OVERVIEW

One of the by-products of British rule in India was the literature produced by English men and women who came to this country in connection with the imperial enterprise. The early generation of Anglo-Indians were largely interested in documenting the life and landscape of this unfamiliar land but gradually some writers emerged whose creative output had to be taken seriously as literature. Philip Meadows Taylor, Flora Annie Steel and Maud Diver in the nineteenth century and Rudyard Kipling, E.M. Forster and Edward Thompson in the twentieth are some of these names. In the last couple of decades a number of critical studies have appeared that examine these writers against the background of the changing historical and political relationship between Britain and England.

After India became independent in 1947 the connection between Britain and India did not automatically and abruptly come to an end. Fiction about India continued to be written by British writers, but now the perspective was bound to be different. These novels have not as yet been systematically studied.
Writers like Paul Scott, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Rumer Godden are some of these writers, although some of them had started writing before 1947. Jhabvala's writings about post-colonial India reflect her position as a westerner who educated in England, despite her Indian connection, remains an outsider. Lesser-known writers like Gerald Hanley, Valerie Anand, Deborah Moggach have turned to India only in one or two novels and their other works focus on life in England. I have included these three writers in the same area of fiction as writers like Godden, Jhabvala and Scott, because many of their concerns seem surprisingly similar. I have attempted to show that these later texts can be treated as part of a literary tradition that gained its full stature with Kipling, Forster and Edward Thompson.

This thesis entitled "The Post-Colonial Encounter: India in the British Imagination" takes up as its area of research fiction written about India by British writers in this period. The Second World War was a turning point in Britain's colonial history. To understand how the dissolution of the empire and the process of decolonization in India affect literary creativity and intellectual understanding I have taken up the fifty-year period from
1939 to 1989 for close scrutiny. Though the themes and issues are different in the post-colonial era I have tried to examine if the treatment and the attitudes have also changed significantly.

In the first chapter, I have explored how India figured in British imagination throughout its history of colonization, focusing basically on fiction. I also briefly review the existing critical material on this topic. Then I go on to look at the new themes and concerns of Anglo-Indian fiction writers after the imperial chapter is over. Finally the plan and focus of the thesis is spelt out in the remaining part of the first chapter.

The second chapter "Passages to India after A Passage to India" tries to trace the influence that Forster's novel has exerted at various levels - subtle as well as obvious - on some subsequent novels. These texts pick out from among the many crucial strands of A Passage to India the metaphor of power as seen encased in the relationship of Aziz and Adela and complicated by Ronny Heaslop. The metaphor is used more as a point of departure in exploring gender relations and power structures than as a fixed model. I see that the shadow of Forster falls on novels by later writers.
Although these novels take *A Passage to India* more as a point of departure yet there is a conscious attempt to emulate his literary example. While some novels clearly transmute Forster's influence into a unique theme of love, death and resurgence like Paul Scott's *The Jewel in the Crown*, some others like *Hot Water Man* by Deborah Moggach fall back on facile resolutions to avoid the complex issues of cross-cultural relationships.

Although man-woman relationship has traditionally been the staple of English fiction in the nineteenth century, in Anglo-Indian novels of the colonial period we rarely if ever see a marriage being described where the partners are from the different races. In post-colonial fiction on the other hand such marriages are frequently portrayed. The third chapter "Marriage Across Boundaries" focuses on this theme perceiving in it a new paradigm of race relations. The restrictions of colonial hierarchy no longer hinder the human relationship necessary in marriage but the representation of marriages in these novels makes us aware of other kinds of cultural and historical tensions.

Although when India became independent many of the English men and women went back to Britain a few of them
stayed on, most of them too old to make a fresh beginning back home. The fourth chapter called "Varieties of Exile" focuses on the fictional representations of these elderly characters who seem to have been forgotten by history. Exiled in a land which they had once subjugated, economically reduced in stature, now they neither belong to the changed India nor find any new identity. Their lives can be seen as unprocessed raw material for reconstructing certain phases of Indo-British history.

Consciousness of history seems always to be a crucial element in all the novels dealing with British in India. It is perhaps not surprising that some of the novelists actually create a fictional historian in their novels who is observing the events with the detachment of a chronicle. The figure of the historian seems to be an effective narrative strategy to introduce into the text a double perspective—that of the character, and that of the author. The fifth chapter "The Historical Novel" selects such texts that present fictional historian enabling the novels to be self-reflexive.

During British presence in India, apart from the administrative enterprise, missionary activities were also
largely prevalent. It is not surprising that missionary activities recur not only in Anglo-Indian fiction of the imperial period but also in the novels set in the time of decline of raj. While the missionaries had come to India with the noble purpose of saving the heathen, in the post-colonial decades particularly from the sixties onward a different kind of spiritual pilgrims had begun to come to India. Although not as many in number nor as consistent in purpose these young western travellers who came to India to seek salvation were significant enough to find fictional representation. The sixth chapter called "The Missionaries and the Questers" focuses on novels dealing with these two groups of people very unlike each other in many ways but similar in their renunciation of the material world. The Servants of Christ saw India as a land in need of the Gospel and decades later the young questers perceive India offering them peace. This shift in perception from one group of idealists to another set of seekers indicates that India is approached differently to suit certain psychological needs of the viewers.

India is used as a geographical location and as a historical backdrop to focus on the psychological crisis of
white women who are peripheral in both western and Indian societies. Although the two groups—fictional missionaries and the young questers—differ from each other in terms of their time-periods, ideologies and level of achievement but their marginalized status both in their home country as well as in the country of their sojourn is used by the novelists to bring out their psychological predicaments and problems of loneliness. They also succeed in highlighting the fissures in the society around them.

The five chapters of this thesis concentrate on five of the recurrent pattern and themes found in novels that describe Indo-British relationships. Not only are the issues and concerns different from colonial period the attitudes and perspectives of the writers have also changed significantly. I have attempted in this thesis to study these changes by viewing the literary texts as nodal points where the forces of history and culture, psychology and economic changes converge.