5.1) Introduction

Traditionally, Western literatures were interpreted as both aesthetically independent and expressive of the national spirit, while literatures from the rest of the world were read more from an ethnographic, historical or anthropological perspective than as works of literature in their own right. Comparative literary study, then, strives to overcome this separation between ‘the West’ and ‘the Rest’ by merging the formal rigidity of European literary studies with the interdisciplinary expanse of area studies.

One significant aspect of the comparative study of literature is its flexibility. It traces the transformations and progressions of literary genres and works across time and space. It studies the relations of literature with history, philosophy, politics and literary theory and also explores the intersections of literature with other literary forms such as drama, music, film, visual arts etc. In the present age of globalization,
translation studies are also a significant part of the comparative approach to literature. Literary translations also have their own kind of history, philosophy and even politics.

5.2) **Comparative Study of Literature**

The present age is prominently suitable for comparative study of literature. Intention of such study is to find out the common areas among varicoloured literatures. This is a kind of co-ordination which goes in search of resemblance in some respects. Actually all great literary works look to their own times and also look forward and backward. The process of comparison is natural function of the reason. Even in our everyday life comparison is implicit in our response and behaviour. It thus seems to be a normal and inevitable mental process. Therefore, the study and evaluation of literature in a sense is always comparative. It is the study of literature using comparison as the main instrument.

Here literature is studied not in isolation but in comparison. It may be comparison of two or more similar or even dissimilar forms, trends or movements within the literature. It may be the comparison of similar or dissimilar forms or trends of two or more languages of the same country. It may also cut across the national boundaries and compare themes, literary forms and trends of authors from the various languages across the world to discover the underlying elements of unity in diversity for getting global view of literature. In fact comparative study of literature is not confined to any particular method. It is related to history as well as to criticism. In comparative study of literature not only comparison but other methods such as description, characterization, interpretation, narration, evaluation are employed. It is independent of linguistic or social as well as political boundaries.
In comparative study of literature one can draw analogues and similarities, but it is very difficult to exhibit that a work of art was caused by another work of art. It is also indicated by Rene Wellek that the concept of comparative studies is very often debased by narrow nationalism. It is his belief that comparative study of literature must overcome national prejudices and at the same time should not ignore the existence of different national traditions. Of course, comparative literary studies are pursued in a spirit of intellectual curiosity.

5.3) Definitions

While giving the history of the origin of the term ‘comparative’, Rene Wellek mentions in his book Discriminations: Further concepts of Criticism (1970) that it has occurred in English from Latin ‘Comparativus’. Wellek says that it is Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett, who has first stated and illustrated the method and principles of the new science and adds that “the English term cannot be discussed in isolation from analogous terms in France and Germany” (2-3).

After giving a brief account of the origin of the term; Rene Wellek quotes a definition of ‘comparative study of literature’ given by a French scholar Van Tieghem. While defining the term Tieghem says: “The object of comparative literature is essentially the study of diverse literatures in their relations with one another” (15).

Wellek further says:

… It (comparative study of literature) will study all literatures from an international perspective, with a consciousness of the unit of all literary creation and experience (18).
It indicates that the comparative study of literature intersects the national linguistic and ethnic boundaries and enters into a wider world of diverse experiences.

Comparative study of literature is the study of literature using comparison as the main tool. Such a study of literature can develop in a sense of universality of literature. A renowned scholar of comparative study of literature and Nativist Dr. C. J. Jahagirdar emphasizes the same aspect of the universality, when he states:

“तौलिलिक साहित्य हे मानवजातीच्या सार्वजनिक नुसारचा आधाराभूत माहूल देश, काळ, वंश या परिकडे असणाचा वैश्विकतेचा शोध घेते”

(Comparative literature investigates the universality, transcending the boundaries and binaries of nation, time and ethnicity based on general human values) (Translated by the researcher).

The above cited definitions illustrate that the instrument of comparison is mainly used in such a study. In it a literature is studied in comparison with other literature(s).

5.4) Motives of comparative study of literature

The motives of the comparative study of literature can be various. However, such type of study is taken with a view to use it as the most useful technique of analyzing a work of art. One can acknowledge the qualities of a work in an effective manner by comparing it to other literary works in various languages as well as literatures. Secondly, it is easy to take a balanced survey of literary virtue. Thirdly, it helps one to identify that literature cannot be a separate entity and so it must be studied in relation to other literary works. Comparative study of literature
intends to study various national traditions. There is normally a set of peculiar characteristics that compose national character. This group of characteristics may not be found in a single individual in that nation and in the comparative study of literature. In this manner, an attempt can be made to identify the spirit of the nation mirrored in the language and literature of that nation.

Comparative study of literature leads to rediscovery and reassessment of various literary works. It helps to find out the relations between genres, movements, themes or social, political and mythological aspects in various literary works. Comparative study of literature takes note of all such aspects because social and political movements truly influence literature. To sum up, comparative literary study helps to satisfy the natural intellectual curiosity.

5.5) Comparative imperial perspectives in the novels of Edward Thompson and J. G. Farrell

In this chapter, the present research work engages with the empire novels of Edward J. Thompson and J. G. Farrell from social, historical, cultural and political studies perspectives to focus and compare imperial aspects and theme of imperialistic consciousness reflected in the novels. The study endeavours to compare the imperialistic perspectives in the novels of these writers on the platform of the following two-fold scheme or criteria of comparison.

1) Imperialistic modes: (The comparative studies of social, political, economic, historical and cultural dimensions of imperialism).

2) Characterization: (Interrogating imperial ironies through portrayal of major characters).
As Edward Thompson witnessed the Indian situation, his Indian novels can be observed as a dependable source describing these controversial times. In his novels Thompson attempts to make the reader realize about intricacies related with colonialism, not only to provide entertainment. Thompson works as a missionary, advocates Indian demand of self-rule, criticizes the education system in India and is always eager to express his views on Indian politics. Thompson has a serious attitude towards India’s future. According to him, the educational system of the Raj was not proper for the Indians; it was only for the need of the British rulers. As an educational missionary, Thompson was largely known with the problems of education. Similarly, he did not agree with the subjugation of the natives and was not afraid to make his persuasion in a loud manner. This was quite rare in that time of British regime as the British regarded themselves as a superior breed that has the right to control and civilize the native population. Thompson recognized that it needs a radical change, but he didn’t have enough force to struggle with it and in addition, did not have the helping circumstance that was necessary. This shows that Thompson always desired best for India and the Indian people and didn’t glamourize the imperial behaviour of the British rulers in his novels.

Similarly, J. G. Farrell is certainly a writer who can be seen to have overcome his contemporaries as well as his successors on the imperial theme in a self-conscious endeavour and by a highly comprehensive treatment of the decline of the Empire in his empire novels. In comparison with the masters of colonial fiction, Farrell takes control of a sole position for his proper handling of a historical event and for his fictional experimentation. The competent treatment of the theme of imperial decline gives an additional measure to Farrell’s handling of history and serves to emphasize his peculiarity as a writer of the decline-
of-the-empire genre of fiction. In his empire fiction Farrell uses postmodern techniques like parody, pastiche and intertextuality to criticize imperialism. Using these techniques, he implies not only the uselessness of earlier literary styles of fictionalizing imperial history but also of the British manner of anticipating the East.

5.5.1) **Assimilating the Imperialistic modes**

British colonial period is considered to be one of the most disputatious periods in the history of the modern world. Colonization influenced in a great manner the major part of the world, extending from geographical changes to economic, political, social and cultural upheavals in the colonized countries. These changes can be read in the history books or chronicles but the real issues like imperial attitudes or feelings of superiority are not written in them.

It is true that colonialism has emerged with commercial motives and a thought of profit. It is related to the domination over the colonized countries from multifarious points of view – for instance, political, cultural domination or social superiority. But in the beginning of the 20th century the resistance to the colonial powers had become stronger and after the Second World War many colonized countries achieved their ardently desired freedom.

It may be noted that the British colonization had far-reaching effects and altered its intention in the course of time. According to Baldwin and Quinn, “By the late nineteenth century, then, Britain’s colonizing impulse (based on trade and economic exploitation) had transformed in to an imperial (ideologically motivated) one” (2007, 3).

This obviously indicates that colonial advocates skillfully utilized India’s awareness of its history and culture. Many colonial authors tried to depict
the effects of colonization. This depiction directs to variety of imperialistic perspectives.

In comparison to colonization the postcolonial point of view emerged as a challenge to this colonial tradition; it endeavours to subvert the idea of establishing power through conquest. Postcolonial literature often includes literary works that deal with issues of de-colonization or the political and cultural independence of people previously dominated by colonial rule. It is also a critical examination of literary works that imply racist or imperial undertones. Postcolonial writers might interact with the conventional colonial discourse by attempting to modify or destroy it.

Both colonial and postcolonial literatures reflect these perspectives. It serves many purposes ranging from Kipling’s romantic portrayal of the colonies to Thompson’s and Farrell’s factual description of the evil attitude of dominance.

With reference to his Indian novels, Edward Thompson tries to uncover some deeply rooted facts affecting the ruler-ruled relationship in India. Further he depicts the conflict between these two different communities having their own culture which brought something that has never seen before and established the powerful Empire. But here he forcefully says that no power has the right to dominate any other country and make its inhabitants slaves of new orders. He believes that imperialism might always witness the decline of its power. Similarly, as a postcolonial novelist and turning to the British past, J. G. Farrell endeavours something altogether different in the following few decades with his Empire novels each of which revolves around critical moments and defeat of the British Empire. As the backgrounds, Farrell selects three different periods of maximum disturbance in British colonial history. For instance, in Troubles, it is the Irish War of Independence of 1919-1921,
for *The Siege of Krishnapur*, the Indian Mutiny of 1857, and for *The Singapore Grip*, the Japanese invasion of Malaya and the fall of Singapore in 1942, which delivers a shattering blow to British conduct. The aggregate effects of these novels emphasize the weakness and delusions of British Imperialism.

As the main aim of British rulers was an economic exploitation, they dominated colonized countries economically as well as politically. They came to India and established their models to all spheres of Indian politics. This could be identified as a significant fundamental point for the later conflict for independence and self-government. This matter of self-rule is frequently discussed from various perspectives in Thompson’s Indian novels. Many British characters in Thompson’s novels are pro-native who support India’s self-rule. On the other hand, Indians wanted self-government in any situation, no matter what blood it costs. They thought of radical solutions. In *A Farewell to India* Thompson says: “The only thing that’ll set India right is Red Revolution. She has a right to have it. Every other country has had it. She ought to have it” (193).

Robert Alden, Thompson’s major character and his mouthpiece, is ready to make sacrifice for India’s self-rule but by non-violent ways. But Indians like Dinbandhu raises questions on British policy regarding Indian freedom. He says:

> What sacrifice is England proposing to make? He (Dinbandhu) sneered. The giving up of booty is not sacrifice. It is a measure demanded by the police, when a thief is run to ground. And why, he shouted angrily, is any other than a peaceful solution unthinkable? It is very thinkable to us. India has been subjugated
by blood; she shall win freedom by blood. Do you think we are afraid of being shot down by your machine-guns? (83).

This clearly shows that the British did not make any kind of sacrifice for India’s independence. On the other hand, they ruled India against her will and dominated Indians with all possible means. They tried to keep up their dominance not through working out politics favourable for both sides, but through dominion shown by guns and restrictions. They exhibited their dominance arrogantly. One can see this arrogance when Hamar, the British judge in An Indian Day aptly thinks:

Indian politics were a deep sorrow to him, as to most people of his sort. It was all so simple, a dozen round for machine-gun, a few executions, and everyone would be happy again (15).

Even John Findlay, a pro-native British missionary in the same novel ironically comments: “I know, I know. We’ve evolved a method of selecting you (Indians) which picks out all your swabs and sets them over you” (147).

It must be noted that only Robert Alden believes that India will be efficient and able of self-governance. In A Farewell to India, he remarks:

Well, he says that when we say Indians are incapable of self-government we forget that once for practically a solid week a good third of India was in the hands of Indian clerks, and nothing went wrong (38).

Needless to add that in order to maintain the imperial dominance, the British rulers tried to refine and strengthen their administration by
replacing old officers with young ones. In this connection, Edward Said in *Orientalism* comments:

> When it became common practice during the nineteenth century for Britain to retire its administrators from India and elsewhere once they had reached the age of fifty-five, then a further refinement in Orientalism had been achieved, no Oriental was ever allowed to see himself, mirrored in the eyes of the subject race, as anything but a vigorous, rational, ever-alert young Raj (42).

In this way, in Thompson’s Indian fiction it is seen that as the main purpose of British rulers was an economic exploitation, they dominated colonized countries economically and politically.

English language played an important role in exploiting the Indian natives. Through the medium of Christian missionary English language was imposed by the British rulers on the native population. The British rulers wanted Indian people to speak English to help them in administration, while the Christian missionaries wanted to convert Indians and to spread Christianity. In this connection, Daniel Aharon succinctly remarks:

> When the British started ruling India, they searched for Indian mediators who could help them to administer India…. The British policy was to create an Indian class who should think like British, or as it was said then in Britain ‘Indians in Blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions and morals and intellect’” (Aharon, *English in India* (online) 1999-2000).
It should be noted that for the British rulers, their concept of superiority and inferiority was based on the Indian’s knowledge of the English language. In Thompson’s Indian novels this importance of English language is underlined. The plot of all his Indian novels occurred in a time when the Indians are somehow made familiar with the compulsory use of English language. The characteristic example of this may be Kamalakanta Neogyi, a Westernized Indian. He always speaks in English and has no knowledge of his mother tongue. He works as an I.C.S. officer but maintains healthy relations with British administrators. He is the perfect example of ‘an Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions and morals and intellect’.

Introduction and establishment of the western type of education was another factor that the British colonizers applied to dominate the native population. The aim of the Christian missionary educating native people was to convert them into Christianity but not to offer them better knowledge. The British developed their education system for Indians without taking care of their needs. In Thompson’s novels the university in Vishnugram is providing the same type of education. At the university, Robert Alden, a teacher of English literature, is not happy with the system and feels sorry about the future of the educated Indians. In An End of the Hours Thompson aptly points out:

Alden had spent over a quarter of century teaching what were nominally students of undergraduate status, and of these the vast majority after graduation became petty clerks – if they had luck to obtain employment at all (192-193).

On the other hand, the British administrators visualize no reason for educating the natives. According to them, the government should utilize
money on important issues like a compound wall to their official residence than educating natives. This selfishness is seen clearly in a statement in *An Indian Day*:

A dissertation followed on the meanness of a government which squandered money on the education of the natives and pampering them in every way, but left its officials without a stone wall to their compound (23).

This statement shows that the British rulers would prioritize their opportunistic aims without caring for the needs of the Indian natives.

As Edward Thompson himself worked as an educational missionary in India, his Indian fiction can contribute as a significant source depicting the missionary work in the field of education as well as religion during the final years before the end of the empire. In his novels it is clearly seen that although the chief motive of the Christian missionaries was to convert the Indian natives to Christianity, there were also some more intentions. In *An Indian Day* it is clearly indicated when Thompson writes:

… that missionary work was, at best, a well-meant waste of time – at worst, humbug. Some officials – and Hamar was liberal enough to be inclined to agree with them – conceded an unreligious kind of usefulness to certain aspects of missionary work, so called (60).

There was a common belief in British colonizers that the Christian religion was the superior religion than other religions. They thought their religion the only one that should be followed. But in *An Indian Day* Thompson clearly indicates the failure of British religion missionaries to
convert Indian natives with their heart and mind. He thinks that their original religion was deeply rooted in their minds and though evangelized, they turned to their original religion. In the novel John Findlay, a Christian missionary, hatefully confesses before Alden: “You know that I’ve baptized no one but jungly folk, in seven years. You know that no student who leaves the college ever becomes a Christian” (160-161).

The English inclination for games also helps them to govern the colonial land. Thompson asserts this in his last novel of the Indian trilogy; *An End of the Hours*:

This is what gives us such a pull over other nations. We have a sense of humour. And we keep cheery. It’s our sporting tradition that does it. Other nations haven’t got this tradition (8).

This proclivity for games is ridiculously seen in Farrell’s *The Singapore Grip* when Walter Blackett, a rubber millionaire, attempts to continue the jubilee function of his company under the shadow of Japanese offensive parallels the decision of the cricket club not to put off the cricket match under any circumstances. This is seen when Walter declares: “No doubt cricket would continue despite the Bombing; important matches could not be expected to wait until the Japanese had been dealt with’ (224).

All this shows that colonial imperialism was most commonly the abuse of native population.

As a writer Farrell’s first impulse was to point out the distinction between everyday life and history. In the middle of the Troubles, the Mutiny, or the invasion of Singapore, he shows lifelike moments of history seeming so unhistorical to those involved. He is a realist and his
every empire novel is a story which proceeds from a beginning to an end in a proper order. The characters are presented as they understand themselves and see one another. In his trilogy of Empire novels, one realizes that one is looking at the things from different point of view. For instance, atrocities are committed, but by the British rulers; love blooms, but without any romantic touch; the English officers are neither spirited nor intelligent; they are depicted as indifferent, self-satisfied, arrogant, artificial and unaware of reality. Only accidentally do they fall into heroism, nobility of spirit and courage. If the British rulers are treated more un glamourously by Farrell, they are also treated more realistically from a historical perspective.

As stated in preceding chapter, Farrell’s Troubles, the first novel of his empire trilogy, indicates a significant departure from his earlier non-historical fiction. The novel is evaluated individually in terms of its Irish context. It is almost regarded as capturing the development of the civil war of independence and with the delightful deviations of Farrell’s creation. The historical context used in the novel is unquestionably Anglo-Irish, with much emphasis placed on the imperial background. The novel may be part of a trilogy in which the story of expanding empire is displayed, yet an understanding of Irish history appears to be the only discourse necessary for a discussion of the novel.

Farrell followed Troubles with a novel about the Indian Mutiny, and after that about the fall of Singapore. These distinctive territories not only share common characteristics but that they set up a large picture of imperial decline. In other words, the themes explored are set against a sense of Irish political development, but the role of Ireland in the general decline of the empire is distinctively shown, which Farrell with much sensitivity chose to show most clearly in the use of newspaper excerpts placed at key points within the novel. These excerpts express the
disintegration of British rule in Ireland in a somewhat simple manner. Besides, they introduce Irish political activity within a full setting.

Farrell brings the British under control to ironic examination in his empire fiction. In doing so, he adjusts a romanticized view of history. However, his Mutiny novel, *The Siege of Krishnapur* goes beyond this accomplishment. The novel utilizes the criticism of the British rulers in India as a way of investigating and passing judgment on some principle Victorian attitudes and beliefs. Specifically, the novel examines the Victorian mind of progress. It also tries to define the meaning of historical consciousness and expose how it is developed. In the end, the novel asserts that though historical consciousness is, in certain circumstances, contrastable to the notion of progress, a favourable relationship can be possible between them. It is appropriate that it is the Collector who develops most of all into historical consciousness because although at the beginning of the novel he is unaware of how history really operates, he does show that he has the potential for developing such awareness.

According to Farrell, history is the logic of practice and the life-like experience of individuals. His novel on Indian Mutiny, *The Siege of Krishnapur* overthrows and manages the realistic conventions skillfully in order to describe the interaction of individuals and the powerful forces of history in an impressive and proper manner. While writing the historical novels, Farrell follows the track of Forster and Conrad and anticipates the efforts of postmodern writers like Salman Rushdie to overcome realism while dealing with history in a manner which has become acquainted as ‘historiographic metafiction’. But Farrell is not included in the list of postmodern practitioners, although his historical novels harmonize with Patricia Waugh’s definition of metafiction as,
fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality”, and which “offers both innovation and familiarity through the individual reworking and undermining of familiar conventions (Waugh, *Metafiction*, 212).

Farrell’s *The Siege of Krishnapur* is a powerful discourse on the tendency of postmodern fiction in the second half of the 20th century. Much like Edward Thompson’s *The Other Side of the Medal* it reemphasizes the British imperial ideology and its consequences.

Thompson’s controversial work *The Other Side of the Medal* questions the tendentious mold of British historiography and popular fiction and concludes that it is the ‘shadow of the Mutiny’, overstated by the British writing, which has made the relations between Indians and the British largely bitter. Writing in 1925, with the memory of Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre fresh in mind, and hit by a liberal guilt, *The Other Side of the Medal* called for and offered an act of atonement by means of which the Indian rebellion could finally come to an end.

J. G. Farrell set his plan at a remarkable time in British literary history. As the British Empire was leading gradually towards its end in the middle of the 20th century, it was forming a new literature about the imperial state in the novels of Paul Scott, V. S. Naipaul and J. G. Farrell. Each of their novels and particularly Farrell’s is actually a photo copy of what we might call in a loose manner the imperial mentality and the development of its ideology. Farrell’s empire novels display his extreme interest in the decay of the British Empire in both political and material terms. He depicts the Empire at three points of historical crisis and its utter ruin: Anglo-Protestant society in Ireland on the verge of the Irish
Civil War, an East India Company Residency caught up in the Indian Mutiny of 1857 and the final days of British rule in Singapore before Japanese invasion.

_The Siege of Krishnapur_ is fundamentally a work that intends to shatter British illusions. The idea that England was bringing illumination to India through their culture and civilization has become ineffective and unconvincing. The British rulers opine that their (English) culture is ‘superior view of mankind’ and they think that it should be accepted by the Indians as the only just and ideal culture. But Fleury, Farrell’s mouthpiece rejects the idea of ‘superior culture’ and implies that, “it is wrong to talk of a ‘superior civilisation’ because there isn’t such thing…. It mars the noble and natural instincts of the heart” (*The Siege of Krishnapur*, 171).

In the same way, in _The Other Side of the Medal_ Thompson responded pro-natively to the changed conditions in India after the Mutiny. According to him, the Indian rebellion had finally killed the idea of British superiority. The events like the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre formed the sense of self-doubt among the British and enhanced political self-assertion among the Indians. These events, Thompson thinks, formed a turning point in Indo-British relationship.

Similarly, with the reference to the ‘Great Exhibition’ in _The Siege of Krishnapur_, Farrell wants to show two opposing aspects of the British Empire – its power and its weakness face-to-face with Indian culture. Here, in this connection, Ralph Crane in his _Troubled Pleasures_ (1997) aptly mentions John McLeod’s arguments:

Farrell’s “use of the Exhibition” is “to reveal the collection as the display/performance of imperialist culture and order. McLeod
argues that Farrell uses the collection to demonstrate the inherent fragility of the colonially imposed order. The gathering of objects in any collection or exhibition imposes a taxonomy which draws together under a new heading a group of disparate objects, but the new group is always threatening to disperse into its original individualities. Each single object is a startling reminder of the potential for separation and anarchy (96).

In *The Singapore Grip*, a long and vastly peopled novel, Farrell wants to expose the naked economic self-interest and exploitation that strengthened English imperial classes. The novel entwines with the nature of colonial economics and speculation on history. In the novel Farrell exposes the meanness of the tropical commodities that maintained a company like Blackett and Webb self-sufficient. He reports in detail the exploitation of a vast multitude of coolies who reaped Burmese rice and tapped the rubber trees that developed the core of Malaya’s plantation economy. The novel revolves around the concerns of a renowned rubber company named Blackett and Webb and its partner owner Walter Blackett. In the novel Walter is shown intriguing to adjust the rubber market as Europe moves toward war and he can loot more money from rubber. When his old partner Mr. Webb dies, he tries to pull his partner’s son Matthew into the business. But being a romantic idealist, Matthew shows unwillingness to pollute is hands in the indecent business of imperial economics.

After reading the novel, it is observed that although a novel full of comedy and parody, *The Singapore Grip* also seeks to communicate a serious analysis of colonialism, both locally, as it developed in Singapore and in the global context of 20th century history. The novel looks back in time to the Boxer War of 1900, the Russian Japanese War of 1905, and
the First World War. Though many critics and reviewers found Farrell’s detailed revelation of the mechanics of colonial capitalism indigestible, Timothy Mo glorified the politics of the novel by saying:

The account of the development of the big Far Eastern commercial houses, the rubber business, the way native small HOLDERS were systematically ruined, the unholy alliance of Indian money-lenders and Western capital which destroyed the old communities and created a pool plantation and mining labour, the rise of Japanese imperialism - … (Mo, ‘Magpie Man’, The New Statesman, 338).

The British imperialists along with their racial and cultural superiority carried a sense of physical pre-eminence. In Farrell’s The Singapore Grip, the narrator of the novel, Walter Blackett relates physical strength with economic advantages when he tells Matthew that imperialism is a “law of nature” and strong nations will take advantage of the weak: “… Weak nations go to the wall. That has always been the way of the world, and always will be” (140).

In Thompson’s Indian novels the natives are said to regard the British rulers as men of superhuman stature. For instance, Robert Alden in An End of the Hours seeks to explain this as: “In the opinion of the East, which sees us only in our arrogant prime and years of growth of prime, the Englishman is unaging” (65).

Again Alden feels this physical advantage over the natives in A Farewell to India when he says:
He was forty-four. Had he been an Indian, he would have been old. Sometimes he knew that he was old. But, so long as this nervous energy stood at the centre of his being, imperious, insistent, arrogant, prepared to fling aside any dictates of wisdom or necessity … aware of duty and the mind’s fierce pride, he could not age (38).

This shows that Farrell’s perspective, throughout his empire novels, is of the effect of imperial decay on the lives of its colonial group: on the former colonials and settlers of Ireland, the military establishment and its multiple associates in Krishnapur, and the planters and expatriates of Singapore, rather than on whatever contacts may, or may not have been made firm as a result of aggregated colonial dislike.

5.5.2) Characterization: Interrogating imperial ironies through the portrayal of major characters

Edward Thompson’s characters are part of colonial administration, such as missionaries, bureaucrats, clerks or major or minor employees from both communities – rulers as well as ruled. The major characters in his novels chiefly belong to the upper social class also from both the communities. Though Thompson doesn’t represent a British colonizer in a typical manner as a superior to the natives, he tries to depict him as a person who is sensible of racial equality and capable of equal friendship. According to Thompson, the process of colonization created a gap in the minds of English and the Indians so major or minor conflicts cannot be shunned. Such conflicts of two completely distinct social, religious and cultural communities are discriminated in a way these two groups observe on fundamental values, such as social and family life, religion and
politics. The following comments of Jayananda Sadhu in *An Indian Day* exemplify such clashes:

Your nobly moral airs. The way you have persuaded yourselves that the Empire is just a magnificent philanthropic institution, disinterestedly run for the sake of an ungrateful world. That’s where your brag comes in. you don’t brag about your poetry – or your men of science – or your martyrs – or any of the things that really exist (278).

It is evident that Thompson’s British characters persist on typical British morality and social behaviour. They are proud of the imperial ideas misrepresented by them and did not worry about their culture and moral values. They act and behave like ‘donors of culture’ to the colonized country. Similarly, J. G. Farrell’s Collector in *The Siege of Krishnapur* regards the ‘Great Exhibition’ as a “collective prayer of all civilized nations” (48) under the supervision and leadership of Great Britain. On the other hand, Thompson’s major characters like Robert Alden and Findlay are willing and even keen to comprehend the way of thinking of the native people. They want to learn their (natives’) social life, family life and cultural and religious traditions. Farrell’s Fleury in *The Siege of Krishnapur* is also eager to know the native culture and calls Empire’s civilization a “beneficial disease” (24) and goes back to England with profound misgivings about the British theory of superior culture. According to Fleury, “the Great Exhibition was not, as everyone said it was, a landmark of civilisation; it was for the most part a collection of irrelevant rubbish ….” (92). Later on he tells Harri, the son of a local Maharaja, that civilisation as it is now has changed man into an engine
and that “an engine has no heart” (95). This is Farrell’s attitude to the British concept of a superior culture.

Thompson does not mention the people from the lower strata: his characters range from minor clerks to high positioned officers. Kamalakanta Neogyi presents himself as a typical example of an ‘anglicized Indian’ who serves the British Empire but is hated by his countrymen as a selfish man lacking courage and patriotism. He worships English but has no knowledge of his mother tongue. According to Thompson, Kamalakanta Neogyi is an anachronism in the India of today. He was an Indian serving the British Raj, and serving it in the spirit of a generation that had vanished forever. In the same way, Farrell’s Hari in *The Siege of Krishnapur* remains a biased Indian whose British education has taught him nothing except that his own culture is far inferior to that of the British. This shows that his British education turned out to be unwholesome for him rather than a step on the road to progress and culture. These examples of Kamalakanta and Hari show that the upper class Indians who came in contact with the British colonizers normally have a positive attitude towards them than the people who as servants and lower class Indians directly experienced their domination.

Robert Alden, a mouthpiece of Edward Thompson, is the most significant character in his Indian novels. He is a pro-native anti-imperial educational missionary who teaches English literature in Vishnugram University. He advocates the non-violent advancement of India and loves her for her beauty and tender wilderness. One can astonish at the British colonizer characterized with Indian point of view:

> We in the West are individuals and walk our individual separate way to the grave. The East is part of a sept, and its vitality, which so often towers up unexpectedly out of what looked to be utter
weakness, is vitality greater than the individual (An End of the Hours, 201).

The colonizers always treat the natives from the British point of view without any sympathy for them. Vincent Hamar and the police superintendent Mr. Nixon provide fine example of arrogant British officials. Their sympathy with the Indians was only theoretical and their hatred for Indians was always with them. For example, when Hamar and Nixon find a quantity of ammunition hidden in some caves, they feel:

the pulse of wild excitement and hatred, the excitement greater than hatred … that was knitting the educated classes together … Hindus and Mussalmans would quarrel after we were gone, and they quarreled now. But what did we know of systems in whose interaction we bore no part? (An Indian Day, 182).

When Hamar sacked a political case against Indians on the grounds of inadequate evidence, he is said to have played out of “an almost savage sense of fairness” (57) and not because of any affinity for Indians towards whom his feelings are absolutely impersonal and his conduct rude.

The English women in the colonial India were not allowed to do the things as the English men did. The Englishmen did not notice their women as equal partners. But Thompson’s Hilda Mannering wants to break this patriarchy concept but she fails. About her attempt Thompson in An End of the Hours says:

Like all intellectual women, she wanted friendship with men: even the dullest man seemed to have some touch with life somewhere. She had not realized this so strongly till she came to India. But
men’s friendship never seemed free from some dominion of the senses. As long as she was young and beautiful, men would throng to talk with her, but their friendship was not the thing it seemed. Men had given her the best of comradeship, and then wanted to possess her (125).

Even in Farrell’s *The Siege of Krishnapur*, women are depicted as mere objects either to be protected or to be tortured by men. They are subjected to the wills of men. They are not depicted displaying heroic actions. Only few women like Louise Dunstaple works as a nurse at the hospital, another one, Lucy, makes cartridges to help the English soldiers.

This indicates that English women are subordinate to their male counterparts. But there are some exceptions. Many English women who came to India to accompany their husbands also maintained their Western habits and lifestyle. They held parties; organize gatherings, dinners with their friends. They behave with their distinctive brand of ruler’s brutality. Such women characters Thompson shows as cruel to Indians, whom they did not see as human beings, as emotionally crude and rude due to their unearned right. For example, Mrs. Nixon pleasingly narrates how she hit her cook with a device used to frighten squirrels from eating the horse-feed:

He was carrying a dish of absolutely boiling stew when the pellet touched him up. He smashed the dish, of course! You should have heard him howl! I thought I must hit a jackal (*The Siege of Krishnapur*, 25).

What emerges from the preceding analysis is that in Thompson’s Indian novels the ‘herd-mentality’ and constructed outlook of British
colonizers becomes evident in his treatment of British motives and behaviour in India.

In his empire novels, J. G. Farrell shows compassion to the wide range of characters caught up in the ruin, particularly those representing the dying order, firmly maintaining due standards of literary convention in situations of death and destruction, such as the valiant Major Brendan Archer who plays major part in Troubles. Skillfully narrated and carefully investigated Farrell’s empire novels combine comedy with suspense, critical observation, and vivid characterization.

In Troubles, Farrell’s first novel of the empire fiction, the story revolves around a hotel and its residents, in rural Ireland, as they experience the mutability of life in a country struggling for its identity. These residents are a remaining part of changing times – times where the old order is vanishing to make way for an extremely new one. Here, Farrell distinctively portrays the actively changing and violent social milieu of Ireland throughout the almost dreadful, frozen life of the residents. There are social, political and religious conflicts between the rural and urban Irish people. In the middle of these clashes, Major Brendan Archer attends as a silent observer in the novel. It is he who provides a sense of calm and reality to the disturbed condition of rural Ireland. In an interesting manner, the event-schedule of the novel is posted to the Major; that is the novel follows happening at the pace of Major’s life and not the other way round. So, in some sense the author’s focus is not Ireland but the effect of Ireland on the Major and other residents of the Majestic.

This attendance of the Major as a silent observer of the novel provides perhaps the most incoherent view of the occurrences in Ireland. While the other occupants portray Englishmen living in their disintegrating ivory towers and refer to the Irish as radicals, the character
of the Major maintains the balance in a great manner. His walking clumsily through the corridors of the hotel as his stumbling through his life provides an extent of fatalism to the novel. John Spurling in his appendix to *The Hill Station* thinks about him as, “One of the most sympathetic characters in fiction … a Quixote without being a fool, a Galahad with being a prig; and that praise s not absurd” (Spurling, ‘As Does the Bishop’, 163).

In short, it is clearly seen that the character of the Major is one that the narrator has retained for himself. It is also clear that the greatness of the novel lies in the character of Major, the protagonist of the novel who drifts through the novel, without understanding most of the time, but in his lack of understanding there lies a kind of lesson.

To show the gradual development of characters in *The Siege of Krishnapur*, Farrell makes them endure trials which comprehended like the visits of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse: death, disease, starvation and war. But not all the characters develop under such circumstances. Harry Dunstable, the British administrator who is neither spirited nor ingenious, and Lucy, the “Fallen Woman”, do not change at all. On the other hand, Dr. Dunstable, Harry’s father, the Rev. Hampton, the English padre and a young Indian named Harri cannot meet at all with changing circumstances. Here Harri, the local Maharaja’s son like Thompson’s Kamalakanta Neogyi, the Indian officer under British rule in *An Indian Day*, is serving the British Raj. Both are Westernized Indians who have no native attachment. One more Dr. McNab does not need to grow because the Collector mentions him as, “the best of us all” (379), but he is not the hero of the novel. [Farrell re-introduces the character of Dr. McNab in *The Hill Station* published posthumously in 1981, from *The Siege of Krishnapur*, just as the central character of *Troubles*, Major
Brendan Archer, seen contemplating the ruins of the Majestic Hotel, had reappeared in *The Singapore Grip* set two decades later in Singapore. These intertextual links represent just one kind of association established among Farrell’s Empire novels, indicating at a fairly literal level, realistic connections across time and place. The interlocking effects of Farrell’s imaginative shifting are not always so visible, however, and may pull against the facts of history and geography. The characters of Fleury and the Magistrate hold their opinions strongly in the forefront of the novel. Fleury like Matthew Webb of *Troubles* is a lover of the arts who has this love in him to become a great creative, inventive figure but settles in the end of the novel for his marriage and his love for the arts. For him, the siege comes as “a solstice” in his life: “He grew less steadily less responsive to beauty and steadily more bluff, good-natured and interested in physical things” (187).

In the same manner, being disgusted by the British imperialism and having solace in Indian plains and hills, Thompson’s John Findlay distances himself from the English world and spends his time with the natives and lives in their huts.

The Magistrate, on the other hand, is a sceptic and his critical estimate of British imperial rule makes him the most modern voice in the novel. However, his scepticism is weakened gradually by his cynicism.

These characters mentioned above sometimes are not much more than placards, each playing his assigned role as a guide for various tendencies. Only the character of Mr. Hopkins, the Collector (in British India, the chief administrator of a district) grows most of all in the novel. He is aware of the pre-siege upheavals and takes pains to build earthworks against the insurrection he has deduced. He is the stereotype of a British ruler of the 19th century who believes in colonial policies.
Like Edward Spenser of *Troubles*, the Collector is slightly absurd, though he is drawn with much less care. He is the advocate and follower of British civilization. According to him, the ‘Great Exhibition’ is the ‘crystal palace’ where the concept of progress is enshrined. He regards the Exhibition a “collective prayer of all the civilized nations” (53). He reminds the British company that the ultimate aim of Empire is not merely to acquire wealth but to acquire ‘through’ wealth

… a system of administering justice impartially on the one hand, work of art unsurpassed in beauty since antique times on the other. The spreading of the Gospel on the one hand, the spreading of railway on the other” (50).

As is self-evident, the Collector’s impartial justice is that of British rule and includes not the slightest notion of a native system of justice, nor does he acknowledge the history of Indian art and civilization.

In comparison to the Collector’s ‘Great Exhibition’ there is a reference of the ‘Annual Agricultural Exhibition’ in Thompson’s *An Indian Day*. Kamalakanta Neogyi, an anglicized Indian calls a meeting for the preparation of the Exhibition. While addressing the meeting, instead of discussing on the preparation, he reveals his sense of humour by recounting with “infinite tediousness” (50) to which the English audience never responds. This shows that even the Westernized Indians were also treated hatefully by the British colonizers.

In *The Singapore Grip*, many of Farrell’s characters like Matthew Webb are naïve and liberal. Though Matthew is a member of colonial community and a British citizen is a staunch opponent of British imperial policy. He was progressively educated and worked for the League of Nations before he comes out to Singapore after his father’s death. But he
never shows the least interest in inheriting his ancestral business and wealth. Matthew thinks that profit and wealth are like dangerous viruses against which there is no remedy which grip the country to decline. Here Matthew is seen to be the philosophical contrast to Walter, the rubber millionaire.

The character of Joan, Walter’s daughter, on the other hand, disciplined by her father, is the professional manipulator, a woman who will do anything to raise her own and her family’s greater wealth. On the other hand, Monty, the son of Walter is a fool, so out of touch that in any other society he would be quickly removed as inapplicable. The other minor characters in the novel though they apply themselves to war work and go into great detail about the Japanese attack, following the battle from both the Japanese and the British side.

Walter Blackett, the rubber tycoon, is the least sympathetic character Farrell created in any of his empire novels. He is a manipulative and enormously successful capitalist, emotionlessly determined to marry off his own daughter to the largest benefit of his business after realizing that his son is unfit to continue his business policy. He is a perfectly business-minded man and according to him, ‘eat or be eaten’ should be the rule of business. He thinks that business must flourish although Singapore is in flames. The novel revolves around him, who is the typical example of the British imperialist and highly self-satisfied about the great civilizing mission of Britain. His solitary goal is to enhance rubber profits and make sure the company he has built continues on.

Like the Collector in *The Siege of Krishnapur*, Walter, too, is a strong supporter of the British concept of superior civilization. But his theory of the superior culture has more to do with financial keenness. For him, civilization is almost identical with the spreading of capitalism. As a rubber merchant, he complains that it is
unjust that history should only relate the exploits of bungling soldiers, merchants and politicians, ignoring the merchants whose activities were the very bedrock of civilization and progress (157).

Similarly, the Collector in The Siege of Krishnapur also thinks that “mechanical invention” (90) i.e. the progress of mankind is the essential ingredient of civilisation.

In The Singapore Grip the characters of Walter and Matthew are nicely contrasted by Farrell. Walter is the unscrupulous but ever successful businessman and on the other hand, Matthew is the ineffectual idealist who is honest enough to admit his failure. Where Walter has a firm grip on the business world around him, Matthew is only faintly aware of it.

To sum up, Farrell’s every empire novel depicts characters that are trapped, because each novel is a story of a siege and this siege mentality in each novel suggests a metaphor for British imperial policy. Like Edward Thompson, Farrell also intends to satirize the colonizers’ arrogant and exaggerated sense of superiority which has always remained a serious obstacle to create a healthy relationship between the British and the Indians.

The present comparative study of the imperialistic perspectives and major and minor characters in the novels of Edward Thompson and J. G. Farrell indicates that both the novelists put their imperial characters under minute observation and tears out their imperial as well as superior attitudes with the weapon of wit and making them liable to satire, portraying them with irony and understatement and exposing them and their lives against the realities around them.
The present study also addresses some of the points related to the politics of writing and reception. It modestly makes an endeavour to assess and analyse the construction and reconstruction of India as a ‘nation’ by two well known non-native writers who narrate various experiences of imperial mindset in their empire fiction. There is no denying the fact that literature often functions as a signifier of a national identity. Literature, in other words, recreates the nation it belongs to. The binaries and dialectical relationship between the colonizers and the colonized is an important source of the construct of imperialism. The terms ‘nation’ or ‘imperial’ cannot be defined through territorial/geographical or political mapping. A collectivity finally emerges as a ‘nation’ or ‘imperial’ only when it is textualized. After mapping the two distinct works, the present study modestly arrives at a suitable and reasonable conclusion that what impedes the perception of imperialism is the imperialist discourse and ironies which, at times produces excessively ironic notion displaying a temporality of cultures and socio-political consciousness. What both the writers want to criticize is the petty and jingoistic version of imperialism, often under the convenient camouflage of socio-political and cultural harmony between the rulers and the ruled. It is significant thing to note that even at the turn of this millennium one could go on discovering such ironies and archetypes endlessly. The distinctions of space and time are no longer impediments in finding out the layers of truth in this context. The ironic reversals embedded in the narrative of select work deconstruct a number of British and European commonplace prejudices against India since the political message of the work is anti-imperialist.