CHAPTER-VII

CONCLUSION
INTRODUCTION:

In order to arrive at a proper point of assessment of Mrs. B.M. Croker's presentation and picturing of India, hitherto a detailed study of her novels has been undertaken. The study makes us to agree with the point that Mrs. B.M. Croker is incontrovertibly a novelist who depicts colonial India specially dealing with the south and the life here. In the first chapter a detailed study of the Images of India through the ages beginning with pre-historic period to the days of the colonial rule and the white man's understanding of India in general is presented. The second chapter captures the political predicament during the days of British rule in India with special reference to the period when Mrs. B.M. Croker was writing her novels. The third chapter tries to document the economic Image of India as gets reflected in the novels of Mrs. Croker. The fourth chapter attempts to record the picture of socio-cultural aspects of British and Indian life during her days as they get mirrored in the novels of Mrs. B.M. Croker. The fifth chapter foregrounds the religio-philosophical Image of India as it gets captured and reflected in her works. In the same tenor the sixth chapter examines the various techniques and strategies that Mrs. B.M. Croker employs in communicating her ideas to the readers effectively.

In this chapter an attempt is made to assess and announce the achievement of Mrs. B.M. Croker as an Anglo-Indian novelist dealing with India, her attempts to capture the various images and impressions of India, which she gathered during her stay of fourteen years in this sub-continent. This chapter also, in the end, enumerates her contribution to the world of Anglo-Indian fiction along with some corners of slender understanding of this bewilderingly vast country with paralyzing practices. All this is done by way of comparison and contrast.

Along the preceding pages of the thesis the argument brought forward is that according Mrs. B.M. Croker India is a land of uncivilized people without any sense of history; a land of opportunities for a white man to exercise his will, words and weapons on the docile people and wild
beasts; also a land of earning enough wealth as it was a land of gold and
hidden treasure; it is also depicted as a land that posed threats and
troubles in the form of financial worries and unaccountable hurry
separating them from their loving ones; so a land of exile; a land of
attractive brunettes, betraying the white man. India is a land of castes and
crossbreed race of usuring Eurasians who craved equality with the whites;
India is a land consisting of incurably custom bound population; it is India
full of many cultures and behaviour patterns and dress codes; it is a land
of various foods and food habits along with its own peculiar life styles;
India is a land of purdah and primitive practices like Sati; India is land of
innumerable diseases, poisonous creatures, tigers, typhoons and
unwarranted floods; India is a land of dirt and squalor, India is a land of
sweltering heat and suffocating dust, India is land of multiple
philosophies, doctrines and dictions; it is a land of superstitions and
supernatural elements; India is a land of mysteries, miracles and occult
practices; is India is a land of famines and fiery plains; it is a land of
half-naked fakirs fortune tellers; it is land of countless corns and
colourful crops; above all it is a land of exotic beauty and arresting
bounty.

In spite of such bewildering diversity there is unity. The
distinguishing mark of India’s ageless culture is its openness and all-
inclusive nature. As has been discussed in the first chapter the intrinsic
values of Indian culture are Shradha (faith) Satya (truth fullness) and
Dharma (righteousness) that ultimately lead the man towards Soundarya
(beauty) and ultimate union with Shiva (All embracing Goodness). This
type of impregnable walls of aeons-old culture have been fortified from
time to time with the mortar of teachings of the great sages like Goutama
and Yajnawalkya; Mahaveera and Buddha; Shankara and Madhva; Basava
and a host of Sharanas; Dasas, and innumerable reformers like
Ramakrishna, Dayananda Saraswati, Vivekananda, Aurobindo and others.
With the relentless efforts of such a shining line of reformers Indian
culture, in spite of various influences of alien elements, has remained like
a lighthouse spreading streaks of light of knowledge of spiritualism to the
world, without undergoing a sea change. It is endowed with a rare power of assimilating and acclimatizing the alien elements into its womb and bringing something new and wonderful.

7.1 MRS. B.M. CROKER’S ACHIEVEMENT AS A NOVELIST

No writer can be assessed in isolation. In order to assess or evaluate an individual writer it becomes imperative to install that writer in the line of the other writers who form a tradition of writers of a particular genre. In this light let us now examine the merits and achievements of Mrs. B.M. Croker by placing her beside some of the writers, predecessors as well as followers as a part of that tradition. The writers with whom we can place her are Meadows Taylor, Rudyard Kipling, Mrs. Flora Annie Steel, Mrs. Alice Perrin, and Mrs. F. E. Penny etc.

Meadows Taylor, though tried to provide a corrective to the wrong notion that the West had borne of the East, tried to depict India in terms of realism and held the view that India is not satisfactorily civilized and still struggled with primitive, crude practices. This fact becomes clear to us if we read his works like Confessions of a Thug (1839), Tippoo Sultan (1840) and Tara (1863) etc. We can discern his image of India, which is nearer to the view or image of India that we witness in the novels of Mrs. B.M. Croker.

Like Mr. Rudyard Kipling, who took pride in speaking or glorifying the achievements of British Raj Mrs. B.M. Croker also (seems to take sides with him) delights more in depicting the achievements of the Company Sirkar in India. This is evident in her works again and again.

Mrs. Flora Annie Steel is another prominent woman writer who was contemporary of Mrs. B.M. Croker. She was greatly influenced by Rudyard Kipling. Like Mrs. Croker’s works her works too, though mainly deal with Anglo-Indian life they are not without reference to native life or Indian life. In that they picture more of Punjab and the northern parts of India, unlike Mrs. Croker’s works which though present the life of almost
many provinces in general and the Madras Province or the south in particular. She writes about the life in the places of the south like Bangalore, Madras, Ooty, Coonor, and Secunderbad etc. Like Steel Mrs. Croker also appreciates the obsequiousness, faithfulness of Indian servants.

Another important woman writer whom Mrs. B.M. Croker can be compared with is Mrs. Alice Perrin in one important aspect of thematic concern viz: documentation of occult and mysterious elements. Like Mrs. B.M. Croker, who documents the impact of the occult practices of the Indians such as in *The Cat's-Paw* (1902) (poisoning of Mr. Maxwell Thorold), Mrs. Perrin shows “her interest in the occult and the mysterious. She records its influence on the life of her country-men in the East”¹

Yet another prominent practitioner of fiction who strikes comparative chord with Mrs. Croker as far as locale is concerned, is Mrs. F.E. Penny. For, like Mrs. Penny Croker too wrote mainly of the south. Yet there are some threads of contrasts between the two. For instance if some of the novels of Mrs. Penny describe the Anglo-Indian life in Ceylon, in some of the novels of Mrs. Croker, we see the life in Burma getting depicted. The books of Penny allow the reader the glimpse of only South India while the novels of Mrs. Croker “take the reader practically all over India”²

As far as treatment of Imperialism is concerned she stands poles apart with George Orwell. She supports Imperialism and opines that it is better for Indians while Orwell denounces it with a tinge of satire- and cynicism as in *Shooting an Elephant*.

These comparative and contrastive points go to show the unique place that Mrs. B.M. Croker occupies among the Anglo-Indian novelists. She emerges successful in documenting colonial India and South Indian life of the period with commendable candidness. Although articulating and interpreting the contemporary ideas in their works is the inevitable job of the fictionists, the Anglo-Indian novelists were expected to reflect their

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ambience, i.e., India, the place, people, their food practices etc., in doing so part of their attention was to be fixed on the reading public at home. The exigency automatically “compelled them to seek to steer a middle course between the Scylla of didactic dullness and the Charybdis of unintelligibility.”

Constrained by such conventions of the contemporary days, though she does not propound any theory of fiction her sole object in writing was to offer delight to her readers rather than instructing them. Her major concern was to present every day social scenes. Her brilliant success was beyond all doubts due to her unambitious nature as is evident from her novels. Answering the question of audience “were there books for female readers?”, at a seminar entitled “Political Fiction: Home Rule Novels”, held on October 3, 2003. Dr. Eileen Reilly Associate Director of Glucksman Ireland House, New York University considered her as one of the most prominent writer for female readers and said, “The popular writer B.M. Croker typically sold 25000 volumes in the first printing. Most of the books for female audience were romances...”

This popularity of Mrs. B.M. Croker is due to her multifaceted personality and multiplicity of themes. She was a social realist, humanist, romancer of India, a feminist etc. As far as her use of various subjects such as child marriage, sati, superstitions sacrifices of children and women, depiction of Hindu life and practices, fanatic and fundamental attitude of Mohammadans and the dauntless criticism that she hurls upon these subjects is certainly a forte of the author that waits to be registered as her achievement as a novelist. Her novels offer the unforgettable picture of sylvan forests of the western ghats as also with the immaculate beauty of the hills of the Eastern parts; endlessly stretching fiery plains; rivers, flowing through the dense forests and mountain chains; cool moonlight nights and star spangled sky: inexplicable and awe striking sunsets; all wetting rains and drowning floods etc. Bhupal Singh’s remark, she “gives us some of the most beautiful and poetical descriptions of the Indian dawn and midday and Indian life and scenery” under scores this view. Indeed, in spite of such spots of beauty ambiguity is very much present in her novels. The images of India that we gather from her works oscillate like pendulum of clock from belief to disbelief, illusion to reality and delusion to discovery. This
is perhaps because of the uncapturable and absolutely ungraspable vastness of India coupled to the constraints of cultural bias and imperial ideas that lead to such a kind of hiatus. This can be aptly seconded by a quotation from Bhullar, “When a novelist has to grasp and present the reality of so vast, varied and ancient a land as India, ambiguity is likely to become an inevitable characteristic of the whole picture”. Thus breaking new grounds in many things she emerges as a mistress of macabre, mechanics and many untrodden terrains especially in the treatment of little cultures and rural agrarian life of India that add the smell of soil to her writing- and assign her a unique position in the world of Anglo-Indian fiction.

Yet Mr. E.F. Oaten’s observations on the limitations of Mrs. B.M. Croker’s novels “the total exclusion of all religious, political, or psychological problems, the monotonous persistence with which the story remains in one social strata, and the entire suppression of the authoress own personality, tend to rob her stories of interest. Other limitations of Mrs. Croker in these novels seem to be certain disregard of the laws of dramatic effect which leads her to introduce irrelevant events; and an occasional improbability of incident which is the stock characteristic of far weaker writers” needs to be examined thoroughly to be applied grossly to all her novels after considering the findings of the study. For they show her to emerge as an incontrovertibly “one of the select few” Anglo-Indian novelists who has left a silvery line behind her that shines from far.

7.2 MRS. B.M. CROKER’S CONTRIBUTION TO ANGLO-INDIAN FICTION.

The Crown of contributions of Mrs. B.M. Croker to the world of Anglo-Indian fiction is studded with many and important agates. Let us examine them one by one.

Her prominent contribution to the field of Anglo-Indian fiction is that she chose to write about south India with special consideration for it.
Her works like *The Cat's-Paw* (1902), *Her Own People* (1905) *The Company's Servant* (1907), *In Old Madras* (1913), *Quicksands* (1915) *Given in Marriage* (1916) and some stories have all their plots laid mainly in South India. She also chose to depict the life in the Andaman and Nicobar islands, as also of Burma, which was part of Indian colony then. Famous critics like Bhupal Singh, A.J. Greenberger, Benita Parry, M.K. Naik etc., hold the view that there are scanty references to South India in the works of Anglo-Indian writers. But Mrs. B.M. Croker emerges as an exceptionally dazzling name to deal with and depict South India much before Mrs. F.E. Penny who too wrote mainly about the south.

Her second important contribution is her treatment of religious theme. In dealing with it she alludes to the dominant doctrines like theosophy, theory of Karma and rebirth and the doctrine of Animism propounded by the famous anthropologist E.B. Taylor. She also at the same time alludes to many superstitions, occult practices of witchcraft as well as other forbidden arts such as poison dealing, poison cleansing, peeping into the ink pool etc.

Another contribution to Anglo-Indian fiction by Mrs. B.M. Croker is her depiction of Eurasian life in stark reality, their love for money, craving for status, cheating nature with ineffable love for powdery show of painted faces, peals, pachouli and peppermints. In spite of her spitting anger for such intolerable qualities she advocates sympathy for the apathetic Eurasians at times.

Her treatment of little cultures- tribal life, with their peculiar practices, depiction of Indian rural agricultural life of farmers, the untold miseries and exploitation hurled upon them by the callous moneylenders who mis-utilized the Indian farmers' illiteracy and custom bound nature. This sort of life gets enacted in the works like *Her Own People* (1905) and some stories etc., as it constitutes her contribution to Anglo-Indian Literature.
One more aspect of her contribution to the field which waits to be appreciated fully, is her unabated interest in knowing and attempting to interpret the practices and the rituals of the oriental religions other than Christianity in spite of her being fed upon Christian philosophy and ideologies.

Her observation and documentation of the Brahminical life and dress forms another branch of her contribution to the realm of Anglo-Indian fiction. In the works like The Cat’s-Paw (1902), wherein we see Rani Sundaram and Rani Gindia “she wore her saree drawn up between her shrunken legs, after the manner of high-caste Brahmin women of the south...” and also the kind of mystery that pervaded the Brahmin residence in the story “Old Contonment” (1905) wherein she documents “The great studded gates were shut fast; Narayana, the Zamindar, had returned from his devotions, and retired within his borders. There is nothing in this world so impenetrable as a Brahmin’s household!”.

While glorifying the traumatic experience swallowed by the whites during the days of Indian War of Independence, which the white men called the Mutiny, she alludes to it sometimes directly and some times implicitly in many places in her fiction. Along with such documents she offers a modern reader to get the knowledge of political system of Colonial India. Her political image also throws effulgence enough on the fact that there were innumerable dark areas even in British administration and how, many times the Indians, even the ladies of the Royal families cheated the British government and officials. The story “Missing Link” presents such a case, wherein Begum Sona-bee cheated the government and went on claiming the additional pension in some one’s name along with her own.

One more important contribution that she made to the field of Anglo-Indian fiction that claims our attention without failure is her attempt at blowing the clarion of feminism even much before the trend got fervently shaking the minds of the readers. Her female characters- heroines or other wise breathe the spirit of freedom and economic
emancipations. In doing this she documents the predicament of Indian women also to juxtapose it with that of their European counter parts.

Yet another aspect of her contribution to the field of Anglo-Indian fiction is the depiction of Anglo-Indian social life in its true colours of dinners, dances, and games; risks and recreations; tours and travels; adventures and amatory affairs; financial muddles and failed picnics; occasions of confusions and quarrels among men, women, friends and loving couples. In depicting this she remains fathomlessly faithful to her predecessors who were headed by Rudyard Kipling.

As a novelist, who stayed in India for fourteen years she had made a memorable contribution to the mansion of Anglo-Indian fiction and that is image of India as a home another or additional home at least for some Anglo-Indian officers who after spending a considerable period of life out here not only desired to stay back here but decided and settled. There is in fact a set of such characters in the Crokerian world of fiction. Instances may be drawn from the books like *Proper Pride* (1885), *In Old Madras* (1913) etc.

In spite of her sympathetic attempts to understand and unfold India, Indians and Indianness to the fellow people at home, her limited view betrays her many times and the "areas of white darkness" in her understanding get fore grounded. She attaches more importance to the imperial ideas, British government and white man. At such moments she takes ignorant and even contemptuous critical stance at Eurasians, Indians and their practices etc., in spite of their positive profiles. She merely condemns them ignorantly as idolaters, geolators, superstitious, heathen, snake charmers, primitive, incorrigible, uncivilized etc. Is it not equally true of E.M. forester, Paul Scott etc., who could not see India in her wholeness in spite of their laudable attempts to understand her?

Orientalism was a way through which east was interpreted to the west, by the Western Writers. In the fervour of exhibition of their knowledge of the Orient they tried to translate many Indian words, usages,
and even the names sometimes along with their original forms they were used in the body of a text. Such translations more often than not were undertaken regardless of cultural implications of the words. Wherever the cultural aspect was ignored in translation it led to wrong interpretations and misrepresentations. At such moments the camouflage of Eastern knowledge of the Western Writers fell of and revealed their ignorance of the translation. There are many such areas of ignorance in the use of names of persons and places and also references to and the representations of Indian Gods in the novels of Mrs. B. M. Croker, as are in many Anglo-Indian texts. She stumbles at innumerable places as far as the use of names of persons and places is concerned. Her transliteration at times becomes bad beyond tolerance. For instance in, *Babes in the Wood* (1910), she makes one of her characters speak of Shiraj-ud-Dowlah' as 'Suraj-oo-dowlah' No Muslim family would ever name their child like that for Suraj is a name representative of the Hindus as it means the Sun or Sun God. Some times her white characters address the Muslim characters, for instance Abdul Rehman usually their servant, as 'Abdul Rayman; which is beyond imagination again, for Rayman sounds more Christian than Mohammadan. How can a name like that suit a Mohammadan? Other examples in the line pertaining to Hindu names also are to be found at several places and pages in her works. For example we come across the name like 'Dora Sawny' for 'Dore Swamy.' 'Dore Sawny' means a mistress or queen. The reference in the context is to a dirzee and apothecary and pushes the reader into puzzle. In the same way in, *The Cat's-Paw* (1902), we come across the name of a character, as 'Durigodana' brother of Rani Sundram. It must be, it seems, actually 'Dore Gowdana', for in Drawidian languages, Gowda (originally Gawunda) means 'important person or a ruler or head of a province'. The word 'Anna' which means 'brother' gets added to the word 'Gowda' to form 'Gowdanna'. The South Indian village community is full of such words. But being a writer belonging to, to use Edward Saidain terminology, the other socio-cultural group it becomes a tough task to understand such cultural and linguistic nuances for Mrs. B.M. Croker. Equal degree of irresponsibility is visible in the same way in connection with Indian place
names. ‘Naini Tal’ (which has puranic connection with goddess Nayana) becomes ‘Nani Tal’\(^{11}\) (Tank of grandmother), ‘Ramgud’ (Fort of Rama) becomes ‘Ramghur’\(^{12}\) (Home of Rama), ‘Seetapur’ (town of Seeta) some times becomes ‘Cheetapore’\(^{13}\) (town of Cheetahs) though used in the former sense and spelling occasionally in the novel Angel (1901), ‘Mahabaleshwar’ (God of Great Strength) becomes ‘Marbleishwar’\(^{14}\) hard to be attached with any sense in The Cat’s-Paw (1902), ‘Golconda’ a historical place gets distorted beyond comprehension as ‘Gondalconda’,\(^{15}\) ‘Kanjeverram’ becomes ‘Panjeverram’\(^{16}\) in the novel In Old Madras (1913), ‘Nandi Durga’ (Fort of Nandi- Durga= impregnable place) becomes ‘Nandy Droog’\(^{17}\) in what sense can one interpret the word ‘Droog’? In the novel Quicksands (1915), ‘Hulikal’\(^{18}\) (Rock of Tiger) becomes ‘Holikul’ (sacred generation). ‘Tirupati’ (Abode of Holi Master) if at all the reference is to the place of pilgrimage of the Hindus, becomes ‘Tirraputty’\(^{19}\) which is again hard to be associated with any meaning in that novel Given in Marriage (1916)

Prof. M.K. Naik’s observation, “There seems to be virtually no end to the average Anglo-Indian novelist’s ignorance of Hinduism in its several aspects... and their knowledge about Hindu gods in general and precise nature and status of each is equally shaky”\(^{20}\) becomes aptly applicable to Mrs. Croker’s fiction too at some places. For instance we witness one of the characters in The Cat’s-Paw (1902) observing,

... at last we came upon an ancient Hindoo temple close to the base, or rather in a dip between the hills. It was shaded by an immense banyan and exhibited in the center of the inner court a hideous stone figure on a peculiarly shaped horse or it might be a cow....

“This is a temple to Kali; yonder is the sacrificial stone- see how worn it is. ...\(^{21}\)

Obviously there is hardly any temple of Kali in India where her idol is carved as riding the horse or cow, though goddess Sheetala is mentioned in many places as riding donkey. But the temple dedicated to her can be found nowhere in India except among the Himalayas.
We also witness Mrs. B.M. Croker often indulging in making her British characters address the other characters in unbelievably strange way, especially the Indian characters belonging to lower strata of life. Mr. Thorold’s addressing “Cheer up, Ayah-jee” the ayah with suffix ‘jee’ here appears rather incongruous and improbable, for ‘jee’ is indicative of respect, usually used with the proper nouns or professional names or with venerable persons. Examples can be found in its use with the words like Guruji, Panditji etc., but no Indian master would ever address his maidservant or messenger as ‘ayahjee’ ‘javanje’ or ‘chapparssiji’ etc.

Thus in spite of her sympathetic and unpresumptive attempt, she is constrained in offering all-inclusive image of India. But what becomes importantly assessable and accountable is her laudable attempt. Does all that the goldmine workers dig consist of gold? Do not they upturn the soil, stones and other unwanted things from the core of the earth. That India remained a closed book for the Europeans in spite of their stay and rule is articulated by a character in, *Her Own People* (1905), when he says: “I am truly sorry my information appears so meager, but the truth is that India- a real India- is to the European a closed book.” ... “That we Europeans are like drops of on a great ocean of water, and will never penetrate or mix!” This view is quite comparable to the view expressed by Dr. Collins, in *Babes in the Wood* (1910), who says; I’ve been in India, off and on, for twenty-five years. I keep my eyes and ears open. I speak Urdu, and several other tongues of sorts: and though I I’ve been persevering and pushing, I give you my word, she and I have scarcely a bowing acquaintance yet.”

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13. Ibid., p.259.
19. Ibid., p.34.
22. Ibid., p.122.

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