Preface

In this thesis an attempt has been made to reconstruct the political and cultural history of the Deccan during the nineteenth century as seen and experienced by Colonel Meadows Taylor and also as reflected in his monumental works which deal with themes such as literature, history, art and archaeology. His literary works particularly the novel deal with the historical personages, places and other common people whom Taylor met and knew intimately. While scores of British generals, administrators and statesmen visited India and also lived here during the nineteenth century, Taylor emerges as a unique personality who recorded his intimate associations with people and the places in the Nizam's territories where he worked in different capacities.

Methodology: While the main thrust is laid on Taylor's works, care has been taken to consult contemporary works and the secondary sources based on the original works of later period. These include foreign political consultation, letters of correspondence, despatches and Hyderabad Residency records.

The thesis consists of seven chapters and the details of which are as follows:
Chapter I: Geography and History of the Deccan - The Nizam, Marathas and British (1720-1840).

The chapter is divided into two parts. Part A deals with the geography and history of the Deccan, especially the territories ruled by the former Nizam of Hyderabad. An emphasis has been laid here as to how the geographical determinants have conditioned the political events and the life styles of the people. The importance of river systems and the mountain regions has been highlighted which also played their own role in the history of the Deccan. The background history of the Deccan, particularly of Pre-Islamic period and the Islamic period of the Deccan before the rise of the Nizam and the Marathas has been briefly reiterated here which forms the back drop for the theme chosen here. The candidate is fully aware of the glorious historical happenings and the rich religious and social institutions which were witnessed in this part of the Deccan.

Part B deals with the history of the eighteenth century Deccan. In this part, the candidate is primarily concerned to focus on the Maratha Nizam relations and their changing political fortunes. In the beginning of the nineteenth century the Peshwa rule was finally wiped out by the Britishers. Whereas the Nizam of Hyderabad allied himself with the British Government. Otherwise, it is just possible that the Nizam
also would have followed suit along with the Sultans of Mysore and the Peshwas of the Maratha territories.

Taylor's work do not help us to have a correct appraisal of these political happenings. Hence recourse has been taken to gather evidences from other sources so as to give a fairly clear picture about the political conditions.

Chapter II: A brief biographical sketch of Meadows Taylor.

This chapter deals with the career of Meadows Taylor. It is a tale of hard work and tenacity of purpose of a rare human genius who rose from the position of a runaway lad to that of an efficient administrator, writer of great repute and one who perceived everything with a keen and penetrating mind's eye. It also deals with his efforts to prepare himself to understand the cultural ethos of the people, the geography and geology of the Deccan where he served. His qualities of a diplomat specially when he was appointed as political officer in the principality of Sorapur.

Chapter III: Meadows Taylor as a Historian and an Archaeologist.

This chapter deals with his contribution to the Indian historical writing and his exercises as an archaeological digger. It is true that Taylor was not a historian
or for that matter an archaeologist by training. In fact he was also not a literary figure. But as a gifted person, he acquired excellence in several disciplines. This chapter deals with all these matters.

**Chapter IV: Sorapur and its political role in the Deccan.**

In this chapter an attempt has been made to deal with the political role played by Sorapur, a small principality in the present day Gulbarga district. Sorapur was ruled by the Beydur chiefs who constituted a handful of unruly, warlike group of people. It was entrusted to the care of the Nizam of Hyderabad, with an overall supervision of the British resident stationed at Hyderabad to ensure the proper implementation and compliance of the provision made out in the Act of 1800. Meadows Taylor gives an interesting account about the general characteristics of the Beydurs. He also enumerates the circumstances in which he was required to function there as a political officer. His diplomatic role during his tenure has been emphasised here. By and large this chapter deals with various aspects of Sorapur and its people.

**Chapter V: The Morphology of the Thugs activities in the Deccan.**

It deals with an important social and legal problem of the nineteenth century. Taylor has chosen this theme for his novel, "The Confession of a Thug". The information provided by Taylor has been further
supplemented by the works of Colonel Sleeman and others. Also a good deal of material from the Revenue and Police records and foreign political consultation from National Archives, New Delhi have provided new information. Besides dealing with the religious beliefs and customs among the Thugs, this chapter also emphasises on the geographical distribution of the thuggee operations, the relative prosperity of the cities around which the Thug activities were carried out and also the centre of Thuggee operations. Interestingly the Thugs crossed and crisscrossed the entire Deccan including the Hyderabad city. Care also has been taken to point out the varieties of booties that the Thugs extricated from their victims.

Chapter VI:

This chapter deals with the life and society as prevailed in the Deccan during the nineteenth century. Here much of the data is collected from the writings of Meadows Taylor particularly his works like Tara, the Mahratta tale, the Story of Seeta, and Ralph Darnell. His writings mostly of historical nature provide a broad spectrum of the contemporary social and cultural dynamics. His thorough exposure to the Deccan way of life, his recordings have special credibility. He deals with the customs, manners, religious beliefs, festivals and marriage ceremonies.
This chapter also deals with the social issue of the mixed marriage specially Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Christian and Muslim-Christian marriages. Although they appear idealistic during the 19th century, they gained in popularity in the later period. Taylor seems to have advocated the bonds of humanity through his three culture philosophy. In this chapter an attempt has also been made to supplement Taylor's recorded impressions on the social milieu by the contemporary documents and other literary works.

Chapter VII: Summation.

This chapter is a total recall of the observations and conclusions made in the previous chapters. It also highlights the charisma of Taylor and the fond memories of the people in whose midst he lived who have perpetuated his memory by naming a street, a road, a town and a building after him.