

Chapter V

PHILIP MEADOWS TAYLOR : THE CULTURAL ENCOUNTER

Before we proceed to examine Taylor's literary output, we shall briefly examine his relationship with the land and its people which in fact formed the raw material for his fiction. In his response to the Indian ethos, in his magnanimity and generosity of vision and in his understanding and sympathetic rapport with the natives Taylor differed from most Anglo-Indian writers and officials who preceded or followed him. There were only a few like him who could appreciate the delicate nuances of Indian literature, record the subtlety of eastern sensibility, look beyond the rituals and customs to the spiritual integrity of Indian religion and society. Professor G.S. Amur considers him to be the first major Anglo-Indian writer "who attempted the great theme of the cultural dialectic between the East and the West and laid down the traditions for writers like Kipling, Forster, Raja Rao and Kamala Markandaya" (82). Taylor was an idealist and the main inspiration behind his creative work was a determination to forge a new and lasting relationship between his own people and the people of India. His writings show a continuous process of growth in the east-west cultural dialogue.

On personal level Taylor made a sincere effort to learn the language of the people he worked with, to understand their social mores and habits of thought. A life time of contact convinced him that there is a certain complexity behind the apparent blankness on an Asiatic face. In Ralph Darnell he seems to exonerate Clive of his crooked dealings with Suraj-ud-Daula, Mir Jaffar and Hukum Chand because eastern negotiations are nothing but exercising subtlety with subtlety and crookedness with crookedness where the shrewdest get away with the best of deals. Most Englishmen would not be able to deal with eastern cunningness. Hence "our countrymen in India have since learnt better morality; that among all Asiatic people an open, honest, direct course is not only the surest, but the only one which their subtle minds cannot comprehend or oppose, and which of itself defeats all crooked design." (Ralph Darnell 366) Similarly he disagrees with the then prevalent notion among the Anglo-Indians that the Indians are a dull people. In Seeta Taylor's persona Cyril Brandon corrects Grace Mostyn who harbours such an impression :

The people are not dull and insensible as you may have thought, Miss Mostyn; and there is hardly a rocky knoll, a quiet lake or a giant tree, a broad river or a secluded glen like this which is not in their belief peopled by spirits, nymphs and fawns or the scene of some event in their tradition (209).

Nor could Taylor subscribe to the view that Indians are insensible to aesthetic beauty. In Tara he offers a spirited repudiation of this theory quite unusual for someone bred in the colonial system.

It has been said that they are insensible to beauties of natural scenery. ... Their sacred books, their ballads and recited plays abound with beautiful pictures of natural objects; and living among combinations of the most glorious forms in nature, peopling every remarkable rock, deep dell or giant tree with spiritual being belonging peculiarly to each, who are worshipped with a rude veneration, insensibility to outward impressions and their influence upon character would be impossible (407).

Thus what most others condemned as vestiges of superstition and primitivism were for Taylor the unmistakable signs of a refined sensibility and aesthetic feeling. This insight into the character and sensibility of the eastern races nurtured in him a deep esteem for them.

This is the reason for Taylor's romanticizing of Indian men and women, particularly the latter. To him they were not mere "sleeping dictionaries." He knew fully well the reason for their reticence, aloofness and random expression of passion. Unlike other Anglo-Indians, including writers, who thought of eastern love as an all consuming passion, Taylor portrays it as a synthesis of finer feelings, refinement, tenderness, understanding, sympathy and a spirit of devotion that will not shrink even in the

face of death. Seeta is the consummate example of such a love. Naturally Taylor did not think of Indian women as a contamination to be avoided at all costs. Indian women more or less epitomized the Victorian male vision of womanhood. Taylor's autobiographical hero Cyril Brandon is advised by Mostyn, the magistrate, in the following terms. "Indeed, I often think that if there were not our horrible social prejudices against it many of us would be happier with such a wife than with some of our own people. I think that such a one as that girl (Seeta) would be more interesting, more useful, more easily satisfied". (Seeta 87) In fact Taylor was speaking from his own personal experience. He had married a girl from the Palmer family who were ethnic Anglo-Indians.

If Taylor was aware of the plus points in the Indian character and social life he was also equally aware of the minus points. A liberal humanist, he was intrigued by the religious intolerance and caste barriers among the natives. He noticed a dichotomy between the private and public spheres of relationship. Hindus and Muslims would fight under a single banner for a sovereign of either faith. They would enter into a blood pact in a brotherhood of crime and rapine like thugges or organise themselves into a band of looters like the Pindarees. They could be roused against a common enemy as it happened in the 1857 rebellion. Yet

at the inter-personal level the inherent prejudices and animosities lurked still. A Muslim would always despise the Hindu as a bloodless kafar and idolator. The Hindu on the other hand, would always look down upon the Muslim as an unclean animal from whose hands he would not even accept water. When guided by their own fanatical whims they would be at each other's throat. This is the impression we get from Taylor's novels. The slaughter of devotees at Tuljapur shrine or the slaughter of a cow in Shahganj temple are typical examples of such religious violence in Taylor's fiction. Those who are prone to think of the communal venom in India as a post Curzon phenomenon or a vestige of white colonial rule would find their theories contradicted all along in Taylor's writings.

In A Noble Queen for example, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam meet together, quite contemptuous of each other. Taylor's comments speak for themselves : "These (the peer and the Brahmin) were not persons who could ever unite in private friendship, for the peer as bigoted follower of Mohammed and as a holy saint to boot, was one of those who as warrior of the faith would have led armies against the infidels and utterly exterminated them." (211) The peer is equally violent in his attitude towards Friar Diego, and dubbs him as "the accursed follower of the Nazarite." However the friar and the Brahmin get along

well due to the bond of a common language. Incidentally all the three are devoted servants of a temporal sovereign, Chand Bibi.

Taylor's idealistic and rather optimistic solution to the religious and racial prejudices is a radical lowering of barriers at the inter-personal level. In his novels one notices synthesis as a pattern, the possibility of human relationships beyond the confines of caste and creed. In Ralph Darnell Julia Wharton is befriended by Noor-ul-Nissa. In the encounter Julia discovers that her Christian faith is not basically different from Islam. Runga Naik, the Beydur chief follows his Muslim master Abbas Khan, like a shadow. Kasim Ali, a trusted soldier of Tippoo Sultan befriends Herbert Compton, the hated Englishman. Over and above these friendships between individuals of different faiths and races there is also a more cementing tie, the union of hearts and minds in mixed marriages. Ralph Smithson marries a Muslim widow. Tara is joined to Fazil Khan and Seeta to Cyril Brandon in ideal marriages where love and understanding lead to personal fulfillment. These inter-religious and inter-racial marriages were not mere permutations born of Taylor's fancy. They sprang from his understanding of the Hindu and Muslim tenets and the genuine spirit of tolerance he came to develop. He knew

the core of the Hindu religion consisting of the highest metaphysics of the Puranas and the Gita, though embellished in an outer crust of mythology and supersition. His attitude towards Hinduism was different from those who noticed only the obvious. When in 1845 after a cholera outbreak at Shorapur the Beydurs sacrificed 400 sheep and 50 buffaloes on a single day, their animal sacrifice, a vestige of paganism, which is abhorrent to a Christian evoked only this response from Taylor. "All hands are grateful to God. Their worships is not ours, but their gratitude is the same and we may well hope, will find acceptance in His sight." (Story of My Life 218)

Similarly he was not particularly obsessed with the social evils such as satee, child-marriage, Murli system and the sad plight of widows. No doubt he condemns them but does so in the gentlest of terms; unlike Edward Thompson or the women novelists such as Mrs Penny, Mrs Croker, Maud Diver, L.A.R. Wylie and Flora Annie Steel who highlight the blots on the Indian social scenario. In Taylor one notices a more realistic and more balanced portrayal. Tara declares herself a satee to escape from the clutches of Moro Trimul. Death by fire is more welcome to her than lifelong suffocation at the hands of a lusty villain. Taylor does not forget to explain to his readers the religious belief behind such a cruel sacrifice :

"Fear not daughter; by this act is thy husband delivered from hell; and all that thou hast suffered in this life is sanctified unto thee." (Tara 461). Motivated by such beliefs the people and the victim exhibit an unnatural enthusiasm. Taylor reminds his home audience that there is an element of sublimity even in this bizarre death ritual :

A strange enthusiasm indeed ! Ah-Yes-from the period to which we can trace it in a dim legendary superstition of the past, through the two thousand years since the Greek philosopher stood on the banks of the Indus and Ganges and recorded it, to the time when it was made to cease under the stern power of a purer creed how many have died, alike self-devoted, alike calm, alike tearless, women with ordinary affections, with ordinary habits of life, suddenly lifted up into a sublimity of position - even a death by an influence they were unable to repress or control - barbarous and superstitious if you will, but sublime (Tara 467).

Probably not even a Hindu can be so charitable to a cruel system at which the history of India still shudders. So also with the other social evils, Taylor was charitable almost to a fault. He did not adopt the discursive strategies employed by the colonialists of his time to vilify Indian beliefs and customs. True, he evaluated the Indian ethos from a Eurocentric view point. Yet on the whole his Eurocentrism was diluted to accommodate a genuine understanding and objective view of India.

Taylor's contact with Hinduism, Islam and their deep philosophies in a way only increased his love and veneration for the simple teachings of Christianity and its refreshing attitude towards life, affirming his Eurocentric vision of existence. This attitude is reflected time and again in his novels. Sozun, the wild Afghan girl is eager to learn a few verses from the Bible and is comforted by them. She consoles Julia, "we three one in heart and mind and of those who have sworn in tears, and hope to reap in joy" (Ralph Darnell 332). Zora, in "A Noble Queen", is struck by Maria's simple faith and piety. Seeta too discovers the simplicity and sublimity of the Christian faith. Tara has an ambivalent attitude. She dies calling on a mother; whether it is the Hindu mother Kali or the Christian mother Mary is not made explicit. Taylor, it should be noted, does not present religious conversions but only religious crises. He was fully aware of the hold that Hinduism and Islam had over the minds of their followers both literate and illiterate. Noor-ul-Nissa remains a Muslim but her religion is almost effaced in the worship of her earthly savior, General Smithson. Tara has no other choice but to accept Islam and marry Fazal since she is already a declared suttee. She adopts a new name, so also new rituals. Yet Taylor is sceptical about the reality of her inner conversion. "With her outward conversion

to a strange faith, did Tara forget the old? No it was impossible. Though her studious disposition enabled her to master enough Arabic. ... to understand the daily prayers and simple ceremonials, yet the grand old Hindu hymns of the Vedas, and other devotional portions of the Sashtras, especially the Bhagavat Geeta were never forgotten" (531). In Seeta's case there is no such formal conversion but there is an inner inclination towards Christianity. The issue is however doubtful. Taylor poses a question, "Were the foundation of the old Hinduism-the grand citadel of the Vedas and Bhagavat Geeta, the metaphysics Patansjula giving way? Cyril thought they were and Mrs. Pratt thought so too" (373). However Seeta's death scene makes it all the more confusing. Though she has almost a beatific vision before her death, she actually dies in a hazy configuration of Hinduism and Christianity; with vedantic invocations to the sun and Gayatri and also to the Heavenly Father. There was a prevalent notion that freed from the bondages of caste and social set up the eastern mind ^{might} accept Christianity. Taylor affirms to the contrary. Religion is shown as something deeper than mere formalistic rituals, more binding than the trappings of caste and society; to be a part and parcel of the very fabric of the individual consciousness.

The same is the cause with the blending of Eastern and Western civilization. Though quite a liberal and

unconventional Victorian, it was but natural that he should share the belief in the superiority complex inseparable from colonial consciousness. He too believed in "the whiteman's burden", the establishment of the British power as a historical necessity for the civilization of India. In Ralph Darnell Clive tells the young hero Ralph, "but can we circumscribe the power of the most High? I believe Ralph that I Robert Clive, am one humble instrument, to whose hand is committed the beginning of the end and who can say when that may be?" (340). Once this power had been established many thought the Indians were being schooled along the right lines. This belief as well as the Anglo-Indian attitude of paternal benevolence received a severe jolt during the mutiny of 1857. In his letters during the mutiny Taylor termed the rebellion as a conflict between civilization and barbarism, as a violent reaction of Hinduism and Islam against Western cultural norms introduced in India. Seeta is quite emphatic on the role of Hindu and Muslim fanaticism in the rebellion. On a broader perspective however Taylor likens the 1857 mutiny to the past struggles in world history :

This too may have been one of those solemn warnings given in God's providence, resulting from struggles in men's minds between forms of belief, the fact between Heathenism and Christianity. What the saxons were to Charlemagne, the Hindus, mutatis mutandis, may be to us.

A great struggle between light and darkness, civilization and savagery, is no doubt progressing and like others before, it will have its phases of excitement and misery. (ctd. in Amur 86).

No doubt, Taylor tows the Anglo-Indian line of thought but with much less severity and much more understanding than most of his contemporaries. For a short phase, during the upheavals of 1857, Taylor was shaken in his ideals and could not critically evaluate developments. He could not understand the sensitivity of the natives who wanted to overthrow a foreign regime and could not realise the fact that in a process of decolonization truth and civilization are but relative terms. To the natives "truth is that which hastens the break-up of the colonialist regime, it is that which promotes the emergence of the nation; it is all that protects the natives and ruins the foreigners. In this colonialist context there is no truthful behaviour ; and the good is simply that which is evil for them" (Fanon 50).

Taylor's close contact with 19th century India made him almost an Indian in his beliefs and reactions. He had, for example, an implicit faith in astrology, dreams and omens which he amply makes use of in his fictional creations. In Ralph Darnel, one of his earlier novels, the usual Christian attitude towards astrology is indicated in a conversation between Sozun and Ralph. "Dost thou believe in planets, in destiny? "No" replied Ralph smiling, our people think prophecies by the stars foolishness, but they

believe in the will of God, and that is why I am here."

"It is the same-the same," cried the girl wildly clapping her hands; "I could tell thee but not yet. ... not yet ! Wait and thou wilt believe even as I do, when the end comes." (58) In Tara he makes fun of Afzulkhan's wife Lurlee for her astrological apprehensions. Yet Taylor became more and more convinced of the veracity of astrological predictions in personal as well as social life. His attitude towards it is summed up in the words of Babasaheb, his own Sheristandar. "When one who understands the art, casts a horoscope and calculates it scientifically, the result is seldom wrong." (Story of My Life 297)

The affinity with the Indian masses made Taylor a strong supporter of the natives. He was one of those Englishmen who were conscientious objectors to certain British policies and attitudes. Letters written by Taylor to Henry Reeve during 1841-1850 touch upon a critical phase in Indian history. They offer incisive comments on the Afghan and Sikh wars and the man who conducted them. Taylor was against Indian revenues being spent on distant conquests as is evident from the following lines. "Alas! for India, when will her surplus revenue be employed to promote her own interests, education and domestic improvement instead of to fund munitions for distant and unprofitable wars." (Story of My Life 182) Similarly his conscience was hurt

by the dual English policy towards Sind with which the British made treaties of eternal friendship and later placed it in the hands of an unscrupulous man like Charles Napier. "The conquest of Sind was indeed achieved but it had been based upon violence, injustice and deliberate perfidy, which questionable as many transactions in the English conquest of India, may be, has happily no parallel." (Story of My Life 660) If direct conquest was objectionable indirect annexation was even more so. In Seeta the old banker Narendra comments on Dalhousie's system of lapse. "Is it so?" said the banker sadly. They have taken Nagpur and Jhansi. Is not that enough? They are all powerful, and in the main they are just; but only too greedy. Is no one to be left?" (30) Taylor's was more than a literary protest. In 1853 he resigned his post as special correspondent to 'The Times' because he could not agree with the annexation policy of Lord Dalhousie - and he thought that step better than "defend or attack them." (Story of My Life 303) He was opposed to any measures which was likely to alienate the affection of the Indian people from their rulers.

On the other hand he welcomed and carried out every single measure beneficial to the natives. Apart from roads, schools, ponds and public buildings and dams, Taylor was also interested in a more fundamental issue - the survey of

the land and the granting of title deeds to the tillers and not to the land lords absent or present. His policy was directly opposed to the land tenancy system of the North West province and so had to face severe criticism and opposition. He had, however, the solid backing of two like minded Englishmen Lyall, the commissioner and Saunders, the assistant Commissioner. Taylor had to wage a wordy battle for quite some time about which he wrote later in his auto-biography :

I wrote, as I was obliged, a great deal on the subject (against introducing the Zamindari system) and I believe I was considered most impractical and obstinate and incurred, I have little doubt, much ill-will; but for that I cared absolutely nothing. I could not uphold what I believed would be an injury and a wrong to my people, or become a party to any course which I considered was not only unjust and unpopular to the last degree, but which would abolish all these ancient hereditary tenures to which the people had clung with devoted pertinacity through all revolutions and vicissitudes for many centuries, and which the old Mussalman Kings and rulers of Deccan had continuously respected. (308)

Nothing more needs to be said to prove that Taylor's intimate contact with the Indian masses led him to identify himself with them and espouse their cases as his own.

. . . .

II

FICTION AS HISTORY

One cannot claim for Taylor the same status as accorded to creative writers like Thackeray, Kipling and Forster. Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar is more than just to him when he says that "His writings showed talent and industry rather than originality and genius" (1). He was a mediocre artist with more versatility than inspiration, with an abundance of source materials but inadequate formalistic control. Nonetheless he holds a unique place in the history of Anglo-Indian fiction for, "It was useless to go beyond Taylor's time for the beginning of fiction on India."

(Bruce 1) Of course William Browne Hockley's Pandurang Hari or The Memoirs of a Hindoo was published in 1826; Sir Walter Scott's The Surgeon's Daughter in 1827 and Thomas Henry Otley's Rustam Khan in 1831. These novels as James C. Simons observes ,

were fictional excursions into the Orient by men who possessed little real knowledge or sympathy for the Indian peoples; their ways and their history. None of these earlier writers achieved a reasonably balanced presentation of Indian culture; either they buried it beneath the exotic extravagance of romance or condescendingly exposed it's more sordid and seamy aspects. It was not until Philip Meadows Taylor's arrival on the English literary scene in the late 1830s that we find a man fully qualified by personal experience... to write intelligently and accurately of the rich experience offered by the vast Indian sub-continent. (154)

None can possibly question Taylor's place as the most remarkable exponent of Indian history and character. Despite its characterization as historical romances by critics, it is worth noting that the prime motive behind his novels seems to be to present the cultures of India to the West. He uses history as a backdrop, at times as a mere peg to hang on his impressions of the social milieu and personal reminiscences together with bits of the mysterious East.

The predilections, prejudices and influences of the Victorian age are clearly stamped on Taylor's novels. Among the Victorians, Dickens, Trollope and Thackeray seem to have influenced Taylor to some extent. His immediate models were Hockley and Scott. The Confessions of a Thug, Taylor's first novel, is modelled on Hockely's Pandurang Hari. Both these novels have villains as heroes and the incidents are based on the social life of the day. Fortunately the similarities end there. Ralph Darnell, the first of the historical trilogy exhibits several Dickensian traits. Taylor's description of a London storm almost sounds like the storm and wreck in David Copperfield. Similarly Mrs. Smithson's delirious death scene is reminiscent of Paul's death in Dombey and Son. The references to the themes of life, death and heaven also have Dickensian echoes about them though it might be a mere coincidence.

Sir Geoffrey is a distant cousin of Mr. Cratchit while Mr. Peed and his clerk Mr. Wilson seem to be characters lifted from the pages of Bleak House³. How far Dickens influenced Taylor may be adjudged from the following mock serious passage :

Of George Elliot's pleasant company they were deprived by one of his majesty's officers, with a certain paper in his hand, which need not be specified, who requested his company till payment should be arranged of a sum recorded; and as Mr. Elliot was as he expressed it "run dry" and had not even the means of being squeezed, often successful in a sponging house, left in him, he had gone into Winter quarters which were usually hard bound, in his Gracious Majesty's Fleet, and was not likely to emerge from thence for sometime to come. (Ralph Darnell 384)

Even in other stylistic devices Taylor was probably indebted to the greatest of the Victorian novelists as is evident from the opening lines in 'A Noble Queen'⁴ : "Queen Elizabeth reigned in England. In the Dekhan, King Boorhan Nizam Shah ruled over Ahmednagar and King Ibrahim Adil Shah II over the kingdom of Bejapore. They were rivals." The short cryptic sentences are like the ones in the opening passage of 'A Tale of Two Cities'. But Dicken's passage stresses paradox. "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair." (Dickens 1)

His indebtedness to Trollope is attested to by Taylor himself. "I think if I had the power and imagination of

Mr. Trollope, I might find materials enough for a very spicy detail of male and female doings and sayings during this period. ... but as I am not Mr. Trollope, I regret I cannot avail myself of them, on this occasion, and might pursue the tenor of the history I am recording."

(Seeta 371) In fact Taylor in his account of the male and female doings of the Anglo-Indian society of Norpooor approximates Trollope's art in Barsetshire novels. Like Trollope Taylor too, sees "art primarily as a craft, the artist as a maker, not an inspired historian creating an illusion of naive verisimilitude." (Kinciad vii)

No historical novelist can possibly escape the influence of Sir Walter Scott. Several critics have described Taylor as Sir Walter Scott of India. Following the father of historical fiction who through his novels illustrated Scottish history and manners Taylor too portrayed India's cultural scene of three centuries or more. His novels represent an imaginative view of individuals and masses as they are affected by public struggles and social upheavals of the time. They present to our eyes the brave defence of Ahmednagar by Chandbibbi, the clash of Hindu and Muslim powers in the Deccan, the brutal atrocities and vain ambitions of Tippoo Sultan, Clive's intrigues and daredevilry, the agonies of 1857 and the countless freaks, follies and fashions of the bygone days. His works readily fit into John Buchan's

definition of historical novels in their attempt "to reconstruct the life and recapture the atmosphere of an age other than those of the writer." (qtd. in Mansukhani 190)

In the 1830s there were a number of Scott imitators who undertook to introduce the British reading public to various aspects of alien cultures. Taylor with his inherent strengths and weaknesses was closer to Scott than his other contemporaries :

Taylor brought back to the historical romance a sense of personal familiarity, based on a first hand experience with the customs and manners of the people depicted that was lacking in the historical romance of other Victorian novelists who also took Scott as their mentor. Taylor's novels capture the strengths and not just the weakness of Scott's fictions : the realistic and sympathetic depiction of setting and culture; the ability to present noteworthy minor characters, drawn with vigour from the middle and lower classes of society; a colloquial liveliness in much of the dialogue and a careful eye for the more picturesque qualities of regional life. While his heroes and heroines are sometimes the idealized stereotypes found in sentimental fiction, many of his minor characters drawn from Indian society carry the conviction of life... Taylor's fictional world then, like that of Scott, is peopled with both the credible and the incredible. There is an abundant amount of grain mixed in with the chaff and that could never be said for the historical romances of Scott's other professed followers such as G.P.R. James and William Harrison Ainsworth. (Simons 156)

Moreover it seems to be more than a mere coincidence that Taylor made use of some of the very social themes found in Scott. The bandit gang in Tara is similar to the robber clan headed by Donald Lean Bean in Waverley, while Tara

herself is a complex and memorable creation in the manner Scott's Jeannie Deans is. In Guy Mannering Scott bases his story on the horoscope of the first Bertram child as cast by Mannering, a student of astrology. Taylor taking a step ahead of Scott makes the horoscopolical predictions for 1757 and 1857 about the fate of the English and Indians the very base of Ralph Darnell and Seeta respectively. Similarly General Smithson's social stigma of illegitimacy and his thwarted love affair with the daughter of Sir Ralph Darnell can be traced to The Antiquary where the theme of illegitimacy plays a similar role in the case of Lovel and his love for Isabella. Yet other similarities between Scott and Taylor will be pointed out later in this study.

The primary inspiration behind Taylor's historical romances is seldom a historical event. In fact when he turns to objective history it is neither history nor fiction. "A Retrospect" in Seeta and "Local History" in A Noble Queen for instance, would sound too dull even in histories. Fortunately most of the time he sticks to the imaginative interpretation and transformation of history. This in turn is triggered off by some personal encounter or other. Story of My Life throws up valuable insight into the making of his fictional world. On a visit to Tuljapore the beauty of the locale and stories about its past fired his imagination. The result was Tara.

Similarly the sight of a beautiful widow in one of the trials he conducted prompted him to write Seeta. The jungles of Gudalur which he visited along with his wife in 1834-1837 to regain his health made indelible impressions on his mind and he immortalised it in his second novel Tippoo Sultan. The festivals of Mohrum and Ramnavami, the rituals and ablutions of both Hindus and Muslims, the feast of dolls, the charms for the sick and a thousand other details which occur and recur in his novels were all born out of his first hand experience. His method was to project contemporary scenes, sights and incidents into the past. Seeta and Confessions of a Thug are the only two novels which can be termed as contemporaneous with Taylor's service in India. The others are tales from the past resurrected and coloured by his imagination. A single incident in Taylor's life undergoes several metamorphoses. For example, on his way to Hyderabad he was taken ill with possibly jungle fever, and lovingly nursed in the house of a Muslim Talukdar of Fargi. All his heroes pass through such an experience made all the more appealing by the twin presence of love and beauty. Abbaskhan is nursed by Zora; Cyril Brandon recovers under the loving care of Seeta, and Ralph is supported by two pairs of loving arms. In an inverse order Tara is anxiously watched over by Fazil. It is safe to conclude that Taylor's novels reflect and

refract the deep personal impressions and reminiscences that lay in his subconscious and his fictional world casts silhouettes of sublimated desires, idealizations, wish-fulfillment and day dreams. In the words of his friend Henry Reeve, "His various literary productions... are not so much works of imagination as living pictures of the men and women amongst whom he dwelt. There is hardly a character in these volumes that was not drawn from some real person whom he had seen and known in his various expeditions or, in the repression of crime." (XXXV) Like his mentor Trollope, Taylor lived with his characters in reality and in imagination and believed that "he can never know them well, unless he can live with them in the full reality of established intimacy. They must be with him as he lies down to sleep and as he wakes up from his dreams." (qtd. in Wall 130)

Taylor's novels are thus a mixture of history, auto-biographia and romance, the autobiographical subtly merged into the romantic. No wonder then that their plots are loose, baggy structures like those of Dickens's novels. His "stories are essentially human, dealing with the play of elemental passions and sentiments like friendship, loyalty, faith, idealism against a historical background." (Mansukhani 208) To an extent they are theme-oriented rather than story oriented. Once Taylor had a theme in his mind,

the plot built itself around it, in the form of stories within stories. He seems to have followed the oriental method of story telling which makes use of asides, digressions, subplots, animated dialogues, thrilling actions interposed with enthralling scenic descriptions. Another early Anglo-Indian temptation to which he occasionally yields is to turn his heroes and heroines into mere tourists. Ameer Ali and his thugs during their progress through Hyderabad, Secunderabad, Badar, Berar and Ellichpore are more of tourists than thugs. Since to the audience at home the descriptions of mosques, palaces and forts would be interesting, Taylor packs into his novels as much description as possible. His heroes have often a poetic eye. Ameer Ali, though a thug has a soft corner for the Bombay beach :

I used to lie on the grass of the plain before the fort, and pass hours in a sort of dreamy ecstasy, looking on its varying aspects like that of a beautiful woman, now all smiles, again agitated by the passions of love-or listening to its monotonous and sullen roar, as wave after wave bowed its crest and broke into sparkling foam on the white sand. (The Thug 334)

The reason for many of the digressions in his novels is to be found in Taylor's pre-occupation with the "English interests of the time" as testified in his preface to Ralph Darnell. "In this volume I have endeavoured to follow the events and actions of history and to invest it with such English interests as was in many instances common to the period." (1)

Again as a romancer with an implicit belief in poetic justice Taylor accentuates history's romantic overtones even in the face of its tragic under currents. His fictional world is peopled by characters who hold out romantic possibilities. Of course the historic personages cast their shadows on each age as well as on the private fortunes of the novels' fictional characters. They are there like statues in a museum surrounded by the halo of history and enveloped in the crust of popular myths, not easily pliable in the hands of a novelist. Clive, Shivaji, Afzul Khan, Mir Kasim and Tippoo Sultan appear as human epicentres directing the course of history :

The great historical personality is the representative of an important and significant movement embracing large sections of the people. He is great because his personal passion and personal aim coincide with this great historical movement, because he concentrates within himself its positive and negative sides, because he gives to these popular strivings their standard bearer in good and evil. (Lukacs 38)

On Taylor's part there was no deliberate attempt at historical calcification or dehumanisation of historical characters. However it should be noted that Taylor did not always rise above the common English prejudice against most Indian heroes. His picture of Tippoo Sultan, who opposed British dominion in South India is drawn too darkly. His cruelty, duplicity and his barbarous treatment of the English prisoners are given undue weightage. In the light of modern

historical researches,

the Tippoo of real life was neither the blood thirsty monster of Wilk's nor the defiant hero of Dodwell; nor an ideal administrator nor an apostle of toleration. Tippoo is a complex character, a mixture of the sordid and the sublime. Taylor does not make him either heroic or tragic. He is for Taylor as for Englishmen in general an abominable and unredeemed savage. (Bhupal Singh 47)

In Ralph Darnell Taylor, contrary to historical facts unfairly places the full blame for the incident of the Black Hole of Calcutta upon Nawab Suraj-ul-Dowlah whereas it was the work of his subordinates. Again the picture of Shivaji in Tara is none too flattering. In such portrayals Taylor seems to follow the then prevalent strategies of colonial discourse rather than his own individual descretion. On the other hand, however, he monumentalized and romanticized the epochal events of Indian history confirming his esteem for this land ^{and} its people. He thus counteracted the Anglo-Indian ideas about India and Indians as a famished land and an abject people. Time and again he reminded his readers of their prejudices, misconceptions and misunderstandings about the Indian sub-continent and its people. From this perspective Tod's monumental history The Annals and Taylor's romantic novels seem to have almost the same aesthetic value.

Like his predecessor Scott, he turned his chief attention to the fictional characters and their story. Like Balzac he realised that "the characters of a novel are forced to be more rational than historical characters. The former must be roused to life the latter have already lived." (Lukacs 43) In the well known historical novels of Scott historically unknown or semi-historical characters play the leading roles. Vich Ian Vohr in Waverley, Burley in Old Mortality, and Cedric and Robin in Ivanhoe are characters directly interwoven with the life of the people. Taylor also gives the leading roles in his novels to such figures. In Tara Fazil and Tara are far more important than Shivaji and Jeejibhai. The intrigues of Trimul Moro play a more crucial role than the historically famous treacherous duel between Shivaji and Afzulkhan. In the scheme of Seeta the leaders of the Mutiny, Nanasaheb and the Rani of Jhansi are assigned a minor place when compared to Cyril Brandon and Seeta. Clive fades before General Smithson and the legendary queen Chandbibbi is but a pale reflection before the more carefully drawn characters of Zora and Abbaskhan. Taylor's heroes, however, miss an important aspect of Scott's middle of the road heroes. None of them has a conciliatory role. Scott's heroes enter into human contact with both the warring camps. Waverley, just to cite a single example, a pro-Stuart country squire

keeps his connections with the Hanoverian side as well. Taylor ignores the compositional importance of the mediocre hero and heroines. So the collision of the hostile social forces, he presents, largely remains an academic exercise incapable of touching the responsive chords in his readers. Nor do the conflicts shape the characters of his protagonists. The external conflicts are not internalized so as to become a motive for action, reaction or inaction. His chief protagonists are generally led by a single passion, either hate, or love or retaliation. There is no interpersonal or interparty relationships affected by the historical conflict. In Ralph Darnell a concubine and in Seeta a widow cross over to the opposite camps. They hardly embody a historical crisis but a personal crisis and history becomes a mere backdrop. Seeta is less concerned with the national tragedy of the Mutiny and more concerned with her personal tragedy and the rebellion in her own heart. "The infinite passion and pain of human hearts cause our inner chords to vibrate while the distant rumblings of the mutiny raise no echoes and recall no memories." (Mansukhani 213) Similarly Tara hardly bothers about the Hindu-Muslim tug of war for supremacy. It is her own fate that smotheres her. For both these heroines love is the secure nest in which one can hide from the external vicissitudes. Thus, the absence of "historical dimension" in the delineation of characters makes them less dynamic. A concubine, a widow or a Nabob

could exist in the same way in any other set up.

Furthermore "for literary purposes Taylor's native hearth was only Indian life and character." (Bruce XV) He tried to depict the 18th century England in Ralph Darnell⁶ and the 19th century England in Seeta⁶. However they seem but hazy appendices to the Indian tales. The same can be more or less said of the English characters except General Smithson and Cyril Brandon. According to Bruce, "Taylor probably brought in these English figures in the hope of making his story less strange to readers at home. But he could not then or at any time portray his own country people well." (XIV) His failure is obvious when he depicts the aristocracy. The blue blood Cyril Brandon is a mere shadow of the toiling, benevolent administrator. And Miss Mostyn and Miss Darnell hardly rise above the conventionalities of the times. Taylor however is more successful with the humble English folk like the Smithsons, Cybil and her mother. "Taylor is best at depicting humble and very human character; the meeting of travellers on the road, the rumours of servants, wives who cannot read, the working of the souls of the untaught if not always poor people." (Bruce XIV)

In a similar way, Taylor's assimilation of the eastern semic codes did not go beyond certain cultural stereotypes. His characters follow an articulated pattern of male and

female attributes broadly based on the conventional metaphysical binary opposites. His heroes are by nature active, intelligent, cultured and ruled by their heads while his heroines are passive, sensitive, emotional and generally ruled by their hearts. His view of women was essentially phallogocentric and hence his females exude sweetness, modesty, docility and a degree of intelligence. It needs to be specially noted that his principal heroines are modelled on the logocentric conception of the female as a source of life and inspiration. This view is in turn contrasted by the typically "oriental" phallogocentric conception of women as an instrument of satisfaction, procreation and subjugation particularly in Seeta, Tara and Ralph Darnell. It is intriguing that Taylor never attempted to portray a Hindu hero inspite of his close contact with the Hindus. All his Indian heroes are young, handsome and passionate Muslims, heroic in battle, near feminine in sensibility and delicate in love. Kasim Ali in Tippoo Sultan, Ameer Ali in The Thug, Fazul in Tara and Abbaskhan in A Noble Queen, they all exhibit a kind of mathematical regularity in their responses and reactions. The heroines, chosen flowers of the eastern race, have invariably chiseled features, refined minds and sensitiveness to love and beauty and a strain of the heroines of sentimental comedies to swoon and faint. If Taylor was drawn to the

hardihood of Muslim nobility in the selection of his heroes, he chose his best heroines Tara and Seeta from the enslaved race of Hindu women. They bespeak of his knowledge of the female mind and heart and his respect and sympathy for the educated and cultured women of India. All his characters have a certain predictability in their behavioural patterns since Taylor was not adept at subtle and complex psychological portrayal. Exploration into human motives and ~~revelation~~ of the dark regions of the human consciousness were beyond his range. Nonetheless there is a concentrated effort to invest the crucial steps that the characters take with psychological realism. A tired concubine like Noor-ul-Nissa would willingly love a deliverer, general Smithson. Tara has no choice but be an Ayesha after her escape from suttee. Seeta's gradual change of heart is a bit more complex. She loses her husband and then her healthy son. The ties of duty begin to weaken and the ties of love begin take their place. The concern of a chivalrous English Officer for her safety and her concern for his health eventually blossom into a beautiful love. The gradual attraction of their minds rather than their bodies sets in motion waves that never will cease, never let them rest. Her agitated mind and her unfulfilled desires are revealed to aunt Ella in a series of dreams and mutterings in sleep. Both Seeta and Brandon try to stem the tide, to nip their love in the bud but to

no avail. After a series of agonies, doubts and misgivings the two are united. Without such attempts to reveal their inner depths Taylor's characters would have been mere puppets tossed about in the social and political under-currents of the time.

Generally Taylor's method of characterization is from the physical to the psychological, in that order. When a character steps into the action of a novel he or she is introduced with a wealth of physical details. In Taylor's scheme of things a pretty face is a sure index to the disposition of the individual. Julia Wharton, Constance Darnell and Grace Mostyn with their Anglo-Saxon features and complexions are made-to-order beauties. Maria, the pious Portuguese beauty hardly differs from them. The Indian heroines like Seeta, Tara and Zora are also gracefully sketched. The Afghan girl Sozun is however an exception. She is a happy union of feminine sweetness and male heroism. Taylor's obsession with beauty makes him forget that it can be a cause of jealousy among his women. Anundabai, Tara's mother, in her craving for a son wants Radha to be a second wife to Vyas Sashtri. She entices her not so enthusiastic husband with a detailed description of Radha's feminine assets. Sozun, who fears Julia to be a clear rival for her Sultan's affections, loves and protects her. Taj-ul-Nissa, the young queen, coaxes Maria to be a co-wife with her. Generosity to this extent among beautiful women is quite unheard of.

Beauty is also treated as an instant confidence generator. At the mere sight of Maria, Zora surrenders her heart and affection to her. So does Noor-ul-Nissa to Julia. Such confidences among the entrapped women are quite the normal thing. Still the haste with which Taylor executes these rapports make them unreal. He bestows less attention on the male characters, though follows the same scheme of characterization and the same formulae. Though there is an attempt to accentuate the male characteristics of hardihood, heroism and chivalry, they seem to be weighed over by idealized qualities and conventionalized responses to people and situations. They lack the necessary quantum of human frailties to make them really human. Abbaskhan, Fazil, Cyril and General Smithson are too strait jacketed, ideal subjects and administrators. Their opposites Osman Beg, Trimul, Asrael Pande and the rest are too far gone in crime and so beyond the pale of redemption. Taylor juxtaposes the virtuous with the immoral to show in relief the sterling qualities of the former. As against the angelic Tara there is the vile Ganga who is devoted not to Kali but to the pleasures of the flesh. The refined heroine Ameena is contrasted with the earthy kumnoo. Maria's piety and purity shine out against Diego's lust and worldiness. Similarly Abbaskhan's unwavering fidelity to Ahmednagar through all the temptations of political horse-trading stands out in relief against the background of Osman Beg's persistent

treachery. Besides these studies in contrasts Taylor also throws together similar characters to augment each other, so to say. Maria and Zora, Grace and Seeta, Tara and Zyna, Julia and Noor-ul-Nissa are such pairs who cling together amidst the turmoils of political and social upheavals under the protecting shadow of a deliverer hero.

Taylor's fictional men and women neither weave histories nor force historical outcome. Primarily they weaves the web of their romantic lives against the backdrop of historical crises. Judging from the footage devoted to and the care bestowed on tales of love, Taylor should be called a chronicler of eastern romance rather than a historical novelist. His "fidelity, like that of Scott, is chiefly to the manners and customs of the region rather than to the fine points of history." (Simons 158) Each novel pivots on a romantic pair and the trajectory of their love forms the essential action of the story. The proairetic codes that govern the sequence of action in Taylor's novels seem to obey a recurring pattern. The action of each novel is initiated within the perimeters of an epochal moment such as the fall of Beejapore, the rise of the Marathas, the rise of the British Raj or the mutiny of 1857. The historical moment is in turn dominated by a monumental hero like Shivaji, Clive or Chandbibi. Neither of these exterior forces; the historical moment or the historical monument has

any intimate relationship with the protagonists and their blossoming love which forms the kernel of every plot.

Their romance is tried and chastened by contrary forces of race, religion, society or villanous individuals. The resolution of the plot culminates invariably in an inter-religious or inter-racial union. Thematically every novel seems to affirm that love is the unction of life, the connecting link between castes, creeds and even races.

"Taylor's passionate search for connections leads him to striking discoveries in the possibilities of human relationships. His particular delight was to break down the barriers between individuals and communities and reveal the common humanity that was unmistakably there." (Amur 93) This is his favourite theme, repeated again and again till it becomes the invariable motif of his craft. In Taylor's philosophy of love, beauty has the topmost place. Zora's good looks infect several with love besides Abbaskhan. The young king of Bijapore takes a fancy to Maria solely because she has a winsome face. Tara's attraction too is based on the singularity of her frame. Neither Ameena nor Noor-ul-Nissa has any attainment other than what is bestowed by mother nature. Only in Seeta the physical and the intellectual meet in a happy union.

Again in Taylor's conception of women ^{and love}/conjugalit^y predominates over maternity. None of the heroines is endowed with the halo of motherhood. Seeta, initially a

widowed mother, loses her child prior to her union with Cyril Brandon. Moreover the conjugality he describes is devoid of sexual undertones. Verbal love is all that Taylor would allow to his heroes and heroines in the true tradition of Victorian novelists. The awakening of love in his heroines coincides with a desire for freedom and the hope for a new life. Tara, a declared suttee dares to dream of love and life :

So a new life, a new desire for life was growing within her and increased day by day. Did she endeavour to check it. No, then it was too delicious... Before it the old home was fading a way, the forms of father and mother already becoming dim and shadow, as belonging to the past. The old temple occupations, the preparations for daily duty, were being supplanted by other feelings undecided yet but ineffably tender(388-9).

Seeta too yearns for a love hitherto unknown, an experience she never had before. After her husband's death, and after her meeting with Cyril Brandon she muses; "Ah! she had never known it till now, never could have known it with him. She had known no love-now she began to yearn for it." (51)

Love to her and others like her, also meant a spiritual freedom, a release from the fetters of an old world. For Moor-ul-Nisse it is the escape from a harem to a loving twosome home; from the slavery of lust to the abandon of love. Her marriage to General Smithson is a peep into a totally alien world of conjugal love. "And when she compared the steady affection, the moral principle and the active mind

of her husband, with what she knew of the sloth, the sensuality, and immorality of her countrymen she felt herself raised to the one more entirely as she comprehended and contrasted with the other." (Ralph Darnell 442) Her affection was returned in full and remembered to the last by her English husband. "For eighteen years - a little soft face-rested here - here on my breast, and nestled close to my heart in such quiet love-as I thank God-to have been permitted to enjoy on earth... and she died here peacefully sleeping away" (Ralph Darnell 446). The union between Cyril Brandon and Seeta is more idealistic and idyllic. The gradual awakening of love between the beautiful Indian widow and the dashing English officer, its inevitable fulfilment and tragic consummation making way to a new yet conventional union are certainly the highest points of Taylor's art. Both Seeta and Cyril go through agonising moments of doubt and anxiety. For Cyril the issue is more complicated since he had to make a choice between the highly accomplished Grace Mostyn and the attractive Indian widow. These two appeal to the two different facets of his personality. He marries Seeta and in her he discovers not only beauty and charm but also a rich mind and delicate sensibility distinctively eastern. In fact Taylor grants his idealized persona the best of both the worlds. After Seeta's death he marries Grace and claims the right place in his aristocratic lineage. Cyril Brandon, Taylor's image symbolizes the Anglo-Indian male

consciousness at cross-roads, debating the issue whether to accept the Indian female as its counterpart or not. His is not a singular case. It happened time and again. The idea of taking a mistress was more or less an answer to a biological need. The acceptance of eastern female as life's partner, as an answer to the male psychological needs, however, was something more serious and contrary to the western social and religious compulsions. Probably this agitated the narrator's mind too.

Tara and Fazul are another such pair conceived in a romantic mode. If Tara's love for the Muslim noble is born out of admiration, Fazul's love for her is inspired by his chivalry towards a damsel in distress. Beneath the coating of almost cloyish sentimentality there is the inner core of mutual devotion and loyalty. Taylor's other novels are also woven around true lovers whose paths never seem to run smooth. Even the hard hearted thug Ameer Ali engineers two elopements. His first affair is with Zora which has all the qualities of a passionate, young love. "I was enraptured. Zinat had left us to ourselves and we sat, my arm around my beloved, while she nestled close to me, and we murmured to each other those vows of love which hearts like ours could alone frame and give utterance too." (The Thug 135) Of course the Thug is not a devoted lover like Fazul or General Smithson. Soon after his affair with

Zora he falls into a second love tangle with Azeema and carries her off to be happy ever after. Love in Taylor's novels is not just the stuff of romance alone, it is a synthesizing force, bringing about a sense of order in an otherwise chaotic situation. This synthesis operates at different stages; meeting of hearts in mixed marriages, meeting of minds at the cultural level and meeting of individuals at the social level. Everything is resolved by love. This is the underlying format of his novels.

Several Indian and British critics have found fault with the mixed marriages in Taylor's novels on different grounds. Henry Bruce finds General Smithson's marriage to a widow from a Nawab's harem out of taste. There is no hint whatever that the general, after his affairs with Constance, Sybil and Julia, will go for such an alliance which strikes the readers as a bolt from the blue. The only plausible reason one can think of is Smithson's inability to establish his lineage among the aristocracy and the shifting dispositions of the English women he comes in contact with. Even the domestic bliss that follows cannot totally justify such a patch-work marriage. Professor Bhupal Singh and Dr. Mansukhani pass over the Smithson Noor-ul-Nissa alliance in silence but they turn vociferous about the union between Tara and Fazul and Seeta and Brandon :

Such beautiful and virtuous women as Tara and Seeta have always existed in India but they would not have behaved as they did; particularly in the age to which they belonged. Tara who is dedicated to Kali and offers to become Sati, may wed a Mohammedan gallant who saves her. But such marriages are not common. The effect is as bad as it would be if Scott were to marry Rebecca to Ivanhoe. The marriage of Seeta to Cyril Brandon is still more improbable. Seeta is a Hindu widow and very religious. If Tara's marriage is improbable, Seeta's is almost impossible. Our objection to this marriage is not like that of the English reviewers who objected to mixed marriages on grounds of prestige. Our objection is on the ground of improbability. (Bhupal Singh 135)

Bhupal Singh's objection seems to rest on the deeply pious attitudes of these two women, which makes such marriages impossible. He seems to imply that ordinary and irreligious women might contract such inter-racial and inter-religious marriages but not women of pious disposition. History however, shows that several Indian women of all castes and creeds and of varying levels of piety had married Indians of alien faith and even Europeans. So the question of improbability seems to be laboured. Moreover the merit of the cases should be decided against the amount of psychological realism as shown in the novels rather than sociological history. The love between Tara and Fazul and Seeta and Cyril is beautifully drawn giving due weightage to the modesty of Indian ladies and the religious and social barriers between the two sets of lovers. Moreover, their marriages are viewed from religious, social and even personal angles. There is a kind of inevitability about them.

Seeta's marriage to Cyril Brandon, for example, is prompted by neither the cravings of the flesh nor the desire to escape from the stigma of widowhood. Their's is a marriage of minds. Critics however do not forgive her for such an alliance. Bhupal Singh brands Seeta's marriage as an impossible union when viewed from the angle of her devotion to her religion. The cold attachment of the soul to a distant deity can be and is often offset by the overpowering sentiments of love and attachment of the heart to a being of flesh and blood. Taylor presents a love which in spite of devotion to one's religion overlooks the boundaries of religion and race. The slow beginning and blossoming of such a love and its readiness for supreme sacrifice are convincingly portrayed. As a matter of fact Taylor does not overlook the strong ties of religion though his love for the simple teachings of the Bible comes to bear upon Seeta's character.

Anglo-Indian critics condemned Cyril-Seeta union as dangerous and doubtful due to their belief in the superiority of European blood and consideration of ethnic purity. Taylor was very much aware of these and discusses at length the social, cultural and interpersonal implications of inter-racial marriages. The white women at Noorpoor symbolise the Anglo-Indian attitude while Lord Hilton and the Brandon family show the corresponding attitude at home. The doubts

and anxieties that sway Cyril's and Seeta's minds and Cyril's attraction to Grace Mostyn epitomize the tremours produced deep down in the individual as a result of such alliances. Indian critics also in the main endorse this view. However there is another edge to their opposition. Taylor diametrically opposes the Hindu notions about widows and widow re-marriages and unconsciously poses a challenge to the old order. Both Tara and Seeta outgrow⁷⁰ their assigned role of a tame Hindu widow and accept non-Hindu husbands against the prescribed norms of the society. Hence it is hardly surprising if Dr. Mansukhani advances the following opinion. "It appears that Taylor did not realise the significance of renunciation by a Hindu widow from the orthodox point of view; he advocates re-marriages of widows as the only alternative to a life of sex-starvation, social humiliation, economic dependence and aimless living. His remarks on the Hindu ideal of marriages - an arrangement without preliminaries of love and courtship and on Hindu credulity and idolatory are the result of an unfavourable view of the Hindu culture and religion." (165-6) Surprisingly Dr. Mansukhani himself praises Taylor time and again for his catholic mentality and sympathetic understanding of India. When a European applauds Indian character and society inspite of its obvious failures he is said to be favourably disposed, but the moment he points out those defects he is unfavourably disposed. If Taylor did not understand India who understood

her? The orthodox point of view about widowhood is a male view point with the womanhood in the woman left out. It is a bondage without opportunities for channelizing a woman's energies and sublimating her inner most feelings. It appears that Taylor tried to look at widowhood from a woman's point of view and not from the stance of male prerogatives. For him the Indian woman is not a stereotyped, unintelligent and mindless entity but an equal to man. Seeta emerges as a living character because she steps out of the traditional mode. As an artist Taylor shows the ideal rather than the real. His heroes, especially his heroines step beyond their time-bound and custom bound walls of behaviour and thought. Tara takes the bold step of a religious conversion and re-marriage. Seeta on account of her alliance with a European, her knowledge of literature, her intuitions and ideas certainly looks beyond her age.

Such social concern was very much a part of the Victorian novel. Yet it is difficult to hang onto Taylor the mantle of a pioneer in Hindu-Muslim unity or to describe him as a harbinger of social reforms as Professor Wishwanatham does; "Taylor's Tara is a pioneer in social reform and Hindu-Muslim unity and an implicit censor on sati, virgin widowhood and moorlees." (43) It is possible to say that Taylor had great sympathy for the hapless Hindu and Muslim women caught in the shackles of society. However he did not

advocate any violent reforms in the Hindu society. In Seeta he explicitly expresses himself against the "new fangled laws" of the government which interfered with the religious and social life of the people. His was a silent protest against virgin widowhood, Sati and Murli. He confined himself to remarrying his widow heroines to men of other creeds. He was far from being a vociferous advocate of social reforms though he was so for agrarian reforms. It is difficult to judge Taylor's motive in portraying Hindu-Muslim or Hindu-Christian conjugal union from this distance of time. It is certain that he expressed himself against the evils prevalent in the Hindu society of those days. However, it is quite uncertain whether he wanted to sound any warning to the Hindus to move with the times. Udayon Misra in The Raj in Fiction advances the following viewpoint :

Perhaps in presenting the image of the emancipated Hindu widow, Taylor had in mind the winds of change that were blowing across the country during the two decades or so before the outbreak of 1857 and the efforts of enlightened Indians like Raja Rammohan Roy and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar to bring about a radical change in Hindu society. In uniting the unconventional and beautiful Hindu widow with the uninhibited and unprejudiced Englishman Taylor attempted to put forward the view that a sympathetic and understanding England would find it much easier to come closer to India which had shed some, if not all, of its feudal prejudices. (96)

Taylor's fame as an Anglo-Indian novelist largely rests on his ability in articulating the eastern idiom. His use of

Indianisms - Indian words, phrases and idioms - is only a facet of it. Resurrecting a past nearly always involves modernizing of feelings, ideas and thoughts combined with archeological faithfulness towards things and customs that are of no concern to us. Taylor faced the problem which every historical novelist faces. "Is the novelist to use the speech of the day or the speech of no day, the speech of unspecified yesterday." (Mansukhani 190) His solution to this problem was simplistic. He used the language of his day both English and Indian. However his attempt at Indianizing English does not stop with the use of a few Indian words or idioms. It is subtler and deeper than the linguistic layer. It is the ability to think and feel like an Indian and if that is not always possible to arrive at an approximation of the Indian mode of thought and response. Taylor's peculiarities - his best and worst qualities - as a novelist mainly have their origin in his conscious effort to feel, to think and express like an Indian. There are occasions when this deliberate straining after effects and pseudo-realism, invest his writing with a certain artificiality.

All the same Taylor's proximity to the Indian Idiom was deeper than that of other Anglo-Indians who were merely birds of passage or of those who looked at the plains and the masses from their holiday resorts. Taylor had no

Europeans within his call and had to move among the people he ruled. Through study and contact he attained a near mastery over the symbolic codes of eastern language and literature as well as the referential or cultural codes of eastern social structure. He uses Indian imagery and symbolism with an ease that would make him an equal of any native author of his day. His fiction reveals a predilection for Indian mythological and literary symbols. At the same time it bears testimony to his deep insight into the prismatic fabric of Indian life with its superstitions : omens, horoscopes and charms; its social stigmas : child brides, virgin widows and suttees; its romantic hues : murlies, harems and zenanas and its annual cycle of rituals and festivals. The effects of this assimilation of the eastern symbolic and referential codes are seen all along his novels. Before Clive's attack on Calcutta, for instance, a Dervesh foretells Suraj-ud-Daula's initial victory as well as his eventual defeat paving the way for a hundred years rule by the British :

He (the Muslim priest) had heard of the astrological combinations and after his rude fashion tested them himself and told Ralph they all believed the Feringees would be kings soon and indeed everywhere; the hundred years to come of Feringee's rule were ringing through the land. (Ralph Darnell 331)

Similarly after the attack on the devotees at Tuljamata temple Paharsingh, the outlaw, cautions the Muslim Maulwi

about the dire consequences to follow. She (Kali) would ultimately win ending the rule of the Mohammedans in the Deccan. Likewise the historical backdrop for Seeta is the predictions for Samvat 2014 (A.D. 1857) and their eventual fulfilment.

From astrology to dreams and omens it is but a small step. Taylor seems to abide by the formula that lovers should get dreams, especially the socially inhibited lovers of the East. This pre-occulation with dreams, however, takes its origin from his own personal experience. Before leaving England he was in love but could not marry since he was not financially settled in life. Later in India he was, it seems, prevailed upon to marry Miss Palmer. After her death his thought turned again to his first love. In 1848 while sleeping in his camp at Dewar Kadea he saw his fiancée enter his tent crying "do not let me go, do not let me go." Subsequently he wrote to his father about his dream. His father replied to say that on the very day of his dream his first love was married to another person. By a remarkable coincidence, the dream element crept into all his novels. Sozun, a veritable amazon and Ralph, the militarized version of Taylor, share several dreams. In A Noble Queen Abbaskhan dreams of Zora and concludes, "Then Zora has not forgotten me and that was why she came to me in that sweet dream last night." (151) Zora too is granted the dreams of her choice.

She tells Maria, "Angels of Paradise seemed to be tending to me and there were flowers around me and all because I lay in thy arms like a child." (60) Nowhere in his fiction dreams and omens are assigned such importance as in Seeta. Dreams play a positive role in revealing the budding love between Seeta and Cyril. Aunt Ella detects it from Seeta's soft mutterings, tears and sighs while asleep. Tara has dreams of another kind. She sees visions of Kali while Moro has visions of Tara. Occasionally the dream becomes a premonition of the events to follow. Such is the case of the hallucination of Tippoo Sultan before the final onslaught by the British troops. Taylor in his fiction used dreams as an Indian writer or film director would normally use. It could have been the adoption of an eastern literary convention.

Taylor was also adept at the use of omens and eastern literary and religious imagery. The self-effacing love of Seeta and Savitri emerges as the prime motifs, the figures in the carpet, in Tara and Seeta. In both these novels several scenes are woven around omens or symbols. In Seeta for instance, there is the Gaomukh scene where the ladies throw garlands into the surging waters above a cataract. Seeta's garland is caught and broken on the rocks while that of Grace floats away smoothly. This turns out to be a pointer to the future. Seeta's love is destined to be

short-lived and tragic while Grace's love is to last long. Similarly in the same novel during the thanksgiving service a shaft of light falls upon Seeta and stays there as if denoting the purity of her soul and her impending call from heaven. The massacre at the Tuljamata Temple significantly takes place on a dark newmoon (amavas) day. In an earlier work like Tara Taylor is not quite sure of disguising art. Not content with the use of openly suggestive symbols, he occasionally goes on to explicate them for his readers. Tara, just to cite a single instance, happens to see some butterflies playing among the flowers. Suddenly a dragon fly carries away one of the butterflies and the dragon fly is in turn carried off by a bird. Tara interprets this omen to herself : "A thought came into my mind, she said sadly, 'that I was the butterfly sporting among the flowers and he the fierce glistening insect that darted upon it and bore it away. But then "Mother" the bird came and took both. Why was that?" (Tara 289)

While encoding the nineteenth century Indian ethos, Taylor handled the eastern symbolic and referential codes with an expert's touch. Yet the Indian male and female psyche largely remained an intractable territory to him. He seems to have had a mistaken notion about eastern sentimentality. The 19th century novel is bound to appear to us as sentimental. Even if one transports oneself into the

world of Dickens, Thackeray and Maria Edgeworth, Taylor's sentimentality at times seems sickly. Apart from the very common symptoms of sobs, tears, sighs, screams and shrieks his favourite weapon seems to be the fainting fit, probably an influence of Indian courtly writing. His women are made of such stuff that they faint at least a couple of times in the course of a novel. Tara like Pamela is saved from Moro's lascivious arms by a timely fainting fit. Though her swooning before her own funeral pyre (Sati) is understandable, her second descent into insensibility in the Pratapgarh temple falls just beyond the ordinary gamut of female emotions. So is the case with Zora who faints out of sheer joy as she runs away with her new found lover Ameer Ali. In "A Noble Queen" Abbaskhan a young Muslim noble is severely wounded and brought to Naldrug where he is tenderly cared for by Zora, the grand-daughter of a Dervesh. Later in the story the strangers grow to love each other. Still, there is hardly any reason for Zora to sob and weep while watching her would-be lover who is yet a stranger to her. Taylor is quite free with tears and sobs but not so free with laughter and mirth a primary distinction between him and Dickens. This streak of sentimentality more often than not undermines the effect which the novelist intends. It is particularly so in the relationship between his female characters. The more than instant friendships between Zora and Maria or Julia and Noor-ul-Nissa, bespeak of a lack of

psychological insight into interpersonal relationship, a fault which he greatly avoids in his last novel Seeta. A soft skin and soft blue eyes alone will not make a person a confidant of someone at the first sight. It presupposes a little more knowledge of each other. The same lopsidedness is seen in the case of male characters too. The graph of their sensibility stretches between the extreme points of knightly hardihood of the battlefield and sweet sentimentality of the hearth. Middle points are rare. Even if one grants that the orientals are more imaginative and sentimental than the occidentals, Taylor's characters still have a false ring about them.

If Taylor could not effectively portray the internal world of his characters, he was an expert at portraying the external world they walked. He could paint three things admirably; the scenes of natural wonder, the scenes of battle and the scenes of quite love. His locale are graphic enough to give the body of time its form and leisure. He writes spontaneously, exuberantly when faced with the beauty or the mystery of nature. At his touch the hills, in the Western ghats, for example attains a new glow ;

When in the rich colours of the past
 rising vapours, the mountains glow like fire,
 and peak and precipice, forest and glen are
 bathed-in gold and crimson light... the naked
 heights standing apart like islands glisten
 with rosy tints, while the mist itself as yet
 dense and undisturbed lies wrapped around
 their bases, filling every ravine and valley
 and glittering lake, a sea of molten silver.
 (Tara 402)

Mountains, cataracts, valleys, lakes, mornings and evenings seem to specially attract Taylor. Every novel contains some memorable passages of natural description. Here too Taylor has a tendency to overdo things. At times one does not find a valid reason for pages after pages of descriptive language. What is worse, the same scenery occurs repeatedly. The Naldrug cataract, a sight which caught his fancy, is described again and again as seen by Abbaskhan, Osman Beg, Zora, Nayak, Dom Francis and Maria. Side by side with the love of the romantic and the exotic Taylor also had an affinity to the macabre. Alcadama in Ralph Darnell, the riot in Tuljamata temple, the hanging of Osman Beg, and the death of Asrael Pande are blood-curdling indeed. Then there are elements that can be loosely termed as Gothic though this tradition was already dead in England. Hindu harems, Muslim Zenanas, torture chambers, subterraneous shelters, forced marriages, and elopements are elements of a past which he imaginatively re-constructed. It needs to be said that this is no small achievement.

Taylor in his style resembles many of his contemporaries and suffers from their common faults such as prolixity, profusehness and conventional mannerisms. Every chapter is introduced with one or two thematic quotations, mostly from Shakespeare. The theme of 'Seeta' is obviously hinted

with a quotation from Shakespeare's 116th Sonnet, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds/Admit impediments." Authorial intrusions and philosophical sideshows were but customary in his period. The sight of ruins, palaces and vast expanses prompts Taylor to ecstatic musings. Similarly the urge to talk to his readers and guide their thinking is quite an obsession. Bruce comments on this mannerism as follows. "If I had the power and ingenuity of Mr Trollope these conversations of English folk would be more workmen like. If I had the genius of the late Mr Thackeray I could have given a more convincing picture of the 18th century... Taylor caught from them the hateful habit of buttonholing, the dear reader... He exaggerated it well-nigh beyond belief even to "O patient reader (XXVIII).

In spite of his numerous flaws Taylor is certain to live in the history of Anglo-Indian fiction, particularly in his trilogy: Tara (1863), Ralph Darnell (1865) and Seeta (1872). These three novels deal with the three major phases of India's history; the rise of Maratha power under Shivaji and its growth since the second battle of Panipat, 1657; the rise and consolidation of British rule after the battle of Plassey, 1757, and the united efforts of the Hindus and the Muslims to overthrow the British in 1857. In the opinion of Professor Amur,

In the trilogy Taylor's creative self finds free expression and his Indian experience a striking metaphor. The depth and seriousness of Taylor's concern for the cultural encounter and its outcome gives these works a relevance to our own time. Taylor missed greatness as a novelist because his art was not adequate to his theme and vision. (96)

Incidentally while Taylor wrote his trilogy on the three major crises in Indian history at the astrological intervals of a hundred years each, an Indo-Anglian writer, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, was busy on a similar trilogy. His 'Durgesh Nandini', 'Rajsimha' and 'Anand Math' are based on those periods of history during which the oppressed Hindu masses rose against the Pathans, Aurangzeb and Warren Hastings. Chatterjee's novels are deeply psychological and have more complex and cleverly manipulated plots. Both Taylor and Chatterjee blend the real with the romantic, the natural with the supernatural and the common place with the mysterious. Taking into consideration these general trends of the nineteenth century Indo-Anglian and Anglo-Indian fiction, Dr. Mansukhani concludes his appraisal of Taylor with the following tribute :

He was the first Anglo-Indian writer to handle history imaginatively, inspired by the lofty aim of revealing Indian character to his country-men. Missing the scope and fecundity of Scott and yet gaining in local colour, lacking the complexities of Chatterjee's plots and yet scoring in the dramatisation of history, wanting in the realism of Dutt but excelling in idealisation of character, Taylor

stand out as one of the most remarkable
exponents of Indian history and character (195).

If this perspective is shifted to the English literary point of view, one may be permitted to say that Taylor had Scott's perception of history, Dickens's weakness for melodrama, Thackeray's vision of the nineteenth century English Society, Trollope's eye for social gossip and Richardson's empathy for feminine sensibility. His achievements in the field of historical fiction entitle him to a rank as high as that of any of his able contemporaries.

Chapter V

Works Cited

1. Amur, G.S. "Meadows Taylor and the Three Cultures".
A Critical Spectrum : Studies in Several Literatures. Aurangabad : Parimal Prakashan, 1975. 82-96.
2. Bruce, Henry. Introduct. Story of My Life. by Taylor Meadows Philip. ed. Alice M. Taylor. London : oup, 1877: ~~I-xxxii~~
3. Dickens, Charles. A Tale of Two Cities London : OUP, 1949.
4. Fanon, Frantz. The Wretched of the Earth. trans. Constance Farrington. Newyork : Grove Press, 1968.
5. Iyengar, (Dr.) Srinivasa. Foreward. Philip Meadows Taylor : A Critical Study by Govindsingh Mansukhani. Bombay : New Book Co., 1951.
6. Kinciad, James P. Introduction. Barchester Towers by Anthony Trollope. Oxford ; oup, 1980.
7. Lukacs, Georg. The Historical Novel. trans. Hannah and Stanley Michel. 1962. Hammondsworth : Penguin Books, 1976.
8. Mansukhani, Govindsingh. Philip Meadows Taylor : A Critical Study. Bombay : New Book Company, 1951.
9. Misra, Udayon. The Raj in Fiction : A Study of Nineteenth Century British Attitude Towards India. New Delhi : B.R. Publications, 1987.
10. Reeve, Henry. Preface. Story of my Life. by Taylor Meadows Philip. London : oup, 1877.
11. Simmons, James C. "The Novelist as Historian : An Unexplored Tract of Victorian Historiography". Victorian Studies 14, iii Boston : Boston up 1971 : 271-299.

12. Simons, James C. Philip Meadows Taylor and the
Anglo-Indian Novel". Bulletin New York
Public Library 75 No.3 March 1971: 741-160
13. Singh, Bhupal. A survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction.
Oxford : oup, 1920.
14. Taylor, Philip Meadows. Seeta
London : Kegan Paul, Trench,
Trubner and Co., 1872.
15. Tara : A Mahratta Tale. 3 vols. Edinburgh
and London : W.Blackwood and Sons, 1863.
16. Story of My Life ed. Alice M.Taylor.
London : oup, 1877.
17. A Noble Queen : A Romance of Indian History.
London : Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co.,
1892.
18. Ralph Darnell. London : Kegan Paul, Trench
Trubner and Co., 1865.
19. The Confessions of a Thug. London : Richard
Bentley, 1839.
20. Tippoo Sultan : A Tale of the Mysore War.
3 vols. London : Richard Bentley, 1840.
21. Vishwanatham, K. India in English Fiction. Waltair :
Andhra University Press, 1971.
22. Wall, Stephen. "Trollope, Balzac and the Reappearing
Character". Essays in Criticism. London :
15 No 1 Jn. 1975 : 123 -143.