PREFACE

There seems to be three great epochs in American history, which are peculiarly well fitted for historical romance:--the times just succeeding the first settlement-the era of the Indian wars, which lie scattered along a considerable period-and the revolution. Each of these events, all pregnant with interest in themselves, furnishes the fictitious historian with every variety of character and incident, which the dullest imagination could desire or the most inventive deserve. The literature of America is the youngest of national literatures. Although the beginnings were in the early part of the seventeenth century, it is scarcely more than two generations ago that American literature entered upon a vigorous development. Though there are two great names in the eighteenth century-those of Franklin and Edwards-the polite literature really begins with Irving, Bryant and Cooper, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

During the nineteenth century, American literature had a remarkable development. In various departments – history, criticism, and poetry. It fairly vied with that of the mother country. American literature is an offshoot of English literature, and shares the life of the parent stock. It uses the same language and its earliest writers were colonists who had received their education in England. The culture of this country is distinctively English in origin and character. The differences are but modifications growing out of the new environment. They own their laws and their religion chiefly to England; and the political independence achieved through the Revolution did not withdraw them from the humanizing influence of English letters.

James Fenimore Cooper the American novelist, essayist, historian, travel writer and satirist, who created a uniquely American myth of the pioneer with his historical romances, is considered the first major American novelist best known for his tales of frontier adventures. Cooper, influenced me because he has a greater hand in shaping the popular image of Native Americans. He firmly believes that society or culture in which we grow up is a part of us and what we do and
the attitudes we take will confirm the way society is or make changes in it. He places an idea of commitment and responsibility at heart of his novels. The present thesis entitled, “James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales*: Depiction of an open warfare between the Indians and the Whites” is a close study of Cooper’s characters that he firmly planted within a structure which reflects in turn to the pressure of society at large.

Cooper had a mellowed attitude towards the American Indians and so he very successfully exposed the romanticized image of the over resourceful frontiers men (the Indians) who had an open warfare against the tyranny of the whites. The stoic, wise and the noble red men (the Indians) beckoned James and he was fascinated by the art of wilderness survival of the Indians. The thesis is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter I is entitled **Introduction** is divided into two segments **History of American Novel** and **James Fenimore Cooper as the first great novelist of America**. The first part of the chapter deals with the humble beginning of American literature. It also narrates the development of American literature and the factors that influenced it. The second part deals with Cooper’s life and his major contribution towards American literature, mainly the five tales named *The Leatherstocking Tales*. It certainly exhibit a variety of original character and novel incident, which entitle their author to the praise of great power of invention. Nathaniel Bumppo, or Hawkeye, is a bold and original conception, which I think, upon the whole, the best piece of invention Cooper has ever produced. The series has a power of warming the imagination and is exciting, a glowing interest in fictitious personages and visionary scenes.

Chapter II is **First novel of Leatherstocking Tales, The Pioneers** illustrates **Social degradation of the Indians**. Cooper describes the American Indians doomed to fade away whenever he came into contact with European settlers. They seemed unable to adapt successfully to the newly dominant European economic and social systems. It further narrates social
degradation and their numbers seemed to diminish rapidly. Cooper shared the view that co-inhabitation of Indians and settlers was in the long run impossible.

Chapter III Second novel of *Leatherstocking Tales, The Last of the Mohicans*: Indians as victims of the abuses of civilization. It deals with the warfare between the Indians and the whites in the lake George country. The Indians finally continue to advance in civilization to maturity. Four different aspects of the novel are examined, the picture of Indian character, doctrine of race, the discussion of Indian land rights and the elegiac mood it develops in connection with the Indians.

Chapter IV Fourth novel of *Leatherstocking Tales, The Prairie*: Crusade of the Indians against diminution presents a later stage of American development. This chapter also deals with Indian-white relations and further deals with different and conflicting views of a frontier land. The question of land use and ownership plays an important part in this chapter, with five distinctive points of view represented by various Indians. The Sioux Indians wish to keep the land to themselves and to drive out any encroaching whites. The Pawnee Indians see the necessity of accommodating themselves to the westward expansion of American civilization. The Trapper, Natty Bumppo, wishes to leave the land undisturbed as a refuge from the uncongenial ways of the settlements. Ishmael Bush, the squatter, wants to occupy good tracts of land with no concern for legal title. And Captain Middleton represents the authority of the United States over the newly acquired Louisiana Territory. A rather implausible plot brings these five viewpoints into contact with each other. The Indians struggle for existence and try their best for their survival.

Chapter V Fourth novel of *Leatherstocking Tales, The Pathfinder*: The border warfare and the Indians, much of the action takes place on the water instead of the land. It emphasizes white rather than Indian treachery. It employs the French and Indian Wars to frame two equally
futile possibilities for national development. It deals with the growing civilization and culture of the eastern states which were being rapidly transformed from their rude beginnings. It sets forth a doctrine of race that stresses the exclusive nature of Indian and white. The Indians continue the border warfare for the prevention of their life.

Chapter VI Fifth novel of *Leatherstocking Tales, The Deerslayer: Adventures of the Indians with hostile Hurons* deals with the earliest historical period, the moral concern centres around search for a true wilderness. The disputed claim for the territory subordinates the question of ownership to that of possession. There is a tolerable adherence to the accomplishment of a definite object.

Chapter VII is Conclusion and it throws light on the warfare between the Indians and the whites. It also includes my analytical study of Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales* as an essential factor for research work. This thesis is a humble attempt to express Cooper’s priceless contribution. This valuable treasure will nurture our society so that our children inherit the humanistic message and imbibe the same in their life. As far as the documentation is concerned the thesis follows the parameters of the seventh-edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.*