionary movement in India was dogged by controversies it has been successful in bringing about significant changes in the areas of education, of providing employment to their converts, of private medical care, of social security.

Although the missionaries continued to come to India from West Europe, in the second half of the twentieth century their number dwindled considerably. From the sixties onwards another kind of foreigners became quite visible in India, who belonged to the counterculture in the west, who wanted to renounce the consumerist western culture to find spiritual meaning in the east. This is the time when America and western Europe witnessed the rise of the hippie movement and the proliferation of the flower children. The movement started basically as a protest against the materialistic and competitive life, especially of America, its aggressive military interference in Vietnam and the consequent corrosion of human values. The movement
began in American campuses, spilled over into the streets, roadside camps, attracting both suspicion and ridicule. These young people rejected the success-oriented bourgeois value of their country and sought an alternative. Many of these questers chose India as the site for exploring a different philosophy of life. To some of them Hinduism seemed to contain the key to the problems of life. They had probably identified Christianity as a part of the materialistic mainstream of their national life which they wanted to reject and ceased to recognise it as a possible source of spiritual regeneration. This could explain their need for an alternate source of psychological rejuvenation.

During the colonial period the Christian missions from Europe struggled to bring light and salvation to India, but in the post-colonial era a strangely reverse movement is in evidence, when spiritual seekers from the west flock to India to find peace and solitude. The two movements are not comparable because their values and purpose are different, not to mention their numerical asymmetry. But in one sense they are similar: the missionaries who went out in the world to proselytize and the hippies crowding the eastern shores were/are both peripheral to the competitive and aggressive
mainstream of western society. Their marginalized roles are self-chosen and not thrust upon them by society. Secondly, as we shall see later on in this chapter, in Anglo-Indian fiction, the hippies and the servants of Christ are both presented as peripheral characters.

In this chapter I propose to look at the fictional representation of both these groups: The British missionaries in India during the period 1940-1947 and the new breed of restless seekers who come to India after the sixties for their personal solace. The social and psychological isolation that some missionaries in the lower rungs of their own hierarchy suffered get reflected in subsequent fiction also, e.g., in Paul Scott's novels The Jewel in the Crown (1966) and The Towers of Silence (1971); in the novels of Rumer Godden and Gerald Hanley entitled Black Narcissus (1939) and The Journey Homeward (1961) respectively.

In Edward Thompson's novel A Farewell to India (1931) two missionaries Robert Alden and John Findlay are seen to be diametrically opposite to each other in temperament and lifestyle. Alden's nostalgia about the decades when the sahib was revered as a god is gently countered by Findlay
who reminds him of Christ's renunciation, his compassion for ordinary people. Alden realises that the English, despite their demonstration of strength, patience and fortitude, could not set an example of renunciation and simplicity. This failure is accepted by Thompson as the main barrier between the white community and the Indians and he expresses the following sentiments:

But for all the magnificent philanthropy of their service, whether in ruling or in preaching, they (the British in India) had not shown overmuch of this.

Even the hippies are no example of renunciators, although they do sever themselves from their society and their family. Their self-absorption does not indicate the kind of transcendence that both Hinduism and Christianity exhort upon their followers. The hippies were not a homogenous group. Some of them did plunge into the process of self-discovery with rigorous discipline. For others India became the fount of inner peace to be obtained sometimes by short circuit methods like drugs and fraudulent gurus.

This shift from the missionaries' perception of India as a land to be civilized to the young hippies' conviction that this land can offer salvation to them, can be
interpreted in different ways. The missionaries, though an auxiliary group in relation to colonizing powers were part of the collective thrust that sought to change India. The young questers of later generations, often branded as deviants, are generally repressed by state authority because their rebellion is seen as a menace to the power structure. Michael Brown captures this amalgam of fear, repression and assertion:

When official authority is threatened, social and political deviants are readily conjured up as demons requiring collective exorcism and thus a reaffirmation of that authority. Where exorcism is the exclusive province of government, the government's power is reinforced by the adoption of a scapegoat. 8

India becomes a manifestation of the utopia that this young generation is seeking in order to escape repression at home. Proponents of a counterculture, these young dropouts strive to protect the instinctive life of the individual, his expressiveness and spontaneity. Richard Mills in his study of alternative communities writes:

The conclusion of the bohemian tradition is, then, that it is only by moving outside the routines and specialisation of the world of work that the individual may preserve his natural inner self and bring it to full fruition. 9

To preserve their integrity these latter-day bohemians choose to flock around the interpreters of Hinduism or
institutions of neo-Hinduism like the Iskcon temples. It is not that India is barbaric in one century desperately in need of pacification and suddenly, in the next century it becomes the abode of spirituality offering salvation to those who come. The difference lay in the perceptions of those who came. The actual India is a conglomerate of multiple religious practices, industry, technology and agrarian culture, of tradition and progress, of various centuries co-existing together. For some reason the dropouts from the western mainstream culture feel that this is the ideal country for preserving their integrity.

Herbert Marcuse underlines the extent to which the individual has lost consciousness of his "separate" integrity and become a product of his mechanical society. He explains this degeneration of the self in the following terms:

I have just suggested that the concept of alienation seems to become questionable when the individuals identify themselves with the existence which is imposed upon them and have it in their own development and satisfaction. This identification is not illusion but reality. However, the reality constitutes a more progressive stage of alienation.10

The attempt of these young people is to escape a culture which slowly snuffs out their capacity to be
themselves. Refusing to be automatons they turn to India without knowing that it can have a reality as complex as that of the west. Disillusionment generally follows, prompting some of them to renounce their new-found faith and return home. Some stay on opting for a different environment and people and making their own adjustments. These questers are repeatedly represented in the fiction of Ruth P. Jhabvala — in short stories "How I Became a Holy Mother" from the book of the same title (1981), "A Spiritual Call" from A Stronger Climate (1968) and her novels A New Dominion (1972), Heat and Dust (1975) and Three Continents (1987). Some of her women bohemians characters — get deceived by unscrupulous and pernicious godmen. One wonders why this single leitmotif of gullibility and crookedness dominate so much of her fiction. The gap between their perception of reality and what India actually is looms so large that these characters find themselves unable to tackle both their past and future. The texts by Jhabvala, especially A New Dominion and Three Continents, indicate that every quest demands so much of the pilgrim in terms of discipline and sacrifice that the seeker, unprepared within, will relinquish his search for peace. In the second novel, the western seeker confronts in the personality of his guru
the social brutality, repression, lust for power in his society that he thought he had escaped.

Unlike her grim and cynical novels, Judvala's short stories (which are of an earlier date) about the young bohemians in India reflect a happy image of the guru, child-like and spontaneous. He encourages his disciples to bring to the fore such qualities that help their inner development. The guru teaches them that work is an extension of play, thus countering the overpowering influences of the west which even institutionalizes leisure.

M.K. Naik in his book, Mirror On The Wall: Images of India and the Englishman in Anglo-Indian Fiction (1991) points out that novels like The Missionary (1811) by Sydney Owenson, A Meeting By the River (1967) by Christopher Isherwood and the Razor's Edge (1944) by Somerset Maugham portray the Indian Sadhu as venerable visionary who is completely detached from the world and represents God upon earth. The western characters who come in contact with him are transformed into genuine ascetics. In The Missionary, "Hilarion, the idealistic man of God is vouchsafed a mystical vision in the valley of Kashmir."

Naik elaborates how Oliver is drawn powerfully to the Swami in Isherwood's A Meeting By the River and renounces the world to become a sannyasi. Larry Doyle in The Razor's Edge rejects both philosophy and Christianity since these offer him no insight into human suffering and death. According to Naik, his India-based
guru Sri Ganesha, leads him towards the answers he seeks. Larry returns to America deciding to dedicate himself to self-perfection.

Naik recounts how Bapuji in Jon Godden's *The Seven Islands* (1956), is a holy figure to whom several legends have been attributed by the local people. He is also capable of seeing into the future. Naik points out that in *Daughters of India*, (1928) by Margaret Wilson Naik stresses on the nameless young missionary believes that he has had the vision of Christ in Lahore Bazar. He puts on ochre garments and mixes with Indians, gradually earning the disapproval of his fellow-missionaries. Naik also mentions a similar character Aaron in Robin White's *House of Many Rooms* (1960) who becomes a vagrant Hindu monk but does not have the good fortune of either Larry Doyle or Oliver. After a sincere quest he accepts defeat, returns home and retreats into a solitary stillness. Aaron's experience matches that of many of the fictional questers in this chapter who meet with frustration.

Section II : THE LONELY TORCH-BEAVERS

The novels dealing with the women missionaries give an impression of intertextuality. It is as though *The Jewel in the Crown* is constructed out of the *The Towers of Silence* and the second novel is reflected in *Black Narcissus*, lending its ambience to *The Journey Homeward*. The two sets of novels dealing with the preachers of the Gospel and the young aspirants, have common patterns which reveal that being peripheral in India and in one's society have almost similar consequences.
Rumer Godden's novel *Black Narcissus* (1939) depicts a Convent up in the Himalayas where the missionary women try to come to grips with the reality of their inner conflicts. The novel explores the agony of committed missionaries who have to struggle against their occasional skepticism, worldly cynicism, and normal but repressed desires lurking in the dark subconscious layers of their mind. What we see in the paradoxical situation of this particular mission is its expansionist policy destroying the vital living entity of its Christian faith.

The sisters of the Convent of St. Faith are apparently normal and active. Their present task of setting up another nunnery in a palace of an Indian General opens them to all kinds of influences that make them surrender their pretensions at their civilizing mission and indulge in their natural aptitudes. Eventually, the nuns have to close their ranks, be in conformity with their orders or else lose their identity.

More than the other novels this one brings the missionaries into a somewhat diagonal confrontation with Hinduism. There is the motif of a Hindu Sannyasi, the
General's Uncle, whose asceticism draws people to him effortlessly and who can give them solace without the kind of infrastructure the missionaries have set up. The author contrasts two knowledge-power structures and shows Christian missions' dependence on social institutions. Sister Clodagh endorses the worldliness of the Church but this does not signify that the author suggests a higher position for Hinduism. She only acknowledges Hindu religion's independence from the institutionalised power structure. The manner in which a sweet-natured nun is sent to this mission to balance a sour-tempered one shows the heavy structuralization of the system. Mr. Dean, the General's British agent points out the complete detachment of the Sannyasi as against the almost mechanical austerity of the Sisters.

Mr. Dean is reputed to have blended Indian influences with his British culture and lifestyle and exudes a wild and overpowering charm. Godden seems to suggest through this pattern of racial encounter that the best method of overcoming the inscrutability of the East is to succumb to it and let it mould one's European identity.
The novel illustrates the panic of the Sisters who theorize that the orient, both alluring and impenetrable, should be kept at a safe distance to escape its seductive influence. It is dangerous because it is outside the familiar terrain.

Those who accept and absorb the local influences like the agent Mr. Dean have an ambivalent position in the power structure. The palace, where the mission is established, is a good signifier of the East-West confrontation as well as of a past which witnessed both royal splendour and intrigues. The Palace was earlier the harem of the General's father and was not yet innocent of its past. The irony that a nunnery should replace a harem is kept alive through occasional reminders:

Sometimes it seemed to him (the present General) that the house had a bad wild life of its own; the impression of its evil lingered, in its name, in its atmosphere...12

Mr. Dean tries to awaken subtly the sisters to the significance of the East. The final stroke of Indian (or rather Hindu) influence comes when Mr. Dean makes his own ground-plan of the Chapel, bearing close resemblance to a temple.
To Sister Clodagh's objection he insinuates that to accept Christ as the Saviour, the local people should be able to comprehend the eastern origin of Christianity. But sister Clodagh will not let her concept of Christianity come out of the cloister of European sensibility.

Sister Ruth's neurosis, centering around her unrequited love for Mr. Dean is not just thwarted passion, but a deep longing for a fresh liberty, an escape from the bondage of being a skeptical missionary. About this form of neurosis Erich Fromm says:

What we can observe at the Kernel of every neurosis... is the struggle for freedom and independence... The neurotic person is the one who has not given up fighting against complete submission, but who, at the same time, has remained bound to the figure of the magic helper, whatever form or shape "he" may have assumed. His neurosis is always to be an attempt, and essentially an unsuccessful one, to solve the conflict between that basic dependency and the quest for freedom.  

The author ends sister Ruth's conflict abruptly by her accidental death. Her death brings about profound and positive changes in Sister Clodagh. Although, Sister Clodagh has suffered from unrequited love like Sister Ruth yet the former scores a moral victory. By portraying her as the true daughter of the Church, who embalms her wound with
religion, Rumer Godden seems to privilege the character of Sister Clodagh over others.

The mission headquarters give up their expansionist policy and recall the Sisters from Mopu. The palace is seen by the Sisters as a baleful influence not because the Christian spirit failed to tame the atmosphere but because it brought out equally wild and extravagant desires in the sisters' minds. The author argues that ultimately the Sisters accepted defeat because they had not reckoned with their own selves.

"Miss Crane, the missionary teacher, in *The Jewel in the Crown* accepts the futility of her defiance against British views when Gandhi begins the Quit India Movement. Her critical mind observes that Gandhi's message of non-violence is tinged by dark motives of sedition. By extending an invitation to the masses to observe non-cooperation he is indirectly pushing the British to the brink of violence and armed resistance. Nor can she ignore the expression of British injustice and callousness towards Indians. Due to this balanced judgement of the contemporary political situation she realises that she is neither a part of the British community nor an honorary member of the Indian
groups. Her social isolation is compounded by her awkward position of being a teacher without real qualifications, a missionary who is also an atheist. Her scathing self-analysis is a clear manifestation of her strong reason yet this does not save her from her growing alienation from racial groups, from her work, and her faith. During August 1942 she takes down Gandhi's portrait from the wall, disillusioned with his political views and wins the silent approbation of the British, and thus conveys the impression of closing the ranks against the enemies. Yet each act of conformity on her part, termed by the British as sensible turns out to be a camouflage for her aggravating identity crisis. The Mission authorities consider her to be an intelligent and perceptive woman...

... whose understanding, common sense and organising ability, more than made up for what in a woman connected with a christian mission were of doubtful value: her agnosticism, for instance, and her fundamentally anti-British, because pro-Indian, sympathies.14

The mission's worldly attitudes reveal that their concern for Miss Crane's service is based purely on pragmatic ground and not on humanitarian religious consideration. Her personal opinions can be overlooked only because she is of some practical use. Edwina is aware to
some extent about the utilitarian approach of the mission authorities and feels neglected as an individual. She decides deliberately upon a process of catharsis to purify herself of the strange anomalies in her life. On a historic day, 9th August 1942, she attempts to save her Indian colleague from a crowd of rioters. His death shocks her so profoundly that she sits on the roadside with his corpse vainly hoping to atone for her failures. Imagining that her sins of atheism, oscillating political views are responsible for her colleague's death, she succumbs to pneumonia and a paralysing sense of guilt that unhinges her personality. The God to whom she has lain allegiance appears now as he did before to be more British than divine. She loses her final chance of resurrecting herself from her morbid preoccupations.

The God of this Church was a kind, familiar, comfortable god. She had him in her heart but not in her soul... He was very much the god of a community... but of the privileged palefaced community of which she was a marginal member.\textsuperscript{15}

Thus, her life is projected as a long row of responsibilities and disappointments unremitting by spiritual revelations or human relationships. Her Indian colleague's murder destroys in her the last hope of self-redemption.
Her demented state thus becomes an index of her failure to create some meaning out of the chaos of her inner life. The decision to quit everything, to sever herself from life itself reflects her inner conviction that any other alternative for self-regeneration would be cowardly.

Nobody suspects Edwina Crane's aggravating lunacy because by general opinion she is a 'tough old bird' - an obvious pun on her name. Lady Chatterjee, a local elite socialite for whom racial distinctions are not very important, comments about her madness and suicide:

I think I could have stopped Miss Crane from becoming Sannyasi is that especially horrible way. It's all right to give everything up as long as you realise just what it is you've had. Poor Miss Crane didn't...

Miss Crane commits suicide in a very dramatic manner. Wearing a white sari, probably an attempt at identification with India, she sets herself on fire. People say she has committed "Sati" due to the external signifiers like the white sari and the fire but her unhinged mind must have had other reasons.

Lady Chatterjee's conclusion about her sannyas does not seem to have valid grounds. Paul Scott confuses renunciation of worldly possessions with suicide. According
to Hindu religion, an act of self-immolation is an unpardonable sin that chains one to the cycle of life and death. Christianity also condemns suicide. Moreover, an unmarried, christian woman cannot perform "sati" in the technical sense.

The life and circumstances of Miss Barbara Batchelor, the other missionary woman in The Raj Quartet, resemble that of Miss Crane. In fact, The Towers of Silence semantically gives a sinister impression of death and absence of movement since the title refers to the Parsi community's tower where the vultures encircle the disposed of corpses.

Barbie Batchelor, garrulous, scatterbrained and effusive is burdened with the same emotional problem of alienation and lack of fulfilment as Edwina Crane. Barbie's approach towards her problems is different from Edwina's yet both their attempts at surmounting their obstacles fail miserably. They are portrayed as doomed characters who are repulsed in their efforts to communicate with others, and yet their withdrawal into themselves evokes sharp criticism from the white community. Barbie gets no chance to resurrect herself in public, although her integrity saves her for some time from degenerating into being a hopeless
victim of circumstances. This situation underlines poignantly the pathos of their peripheral existence and the double standards of the British group.

When Edwina's act of defiance hits the headlines (also because it gets linked up with the Bibighar case) Barbie proudly responds to her friend's gesture of determination. The dead Indian colleague becomes for Edwina the symbol of her dead hopes about a meaningful Indo-British relationship. To Barbie the author accredits no such wide expansion of mental horizons or public act of martyrdom. A confused and agnostic missionary, Barbie accepts gracefully her place as a second-grade member of the British community. Unrelenting in her attempt to embellish her life, Barbie nevertheless finds no consistent source of happiness and beauty. Sometimes she seeks meaning in the commonplace events of life, sometimes she has grandiose hopes of removing some strains in Indo-British relationship. To achieve a normal social relationship with Indians she wants first to ameliorate her interaction with those Indians socially inferior to her. This seems to her the only way to justify the validity of her faith and her work.
The irony of her life is well-illustrated in one incident. When she asks a young Indian student why she has painted Jesus blue, the answer reveals her basic confusion between Jesus and Krishna. The girl is obviously unable to unravel the intricacies of Christian religion from the Hindu pantheon of gods. Barbie realises that religious conversion has its petty means and equally sad ends - both for the missionary and the convert. They both get trapped in a psychological vacuum. It also strikes Barbie that the ambience of Hindu religion has seeped into her depths and it is this latter fact that prevents her from punishing the girl.

Mabel Layton, an elderly upper-class white woman, accepts Barbie as a paying-guest and extends her love, generosity and companionship to her. A unique relationship develops between the two about which the local British people become both suspicious and skeptical. With Mabel's death, they unleash their hitherto repressed hostility towards her. Thus Barbie's alienation is further accentuated. She believes that she alone understood Mabel and knew that her last wish was to be buried in the plains rather than in Pankot. Her obsession about this triggers
off violent reactions from all members of the white community. Soliloquizing with the dead friend, trying to preserve her own identity in the world of the living through Mabel leads to her lunacy. Scott shows this obsession as a need for self-assertion and attention which is now being completely denied to her. It could be that her latent madness comes to the surface as Mabel's family members get increased about Barbie's proposal to exhume Mabel's grave. The British people in Pankot not only condemn Barbie for such a sacrilege but even plan vengeance against her. They force her out of Mabel's cottage, rendering her homeless so that she has to seek asylum from one British house to another. Barbie Batchelor grows insane and dies in her hospital bed repeating that she sees birds circling above a tower. These are vultures eyeing the corpses in the Parsi tower of silence and through this Scott builds up a visual image of death and putrefaction.

Scott's portrayal of the madness of both the missionary women could be a narrative strategy to reveal the crumbling edifice of missionary service. For both Barbie and Edwina, directly experiencing the death of somebody close to them, either professionally or personally, frightens them deeply.
They are suddenly left forlorn and reminded cruelly of their old age and death. Their madness is an index to a deep-rooted desire for love and security which the Church could not provide them. In their madness they are not helped by their mission headquarters or other missionaries, thus suffering a complete isolation from human society. Michel Foucault poignantly re-creates the divine compassion of Christ that brought solace to demented people. In his illuminating study on madness he writes:

Christ did not merely choose to be surrounded by lunatics, he himself chose to pass in their eyes for a madman thus experiencing, in his incarnation, all the sufferings of human misfortune. Madness thus became the ultimate form, the final degree of God in man's image, before its fulfilment and deliverance at the Cross.  

Far removed from Christ both in time, space and spirit these missionary women choose to enter a deafening silence, a forbidden area of darkness where no human help can reach. They choose a powerful, effective death-wish and eventual suicide to liberate themselves. Scott probably does not want to project the Church in an unfavourable light and stresses subtly that it is helpless towards its wards when the enemy is not outside but strikes from within. Repressed desires, sense of alienation grow into a formidable force before which reason and ethics can have no defence. This problem of
madness is not peculiar to the Church in the modern age but according to Foucault existed also in the classical period.

Does not the church's solicitude for the insane during the classical period, as it is symbolized in Saint Vincent de Paul & his Congregation, or in the Brothers of Charity, all those religious orders hovering over madness and showing it to the world—does this not indicate that the Church found in madness a difficult but an essential lesson: The guilty innocence of the animal in man?¹⁸

Thus, we see from these two quotations the ambivalent position of the Christian tradition towards insanity. It draws a wide spectrum from bestiality in madness to its assurance of redemption, thus glorifying lunacy and at the same time clinically isolating it to create a safe terrain.

The Journey Homeward by G. Hanley explores through the eyes of an aged missionary, Miss Bullen, the Partition of India and the effects of a new democracy on an erstwhile princely state, Jashimpur, somewhere near Kashmir. Miss Bullen originally intended to be a missionary and engage herself exclusively in social service but finds herself more of a witness to history shaping the fate of Jashimpur. Her life is precariously balanced on illusions. In forty years she makes three converts and consoles herself that this effort is better than three thousand 'rice Christians'.
There continues to be a silent tussle between Miss Bullen and the villagers who wish to see her changed. This conspiratorial hush behind the mutual strategies of conversion add a comic strain to the situation and relieve much of the gloom building up in the novel. Even if Miss Bullen accepts India as her home, she cannot relate herself to Hinduism which terrifies her. The author captures her attitude to Hinduism thus:

It was Hinduism which frightened her most, for it could wait, red-eyed in the darkness, for a million years. For her it had red, drugged eyes and smelled of blood and sex.  

This primitive, virulent aspect of Hinduism as visualized by Miss Bullen seems to be diagonally opposite to her perception of Protestantism as an anemic, clinical and safe religion. This description also evokes for the reader her repressed sexuality, frenzied desires lurking in the subconscious, waiting for a chink in the armour of her rationality to emerge and vanquish her.

Like Barbie, Edwina and Sister Ruth, Miss Bullen has to confront a forlorn sense of having wasted her life. But she tackles her life in a different manner. She works on herself, practises her own psychotherapy instead of either suppressing her paranoia or reaching out at random to
unsympathetic people. She delves into her psyche and tries to undo the knots formed over a period of forty years. The absence of Europeans in her missionary outpost, lack of funds for her work fail to bother her, partly due to her diminished interest in missionary work and partly due to her sense of humour.

Like most fictional missionaries she could not rise above the distinctions of race and religion. Her conception was of a colonial god speaking English, just as Barbie conceives of God as a benevolent Englishman. The writer aptly substitutes her agnosticism with a political consciousness but inadvertently reveals that he does not want to delve into her inner turmoil. He makes her reason it out that since she could not convert Jashimpuris into Christians, she could help them to become aware of their political rights. Hanley turns her into a potential militant activist. At times she sees that over the years the God that she had known has slowly turned into a real mystery, inaccessible, raceless, timeless.

Unlike the other missionary women who turn mad, Miss Bullen retains her sanity for reasons which are quite paradoxical. She has struggled infinitely against all kinds
of heathenism at her mission outpost in Kangla. Her strong love-hate relationship with the people has kept her occupied. Failing to see her work as God’s, she gets engrossed in the possibilities of a new political consciousness in Jashimpur. With the gradual departure of feudalism Miss Bullen realises that she was never thought of as a missionary but as a mother to the Jashimpuris. Hassan, a peasant who has worked in the west was initially educated and inspired by Miss Bullen. He plans a grassroot revolution and succeeds.

The novel could be read as an idealised fantasy about India immediately after Independence, where revolutions take place quietly to usher in progress without hacking away at the roots of tradition. There is peaceful coexistence of old and new values, cooperation of all the classes for running a successful government.

SECTION 3: THE LONELY SEEKERS

As the missionary institutions and preachers became a part of India’s religious panorama in the post-colonial period, bohemians from England and America began arriving in large
numbers. The hippie movement cannot be equated with the historically-acclaimed philanthropic organization of the Christian enterprise but, this too is a phenomenon worth notice both in real life as well as in fiction.

In the works of fiction selected here, the questers without exception are all women, the only exception being a peripheral character called Chid (Chidanand) in Heat and Dust. I would like to explore why the trope of female spiritual seeker is a recurring one. The white women's desire to enter alternative cultural patterns leads them to experimenting with life in some basic and drastic ways. I see these narratives reinforcing the general belief held in real life that a woman who lives on her own, away from the protective fold of the family, is more prone to instability. The novels about missionary women portray almost the same fictional figure of the British woman suffering from a deep-rooted neurosis that either leads to madness or suicide. There is also another pattern of the fictional representatives suffering a nervous breakdown that spells the possibilities of a fresh appraisal of life.

These young outsiders' dissatisfaction with the role of Christianity in western society indicates that it cannot
always be the spiritual answer for individuals on the boundary line of an aggressive capitalist society. In other words, these rebels must be perceiving Christianity to be so highly institutionalized that it appears to be an extension of consumer culture. These people are portrayed in fiction as alienated beings looking for anchors, for an identity. We have to also see whether the author sees the hippie movement as a historical event or as a challenge to the establishment that could happen any time.

The short story "A Spiritual Call" from A Stronger Climate (1968) conveys the impression of wholesomeness in religious life. Jhabvala has not used the comic mode here. Although Swamiji has a strong urge to go abroad to spread his message, at the exhortions of wealthy lady disciples, yet he is reluctant to move from his ashram.

Structurally this short story is more like a straight line without loops. Daphne, the central character here, is not like other drifting, purposeless outsiders who land in India for a quick trip to Nirvana. From an educated, middle-class background, she is by choice and nature a disciplined person. She follows Swamiji on her own volition and not because of his hypnotic charm. Daphne is presented
as an emotionally stable and committed aspirant. She does not reject the west or condemn it but blends it with her experience of India and religious influences.

The Swami seems to use Daphne and other women as satellites so that he can grow in stature. Yet despite this trait in his nature Swamiji inspires love and harmony in his disciples. Daphne refrains from making any critical judgement on her guru. Believing her capacity to achieve salvation she fears that too much of mental interference may shatter it. Thus the harmony created by her is born more out of her desire for inner peace than out of any outside events.

Jhabvala's skill lies in portraying a professionally trained mind, at peace with western culture, trying to probe into the intricacies of a guru-shishya relationship.

In A New Dominion (1972) a set of spiritual questers try to interpret for themselves the values of Hinduism and the real identity of India. Three characters -Lee, Margaret and Evie- turn their back on the west and come to India to seek salvation. It is not their inability to adapt themselves to western culture, but their refusal to do so that brings them here. These three women represent the
fatigue and melancholy of people who have experienced life exhaustively at the material level. The common factor in the lives of these female characters is the absence of a sustaining love either in terms of marriage or of a man-woman relationship. The author does not clarify whether this aspect of their personality propels them towards an uncertain future in India. These three women are also dissatisfied with the corruption in their own families and want to cleanse themselves.

Their selection of a guru reveals much about themselves. None of these women join a well-known or traditional ashram in India. They generally go by references and recommendations made by friends about some obscure gurus in India. Probably Jhabvala wants to point out that they join small groups because they crave the spiritual masters' personal attention, which may be unavailable if they become members of a larger organisation. Secondly Jhabvala implies that these characters mistake physical proximity to the guru with true psychological intimacy. In addition to this Jhabvala suggests that basically these insecure women need personal therapeutic care so that they can first heal themselves.
The guru and his ashram constitute a part of the social establishment. Like all institutions this particular one too is prone to growth and decay. Yet in one sense, the "guru-shishya" relationship is personal and requires total loyalty. It is generally accepted that without the disciple's complete surrender the master cannot lead him along the spiritual path. Therefore in the novel the faith of Lee, Margaret and Evie is real as far as their devotion to the guru is concerned.

Hindu tradition has never forbidden the disciple to examine the sincerity of a guru before surrendering oneself to him. These three women overlook this aspect of Hinduism in their urgency to find a panacea to their problem. In their haste to undergo discipline for a spiritual life they refuse to accept the impact of the world outside.

This ostrich-like attitude of the western quester is further reflected in Margaret's case when she reaches Raman Maharshi's ashram in Tamil Nadu. According to Lee, Margaret has a profound, spiritual experience but does not stay on there because she needs the physical presence of a guru. Even though the Swamiji whom she meets and accepts does not stir in her the same ennobling aspiration she stays on
because he is a direct palpable presence. Jhabvala indicates that Margaret's criterion for choosing a guru is not her own deep conviction but the persuasive power of any strong personality parading in a saffron robe. Since the stress is on the external ritualistic aspects rather than on the inner self's perception, the initial choice of a master starts off on a false note.

Jhabvala implies that despite seeing India from close quarters Lee fails to penetrate into the sordid reality behind an otherwise smooth, placid exterior. She prefers that the ashram she joins should be modern so that it does not demand too many changes in her habits. Her lack of psychological preparation, her demand for total privacy in the ashram premises reveal that she drifted over to India revolting against the nothingness that life held for her in England.

Lee and Margaret try to rope in Asha, an ageing princess, into their ashram. The author draws a contrast between Asha's self-analysis and that of the two young westerners. Asha, equally distraught and fatigued, takes refuge with her old friend and mentor Banubai, widely known for her spiritual powers. Banubai has not only renounced
her vast inheritance but does not let an institution be built around her for the benefit of a cluster of eager disciples. In juxtaposition with Banubai's selflessness the Swamiji's ambitions acquire a lurid crudeness. He is eager to turn his group into an international organization. Through Asha's connections, he wants to acquire political clout and prods Lee and Margaret to impress her about his spiritual powers.

Swamiji's ambitions are fully supported by his unique capacity for psychoanalysis. He understands the nature of his disciples so well that he enthralls them. It is this helplessness before him that Lee, Evie and Margaret happily term as the surrender of their egos. The guru is projected by the author as a modern-day psychotherapist who mesmerizes his neurotic patients so that they can never escape his clutches to achieve personal freedom. Even when sexual exploitation occurs and Swamiji characteristically brands these women as little mice playing in his hands, Lee and her friends do not wake out of their stupor. They sink more into their self-chosen oblivion. Banubai is critical of this blind clinging of the western proponents of a counterculture:
They pretend to be in search of spiritual values, but because they don't know what true spiritual values are, they fasten themselves onto harmful elements who only help them to drive them deeper down into their disturbed egos; and not only do they themselves suffer bad consequences but also all sorts of poisonous influences are released, polluting the air breathed in by truly spiritual Indians.

Banubai probably represents the general Indian opinion about disoriented, melancholy western seekers. When due to quack methods of treatment Margaret dies she exudes not a 'pernicious influence' but a lingering sadness in the air. Swamiji's sadism draws Evie back to his ashram, ruining her chances of reaching a different destination. Lee, despite her rebellion against him, returns to the ashram for want of an alternative.

The impression that one receives about the three women vying against one another for their guru's attention is that their quest despite its earnestness lacks a basic orientation. Their personalities seem deficient because they continue to return to their snare as if they have no volition.

horror that her novel *A New Dominion* portrays. She depicts a kind-hearted guru, happy in his Himalayan ashram refusing to go abroad because of his strong attachment to India. The structural movement of the short story is from England to India and to the West again, then finally back to India. Katie's travel from one continent to another, from one identity-model-turned-spiritual aspirant to the final one, a holy mother preaching Indian mysticism abroad is effected with ease. She is united in matrimony with the Masterji's favourite disciple, Vishwa. The gentle humour and geniality of the guru pervades the entire atmosphere of the ashram. The guru succeeds particularly at creating an atmosphere where the western and Indian disciples are encouraged to exchange mutually what is best in their culture.

One could argue that in the limited scope of the short story Jhabvala cannot project a prolonged exploration of the western mind's confrontation with Indian spirituality. Katie's turbulent life in Europe culminates in marriage and the status of a holy mother in India. This idealized sketch of an unusual personality seems to endorse that life can sometimes achieve a miracle.
Jhabvala's latest novel *Three Continents* (1987), published fifteen years after *A New Dominion* (1972), echoes the latter in many ways. The setting of the novel, although spread over three continents, leads to a climax in India. A set of non-conformists, twins named Michael and Harriet in their urge to find a noble, spiritually sublime guidance, rushes into the first philanthropist movement that cares to pick them up. This leads to disillusionment, Michael's violent death and Harriet's helpless surrender before Crishi who possesses her.

The author's argument does not seem to have altered much in the last fifteen years. Although in *A New Dominion* Margaret dies a violent, unhappy death, Lee and Evie crawl back to an unmitigated scoundrel who controls not just their disturbed psyche but also their body. This equation of psycho-sexual power in an Indian character reappears in *Three Continents*. Harriet is less worried about her brother's gruesome, untimely death than her relationship with her spiritual mentor and husband, refusing to acknowledge that he could have murdered Michael. During the phase of disillusionment and exposure of deceptions, Harriet's ostrich-like attitude towards life alienates her from her roots as it had done Lee and Margaret.
The western cerebral approach like Raymond's in *A New Dominion* is represented here by Harriet's grandfather and her lawyers. Their warnings come not in the subtle and refined manner like Raymond's who tries to expose the cunning Swamiji, but in legal terms about the dangers menacing the twins' vast inheritance.

Both Lee and Margaret's London-based conservative family or the twins' American divorcee parents indulging in off-beat relationships indicate the growing emptiness of their lives. In *A New Dominion* the guru is ambitious about gathering a congregation of foreign disciples in the west. In *Three Continents* the guru alias the Rawul, as well as Renee and Crishi have already begun their adventure in the West and are seeking a foothold in America. The young idealists plunge headlong into the movement. The implication of a strong psycho-sexual urge in the twins harks back to a similar pattern with Lee and the guru, but the ironic twist comes when Crishi, an Anglo-Indian with a murky past and uncertain age, appeases both of them. Like Raymond, Michael is burdened with homosexuality, which extracts fulfilment in vicarious ways leaving his inner being hankering for permanent solace.
The novel tackles the complex theme of queer, unhappy marriages, polygamy or misalliances. Right from the twins' grandfather to their parents to themselves (Crishi's first wife was a British girl) people are busy selecting or rejecting mates or spouses or indulging in homosexual or lesbian relationships. Semiotically this indicates the disintegrating fabric of moral lives, the insecurity and growing neurosis of a generation that seeks the contradicting benefits of ideals and wealth. Jhabvala, in her later fiction does not depict heterosexual relationships in a full-blooded or fulfilling way and even the homosexual and lesbian relationships do not ultimately lead to happiness. The theme of wealth and inheritance also projects the basic insecurity, immaturity and hypocrisy of people. When wealth becomes a habit, the owner cannot renounce it, even for the sake of ideals or relationships. If money becomes the sole reason for clinging to a romantic or marital relationship or for practising shallow ideals then the concerned individual gets irredeemably trapped in tragic circumstances. Crishi's parents' interracial marriage breaks off. Illegitimate alliance with the Rawul comes to an end and later on as a token of oedipal complex,
she transfers her emotions to her adopted son Crishi, thus creating a complex web of carnal passions, lust for wealth and consistent deceit. These interracial marriages meet with unhappy ends because of the absence of economic ease and moral integrity.

Money also sustains and nourishes marriages conducted within the same race. The twins' father marries an American girl with the promise of a substantial bank account behind her. The Rawul returns to his first wife, an Indian like him, because of her wealth. Renee forces her adoring vulnerable first husband, British like her, to smuggle antiques and miniature objects d'art so as to sustain her lifestyle. If Crishi's first marriage was over with his wife's death caused by penury, then his second marriage takes place because of Harriet's vast possessions. His open acceptance of this fact does not seem to upset or touch Harriet. She expects in her enthralled state that her money would keep everything and everyone in their orbit forever. Crishi's blunt statement - "I wouldn't have married you without it - without the money - I'd have wanted to but it wouldn't have worked out"\textsuperscript{21} - may strike Harriet as the confession of an opportunist, but she is reluctant to probe the truth further.
Harriet's style and tone of narration throughout the novel indicates a lassitude born out of bitter disillusionment with life - which could mean that even if she has not been able to escape Crishi, at least she has realised his pernicious nature.

The detachment implicit in her narrative style indicates her transcending that murky phase in her life. There is even a touch of cynicism in her precise recounting of the events. Or it could also indicate her clinging to Crishi, to whose overpowering personality she is still yoked. This deliberate confusion created about Harriet points to the author's own ambivalent position towards the East-West encounter. Jhabvala's mature craftsmanship recalls her own literary techniques and themes employed in her earlier novel A New Dominion. Perhaps she is trying to exorcise herself of her powerful obsession with India by depicting it as a gruesome reality.
SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

In the previous sections I have dealt separately with the novels on missionaries and young rebels. I have created a two-tiered arrangement (dealt chronologically with the two groups in section two and three) so as to explore the situation of these individuals living on the fringe of society, their claims about their different social status, from a psychoanalytical perspective.

Very different from these fictional types, missionaries in real life however have a brilliant record of achievements in various fields like education, medicine, social work. They led normal dedicated lives, helping the local Christians in their distress, extending education and health care to christians and non-christians alike.

Even though Indian Government's later policy restricts the entry of foreign missionaries, the Indian Christians carry on the philanthropic work here and thus replace their western counterparts. In Jhabvala's A New Dominion the effect of this policy is captured neatly.

Miss Charlotte, the head of a mission, approaches politicians to protect the ageing people under her care.
Finally depressed and embittered, she gives up her struggle and leaves everything to the force of circumstances. In the texts analysed we have seen that despite all the dissimilarities, like differences in purpose, time-period and cultural context the missionaries and the later bohemians who came to India for spiritual solace reach a similar tragic end - madness, self-immolation, perversion and annihilated personality. Even those who manage to emerge out of this are scathed by years of depression, anxiety, isolation. The reason for this unhappy end, according to the authors' final judgement seems to be twofold. The fictional missionaries and the young rebels had not learned the process of assimilation necessary for penetrating into a different culture. Secondly, what seems to be quite important, is the lack of harmony between these fictional characters' cerebral strength and their vital, emotional appraisal of situations. Struggling to bring light to the heathen after thirty to forty years Edwina Crane, Barbie Bachelor and Miss Bullen realize that they are disoriented, cynical and too old to make a fresh start. They accept that the heathen did not, after all, need the Gospel so badly. The authors imply that these women characters' failure to assimilate the Indian situation also
leads to a greater failure in their personal lives - which is devoid of emotional relationships of any kind.

Similarly, the young outsiders depicted in the novels have no emotional ties either back home or in India, except to some extent with the guru. Having rejected the west they come to India to seek an alternative culture here. The authors seem to imply that if they had juxtaposed the values and norms of their culture, against the novelty of Hinduism and chosen their philosophy on the basis of this comparison then they could have developed a sense of belonging to India.

These two groups are related to each other in several ways: In the first phase the servants of Christ and the young outsiders begin their work with great zeal. In the second phase the confidence wanes and uncertainties set in. In the third phase either there is self-destruction or disintegration of the personality or the gradual resolution of fears and emergence of new perceptions.

Jhabvala's two novels and short stories studied here reiterate her characters' tendency to simplify Hinduism. Paul Scott points to the social alienation and frustration
of two missionaries who died demented. In the case of these two missionaries the seeds of madness were not inherent in their personality. The problems began when society isolated them both as single women and as missionaries.

Rumâr Godden sees religion either as an opportunity for discovering oneself or as an instrument for shattering one's personality. Her focus is not so much on religion as harbinger of good or ill but on the individuals' ability to create meaning out of it.

The sympathy with which these authors project the young initiates and elderly bearers of the Gospel show that the portrayal of such characters is part of a larger pattern in their mind. A mad woman or an elderly rebel is a symbol of society's slowly disintegrating moral fabric rather than sad cases to be tucked into psychiatrists' files. It is the neglect and callousness of the larger group these peripheral characters that sometimes hasten their disintegration.

Erich Fromm points out the necessity for transforming our perception of madness and social responsibility.

Yet many psychiatrists and psychologists refuse to entertain the idea that society as a whole may be lacking in sanity. They hold that the problem of mental health in a society is only that of the number
of "unadjusted" individuals, not that of a possible unadjustment of the culture itself.

India is thus used by these novelists as a stage which offers a suitable geographical space where the drama of loneliness and disorientation can be isolated for closer study.