

## INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I have tried to make an in-depth study of Indian women characters appearing in Meadows Taylor's four major novels, Tara, Ralph Darnell, Seeta and The Noble Queen. The dissertation consists of six chapters designed as below:

Chapter one, 'Preliminary Perspectives' deals with the writer's literary career as one of the aspects. In this, the attitude of the British towards India and how it influences the novelist is discussed. The second aspect which it deals with is the literary tradition to which the writer belongs i.e., the Anglo-Indian Fiction. It also presents briefly the literary genre i.e., the Historical Novels to which the novels under study belong. An attempt at mapping Taylor's fictional world is made. There is a brief discussion about how Taylor handles his language, because his theme is mixed marriage in three out of the four novels selected for study.

Chapter two onwards, except the last one, which is a conclusion, the works of Taylor which are chosen for study are taken up for discussion in the light of British attitudes- the first three are the historical trilogies, they are discussed chronologically assigning a chapter for each for the detailed study of the novel, focussing critical attention on the women characters, who contribute to the

development of the novel in a major way. Therefore, chapter two deals with Tara in which Tara, a Brahmin widow falls in love with her Muslim saviour Fazil, accepting his faith, marries him. Her suffering is the core of the novel and other female characters, Anandi Bye (Tara's mother), Radha (Tara's step-mother), Lurlee (Fazil's step-mother), Zyna (Fazil's sister) are drawn very realistically. They all play a significant role in the action of the novel. The third chapter deals with Ralph Darnell in which the battle of Plassey is in the background when an Englishman marries the wife of Siraj-ud-Dowlah after he is sentenced to death. The Begum, Noor-ul-Nissa who stayed in an underground cell when the Nawab was in power, comes out and marries her benefactor, the English man, Ralph Darnell. Therefore, her role is not so important as a protagonist. However, she is the cause for Ralph's existence in India. She is like his shadow-silent but inseparable emotionally. Another very lively character is of an Afghan born slave who is an inevitable part of the Nawab's harem and an eye witness of all that happens in and around the palace. Here, one notices that Taylor can probe the zanana too. The fourth chapter is about Seeta. In this novel the character of Seeta is portrayed more or less in the 'roundness' in her predicament of widowhood and subsequently the remarriage of a Hindu widow, who falls in love with an English Deputy Commissioner who conducts the trial of her husband's murderer and punishes the culprit. Presenting the Mutiny in the background, Taylor depicts the Indo-British

socio-political relations with the help of the minor characters. Aunt Ella (Seeta's aunt), a widow herself, supports Seeta's remarriage. Two other characters, one from a Hindu family and the other from a Muslim family, Bheemee and Mama Jumeela respectively, represent the most favourite class in Anglo-Indian fiction, the servants. The character of Chand Bibi the only Indian woman character from the novel, The Noble Queen, is discussed briefly in chapter number five because in all the other three novels, the Hindu-Muslim relationship is discussed while evoking the life and times of different kingdoms and rulers. And the women characters have a significant role to play either in supporting the union of the two sects or in opposing it. But in this novel, only Chand Bibi belongs to India and all other around her are Portuguese characters. The concluding chapter, while summing up the attitudes of Meadows Taylor towards India as reflected in his novels, tries to highlight some of his attitudes towards women, arising through mixed marriage, social customs and taboos. It discusses how Taylor's novels laid the foundation of a tradition out of which emerged later writers like Kipling, Steel and Savi. At every stage of the analysis of Taylor's novels it is to be kept in mind that his works may have suffered from the limitations (like most early writers of Anglo-Indian Fiction). But his works have remained as chroniclers of shifting attitudes born out of the changes in the content of British imperialism.

## CHAPTER I

### PRELIMINARY PERSPECTIVES

Before I take up the study of Indian women characters in Meadows Taylor's novels, it is worthwhile, I think, to have some preliminary perspectives in respect of the writer, the socio-literary tradition to which these novels belong (i.e. the Anglo-Indian Fiction) and its literary genre (i.e. the historical novel) and also map the writer's fictional world. All these perspectives tend to be tentative due to the fact that they are based on earlier researches/studies of Taylor.

#### I

#### Meadows Taylor

Philip Meadows Taylor (1808-1876), also known as Captain Meadows Taylor, was born in Liverpool England in the year 1808, and belonged to the non-conformist stock. He came to India at the young age of fifteen and joined the Nizam's Regiment, where he rose to the rank of Captain Commandant. He spent the greater part of his administrative career in India in the service of the Nizam. That he was a popular administrator seems to be a matter of little doubt. Later he served as Assistant Superintendent of Police and finally retired as the Commissioner of Shorapur. He also served as the Indian correspondent of The Times from 1841 to 1853. He married the daughter of General William Palmer whose wife was a begum of the ruling family of Oudh.

Meadows Taylor was deeply involved in the life of the people both in his capacity as an army officer and an administrator. His official status did not stand as a barrier to his mixing freely with people of various communities; and, unlike many of his contemporaries, he made it a point to exchange views and try to understand the people with whom he came into contact. The common people held him in esteem. "He earned in India not only a distinguished name as an administrator and a soldier but the love of the people who called him Mahadeva Baba and repeated his name while they lighted their lamps in the evenings." <sup>1</sup> He, who knew Persian and several Indian languages including Marathi and Hindustani, combined in himself the Orientalist's respect for the glory that was India with the Conservative's respect for India's customs and social structure. Yet, India was not a permanent home for him like most Englishmen. The yearning for home became even more acute for him after his wife's death in 1844, he returned to England.

According to Amur, the complete bifurcation that has taken place in recent years between Indian Writing in English and the Anglo-Indian Literature of the earlier years has done a lot of harm to writers like Captain Philip Meadows Taylor who, in spite of the efforts of scholars such as Dr. G.S. Mansukhani to sustain interest in their work, are lost in the limbo of literary history. Though Meadows Taylor was not a great writer, and K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar is fair to him when

he says that 'his writings showed talent and industry rather than originality and genius', <sup>3</sup> his writings are worth studying for their originality in discussing Indian milieu.

'Meadows Taylor is the first major writer in Anglo-Indian literature, who attempted the great theme of the cultural dialectic between the East and the West and laid down the tradition for writers like Kipling, Forster, Raja Rao, and Kamala Markandaya.' <sup>4</sup>. He is the most important Anglo-Indian novelist of what is termed as the 'pre-Kipling period'. Taylor started writing in the eighteen thirties and his long literary career spanned a period of about forty years. As Misra says, he gave a distinct sense of respectability to Anglo-Indian fiction. He not only extended its range of experience, but also displayed a literary finesse which often led to his works being ranked with those of the acknowledged masters of fiction like Sir Walter Scott. One of the most positive aspects of his writings on India is that he steered clear of the racial feelings and prejudices shared by his predecessors in the field of Anglo-Indian fiction. <sup>5</sup>

Taylor's success in the vivid, realistic and sympathetic portrayal of Indian life is rooted in his deep involvement in the life of the people with whom his administrative and other duties brought him in touch. He has been classed with Rudyard Kipling and E.M. Forster as a novelist who achieved considerable success in depicting the

Indian scene. He is the first among the Anglo-Indian novelists to write about India with a distinct air of confidence. The roots of such a confidence may be traced to the author's close association with the life of the common Indian people and the high esteem in which he was often held by them. For about three decades commencing from the early thirties, Taylor drew attention both in India and England as a novelist who appeared to have succeeded in penetrating into the closed and inscrutable Indian world. <sup>6</sup> While one may have reservations about many of Taylor's idealized pictures of Indian life in his novels, none perhaps would deny him his remarkable power of observation of India's life and culture. Writing in his times and with his limitation, Taylor undoubtedly ushered in a totally new range of experience into Anglo-Indian fiction.

Meadows Taylor's first novel, The Confessions of a Thug, was published in 1839. It was the only book of its period to be published in world classics edition. Amongst the most popular of Anglo-Indian novels set in India, Confession created quite a stir because of its terrifying theme. This novel is concerned with the life of Thuggs. In the novels that follow, he is the chronicler of the romance of Indian history. His Tippoo Sultaun, published in 1840, is the first of the historical romances that have made his name famous as the Scott of India. The novel subtitled, A Tale of the Mysore War, deals with the struggle of the British

against Tippoo Sultaun. It is on the basis of the trilogy of historical novels, Tara (1863), Ralph Darnell (1865), Seeta (1872) that Taylor's reputation as a lover of India primarily rests. The Three novels deal with three major phases of India's history. Tara deals with the rise of Mahratta power under Shivaji and its growth since the Second Battle of Panipat in 1657; Ralph Darnell, with the rise and consolidation of British rule after the Battle of Plassey, 1757; and Seeta with the united effort of the Hindus and the Muslims to overthrow the British in 1857. All the three novels are of great interest because of the theme of mixed marriage which is central to their plots.

Then he published his novel The Fatal Armlet in 1872. His last novel, The Noble Queen, was published posthumously in 1878. The novel is centred on the life and adventures of a sixteenth century Indian queen, Chand Bibi. Meadows Taylor published seven novels during his literary career. He died in May 1876.

The aim of this dissertation is to study Meadows Taylor's novels with regard to the Indian women characters in them and to demonstrate the range and variety of such characters and the depth of his understanding of the psyche of the Indian women in the context of the vast but authentic world. For this study, I have chosen Taylor's four novels : Tara (1863), Ralph Darnell (1865), Seeta (1872), and The Noble Queen (1878). In the course of the analysis of the



novels the aspects of social background, attitude to mixed marriage, and the various roles they play, are highlighted.

## II

### Historical Background of Anglo-Indian Literature

The British Raj is one of the most fascinating occurrences of history since it has exercised a considerable influence not only in the spheres of law and administration, but also in the realms of ideas. The British first came to India as traders, with no intention of assuming political responsibility for any Indian territory. During the early seventeenth century, the English East India Company began to establish trading stations along the Indian coast. The Moghul power in India by this time was waning rapidly, and when Emperor Aurangzeb died in 1707, warring Indian princes began to vie with each other to grab the political power. Both the English and the French took advantage of this unstable situation to extend their influence. Gradually the English gained the upperhand over their French rivals and by the close of the eighteenth century, after the military exploits of Robert Clive and the political and administrative consolidation of Warren Hastings, virtually the whole sub-continent was dominated by the English Company.

Gradually the Company was transformed from a trading venture into an administrative organisation, increasing its

profits with the taxes it collected. The British Government, alarmed both at the corrupt tendencies of the Company and its immense wealth, decided to intervene directly in Indian affairs, and finally took over control in 1858. Thereafter, although some parts of India were placed under direct rule, many of the interior princely states were ruled of autonomy. British governors in each province were responsible to the Viceroy, who was appointed by Parliament in London. In 1877, at the instigation of the Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, Queen Victoria was declared Empress of India.

In 1885, the Indian National Congress was formed to agitate for a greater degree of native self rule but at first it was little more than a debating society only. In 1906, the Muslim League was established to advance the cause of Islam in India. In the years immediately before and after World War I, the struggle for national independence began to override communal and religious differences among Indian population. Although Indians were now elected to local legislative bodies, the British at first tried to counter this trend with repressive measures.

The war that broke out in 1914, however, brought about profound changes not only in Britain's position in the world but in Britain herself. These changes resulted in new attitudes towards her responsibility in, and to, India. After 1918, the British power, already weakened within, received new challenges from the new fascist imperialisms of Germany

and Italy, from the Soviet Union, and in Asia, from Japan, and consequently the British had to withdraw themselves from India in 1947. This encounter between the two nations fired the imagination of the writers both Indian and English, and a large body of creative writing came into being.

### **The Definition of Anglo-Indian Literature**

India has fascinated the European writers and also inspired them to write novels on their Indian experience almost for three centuries. The idea of imperialism fired the imagination of the English writers and the result of this was an immense body of literature known as Anglo-Indian literature. Missionaries, the British officials and their wives have written most of the Anglo-Indian literature. There are various definitions of Anglo-Indian literature given by the scholars. The first British scholar E.F. Oaten, for example, gives the following:

Anglo-Indian Literature, as regards the greater part of it, is the literature of a comparatively small body of Englishmen who, during the working part of their lives, become residents in a country so different in every respect from their own that they seldom take root in its soil. On the contrary they strive to remain English in thought and aspiration... Anglo-Indian Literature, therefore, is for the most part, merely English literature strongly marked by

Indian local colour." 7

This definition seems to be somewhat vague because Oaten has not clearly distinguished between Anglo-Indian Literature and Indo-Anglian Literature. And he expects India as a back drop only. Another scholar, Bhupal Singh also gives a similar kind of definition in his book A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction. But his definition also seems ambiguous for the same reason, when he defines:

Broadly speaking it (Anglo-Indian Fiction) includes any novel dealing with India which is written in English. Strictly speaking it means fiction mainly describing the life of Englishmen in India. In a still narrower sense it may be taken to mean novels dealing with the life of Eurasians who now prefer to be called Anglo-Indians.<sup>8</sup>

According to British scholars, "Anglo-Indian Literature has been literature produced by Englishmen while on active service in India, but essentially recounting their Indian experience. Anglo-Indian Literature also includes literature produced by British citizens born in India and for some part of their life brought up in that country, but who essentially remained British in their way of life and attitudes." 9 The scholars like Allen J. Greenberger in The British Image of India : A study in the Literature of Imperialism, 1880-1980 (1969) and Benita Parry in Delusions and Discoveries; Studies

on India in the British Imagination, 1880-1930 (1972), use the term 'Anglo-Indian' with reference to the literature written by Englishmen in India. A great Indian scholar, M.K. Naik has also defined Anglo-Indian fiction as 'fiction by British writers' in which British protagonist operates in Indian setting. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, we may conclude that Anglo-Indian Literature is a reflection of the British consciousness in the context of the British Imperial Rule in India.

#### A Short History of Anglo- Indian Fiction

A period of about a century and a half is covered by Anglo- Indian Fiction. This period is divided into three phases. The first phase begins with the Governor- Generalship of Warren Hastings and ends with the Indian Mutiny; the second phase ends with the death of Queen Victoria and the publication of Kim in 1901; and the third phase begins with the partition of Bengal in 1905 and is said to be still in progress. Meadows Taylor and W.D. Arnold are the chief novelists of the first phase; Sir Henry Cunningham and Kipling, of the Second and Edmund Candler, E.M. Forster and Edward Thompson of the third, according to the survey of Singh. The novels of the first phase are mainly 'romances' of Indian history, or are descriptive sketches of English society in India. The novels of the second phase are portraits of the official life of Anglo- India and those of the third phase show a vaster range in the choice of subjects

and 'are a true reflex of the varied life and problems of India in transition.' <sup>11</sup>

Anglo- Indian Literature is the product of the interaction between Englishmen and women in the Indian environment. Earlier the missionaries, the persons serving the Empire, the wives of the British officials, and currently various others keen on the Raj intrigues contribute to the growing Anglo-Indian literary tradition.

Bhupal Singh has mentioned numerous Anglo-Indian novelists. But I mention only a few who may be considered landmarks in the Anglo- Indian Literary tradition as contemporaries of Taylor. Sir Walter Scott laid the foundations of Anglo-Indian romance with his book The Surgeon's Daughter (1827). He had not seen India. But his friends and relatives gave him a lot of information about India and it enabled him to write this romance. India had become a part of British psyche by the beginning of the nineteenth century, both as an ancient country with its strange cultural modes and as a land of opportunity for the British traders and adventures. This fact is indicated by Scott's novel. The same novel of Scott reveals that there was a romantic aspect to the British encounter with India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Meadows Taylor (1808-1876) was the most important writer of the pre-Kipling period, and very close contemporary of Scott, who nourished the genre of Anglo-Indian Romance. He

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was also the first major writer in Anglo-Indian fiction, who attempted the great theme of the cultural dialectic between the East and the West and paved the way to the writers like Kipling, Forster and others. His novel Confessions of a Thug (1839) reflects his fascination for the thugs. His another novel Tippoo Sultaan (1840) is a historical romance and it gives an account of the Mysore war in 1788-89. His other three novels, which are called the trilogy, are, Tara : A Mahratta Tale (1863), Ralph Darnell (1865), and Seeta (1872). The novels Tara and Seeta deal with the theme of conversion and spiritual crisis. Tara, a Hindu widow, accepts the Muslim faith and marries Fazil. Seeta, also a beautiful Hindu widow, marries Cyril Brandon, an English man. Ralph Darnell records the rise of British power in India and Clive's famous victory of Plassey. A Nobel Queen: A Romance of Indian History (1878) is his last historical romance. It shows the life of Chand Bibi.

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Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) was the major writer, who excelled in writing novels on Anglo-Indian themes. His short stories Plain Tales From the Hills (1888), Soldiers Three: Story of the Gadsbys: In Black and White (1888-92), Wee Willie Winkie and Other Stories (1888-92), Life's Handicap (1891) are related to India and were written during the period between 1888 and 1891. All ninety six stories of Kipling have a genuine Indian atmosphere about them. Kipling supplies a conventional account of the palace of the

Maharajah of Seetaram in his novel, The Naulakha (1892). His another novel Kim (1901), is a classic. It deals with a spiritual pilgrimage along the routes drawn from scriptural sources in the Indian tradition. Thus Kipling has an important place in the history of Anglo-Indian Fiction and his merits as an artist are undoubtedly great.

There are many women writers who wrote under the influence of Kipling - Mrs. Flora Annie Steel (1847-1929), Mrs. E.W. Savi (1865-1954), Mrs. Bithia Mary Croker ( - 1920) Mrs. Maud Diver (1867-1945), Mrs. Alice Perrin. (1867-1934), Mrs. Fanny Penny ( -1939). Among them the most successful were the ones who stayed longer or were born here. Mrs. Steel wrote many novels. Her novels are concerned with Indian History and the Anglo-Indian life. On the surface of the Waters (1896) is her most significant novel and it is based on the Indian Mutiny. Voices in the Night (1900) deals with the theme of social and political problems of the day. Her novel A Prince of Dreamers (1908) deals with Emperor Akbar and his dreams of the regeneration of the world. Her other works include From The Five Rivers (1893), Tales of the Punjab (1894), The Adventures of Akbar (1913), Mistress of Men (1918), and Indian Scene (1933).

Mrs. Croker gives an account of an encounter of an English woman with an Indian in her novel, A Family Likeness : A Sketch in the Himalayas (1892). Her another novel, The Cat's Paw (1902) is concerned with the club life in South India. Her other novels include Pretty Miss Neville (1885),



Two Masters (1890), Village Tales and Jungle Tragedies (1895), The Happy Valley (1904), A Rolling Stone (1910), In Old Madras (1913) and The Pagoda Tree (1919). Mrs. Diver has an important place among the women novelists. Her novels are concerned with the theme of military and frontier experiences. Her love for the grandeur and the glory of India have become the important characteristics in her novels. She does not have intimate knowledge of the Englishmen in the military stations. But she has a sympathy for them and has immortalized them in her novels. Her novel, The Great Amulet (1908) deals with the love, separation and reconciliation on the frontier and has described the frontier warfare and family tensions. The novel like Lonely Furrow (1923) deals with the dangers of Indian marriages. Her other important works include Captain Desmond, V.C. (1907), The Judgement of the Sword (1913), Desmond's Daughter (1916), The Strong Hours (1919), and A Wild Bird (1929).

Mrs. Perin also wrote interesting novels on Anglo-Indian life. In her collection of stories East of Suez (1901), she describes India as a place of vast mysteries and immense horror. Her novel, The Woman in the Bazaar (1914) gives the tragic story of the pretty, unsophisticated daughter of a country vicar, who comes to India as the wife of Captain Coventry. She almost falls a prey to the temptations to which married women are exposed in India, and the jealous nature of her husband forces her to become a woman of the bazaar. Government House (1925) describes the

unhappiness of ill-assorted marriages. Her other works include Into Temptation (1894), The Spell of The Jungle (1902), Idolatry (1909), Separation (1917), The Vow of Silence (1920), Rough Passages (1926).

Mrs. Penny, another woman novelist, wrote some forty-five novels during her life-time. She deals with the life of missionaries in her novels. She also depicts the feeling of Indian nationalism in her novels. She has also handled the subject of mixed marriages. Her novel, Mixed Marriage (1903) describes some aspects of the problem of it. The Unlucky Mark (1909) shows the influence of the budding Indian nationalism. The Outcaste (1912) gives the account of the conversion of Ananda to Christianity and his persecution. The conversion of a high caste Hindu, Savalu, is described in The Swami's Curse (1922). Her other works include The Romance of a Nautch Girl (1898), The Rajah (1911), Love in Palace (1915), The Rajah's Daughter (1921), Magic in the Air (1933), etc. Miss I.A.R. Wylie also wrote some novels about India. But her picture of India was derived entirely from second-hand sources. Her lurid imaginings are the indications of the European dream of India as a weird and mysterious place; full of evil spirits. The Rajah's people (1916) and Tristram Sahib (1915) are her two novels. Mrs. E. W. Savi (1865-1954), who wrote fifty seven Indian novels and one of her very famous novels, The Daughter-in-Law (1913), is on the theme of mixed marriage - an English girl marries an Indian.

E.M. Forster (1879-1970) occupies an important place in the history of Anglo-Indian Literature. His book A Passage to India (1924) marks the turning point in the field of Anglo-Indian Fiction. The book is a cleverly drawn picture of Englishmen in India. But at the same time, it depicts the tensions between the natives: the Hindus and the Muslims. Forster handles the theme of suspected rape of an English girl by an Indian.

Edward Thompson (1886-1946) is considered as an important Anglo-Indian writer. In his novel, An Indian Day (1927), he tries to interpret and analyse the political India of his time. In Night Falls on Siva's Hill (1929), he is contemptuous of a military officer, who is forced to lead the life of an exile in the jungles of Trisulbari. His other works are A Farewell to India (1931), An End of the Hours (1938), Atonement (1924), So a Poor Ghost (1933), etc.

A contemporary novelist, Rumer Godden (1907), writes about England-India encounter. Lady and the Unicorn (1937) is a sentimental portrayal of the Eurasian life in Bengal. Like Kipling and Forster, her novels present 'a happy encounter of a sympathetic English sensibility with certain actualities of Indian life of this century.'<sup>12</sup> Black Narcissus (1939), Breakfast with the Nikolides (1942), The River (1946), and Kingfishers Catch Fire (1953) are her Indian novels, the central drama which arises out of "the juxtaposition of the European culture and the Indian, though the focus of interest

changes from novel to novel".<sup>13</sup>

John Masters (1914-1983) is another contemporary novelist. A modern Anglo-Indian girl, who is confused by her racial status on the eve of India's Independence, is portrayed in his Bhowani Junction. The India of 1825 and the British rule of law versus the Indian paternal despotism is depicted in his novel The Deceivers (1952)<sup>14</sup>

Paul Scott (1920-1978) occupies a significant place in the Anglo-Indian Fiction. He wrote thirteen novels during his life time. They are Johnnie Sahib (1952), The Alien Sky (1953), A Male Child (1957), The Mark of The Warrior (1958), The Chinese Love Pavillion (1960), The Birds of Paradise (1966), The Bender (1963), The Jewel in The Crown (1966), The Day of The Scorpion (1968), The Tower of Silence (1971), A Division of The Spoils (1975), Staying On (1977). Scott wrote novels mainly about the post imperial age. From the beginning of his career as a novelist, he was occupied mainly with the 'paradise' that was already lost, with the decline and fall of the British Empire.

### III

The genre, the Historical Novel, is defined and discussed by several scholars. Here I present some of them which are relevant to my study. As per the definition available in The New Encyclopedia Britanica the historical

novel is :

a work of fiction that attempts to convey the spirit, the manners and social conditions of a past age with realistic detail and fidelity to historical fact. The work may deal with actual historical personages, as Robert Graves' I, Claudius (1934), or it may contain a mixture of fictional and historical characters. It may focus on single historical event, as does Franz Werfel's Forty Days of Musa Dagh (1934), which dramatizes the defence of an American stronghold. More often it attempts to portray a border view of a past society in which great events are reflected by their impact on the private lives of fictional individuals. In the twentieth century, distinguished historical novels such as Arthur Koestler's The Gladiators (1934), Zoe Oldenborg's Destiny of Fire (1960) and Mary Renault's, The King Must Die (1958), exemplify an important function of the fictional imagination- to interpret remote events in human and particular terms, to transform documentary fact with the assistance of imaginative conjuncture, into immediate sensuous and emotional experience. <sup>15</sup>

As per the above description, the historical novel is inclusive of historical events, period, facts, and

characters. Therefore, it is most relevant for describing Taylor's novels too. Among the critics, who hold the view that the historical novel is a grafting, Paul Licester is important. He defines it in the following words: "The historical novel is one which grafts upon a story, actual incidents or persons well enough known to be recognised as historical." <sup>16</sup> For critics like Georg Lukacs, the historical novelist is one "who experiences the social and human motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality". He further emphasizes that the writer has to see that "The historical novel therefore, has to demonstrate by artistic means that historical circumstances and characters existed in precisely such and such a way... historical events in their intricacy and complexity, in their manifold interactions with acting individuals". <sup>17</sup>

To justify his cause of writing historical novels, Taylor himself writes in the introduction to The Noble Queen that

It is in illustration of one of the most important epochs in the history of the Dekhan. The character of Chand Bibi is still popular in the country; and ... siege of Ahmednugger... upon which this tale has been founded, are detailed in the history of Mohemed Kasim Ferishta, and can be read and verified in the translation of that work by

the late Major-General Briggs. 18

Taylor has depicted Indian life in its varied phase - the three great modern periods of Indian history at intervals of a century upto and including the Mutiny. His first novel, The Confessions of a Thug (1839), the most popular Anglo-Indian novels, of those days is an investigation and suppression of Thuggee, is a novel of historical significance. His Tippoo sultaun (1840) deals with the struggle of the British against Tippoo sultaun. The period covered by the novel is from 1782 to 1799, with the defeat of Tippoo during Lord Wellesley's regime. Now, the major historical events Taylor encompasses are : sixteenth century, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries during which India was in the clutches of foreigners. In the novels under study, he presents the socio-political ethos of the times, with ideal human beings mingle against a highly romantic background. He is accurate in his historical facts and is very confident when he describes those scenes.

One notices that Taylor is more interested in interaction between characters , who form the spirit of the age. Therefore, they are, as in Lukacs' definition 'humanly authentic and yet be relievable' i.e. the joys and sorrows, cries and confusions of average human beings are portrayed.

IV

**The Indian world of Meadows Taylor**

To get a proper perspective for the study of Indian women characters in Taylor's selected novels, it is appropriate to give a sketch of his fictional world. His fictional world is created out of the diverse elements which constitute the socio-cultural process to which he belongs. Therefore it is necessary to map the fictional world for discovering the principles underlying his creation.

The most important preoccupation of Taylor is his treatment of history. Dunn, while discussing Taylor's autobiography notes that Taylor, "who must justly be described as the greatest English novelist whose themes are exclusively Indian ... No other has set himself the task of illustrating the three great modern periods of Indian History at intervals of a century up to and including the Mutiny." <sup>19</sup>

When Taylor wrote his first novel, India was still seen by many Westerners as a land of mystery and romance. Despite the rise of Imperial attitudes in the eighteen twenties and the increase in the influence of the Utilitarians and the Evangelicals in the thirties and forties, many Britishers continued to view the British-Indian encounter as equally beneficial to both Britain and India. Only after the opening of Suez canal, when British women started to come to India, gradually the racial feelings and



inherent feelings of superiority of the British over the Indians, widened the gap between the two races. The concept of the 'Master Race' is evident in almost all the post Mutiny novels. Viewed in this context, Taylor's novels are refreshingly different. Because he was writing romances, his characters may look idealized but they are neither types nor cardboard cutouts. His writing spanned a period during which the era of reform commenced, thrived and was on the verge of death (after the Mutiny.)

The world that Taylor creates in order to explore the phase discussed above, encompasses a large section of Indian society and marginally the Anglo-Indian society because his novels are placed within the Conservative framework. The majority of the women characters of the Indian side in his novels happen to be Hindus and Muslims: Tara, Seeta, Noor-Ul-Nissa, Chand Bibi. It is primarily the Hindoo simplicity of character is praised and virtue of their women folk held up in his novels. His direct experience of the country had taught him that the Hindus and the Muslims were not always at daggers drawn as it was believed by most Englishmen at home, but they shared a common life within a broad social spectrum.

Taylor, like Walter Scott, never underestimated the importance of the historical reality as it was, in the opinion of Lukacs who believed that... "It could be both humanly authentic and yet be relievable by readers of a later

Caps

age" (emphasis mine). Therefore, Taylor, we notice, was keen in interaction between different types of characters who constitute the spirit of the age. He never depicted decorative or hero-worship of a single historical personality. His heroes are, as Misra points out 'middle-of-the-road heroes',<sup>20</sup> who represent popular life and historical development. Important personalities like Clive, Shivaji or Nanasahib do not dominate but Tara, a Brahmin widow, Sita a non-Brahmin widow, Noor-ul-Nissa, a Muslim widow and Chand Bibi, a queen are, in the focus. It is on the basis of the trilogy of historical novels, Tara, Ralph Darnell and Seeta with the theme of the mixed marriage as their central theme, Taylor attempts to bring the Hindu, Muslim and Christian worlds together.

For the first time in Anglo-Indian fiction, without bringing the European world, Taylor in Tara, attempts to combine the different cultural worlds of the Hindu and the Muslim. The Spectator in England notices the singular effort of the author with a word of praise saying that it is a 'remarkable' book.... to bring the interior Hindoo and Mussalman life of a great Mahrattas province during the most exciting time .. <sup>21</sup>

Tara excels in description of Indian life through the picture of Shastree family which displays a strong sense of social awareness. Taylor is not critical of Hindu beliefs and customs like Suttee. The customs like child

marriage are brought to the forefront. The teaching of Hindu religion, like great respect for great religious classics - Geeta, is stressed only in this novel. We see a broad canvas on which the characters are drawn on a much larger scale than his other novels because it upholds certain fundamental human values.

In Ralph Darnell, the English and the Muslim communities are presented together. His attempt to establish cultural rapport between the East and the West, the ruled and the ruler, bears a sweet fruit later by encouraging many other writers who handle this bitter issue of miscegenation. However, the newly emerging British official class is the focus in this novel. Simultaneously, he presents the simple and genial 'Old Indian' - a class of Englishmen who loved and made India their home. The Hindu universe of the Indian society is barely sketched.

Seeta, being the earliest among the novels on Mutiny, Taylor presents all the English, the Hindu and the Muslim societies with equal merit while Cyril Brandon, the Deputy Commissioner of Noorpur and Mostyn, the Judge represent the employees of the Empire, Seeta's husband, a banker, Azrael Pande, the Mutineer represent the Hindu India and the Nawab represents the Muslim part of Mutiny as a historical event. British prejudices and the drawbacks of British rule in India receive a greater attention than in the earlier novels. The Hinduism also gets much attention

through Seeta, whose husband wants to listen to his wife sing him the old Indian Ballads.

The Noble Queen centres round the life and adventures of a sixteenth-century Indian queen, Chand Bibi. It deals much with the portuguese characters. Therefore, this novel for my purpose has a limited scope. The character of only Chand Bibi lends Indianness to the novel.

Meadows Taylor is one of those few writers, who have tried to depict India as she is. Before him, the European conception of the East in general and of India in particular, as illustrated in literature, was extremely vague and often extravagantly ludicrous. W.B. Hockley who tried to give a realistic picture of India in his two novels are negative approaches. Taylor improvises image of India, for his novel, Tippoo Sultaun he is named after the great historical novelist, Sir walter Scott and his Surgeon's Daughter (1827) was a great influence.

Besides the Indian scenario, Taylor also presents the British profile in Ralph Darnell and Seeta. But his English characters are stiff and they look more Indians, i.e. by birth English but by manners and behaviour Indians. He stumbles in depicting his own people. Perhaps, it is the influence of the exotic and romantic Indian surroundings that influences the Englishman as a writer. He does not depict the English women too with care. They appear little too

stiff. When Taylor was in India the English women were very rare. Therefore, if he portrays some of them, that was only for creating a dramatic scene. For example, in Seeta, Mrs. Mostyn, the Judge's wife and Grace, the Judge's sister are there to represent the British attitude towards mixed marriage.

V

**Taylor's Experiment with Language**

Meadows Taylor belonged to a select minority like Sleeman, Munro, Elphinston, group of British officials, in the thirties who were interested in understanding India and its people by learning from their experience here. Therefore, they learnt and understood the languages and sentiments of the country. Taylor was fortunate enough to secure a commission in the army of Nizam at Hyderabad and could learn gentleman's Hindi. As Bhupal Singh says, "Though his romances are written in English, he often reproduces in them the flavour of cultural Indian conversation by using proper forms of address and Oriental modes of expression"<sup>22</sup>. He knew Persian, Mahratti and Hindustani languages. He could speak Hindustani like a gentleman, he says in his autobiography The Story of my life.

When Taylor wrote in 1839, there were hardly any readers in India who could read his novel. The novels of those days were written mainly for English audience. Therefore he gives lengthy glossary of Indian words at the

end of the novel. It served to bridge the gap between the two cultures. The Indian characters like Seeta in his novel of the same name, reads Savitri from 'Mahabharat'. Seeta is reading the portion from a 'college exercise' and she knew it by heart. Yama, the Lord of Death comes to take the spirit of Savitri's husband :

Where'er my husband goeth, in the way where he is  
led, There Savitri, faithful ever still  
unfliteringly will tread. (P.110)

This is the cultural background of a character. He depicts her class, her social status, her scholarship in dignified King's English. However, what lends an authentic image of India to his novels is, though not the only way, the use of language. The use of Indian words 'Namaste', expressions like 'ya, Allah!' for the Muslim characters to express their happiness or sorrow are his speciality. Being a very early writer of the genre, he had no predecessors except Walter Scott to fall back upon for a model. Therefore he carried the tradition of using Indian words from Scott, still to be used by many Anglo-Indian and Indian writers writing in English. A few examples from the glossary of Tara are mentioned here:

1. Gosha! Murdana! Private! cried out by their attendants when Mussulman ladies leave their houses.
2. Gowra (Canarese), head authority of a village.
3. Dae, a nurse

4. Duopatta, a scarf (P.532)

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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