The history of cultural, political and economic relationship between the Arabs and the English people is quite old. From cultural point of view the English people came to know about the Arabs from two very ancient sources i.e. works of Greek historians and the Holy Bible. Both the Greek historians and the Bible portrayed Arabs as a strange people who possessed some characteristics which were highly abominable in the West. The Bible especially depicted them as wily politicians and lurking mercenaries.

The two ancient sources: Greek works of history and the Holy Bible were confined to a small band of educated people. Thus the common unlettered people remained ignorant of Arab race for quite a long time. It were infact Crusades which besides being wars of conquest provided both the peoples with opportunities to know each other in a direct and better way. It is true that after the conquest of Jerusalem most Crusaders returned back to their respective countries. However, a good number of Crusaders decided to settle in the holy land. It were infact these Crusaders who in times of peace found golden opportunities to study the religion, culture and civilization of the Arabs who had become their conquered neighbours. These Crusaders not only gave up many of their unfounded
prejudices but also adopted the Arabs' living style, especially those aspects of Arab culture and civilization which they found superior to their own.

During the same period some scholars and travellers also visited the Middle East. Whereas the scholars tried to make an objective study of the Arabs, and in this process became highly impressed by some aspects of Islamic civilization such as the Arab sciences and their method of learning, the travellers produced superficial, even misleading material about the Arab world. Unfortunately, their works were more popular than the serious scholarly works. As a result, a highly disfigured and bad image of the Arabs was created in England.

In the sixteenth century the Arab Muslims became subservient to the Muslim Turks. The Turks gave permission to the English merchants to trade in their entire dominion. This paved the way not only for greater commercial activities but also for direct contacts between the two nations. Many English traders sailed to various Oriental port cities which were mainly inhabited by the Arabs. Unfortunately the English merchants proved to be highly unscrupulous and as a result produced materials which further distorted the already disfigured picture of Arabs. Meanwhile, travellers and scholars continued to visit the Arab world and portrayed the Arab race both favourably and unfavourably. However, most travellers presented the Arabs as a base and mean people.
It was only in the eighteenth century when the English travellers began to study the Arab society seriously. The religion of Islam was still subjected to harsh criticism but the Arabs as a race and nation were praised, even glorified. In fact, the eighteenth century saw the rise of nationalism in Europe which affected not only politicians but also scholars and travellers. Influenced by nationalist ideas, they approached and saw the Arabs as a freedom-loving nation who had been subjugated by the Turks. Both travellers and scholars adopted a somewhat favourable attitude towards the Arabs. They were portrayed as men with many errors and shortcomings but their merits were also generously appreciated and praised.

The nineteenth-century travellers, barring a few, were highly subjective, imperialist, and racist. Both imperialism and racism had emerged as the most dominant ideologies in the nineteenth century. It was commonly held that the Europeans, especially the English people, were racially and intellectually superior to Oriental races including the Arabs. Their racist outlook naturally led them to think of themselves as being ones who deserved to govern over the world's inferior races. With such logics, the Englishmen used to justify the expansion of their empire by hook or by crook.

Majority of the English travellers of the period under discussion were influenced by the dominant ideologies.
of their age and presented in their works more of their own prejudices and predilections than the reality of the Middle East. For instance it was their desire to see Oriental races including the Arabs as British subjects. As a result they found out men who could be presented as being desirous of English rule in their respective countries. Infact it was more a reflection of their own desire than the expression of Oriental will to be ruled by the British.

Along with racist and imperialist travellers there were men who visited the Arab world with a missionary zeal. The missionary-minded travellers saw in the expanding European empires an opportunity to convert Oriental races to Christianity. For them Christianity was not merely a religion but a superior civilization which deserved to be imposed upon non-Christian nations. Often such travellers advised their governments to work for the cause of Christianity.

The travellers of the first half of the twentieth century, with the exception of Philby, were as much subjective as the nineteenth-century travellers. They too portrayed the Arabs as ones who liked to be lorded over by the British.

The First World War proved to be a turning point in Anglo-Arab relations. Before the outbreak of the War the English position was to suppress the Arab desire for freedom and help the Turks to strengthen their control of Arabia. But
when the Turks decided to ally themselves with Germany the English started encouraging the nationalist Arabs to revolt with a view to destroying the Ottoman Empire.

The four travellers - Bell, Shakespear, Lawrence and Philby - discussed in this thesis were associated, in one or another way, with the British Government. Often they took stands which were different from the official policy. However, they remained loyal to their Government and served their country obediently. But even then they came to be known as friends of Arabs who struggled and worked hard for Arab independence.

Since most of the above mentioned travellers were actively engaged in the political drama of their age it is natural that their works are greatly concerned with the Anglo-Arab as well as international politics of the time. This aspect of their works naturally helps to understand the political history of the period under discussion.

Gertrude Bell travelled in various parts of Arabia mainly in the first decade of the running century. In the beginning she was merely a travel enthusiast and had no commitment to any political ideology. However, she seems to have been influenced by the nineteenth-century travellers who liked to see Oriental nations under British rule. As a result she found out many a Syrian who, according to her, were
desirous of British occupation of their country.

In her pré-war works Gertrude portrayed the Arabs as well as the Turks as men who had both virtues and vices. However, as a whole, and in keeping with the British policy, she greatly admired the Turks and opposed and criticised the nationalist Arabs who wanted to put an end to the Ottoman rule in the Arab world. But she, like many of her contemporaries, changed her outlook after the outbreak of the war.

Gertrude began her political career with the beginning of the First World War. She served her country in many capacities. She is often referred to as being a friend of Arabs who quarrelled even with her Government for their rights. But a close scrutiny of her political activities proves beyond doubt that she was first and foremost loyal to her country and worked assiduously to promote its imperial interests in the Arab world.

Captain Shakespear was Britain's political agent in Kuwait. His primary task was to watch over Shaikh Mubarak, the ruler of the tiny Shaikhdom. Besides, he was required by Simla-based British Intelligence to gather strategic information about tribal Shaikhs living in the Kuwaiti hinterland. To achieve his goals he made several journeys which enabled him to get into contact with tribal chiefs and to
know their alliances and rivalries on the one hand and to fill in blanks on the Arabian map on the other which was later used by the British army during the First World War.

Captain Shakespear is, however, better known for his friendship with Ibn Saud. It is generally held that Ibn Saud’s interests were greatly dear to him. But in reality he was an intelligent British spy and the purpose of his association with Ibn Saud was to promote the interests of his country. There is no denying the fact that he tried hard to change his country’s traditional pro-Turkish policies and support Ibn Saud’s claims in Central Arabia. On the surface it appears as he wanted to strengthen Ibn Saud’s position against his pro-Turkish rival, Ibn Rashid. But his real intention was some thing else. He had realized well that politically and militarily Ibn Saud was stronger than Ibn Rashid and the Turks in Central Arabia. Hence he tried to convince his Government that an alliance with the powerful Desert King was in Britain’s interests.

Shakespear’s views were not taken seriously by his superiors before the Turkish alliance with Germany. However, the outbreak of the war and Turkish entry in it on the side of Germany made the British Government realize the wisdom of his approach. He was sought by War and Foreign Offices for expert views and comments on various foreign and military
problems then facing his country.

Because of his friendship with Ibn Saud Shakespeare was sent to the later immediately after the war started in order to gain his support for Britain. He did accomplish his job when he successfully persuaded Ibn Saud not to sign a treaty of alliance with Turkey and take side with Great Britain. Moreover, it was on his suggestion that Ibn Saud refused to endorse and accept the Turkish call for Jihad or the Holy War against infidel Britain.

Thomas Edward Lawrence was also a British spy. However, his true identity was known to the world only in 1969 when some secret records of the British Government were made public. As a British spy it was natural for Lawrence to serve his country's interests at all cost. But he was not merely a spy working in the field. Infact he had his own views on various problems of his time which were different from official British position. Moreover, on several occasions he took stands which tended to be pro-Arab rather than pro-British. However, his real intention was not to promote the Arab cause but to serve the British Empire.

Lawrence's friendship with Faisal and his projection of himself as a great Arabophile were in fact a tool or a means to serve his country. His main intention was to eliminate the so-called Islamic threat by creating rift between the Arabs.
and the Turks. He rightly judged that a divided Islamic Ummah would never pose any serious problem for the supremacy of the West. It was with this view that he tried to divide Islam against itself by encouraging the Arabs to rise in rebellion against the Turks. He was not content with this alone. He further divided the Arabs and tried to keep them at loggerheads with each other so that they will never become a force to be reckoned with.

Lawrence was not only against Islam but against any power that tended to challenge the British supremacy in the Middle East. It was with this motivation that he criticised and opposed the Sykes-Picot Agreement which had bound his Government to put Syria under French rule. He supported Faisal's claims in Syria not because he wanted to secure a Kingdom for him but because he wanted to use it as a pretext to stop the French from taking Syria whom he considered to be the main rival of Britain in the Middle East. Clearly Lawrence was loyal to his country alone and his public posture of being an Arabophile was merely a farce.

St. John Philby is the last traveller discussed in the present work. He was an opinionated person and had his own peculiar views on every matter. As a school boy he was highly conservative and believed in the ideals of Christianity and the British Empire. But he became a socialist and liberal when he joined Cambridge University. However, his
socialism was merely intellectual and could not prevent him from becoming a pillar of the British imperialism. He joined Indian Civil Service in 1908.

Although a servant of the British Empire Philby had somewhat liberal views on many issues of his time. He tried to be sympathetic towards the native people while working in India, Mesopotamia and Jordan. He believed that Britain as an advanced nation should help the Arabs to run their independent governments under its nominal control. But he became fiercely anti-imperialist after his resignation from the government service in 1924 and demanded complete freedom for the Arabs. His struggle for the Arab cause brought him so near to the Arabs that in 1930 he embraced the faith of Islam.

Philby's early impressions of Islam were both negative and objective. That he was critical of some aspects of Islam and yet described many other aspects with a great deal of objectivity. After his conversion he seems to have deliberately adopted an attitude of indifference towards the religion of Islam. However, he kept on writing about the political problems of the Arabs.

Philby was a friend and great admirer of Ibn Saud and helped the later modernize his country on a tremendous
scale. On political front he always supported Ibn Saud. However, there came occasions when he disappointed the Desert King. For instance his views on and activities about the Palestine problem proved too embarrassing for Ibn Saud. Philby infact wanted to establish an exclusively Jewish State in Palestine with the help of Zionist Jews and Ibn Saud. His idea was to transfer the Arab population of Palestine to Saudi Arabia or somewhere else in the Arab world. The programme was to be implemented by Ibn Saud and the cost of its implementation was to be borne by the Jews. Ibn Saud publicly disassociated himself from the so-called Philby plan.

It can be reasonably concluded that the four travellers discussed in this thesis were associated in one or another capacity with the British Government and excepting Philby they all remained loyal to their country till their last breath. Philby was anti-imperialist but not anti-Britain. He, unlike his contemporaries not only came nearer to understand the Arabs but also identified himself with them. Bell, Shakespear and Lawrence, however, were committed imperial agents and always tried to promote the interests of their country, even at the cost of Arabs. Their championing of the Arab cause was merely a public posture or a tactics that they successfully employed to hide their real identity on the one hand and to serve the interests of the British Empire on the other. Infact in the heart of their hearts they were imperialist par excellence.