CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

The present research work seeks to explore the ubiquity of imperialistic perspectives in the fiction of Edward Thompson and J. G. Farrell. As stated earlier, the thesis is mainly a study of imperial attitudes. Hence, it focuses on the imperial behaviour in the colonial as well as postcolonial situation. The aim of this research work is not only to focus on the imperialistic perspectives in the works of these writers, but to present the conflict between the two sets of social and cultural values that are quite applicable even at the turn of this millennium.

The first chapter entitled ‘The Concept of Imperialism’ of this research work is devoted to the term ‘Imperialism’ in which the researcher tried to enfold the term with all its dimensions. The term is explained with its definition, its meaning and even with its historical importance. The ramifications and factors responsible for the rise of
imperialism are discussed at large in the chapter. The far reaching effects and the consequences of imperialism are mentioned in detail. Similarly, the British imperialism in India is highlighted in this chapter in which the researcher endeavoured to show how the British colonizers dominated India economically, culturally and politically. At the end the chapter deals with postcolonial theorists’ examination of how Western cultures created the colonial subject, the subaltern, through various discursive practices, and, how subaltern cultures both participated in and worked to oppose colonization, through various direct or subversive means.

As stated earlier in the introduction of this work that imperialism is ‘a policy of territorial aggrandizement’, British rulers applied this policy to all over the world to dominate the nations for building up a powerful Empire. Though the empire building was there in the Medieval Europe, the 19th century British imperialism was a different phenomenon with economic, cultural and political intentions. As a matter of fact, the nineteenth century was the age of imperialism which underwent the consolidation of British dominance in many of the colonies particularly in the continents of Africa and Asia. Throughout the century, the British colonizers perpetually mastered a desire to enlarge their empire in order to prove them superior and to extend their culture and civilisation.

There are multiple factors responsible for the rise of imperialism, but for want of space the researcher compared only few relevant factors. These factors include economic factors, surplus capital, transport and communication, political and intellectual activities, national pride and prestige, urge to spread Christianity, love for adventure, population explosion and lack of international consensus. It must be noted that out of these factors the economic factors strongly stimulated imperialism because the interest in trade framed the primary objective of the British
colonizers which played an important role in the consolidation of the British Empire.

Moreover due to the colonial expansion there were frequent colonial conflicts which resulted in the development of alliances and counter-alliances with political and military powers which finally brought the First World War. Many of Asian and African countries got westernized. British education system in English language introduced to the colonized countries. British culture was imposed on the colonized population. In this process of colonization many colonized countries lost their identity as a nation and became culturally and politically westernized. These and many more are the dire consequences and concomitant of British imperialism which severely changed the very countenance of the world.

It should be noted that India was not the exception to the British policy of dominating countries for empire building. In other words, India suffered a lot due to this policy of aggrandizement. The British Empire in India was established in 1757 after winning the Battle of Plassey and the East India Company established as the predominant European force in India. With this turn into administration, the East India Company began its gradual operation of changing from a trading company into a semi-autonomous state, at first one of many and then the ruling power in India. However, the presence of British people, and the imposition of their rule, had sturdy effects on the native societies of India.

British imperialism annihilated the previous healthy economy of India, particularly the rural economy of India. The rural economy of India was the fundamental strength of Indian economy which received a damaging blow as many small-scale industries like handicrafts were destroyed because of the British imports. Similarly, the British policy of annexing powerful Indian kingdoms on the ground that they had been
misgoverned as they had no recognized male heir, brought about a discontent among the Indians of all classes which contributed to the uprising of 1857 against the British rule. As a result, the East India Company’s government was replaced by direct rule from England, but the British rulers regained their dominance over India by reenacting imperial power and India remained the most rated of British overseas possessions in the nineteenth century.

Chapter two of this thesis deals in brief with the biographical sketch of Edward J. Thompson and J. G. Farrell. The first part of this chapter introduces Edward Thompson as a colonial as well as Anglo-Indian writer with his liberal attitude towards the colonized. This part also describes in brief Thompson’s fictional work, particularly his Indian novels and his symbiotic connections with India and Indian political leaders. In the second part of this chapter the researcher gives the description of James Gordon Farrell’s brief biographical sketch with a short introduction of his literary work including his Empire fiction. This part deals with the upheavals in Farrell’s personal life as well as in his short literary career.

The last part of this chapter encloses a brief review of relevant literature to this research study. In this last part of the second chapter the researcher attempts to encompass major novelists of relevant literature with their major works in which the influence of nineteenth century British imperialism is obvious. In this literary work imperialism appears not only as a literal background but also as the ideological frame of reference which provides justification for its existence. Here the researcher sets two groups of novelists – one having more anti-imperial sentiments in their novels and other expressing some nostalgia for imperial time in their fiction. The novelists like Kipling, Forster, and Thompson belong to the first group while Farrell, Paul Scott and few
others belong to the second one. These novelists of imperial literature like Kipling, Forster, Conrad, Orwell, Scott and Farrell appear as all time writers who became successful in conferring a kind of depth and honour to the genre of imperial literature and the writers like Masters, Thompson, Rumer Godden, Haggard, Diver, Taylor and others who are called as the Raj writers became successful to create a challenge to accept ideas on imperialism in their novels. In spite of certain differences in their treatment of imperialism, all the writers of imperialism experience traces of imperial pride in their works.

Chapter three of this thesis throws light on Edward Thompson’s Indian novels and the imperial modes in the novels briefly touching the Anglo-Indian tradition of English fiction. It dealt with Thompson’s connections with India as the educational missionary who points out that the lack of mutual understanding between the British and the Indians is the main cause of turmoil between the two communities. In his Indian fiction and especially in his trilogy of Indian novels namely An Indian Day, A Farewell to India, and An End of the Hours, Thompson attempts to elevate cross-cultural understanding between the two races.

Thompson in his Indian novels seems to have seen his job as the castigation of both sides in the struggle, and was inflamed at his own nation’s narrowness and insensitivity as rulers of India. He lamented the British lack of imagination about India and his judgment of the educational policies forced on Indians was severe and unambiguous. Thompson’s experience as a missionary convinced him that the quality of education in India was mediocre its content incapable to the people’s lives and its social effects terrible. Where most colonial writers declared that relationships between British and Indians as equals were neither possible nor desirable and degenerate from familiarity with Indians, Thompson emphasized that the disconnection of the communities was a
violation of mankind’s oneness and he formed his writings to attend the cause of resumption of friendly relations.

In his Mutinous work *The Other Side of the Medal* Thompson understands the causes of disrespect of the Indians towards the British rulers. Here Thompson challenges the representation of the history of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 by the British historians. He thinks that the prejudiced one-sided representation of the history of the Indian Mutiny has had an adverse effect on the British-Indian relationship. Thompson saw the Mutiny as a turning point in the history of British Empire in India as the British altered their attitudes towards the colonized Indians. The British rulers during the Mutiny committed acts that would earlier have been considered undesirable. According to Thompson it was necessary to make the British aware of the need to atone for their acts. Only by doing this, Thompson thinks, could the British Empire be saved from its prolonged slide into racial conflict.

Thompson’s *An Indian Day* is a book full of sharp and sagacious observations on Indians as well as Anglo-Indian life, men and manners. In the novel Thompson is fully aware of the sensitiveness of Indians, as of the bad temper of the Englishmen in the East. His power of construction, even that of characterization, may appear to be worked with great labour, but the charm of the novel lies in the reaction of a cultured and artistic mind to India at a time of political and intellectual agitation. In the novel Thompson condemns imperial attitude and behaviour of the British administrators like Fergusson and Tomlinson and at the same time he introduces humanistic approach to India and the Indian population through Robert Alden and John Findlay, the British educationists and missionaries. Thompson shows the Indian point of view with some educated Indians like Jayananda Sadhu and also shows liberality of Englishmen like Alden and Findlay. He exposes the ‘herd mentality’ of
the British rulers through some English typical characters like Major Henderson, Lt. Warren, and Mr. Nixon, the police officer and his wife with their arrogance and prejudices against the Indian people. Though the novel may be artistically less impressive, it is more proving as the final message of the novel is that of mutual understanding.

Thompson’s *A Farewell to India* is a political treatise interspersed with the personal lives of Englishmen like Robert Alden and John Findlay and others. The ruler-ruled relationship crops up from the passionate political conversation between Indian characters like Jayananda Sadhu and Dinbandhu on the one side and non-authoritative Englishmen like Alden and Findlay on the other. The novel further investigates the strains which a changing India forces on the British rulers. It is an ironical narration of the British disdain for the Indians. At the same time Thompson shows the incapability of the educated Indians like Kamalakanta Neogyi and their weakness for involving in self-praise. Besides he criticizes and vexes with the Indians’ political involvement in the functions of educational institutions. In short, the novel is a fine example of the depiction of British sense of superiority and their pretention of goodwill towards Indians. In the end of the novel Thompson persuades the British rulers to make atonement for the wrongs they have done to India.

In *An End of the Hours*, the last novel of his trilogy of Indian novels, Thompson admits British failure to be able to grow in India and also aware of the wrongs done to the Indian population. The novel is full of feeling of loss as if the British rulers accepted the battle as lost and behaving as if they had already isolated their rule from India. Both Alden and Findlay are missionaries and Christian activists and they develop the idea of Christianity as a ‘God’s effort’. But finally Alden admits that Christianity has failed to appeal to Indian people and understands that
Hinduism is full of compassion but Christianity is not a sympathetic religion. In the end the British rulers realize that they should depart with honour. They were energetic enough to admit the guilt but wouldn’t accept that the entire system of colonization was a big blunder.

After analyzing his Indian novels, it is seen that Thompson was a man of Ideas and he had an active and investigative mind. Through his novels and his communication with India and Indians he contributed to a kind of knowledge in England about India to the concerned situation. One can also see his resolution to notify his readers about the predicaments of British-India relationship coexisted with the fervor to convert his nation’s perceptions of India, to drive their consciousness and to entreat the Indians that the British were capable of sympathy, loftiness and repentance.

Chapter four of this research works analyses J. G. Farrell’s empire novels focusing on imperial undertones and colonial pretensions depicted in the novels. Farrell is not a partisan of colonialism or imperialism. In fact, all his novels show the meaninglessness of colonial boastfulness. His trilogy of empire novels set during the three different threats on British rule: Troubles during the brutal guerrilla war in Ireland in 1919-21; The Siege of Krishnapur during the Indian Mutiny of 1857; and The Singapore Grip during the Japanese invasion of Singapore. Farrell’s empire novels deal with the descending fate of the British Empire in the 20t century.

Farrell’s first empire novel Troubles deals with the fate of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, that is, an upper wealthy class of Protestant Anglo-Irishmen. The gradual decline of this wealthy class is resembled in the fate of a hotel called ‘Majestic’. The hotel is frequented by a number of Englishmen and women who seem to live in the past rather than in the present. This decay of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy is just an indication of
another decline, namely that of the British Empire in the 20th century. Propped up within the refuge of its walls, the hotel represents the beginning of the end for the British connection to Ireland – at least within the political terms of the period – but it also registers the decline of the empire in a general manner. Unlike the situations in the Krishnapur compound, Kilnalough is however rather more complex, connecting Ireland to empire, while at the same time setting up the exactness of its position. For example, the indigenous Irish commotion on the verge of the hotel boundary, much as the sepoys outside the Krishnapur Residency do the compound, but the enfeebling effects of the siege and of the anguish of possible defeat, affects those who live outside the hotel, as well as those within its increasingly divided boundaries. In other words, the dissociations so well established in *The Siege of Krishnapur* are not so clearly developed in *Troubles*. The novel comes to an end in a prophetic situation in which the hotel completely destroyed by fire. The hotel owner Edward Spenser dies, while the Major returns to England without his bride because she died in the meantime. This indicates that the English colonial history resembles a natural and instrumental process of gradual decline, while, on the other side, Ireland is reclaiming its rights.

The same process of gradual decline of empire is also characteristic of Farrell’s *The Siege of Krishnapur* and *The Singapore Grip*, the two more empire novels which deal with the fall of Britain from colonial power and the disintegrating of the British Empire. In *The Siege of Krishnapur* Farrell introduces a large appearance of characters and depicts a vivacious picture of English life in the Indian colony, of the Victorians’ daily routines, which were characterized by heat, boredom, class consciousness and the pursuit of stylish pastimes intended for the cooler climate. When Krishnapur is finally attacked, the Europeans withdraw inside the grounds of the Residency where immediate
conditions begin to deteriorate. Food and water supplies run out, diseases come up, people begin to go mad. The proud and pompous British people are reduced to eating insects, and they forget their class consciousness. Farrell’s description is both shocking and comical. Here Farrell restricts himself to the perspective of the imperialist, the Residency and its inhabitants. There is very little representation of the Indian sepoys who set down the siege to the Residency.

By concentrating on the English characters in the Residency, Farrell is able to make their behaviour appear ridiculous in its own right, rather than absurd in comparison to other cultures. His use of irony, understatement and a sense of absurd impart his condemnation of imperialism. Through his proper imagery, his keen eye for notable and revealing details, Farrell creates a historical novel with the lasting qualities which make it as applicable today as it was forty years ago when it was first published.

Compared with Farrell’s previous empire novels, The Hill Station might be termed as dim, but only in that the writing is less compact, less effortful in reading than is the case with the previous empire novels. The Hill Station is Farrell’s final, unfinished novel and has been published along with his diary of his 1971 travels around India and some essays by his friends and admirers: Margaret Drabble, John Spurling and Malcolm Dean. The novel paints an intriguing picture of the life of the British officer in the hill stations of India. It gives insights into colonial practices and the intentions behind them. Also thrown in is a bit of religion and the practice of proselytisation. The characters in the novel are mainly British; the British not exactly in India, but in a famous hill station, where one expects to find a mixture of the wealthy and fashionable English people. In the eyes of Dr. McNab, a major character in the novel, Simla is ‘a
fictitious England’. It is in such ‘fictitious’ settings that the private life directs to throw out bizarre or outlandish appearances.

In *The Singapore Grip*, the last novel in his Empire Trilogy, Farrell refreshes the traumatic days in Singapore, which, like his previous two novels, combines his cynical attitude, black humour and sense of absurdity with his unyielding honesty about colonialism – Britain’s excessive desire, its colonial mission, its superior attitudes and its inhuman treatment toward the native people they consider their ‘subjects’.

The well-known merchant company of Singapore of Blackett and Webb and its owners come resonantly alive in the novel as they must deal with constant strikes, labour unrest, challenges to the government from the communists and the access of the immigrants from other countries who raise the ‘threat’ of cultural assimilation. The outbreak of war in Europe has made the demand for Blackett and Webb’s rubber supplies a high priority for Britain’s Military vehicles, and the company held to capitalize by manipulating prices, withholding product, attempting to form a monopoly, and evading the law as they cut down good trees in order to keep prices high, claiming the replanting costs against profit. The owner’s personal fortune and personal prestige is more important to them than the future of the war effort, however patriotic they regard themselves. Associating with British officers, the leaders of society, and local governors, the company’s representatives are busy planning their elaborate jubilee celebration. Even the Japanese are attacking from the north Walter Blackett continues with the celebration preparations, while also trying to arrange the perfect commercial marriage for his daughter. In the end of the novel, Farrell aptly conveys the shocking reactions of his characters to the Japanese invasion. Blackett, like the Collector, wanders in the chaos trying to comprehend the destruction of his firm but is
helpless, as is Singapore, which the British surrendered in one of its most dishonourable defeats.

In fact, it is evident that Farrell, in his empire fiction puts up a critique of what was wrong about the British colonial initiative. Moreover, he brings the critique right up to the present time when he points out in *The Singapore Grip* that though the British Empire may be a shadow of its former self, the exploitation of the weak and poor people goes on, it is simply the agencies are different.

In the fifth chapter, the researcher tried to compare the selected novels of Edward Thompson and J. G. Farrell focusing on the colonial and postcolonial imperialistic perspectives implied in them. The researcher has attempted to compare these perspectives on the platform of social, political, economic, historical and cultural dimensions of imperialism and portrayals of major characters.

Edward Thompson, as a missionary, supports India’s demand of self-government and criticizes English system of educating Indians. He thinks that English education system in India was not proper as it was British-oriented. Thompson also criticizes the British sense of superiority and he never glamorized it in his novels. Similarly, J. G. Farrell, in his Empire fiction self-consciously endeavoured to show the decline of the British Empire by proper handling of a historical event for fictional experimentation. For this treatment he uses postmodern techniques to criticize imperialism and colonialism.

Thompson, with reference to his Indian fiction tries to disclose some basic facts affecting the British-India relationship. At the same time he loudly objects the British dominance saying that no any power has the right to subjugate any other country. In his Indian novels he describes the clash between two distinct communities having their own culture. British Empire brought its culture with it and made cultural domination as an
integral part of its colonial policy. They came to India with their cultural and academic hegemonies but were not familiar with the nuances of Indian culture and heritage. Edward Thompson, through his Indian fiction and particularly through his mouthpiece Robert Alden showed the interest in Indian culture and tradition and thus tried to correct the misunderstandings and eradicate the prejudices about Indians from English mind. Similarly, J. G. Farrell in his empire novels, set on three different periods of maximum unrest, delivers a damaging punch to British behaviour of superiority. Although India is a free nation and evolved as big democracy, she has not fully come out of the labyrinth of imperial or colonial hang-over.

The present research study has modestly endeavoured to compare and analyse the ironies of imperialistic encounters between East and West against the backdrop of the discordant historical, socio-economic and cultural context. It may help emend the unsound bilateral and cultural relationships between the two big-wig democratic countries diminishing the binaries of love-hate. In the postmodern condition this diverse comparative study can be more innovative revealing and rewarding, to bring into focus a new postmodernist and post-colonial image of India and help in revamping Indian-British relationships in the present situation. This comparative study may lead to future studies and ameliorate further research in the field of comparative colonial and post-colonial studies.

Finally, it can be concluded that a comparative imperialistic study can expose the politics of evil associated with the colonial and imperialist mindset of the rulers. Hence, the value of the novels analyzed and compared in this research work lies in its being a critique of imperialistic ironies and a chaotic turbulence of relationship reflected in the novels written during diverse period of time. It is more ironic thing to note that