

ENCOUNTERS OF THE COLONIAL KIND

*A study of the emergent Indian nationhood in three texts of British
Imperial contact with India.*

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that this dissertation entitled **Encounters of the Colonial Kind: A study of emergent Indian nationhood in three texts of British Imperial contact with India** submitted by Saon Gupta in partial fulfilment of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** is entirely her own work and has not been considered for the award of any other degree either at this or any other university.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation

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To my dearest

Didua

for introducing my nascent self to the world of ideas...

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CHAPTER - 3

...The House That One Has Built...

According to Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa's interpretation of the Buddhist Apoha theory of cognition and language (Ślokavārtika, p.295), an entity is defined as the negation of its contradictory form. The theory implies that the cognition of the Self necessarily includes the idea of the Other. This is demonstrated in the very definition of the Self as the "not non-Self", where, the universal negative term "non-Self" indicates the category of the Other. In spite of being mutually exclusive, the Self and its Other are therefore constructed within a complex network of dominance and dependence. At the same time, both the categories are in constant need of reiterating their "separateness" and "difference" from each other in order to be able to maintain their identities. Which is why, in a text, wherever the Self attempts to appropriate the Other within its own idiom of representation, it precipitates various sites of dissent. Irrespective of authorial intent, these problematic zones within the text cause the very fabric to rip apart. Under close scrutiny, these inherent ruptures in the formal structure easily reveal themselves. In other words, the authenticity of the resisting colonised voice in a Eurocentric novel created by a Eurocentric author is highly questionable. How a British author represents his perspective of the process of an alien nation's (India's in this case) identity formation is well worth examining.

The three texts chosen for this purpose are, E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), John Masters' *Bhowani Junction* (1954) and Paul Scott's *A Jewel in the Crown* (1966). Forster's *A Passage to India* is about the ultimate impossibility of two different cultures (especially when they are locked within a

relationship of dominance and dependence) to understand each other. If Forster's earlier novel, *Howard's End* (1910), had as its epigraph, the imperative "Only connect", then his last novel, *A Passage to India* might well have had as its epigraph, the interrogative "Can one connect?" The cave scene of *Passage* is demonstrative of how it is linguistically impossible to translate a different culture, simply because one is devoid of a vocabulary with which to express an alien cultural experience. The novel also evokes (but does not directly talk about) two events from British-Indian history which have an important bearing on it. These are, the Mutiny or the first war of independence of 1857 and the Jallianwallah Bagh Massacre of 1919. Even though, writing as he was in the 1920s, Forster did not have certain knowledge about India's independence, the novel contains an amazing anticipation of events to come.

The Jewel in the Crown is the first book of Paul Scott's *Raj Quartet*. The story is presented as the effort of one individual to reconstruct the events (from official versions as well as from gossip and rumour) of 9th August, 1942. This also happens to be the day when Gandhiji's call for the Quit India Movement was endorsed by the Indian National Congress. Earlier in the day of August, 1942, an English missionary lady, Miss Crane is assaulted and her Indian companion is murdered. Later that same day, Daphne Manners, the niece of an ex-Deputy Commissioner, is raped by a gang of unknown assailants following an act of sexual intercourse with her Indian lover, Hari Kumar. Kumar is arrested along with five other acquaintances of his, they are tortured and held without trial. According to Jenny Sharpe, the novel produces an "allegory of imperialism

as rape through a sliding chain of signification from English woman to Indian man to India" (*Allegories of Empire*, p.139). The novel fuses the fate of individuals and of nations into its plot. This love-hate relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is expressed both through metaphors of rape and sexual violence as well as through marriage and romantic love.

John Masters' *Bhowani Junction* is situated in the India of 1946 and centered at the railway junction town of Bhowani. The novel is about the attempts of an Anglo-Indian (or Eurasian) girl, Victoria Jones, to come to terms with her "half-caste" identity in a rapidly changing India. This new emergent nation in the novel is unable to revert to its pre-colonial past and equally unable to metamorphose itself into an European nation. It is left with no choice but that of accepting its hybridized identity. The novel refers to the Quit India Movement and the 1946 Mutiny of the Royal Indian Navy at Bombay, besides the Independence and the Partition to come in 1947. The National Freedom Struggle is portrayed as a conglomeration of diverse, contending factions. The message behind such a portrayal seems to be that British colonial rule was ultimately beneficial for India and her people.

All the three novels are in a way ethnographic texts, by which I mean, that they are the texts by means of which the Europeans represent to themselves their Others (Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.7). They are the products of what Pratt terms the "contact zone". According to her, this is a "social space where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in

highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination (p.4)". Another concept which this project deals with is that of "transculturation", which is a phenomenon of the contact zone. This concept has to do with the ways and means by which "subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture. While subjugated peoples cannot readily control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine ... what they absorb into their own, and what they use it for" (p.6). In Pratt's opinion, much of European literary history consists of a compulsive desire to continually represent its Other to itself. During which act it remains ignorant of the methods through which the peripheral colony determines the metropolitan centre.

Partha Chatterjee in his book, *The Nation and its Fragments*, works with concepts very similar to Pratt's. "The ideological sieve" is his term for the phenomenon of Prattian "transculturation". It is that through which the colony filters European ideas. The other concept with which Chatterjee mainly concerns himself is the way in which Indian nationalism had maintained its difference from the European model by separating the domain of Indian culture into two spheres—

...the material and the spiritual. The claims of Western civilization were the most powerful in the material sphere ... Not only was it undesirable to initiate the West in anything other than the material aspect of life, it was...unnecessary to do so, because in the spiritual domain, the East was superior to the West.

(p.120)

Chatterjee then proceeds to condense this material / spiritual distinction into the dichotomy between the outer and the inner. Inspired by Tagore's novel *Ghare Baire*, he calls the two social domains "ghar" and "bahir", the home and the world. These two categories operate in the same way that semiotic "langue" and "parole" do. Chatterjee's "ghar" and "bahir" have been very useful for analysing the three novels in this project.

Ernest Renan's essay "What is a Nation?" (1990) still remains a pioneering study on nationalism. Renan's concepts of "memory" and "forgetting" are very important in understanding the process of nation building. It is crucial to "remember" a shared, past history while simultaneously "forgetting" certain brutal parts of it, in order to construct a national identity within a community.

These brutal instances of a community's shared history which are best forgotten often stem from a clash between the deviant and the dominant spaces within the colonised nation itself. The deviant space may alternately be termed as the "subaltern" space. Though the term "subaltern" was first coined by Gramsci (*Letters from Prison*) when he widened the military term to accommodate the subordinate classes, it was Ranajit Guha who popularised the term when he wrote his introduction to the first volume of the *Subaltern Series* ("On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India", 1982). He defines the term "subaltern" as "the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those we have defined as elite" (p.8). The "elite"

according to Guha, consisted of all "dominant groups, foreign as well as indigenous". The dominant foreign groups included "all the non-Indian... British officials of the colonial state and foreign industrialists, merchants, financiers, planters, landlords and missionaries." The dominant indigenous groups included classes and interests operating at two levels. "At the all-India level... [and]...[a]t the regional and local levels..." (Ibid). Guha explains that the term "subaltern" does not identify a unified and homogenous entity but those who stand in opposition to elite groups. The same social group or individual could therefore be either elite or subaltern depending on how the category aligned itself in any one historical situation.

These are the various theoretical concepts, which has helped shape this project from a bewildering panoply of layered discourses. Theorists of the novel (Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The figure of women in the colonial text*, 1993; Benita Parry, "Materiality and Mystification in *A Passage to India*", 1998) who write about the exchange between historical processes and textual practices, perceive the effects of Empire in literature as mutable and locate these signs in the formal structure of the novel. Recent studies have emphasized the contradictions and tensions within British Indian texts¹ But while such disruptions are evident to the contemporary critic, the novels were written in a declarative mode to the colonized elite as a reply to dissent and received in the novel's own time by a metropolitan audience as a warrant for British rule.

¹ see Suleri, "The Geography of *A Passage to India*", 1987 and Moore-Gilbert, "'The Babel of Tongues': Reading Kipling, Reading Bhabha", 1996.

It is important to keep in mind that all these three novels, as well as their authors, are Eurocentric. Therefore, even though the novels offer critiques of British Imperial rule in India, it would be unwise to go looking for an "authentic" resisting voice of the colonised within the texts. What can be examined is the ways and means in which a dominant colonial discourse allows the Other to voice its dissent, even when this is expressed in the coloniser's own idiom.

CHAPTER - 33

The Negation of a Nation
Forster's A Passage to India

Perhaps it is chance, more than any peculiar devotion that determines a man in his choice of medium, when he finds himself possessed by the obscure impulse towards creation. The distinction between the functions of one art and another is not clear; they have a tendency to overlap, to merge, even to identify themselves in a manner which prevents definition. They have one common subject for discussion – the life that is lived and known by men;

Peter Burra¹

At the end of *A Passage to India*, where, Fielding, Ralph and Stella capsize their boats and disrupt the Gokul Ashtami ceremony at Mau, (which they cannot fathom) is very symptomatic of the whole of Forster's novel. The very structure of the text, both syntactically as well as semiologically, is replete with the inability to represent its professed discourse. In his attempt to imaginatively portray the relationship between British India and Imperial England, Forster demands the impossible from his language which cannot accommodate all the Indias. This chapter is about the India's which do get accommodated within the language of a far-off European belief system. There are moments when even Forster despairs of the impossibility of his task and the inadequacy of his narrative tools. According to Said, the most interesting factor about the novel *Passage* is the use of India, "to represent material that according to the canons of the novel form cannot in fact be represented - vastness, incomprehensible creeds, secret motions, histories and social forms (*Culture* p. 214). The novel's own narrative ambitions are repeatedly frustrated by lines such as - "How can the mind take hold of such a

¹ Peter Burra, in his Introduction (1942) to the Everyman Edition of Forster's *A Passage to India*, qtd. in E.M.Forster, *A Passage to India*, Oliver Stallybrass (ed.), London :Penguin Books, 1989, p.319.

country? Generations of invaders have tried, but they remain in exile" (Passage, p.148), or "... in... India everything was placed wrong. He had forgotten the beauty of form among idol temples and lumpy hills.... Writing to his Indian friends, he felt that all of them would miss the joys... of form and that this constituted a serious barrier" (p.278). The India which finally emerges from the novel is a nation whose material worlds, cultural forms and systems of thought ultimately resist all discursive appropriation by its conquerors.

These resistances occur whenever the disjointed spheres of Chatterjee's "ghar" and "bahir" are brought into uneasy proximity. Whenever Forster struggles to forge a "passage" into the fiercely protected inner domain of India's life and culture, his language fails him. The gap between signifier and signified that exists in Forster's modernist language is closely connected with the cultural separation present in any colonial situation, and the cultural alienation that separates Forster's Aziz and Fielding at the end of the novel, is very much part and parcel of the book's modernist tone. All of the standard modernist techniques of distance and indirection, of fractured realities and indeterminacy, are to be found in Forster's text. Instead of creating closed spaces and finite worlds within which the novelist can exercise unlimited control over his narrative creation, *A Passage to India* is fraught with an awareness of all the things that the novel cannot include:

... And there were circles even beyond these - people who were nothing but a loincloth, people who wore not even that, and spent their lives knocking two sticks together before a scarlet doll - humanity grading and drifting from the educated vision, until no earthly invitation can embrace it...

(*A Passage to India*, pp. 57-8)

At another instance, Forster's predicament at being unable to deal with the unimaginable diversity of an alien nation gets reflected in the sorry plight that Mr. Sorley finds himself in when he is questioned about the capriciousness of God's love. The missionary is prepared to allow that there may be a place in Heaven for monkeys, even jackals, but he becomes uneasy when the case of wasps are mentioned, and when he is asked to consider oranges, cactuses, crystals, mud and bacteria, he throws up his hands in despair: "No, no this is going too far. We must exclude something from our gathering, or we shall be left with nothing" (p.58). Heaven, according to Mr. Sorley, becomes an exclusive club, defined not by what it admits but by what it excludes, and so does the novel. The novel ultimately becomes a confession of its own limitedness.

I

Forster claimed that *A Passage to India* was not a political novel² but writing, as he was, at a period in India's history when her people were waking up to a national consciousness, he could hardly help the contemporary political atmosphere from invading his text. Even though the novel never directly mentions any important political event or figure of the time, they are nevertheless alluded to within the larger framework of the novel. The figure of Gandhi, who had already launched himself into the political scene by the time *Passage* got published, is conspicuous by his absence. Yet when Muslim women go on a hunger strike in protest over Aziz's arrest and the sweepers join them in their strike - "and half the commodes of Chandrapore remained desolate in consequence" (p.218), when Aziz asks Fielding, ".... how is England justified in holding India?" (p.124), surely what gets reflected are the political concerns of a figure such as Gandhi's. The National Movement must also have been at the back of Heaslop's mind when he tells his mother and Adela that "the educated Indians will be no good to us if there's a row" (p.59). Through out the novel, in fact, the vision of India that emerges, does so as a direct consequence of what Forster leaves unsaid rather than from what he articulates. It is amazing that Forster fails to even directly mention the Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre of 1919, writing as he was in the early 1920s. But what he does do is to allude to the event on at least four occasions, which Stallybrass carefully lists out in his notes to the Penguin edition of the novel. The first reference occurs when the club takes on its besieged attitude after the Marabar incident . This immediately calls to mind

² Stallybrass, introduction to E.M.Forster's *A Passage to India*. London: Penguin Books, 1989, p.25.

the frenzied mindset of the European community during the Mutiny and the besieged residency of Lucknow. But Stallybrass suggests that Forster was also referring to the events which took place at Amritsar in April 1919: "... starting on the 10th with the arrest of two Indian doctors who were supporting Gandhi's civil disobedience campaign, and the consequent rioting in which five Europeans were killed and an English woman [Miss Marcia Sherwood] seriously injured..." (note to p.188). Later in the novel, the Collector's desire to "flog every native that he saw" (p. 190) refers to the fact that the assault on Miss Sherwood "was avenged in part by the flogging, in several cases into unconsciousness, of six Indians allegedly implicated in the assault" (note to p.190). Further, the fact that "the dread of having to call in the troops was vivid to [the collector]" (p.190), along with the Major's, "Call in the troops and clear the bazaars" (p. 194), there are other references to the Jallianwalla Bagh incident of 13th April 1919 when General Reginald Dyer opened fire on an unarmed crowd estimated at between 5000 and 20,000³. He fired 1,650 rounds of ammunition, killing 379 people and injuring over 1000 more, and stopped firing only when there was no ammunitions left (379 is the official death toll, but some Indian sources put the total dead between 500 and 1000)⁴. The suggestion that women and children "should be packed off at once in a special train" (p.191) refers to the special trains which had been used to evacuate women and children from Amritsar and Lahore (note to p. 191). The final allusion occurs when Mrs. Turton exclaims, right before the trial, "[Indians] ought to crawl from here to the caves on their hands and knees

³ Sumit Sarkar. *Writing Social History*. Delhi: OUP, 1997, p.74.

⁴ Sharpe. *Allegories of Empire*. Minneapolis, London : Univ. of Minnesota Press. 1993, p.114. Also, Crane. *Inventing India*. London : Macmillan, 1992, p.79.

whenever an English woman's in sight" (p. 220). Six days after the massacre, Dyer issued an order that all Indians using the street where Miss Marcia Sherwood, a doctor from the Zenana Missionary Society, had been attacked by a group of Indians on 10th April, must crawl on all fours⁵. These allusions to the political disturbances of the times inspite of being vieled, captures the mood of the period.

Sharpe points out in her book, *Allegories of Empire* , that British colonial fiction of the past century has frequently been informed by scenes of violent revolt against British authority. According to her, such scenes are consistently informed by the haunting memory of the 1857 Mutiny. In fact the early Mutiny writers (Kaye, Vibarte, Smith, Wagentreiber etc) far from writing objectively, had created myths in their own rights. Later, Forster along with other adventure–story writers like John Masters and Norman Partington were to make good use of such myths. Perhaps the most potent being the one about "darker races [being] physically attracted by the fairer, but not vice versa... a fact which any scientific observer will confirm" (*Passage*, p.222).

Myths such as this one created passages like the following in innumerable Mutiny Novels:

... the hook-nosed man stiffened... one claw-like hand reached out to Bertha, grasped her dress near the breast, and tore at it viciously. The other hand followed in a frenzy of rage. She struggled silently, but was no match for his strength .. it was obvious that nothing was

⁵ Ibid.

going to satisfy the brute less than *the complete stripping of this white woman...*
(Partington, *Flow Red the Ganges*, p. 95, emphasis added.).

Memories of the Mutiny, along with the reminders of colonial violence which it entailed, clearly seeps into the sense of crisis that pervades *Passage*. The trial of Aziz, for instance, has a great deal to say about colonial power. The Anglo-Indians, finding themselves in the middle of a crisis of authority engendered by Aziz's alleged assault on Adela, become particularly nostalgic for a recently bygone era when a General could order a massacre and be decorated for it. They are particularly disappointed that the current political unrest makes it dangerous for them to react in a feudal-aristocratic manner towards the growing national consciousness among the Indians, following Aziz's arrest. McBryde is bitter that the "new fruits of democracy" make it necessary for Adela to testify at Aziz's trial, whereas, in "the old days" Aziz could easily have been convicted without Adela's testimony.

It might be significant that exactly a year after Forster's *Passage* was published, Edward Thompson brought out his *Other Side of the Medal*, which is arguably the first bid at inverting British-Indian historiography. It was the Jallianwallah Bagh Massacre and the blatant justification of Dyer by a substantial section of the British and Anglo-Indian public, together with the Indian nationalist upsurge of 1919-1922 which had induced Thompson to write his book in 1925. Extraordinary as *Other Side of the Medal* might have been during its period of inception, nevertheless, to quote Sharpe, "Thompson silences the people he claims to represent [by] his constant

shuttling between colonizer and colonised, looking at "ourselves" to represent the "other" (*Allegories of Empire*, p.116). This constant shifting of focus reveals his true intention which is to perpetuate another myth, the one about the ultimate benevolence of British colonialism in India. But, as Sumit Sarkar remarks in his afterword to the 1989 edition of *Other Side of the Medal*, "... the real interest of *Other Side of the Medal* today lies in a different direction: as a significant text that embodies liberal British perceptions about colonial India during the inter- War years. And a very rich text it is, provided we read it for the tensions, ambiguities and silences which underlie its surface smoothness of polemic (*Other Side of the Medal*, after word, p. 87-8). He had attempted to portray the Indian side of the Mutiny, which had hitherto remained a blank for so long. The book is particularly scathing about Vincent Smith's version of the Great Mutiny in the *Oxford History of India*.

Tensions, ambiguities and silences. Forster's *Passage* is also plagued by these narrative outcomes, and Professor Sarkar's suggestion about reading Thompson for these signs, also applies to *Passage*. In fact, Sharpe, in her book *Allegories of Empire*, does just that, she uses "absence and negativity ... to unsettle the dominant discourse" of Forster's book. She points out that the figures of invisible and silent" (p. 130) Indian women in Forster's novel misleads the reader into believing that Indian women have remained passive and submissive for years together, that they have been non-participants in India's struggle for freedom. But by 1920, Indian women had already launched their battle for liberation on two different planes, sexual

equality as well as national liberation⁶. Women from all classes of Indian society, urban as well as rural, actively demonstrated against anti-colonialism and took part in various acts of civil disobedience. But, except for a single sentence on the Muslim women who were on hunger strike in protest over Aziz's arrest, the histories of all these "visible and vocal" women have been erased and negated by the text. And these are not the only silences within the text, the history of India as a source of raw materials, cheap labour, markets and investment opportunities, " and India as a linchpin of Britain's wider imperial ambitions "⁷ were erased too. This is another way in which the Indian nation is constructed within Forster's text, not through historical memories, but through historical erasures and 'forgettings'.

The women are not the only Indians who are silent in *Passage*. There is the presence of three marginal Indian male figures—the naked gatherer of water- chestnuts who, as he listens to Godbole's song, parts his lips with delight, " disclosing his scarlet tongue" (p. 95); the splendidly formed, physically perfect punkah-wallah from the trial scene, a "beautiful naked god" (p. 233); and the broad-shouldered, thin-waisted, naked servitor officiating at the Gokal Ashtami Festival at Mau, "the Indian body again triumphant (p. 309)". Most criticisms on these silent subaltern figures (Parry, Bristow) have focused on the scopophilic, the homoeroticized voyeuristic gaze of the text which is undeniably present throughout the novel, but I wish to look a little differently at these "beautiful naked gods". I believe its the concept of "ghar" /

⁶ Sharpe. *Ibid.*, note 35 to p.130.

⁷ Benita Parry, "Materiality and Mystification in *A Passage to India*" in *Novel*, Vol. 31, No.2 (Spring, 1998), p.180.

"bahir" which is working here again. Unlike the childlike and ridiculous figures of the elite Indians in the novel who inhabit the 'outside world' and can be made to speak in the borrowed accents of the conquerer, what is to be done with the "vast humanity grading and drifting from the educated vision" (pp 57- /8)" ? Naturally, all that a Eurocentric author can do is to describe the "bahir" in great detail simply because he is denied entrance within the "ghar".

Sharpe makes a remarkably thorough study of the figure of the punkah – wallah and demonstrates how that silent figure successfully disrupts the dominant colonial discourse of the text. This disruption occurs as a result of a direct confrontation between the "ghar" and the "bahir". To quote Sharpe, "Adela ... is... the one member of the colonial race who recognizes the oppressiveness of colonial hierarchies. I now turn to that moment... in which an English woman and an untouchable man are complicit in exposing the racial tenets of colonialism " (p. 132). It is the sight of the lowly punkah – puller in the court-room which induces her to question her stance in the trial and finally leads her to revoke all criminal charges against Aziz. It is this complicity between the "ghar" and the "bahir" which causes the educated colonial hero to metamorphose into an Indian nationalist hero. Changed by his narrow escape from an unjust conviction for attempted rape and impressed by the unity of Hindus and Muslims in his support, Aziz drifts towards a far more, serious and committed nationalism than Hamidullah's. He declares to himself that Indians will be treated with respect only when they have a nation of their own in the manner of Japan (p 261). He then abandons British-India and settles down in the Indian princely state of Mau where he

believes Indian Nationalism has a better chance to grow. And his final rejection of the possibility of friendship with Fielding involves an impassioned declaration of loyalty, not to the British crown but, to an Indian nationalist ideal,

... India shall be a nation ! No foreigners of any sort ! Hindu and Muslim and Sikh and all shall be one ! Hurrah ! Hurrah for India ! Hurrah ! Hurrah ! (p.316)

And so, a marginal and silent figure, who has "no bearing officially upon the trial" who "scarcely knew that he existed and did *not* understand why the court was fuller than usual, indeed he did *not* know that it was fuller than usual, *didn't* even know he worked a fan ... sending swirls of air over others, receiving *none* himself..." (emphasis added), generates a major narrative turning point in the text. Aziz's trial might be the climax of the social novel, but it is obvious that the climax of the symbolist novel is the visit to the caves. The reader had been prepared for this visit right from the first line of the novel.

III

Except for the Marabar Caves - and they were twenty miles off - the city of Chandrapore presents *nothing* extraordinary... washed by the river Ganges.... There are *no* bathing steps on the river front... indeed there is *no* river front... Chandrapore was *never* large or beautiful... *nor* was it ever democratic. In the bazaars there is *no* painting and *scarcely* any carving.

(*Passage*, p. 31, emphasis added)

This cave is a potent symbol in the Western mind, whether erotic as for Dido, or illusionary as for Plato. But in Forster's novel, the caves seem to act as the anti-thesis of symbols. Adela has a vision of a sexual encounter failing to take place. Mrs. Moore's vision is religious only in the sense that it negates religion. They seem to empty the world of the Eurocentric authority of the meaning it once had. The caves are, in fact, a symptom of what the novel is unable to comprehend intellectually, culturally and therefore equally unable to express linguistically. They are, once again, symbolic of the "ghar", the interior, within which the elusive real India resides - a space forever denied to the "outsider".

They are dark caves... There is little to see, and *no* eye to see it, until the visitor arrives... and strikes a match. Immediately another flame rises in the depths... The two flames approach and strive to unite, but *cannot*, because one of them breathes air, the other stone.

(p.138, emphasis added)

When asked about what had really happened in the caves, Forster wrote,

My writing mind is ... a blur, i.e., I will it to remain a blur, and to be uncertain, as I am of many facts of daily life. This isn't a philosophy of aesthetics. It's a particular trick I felt justified in trying because my theme was India. It sprang straight from my subject matter. I wouldn't have attempted it in other countries, which though they contain mysteries or muddles, manage to draw rings round them. Without this trick I doubt whether I could have got the spiritual reverberation going. I call it "trick" but "voluntary surrender to infection" better expresses my state.

(Letter to G. Lowes Dickinson, qtd. in Stallybrass, p. 26)

It is not at all accidental, therefore, that the syntactic structure of the text should breakdown like "a flimsy framework" while describing an 'Indian' landscape which is both material as well as mystical at the same time. On approaching the Marabar Hills, "a new quality occurred, a spiritual silence which invaded more senses than the ear... Everything seems cut off at its root, and therefore infected with illusion" (p. 152). "Illusion" is the key word here, whether Platonic or Jain (the magistrate Mr Dass point out that, "[a]ll the Marabar Caves are Jain" (p. 225), since all the knowledge about the caves which gets filtered through Western cognitive systems of thought ultimately turn out to be illusory, like Adela's sexual experience. It is interesting that Forster should weave into his text a classic example of "Viparyaya" or false cognition, which is defined within the Jain philosophy of knowledge as one of three kinds of wrong epistemologies (the other two being, "Samsaya" or doubt

and 'Anadhyāvasāya' or indifference)⁸. "Viparyaya" arises when, for example, a rope is falsely cognised as a snake or vice versa.

Again there was confusion about a snake, which was *never* cleared up. Miss Quested saw a thin, dark object.. and said, "A snake ! "... Aziz explained: yes, a black cobra ... But when she looked through Ronny's field glasses she found it *wasn't* a snake, but the withered and twisted stump of a toddy palm. So she said, "*It isn't a snake.*" The villagers *contradicted* her... *Nothing* was explained

(pp. 152- 53 , emphasis added)



This falsely cognized snake is symbolic of the illusory nature of the India which is directly referred to in the text. This ultimate illusion or false knowledge of India within a Eurocentric novel written by a Eurocentric author is inevitable. It is only very rarely that the "ghar" and the "bahir" can come together and since a tentative "union" has already taken place in the trial scene, the strain of another forced "passage" within the narrative parameter of a single text is perhaps too exhausting. But I refuse to take the stance that, like the Kawa Dol which is a boulder that contains a sealed cave and swings on the top of the highest hill, the significance of the caves is as "empty as an Easter egg" (p. 139). If the caves turn out to be empty, the very novel's symbolic patterns yield no meaning at all, and as readers we might just as well end up with "Viparyaya" acting as our 'false' means of knowledge of the text.

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⁸ Chandradhar Sharma, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy* . Delhi, Varanasi, Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1964, p.49.

The key to reading the text is through "tensions, ambiguities and silences" and sometimes even through absences, and negation. Parry is right when she comments that the "novel's dissident place within British writing about India does not reside in its meager critique of a colonial situation... but in configuring India's ... cognitive traditions as inimical to the British presence"⁹. When read through Indian systems of cognition, the previously empty caves begin to overflow with meaning. According to the intensely material (not as material as the Cārvākas, but definitely much more than the Buddhist Śūnyavādins) Mimāṃsaka philosopher, Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, there are six means of knowledge or epistemologies. These are,

- Pratyakṣa or perception
- Anumāna or inference
- Upamāna or comparison
- Śabda pramāna or verbal testimony
- Arthāpatti or implication and

In the case of an objection where the aforesaid five means of knowledge do not function towards the comprehension of the existence of that object, we have Negation [or Anupalabdhi] as the sole means of cognition .¹⁰

This last category of Negation differs from all the other epistemologies, in that, while by means of the other five, objects can be cognized as being present, by means of Negation, objects can be cognized as being absent. But

⁹ Parry. Op. cit., p.180.

¹⁰ Kumarila Bhatta. *Slokavartika*. Ganganath Jha (trans.), Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1983, p..24.

this "absence" of objects does not mean their non-existence, it simply stands for a deferred presence. "Nothing" is not non-existence, it is a very relative concept of non-presence relative to the subject, the time and the place of the cognition. Every object has a double character – with regard to its own form, it exists, while with regard to the form of another object, it does not exist. But both the forms are equally entities; sometimes one is cognised and sometimes another. Negation, therefore is that means of cognition by which we cognise the "non-present form" of an object inherent in the "present form" of another object. The "absent" and "silent" histories of Indian women and subaltern figures, for example, suggest themselves from within the visible and vocal forms of other histories. The cognitive method by which the mind latches on to the excluded form of an object by recognizing it as being potentially present in the included form of another object, is Negation.

The word "nothing" sounds through out the text of Forster's novel, while describing the caves, he says, "[n]othing, *nothing* attaches to them ... *Nothing* is inside them... if mankind grew curious and excavated, *nothing* would be added to the sum of good or evil" (pp.138-9, emphasis added).

This concept of Negation is comprehensive to Godbole alone, and speaking of good and evil, he says, "... they are both of them aspects of my Lord. He is present in one, absent in the other... yet absence implies presence, *absence is not non-existence*" (p. 186 emphasis added). Having made Godbole say these words the text itself suggests the method by which it should be read. The text, therefore, far from presenting India as being

epistemologically vacant, reconstructs the nation as a political social and geographical space occupied by multiple intellectual, cognitive and cultural forms. Among the many Indias, it is the non-physical, the "interior", the "ghar" or arguably, the "real" India which continually evades the coloniser's "passage" into it by manifesting itself in forms which elude normative Western cognitive systems. "*No, not yet... No, not there*" (p. 316, emphasis added), now stands for the impossibility of the political and cognitive journey initially promised by the novel. Finally, the form of India which emerges from the text has to be read through the fiction's inherent tensions, absences and erasures. When read in such a manner *Passage* evokes a phase in the history of the Raj when a population increasingly unwilling to remain under alien domination, registers its growing disaffection with its colonial masters.

CHAPTER - III

Agency and Escape
Paul Scott's *The Jewel in the Crown*

.... the affair that began on the evening of 9th August 1942 in Mayapore, ended with the spectacle of two nations in violent opposition, not for the first time nor as yet for the last because they were then still located in an imperial embrace of such long standing and subtlety it was no longer possible for them to know whether they hated or loved one another, or what it was that held them together and seemed to have confused the image of their separate destinies.

This unusual (half) sentence has been necessarily prolonged by Scott with the use of four commas and six conjunctions, to be very precise. This sentence which occurs at the opening pages of the *Jewel in the Crown* (henceforth to be abbreviated as *JC*) contains Scott's ambitions about his novel in a nut shell.

Having researched extensively (he had enough material to write four formidably sized novels on the same subject, together forming the *Raj Quartet*) on the closing years of the Raj, Scott probably felt pressurized to write down every thing on the very first pages of the first novel of the *Quartet*. In fact, the first sentence is also the first paragraph :

Imagine, then, a flat landscape, dark for the moment, but even so conveying to a girl running in the still deeper shadow cast by the wall of the Bibighar Gardens an idea of immensity, of distance, such as years before Miss Crane had been conscious of, standing where a lane ended and cultivation began : a different landscape but also in the alluvial plain between the mountains of the north and the plateau of the south.

(*JC*, p.9)

These one and a half sentences : eventually become an essential thread with which the fabric of the text is tightly held together. Images from these lines resurface as a leitmotif throughout the novel. It is essential, therefore, that the reader put in just as much effort in understanding the true import of these lines as the novelist has put in explicating his complex text. The entire novel is highly loaded with a multiplicity of significations. Quite often, the same symbol represents entirely contradictory images. The facts of individuals and national histories are fused together. In fact, the entire text moves between a double-layered narrative, where the micro structure of personal-individual histories get reflected in the macro-structure of the political and socio-cultural histories of India and England during the volatile 40s. History and the concept of a non-linear temporality are the basic narrative instruments of the author. History in *JC* is not so much a narrative convention used for situating the text within a certain time period as it is a part of the text itself. It is an amalgamation of the factual as well as the fictional. It is an amalgamation which Scott uses to manipulate the various "truths" of his fiction. This fiction is not even presented in a simple chronological order. The concept of "time" within Scott's *JC* comes closer to the Indian concept of a cyclical "kal" rather than the western concept of time as a unidirectional, linear progression. It is as if we have been presented with a crystal ball in which the past, present and future of all the different protagonists are given to us all at the same time. The "past" potentially contains the "present" and again that self-same "present" reverberates endlessly throughout the "future". Another major authorial instrument is the use of images. Paintings, pictures and images play a very complex role within the novel. More than anything else, *JC*

is a highly "visual" novel, which is why I suppose Granada had found it feasible to come up with the popular BBC T.V. serial of the same name. Finally, I would like to present yet another reading of rape as an eloquent trope of imperialism.

I

"Not the intense moment isolated, with no before and after. But a lifetime burning in every moment"

T.S. Eliot, "East Coker".

"At once past, present and future are contained in your cupped palm."

(*JC*, p. 125).

Dates and important events are crucial to Scott's end-of-the-Raj novel. Personal fictive histories are often inextricably bound up with larger historical forces :

"... the affair that began on the evening of 9th August 1942, in Mayapore, ended with the spectacle of two nations in violent opposition..."
(*JC*, p.9).

"In 1942, which was the year the Japanese defeated the British army in Burma and Mr. Gandhi began preaching sedition in India, the English.... Living in ... Mayapore had to admit that the future did not look propitious"
(*JC*, p.10).

"... which had been transferred from the rule of the British East India Company to the rule of the British Crown in 1858, the year after the Mutiny when the

sepoys in the service of the Company... had risen in rebellion... and that the picture had been painted after 1877, the year in which Victoria was persuaded by Mr. Disraeli to adopt the title 'Empress of India' (JC, p.31).

"On the morning of 8th August on the day on which Congress went to vote on Mr. Gandhi's resolution – Miss Crane set off.... To Dibrapur". (JC, p.54).

The events which Scott refers to, the Japanese victory in Burma, Gandhi's "sedition", are all directly related to the events in the novel and they affect individual lives within the text. References to dates, showing the passage of time, and to historical details which helps to contextualise Scott's work within a particular political climate, continues right through the *Raj Quartet*. References are made to the US troops in India, Wingate's Chindits in Burma and even to Hiroshima. It isn't the larger events alone, Scott pays attention even to the most minor of details. Karim Muzzafir Khan (*Division of the Spoils*) is the son of Subedar Muzzafir Khan Bahadur, V.C. It is a historical fact that soldiers of the Indian Army became eligible for the VC after 1912, and a number of awards were made to Indians serving in the WWI.¹

The regular dating in the *Raj Quartet* is of particular importance because, unlike many novels with a strong sense of history, it is not wholly chronological. In *The Jewel in the Crown* the same story is repeated a number of times, each time from a slightly altered perspective, until an entire picture emerges. It is this picture, the implications of "[t]his.... story of a rape,

¹ Ralph J.Crane. *Inventing India*. London : Macmillan, 1992. p.108

of the events that led up to it and followed it and of the place in which it happened" (JC, p.9), which Scott explores throughout the three succeeding volumes of his grand tetralogy about the end of British rule in India: *The Day of the Scorpion* (1968), *The Towers of Silence* (1971) and *A Division of the Spoils* (1975). *The Day of the Scorpion* and *The Towers of Silence* essentially cover the same period, although the opening of *Tower* precedes the opening of *Scorpion* by some three years, building on the events of *Jewel* and preparing the way for the events of *Division*. Thus, we see (to echo the words of the fictional historian Guy Perron), events as they emerge rather than as they occur and as they impinge on individual consciousness. This lack of linearity in the *Quartet* is no accident, for as Kermode has explained in his *The Sense of an Ending*, structure is never innocent. This non-linear structure is just another narrative instrument which Scott uses to bring a sense of history in his work. *Jewel* has the style of a documentary novel, with an unnamed narrator/ historian collecting material which is carefully edited. The novel is composed of seven sections which provide various perspectives, in Scott's own words, "through different eyes, through different histories, from different vantage points of time" (*On Writing and the Novel*, p.89) to that original story/ image of Daphne's rape in the Bibighar Gardens during the riots over the Quit India Resolution. Part of the book is written in the third person, and part in a series of first-person monologues. There are still other narrative devices like documents, the personal testimony of journals, memories and letters. This complex structure is maintained throughout, for not one of the "sieves" (JC, p.349) through which Scott suggests we order experience is in itself adequate to what he calls "the moral continuum of human affairs" (JC,

p.11), and so he persists in fusing one character's experience with another's, using both multiple first-person narrators and an ever-shifting indirect discourse to return repeatedly to certain crucial images. This is a useful device which gives the impression of realism and goes back as far as such novelists as Defoe, Swift and Richardson.

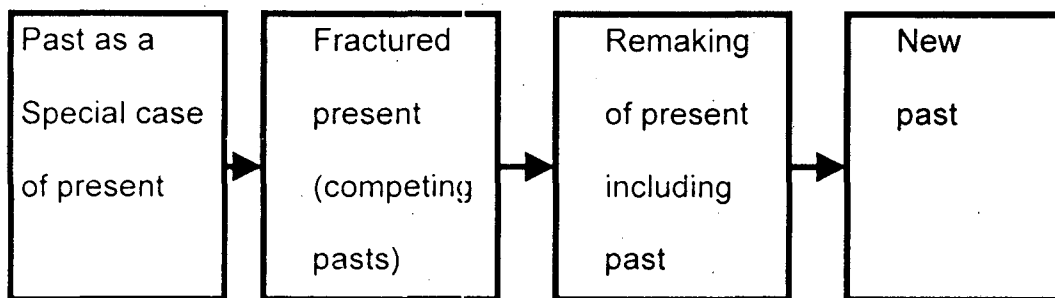
This narrative process of a multilayered perspective calls to mind a cyclical, cause-effect concept of time which is very close to the Indian idea of "kāī", where the past is never really past and potentially contains the present as well as the future. Thus, to fully understand the story of "more than one rape" (*JC*, p.470), one must understand every thing. When for example, did the Bibighar Garden affair begin? For Sister Ludmilla it started on the night when she found Hari Kumar lying dead drunk on the waste ground near the river (Scott doesn't explain the reason for this drunkenness till another 150 pages). She has him carried to her charity hospital, the Sanctuary, where in the morning Hari has a crucial confrontation with Ronald Merrick, the district superintendent of police. Merrick accidentally finds Kumar by the pump when he comes looking for an escaped prisoner. Kumar answers the policeman's affected Urdu with "I'm afraid I don't speak Indian" (*JC*, p. 135) in an English better accented than Merrick's. This episode cannot be seen as an "intense moment isolated," because we have already been told that Kumar and Merrick will eventually become Daphne's friends. We are also informed that Hari will be arrested for her rape. Scott's non-linear structure tells us enough, therefore, to see this tableau by the pump with an intensity it does not yet have for its participants. In our reading, it is as if the past, the present and the

future have become fused into one. It is as if the Bibighar Gardens affair already has happened and has not yet happened and is still happening.

A similar collapse of the chronology of events takes place on 9th August, 1942. On the day when the leaders of the All India Congress are arrested for their ratification of Gandhi's Quit India Resolution. It is also the morning when Miss Crane, a missionary school supervisor is attacked by a mob and her Indian companion killed. This event is an echo of the actual attack of a Miss Marcia Sherwood, a missionary lady, by an Indian mob on 10th April 1919, in Amritsar. On the same night Daphne Manners is raped by an unknown Indian gang at the Bibighar Gardens. This again is an echo of the other "Bibighar of Cawripore" where Nana Saheb is said to have slaughtered European women and children during the 1857 Mutiny. The next day Hari Kumar along with five other Indian boys are randomly arrested for the crime and flogged most brutally. In April 1919, six Indians who had been wrongly implicated in the assault of Miss Sherwood, had actually been flogged. Back in Mayapore, when an Indian crowd demonstrates against the unfair arrest of the six men, General Reid opens fire on the unarmed crowd on a bridge in the Chillianwallah Bagh area of Mayapore. This clearly reflects the Jallianwallah Bagh Massacre of Amritsar carried out by General Reginald Dyer on 13th April 1919, three days after the assault on Miss Sherwood.

Scott has here, blatantly manipulated history to create his own representation of the India during the days of the Quit India Movement. According to Asish Nandy's interpretations of traditional Indian orientations of

time, in his book *The Intimate Enemy*, "Public consciousness [is] not seen as a casual product of history but as related to history noncausally through memories and anti-memories¹." He says that if the West views the temporal category of "the present" as a consequence of an unfolding history", traditional India viewed history as an "all embracing permanent present, waiting to be interpreted and re-interpreted". Nandy also furnishes us with a table explaining how the "past" can be conceptualized by reaffirming or altering the "present" :



Nandy concludes the section by saying that, From such a viewpoint, the past can be an authority but the nature of the authority is seen as shifting, amorphous and amenable to intervention .

By "shifting" and "intervening" in history, Scott has created his own representation of an Indian nation stifled within the bear hug of an "imperial embrace".

¹ Asish Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, Delhi: OUP, 1983. pp. 56-57.

II

... to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect.... My task ... is, before all, to make you see!.

Joseph Conrad, *The Nigger of the Narcissus*.²

Paul Scott came from a family of commercial artists and was himself a skilled draughtsman. As a child, he made elaborate series of hand-drawn still images in sequence (like a film) for a hobby.³ In his volume of essays, *On Writing and the Novel (WN)*, he wrote that images always inspired him to write novels, "a girl in the dark, running, exhausted" (p. 82), for example, was "the first... [image] in the story to be told" (*Scorpion*, p. 6). For Scott, the creative act of writing meant "bombarding" the image with "knowledge, experience, imagination" (*WN*, p. 84) till he had a whole history to explicate an event or image. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that the *Quartet* abounds with rich images, tableaux and even paintings. The Henry Moore drawings of people in the underground during the Blitz, which hang on Merrick's living room wall, for example, are quite significant. The drawings of the 1941 Blitz portraying the British as homeless and defenseless is vital to the ultimate import of a novel informed with a hindsight of things to come. In another instance, the "sight of old Miss Crane sitting in the pouring rain by the roadside holding the hand of a

² Joseph Conrad, Preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, Robert Kimbrough (ed.), New York: Norton, 1978. pp.145-7.

³ Robin Moore, *Paul Scott's Raj*, London: Heinemann, 1990. p.135.

dead Indian" (JC, p. 59-60) is transformed into a painting by Barbie Batchelor in *Towers* :

My poor Edwina sat huddled by the roadside in the rain, holding the dead man's hand. That, I continually see, was significant. For me that image is like an old picture of the kind that were popular in the last century, which told stories and painted moral lessons. I see that caption, 'Too Late.'

(p. 208)

The story which this particular "picture" tells will have far reaching effects within Scott's text. I shall come back to this image again, in the last section of this chapter.

By far the most evocative image which echos right through the *Quartet* is the picture which once hung on the wall in Miss Crane's Muzzafirabad school room:

... a semi-historical, semi-allegorical picture entitled *The Jewel in Her Crown*, which showed the old Queen ... surrounded by representative figures of her Indian Empire: Princes, landowners, merchants, money-lenders, sepoy, farmers, servants, children, mothers and remarkably clean and tidy beggars. The Queen was sitting on a golden throne, under a crimson canopy, attended by temporal and spiritual aides: soldiers, statesmen and clergy. The canopied throne was apparently in the open air because there were palm trees and a sky showing a radiant sun bursting out of bulgy clouds such as, in India, heralded the wet monsoon. Above the clouds flew the prayerful figures of the angels who were the benevolent spectators of the scene below. Among the statesmen who stood behind the throne was one painted in the likeness of Mr. Disraeli holding up a parchment map of India to which he pointed with obvious

pride but tactful humility. An Indian prince, attended by native servants, was approaching the throne bearing a velvet cushion on which he offered a large and sparkling gem. The children in the school thought that this gem was the jewel referred to in the title. Miss Crane had been bound to explain that... the jewel of the title was India herself, which had been transferred from the rule of the British East India Company to the rule of the British Crown in 1858, the year after the Mutiny when the sepoys... had risen in rebellion, and attempts had been made to declare an old mogul prince king in Delhi, and that the picture had been painted after 1877, the year in which Victoria was persuaded by Mr. Disraeli to adopt the title Empress of India....

The Jewel in Her Crown was a picture about which Miss Crane had very mixed feelings.... After all these years it had acquired a faint power to move her with the sense of... glory departed, even although she knew there had never been glory there to begin with. The India of the picture had never existed outside its gilt frame...

(JC, pp. 30-34)

Jenny Sharpe in her *Allegories of Empire* yet again presents an excellent reading of the picture as an allegory of the coloniser's rape of a colonised land. Sharpe points out that the painting has been created on the lines of the Renaissance personifications of Asia as an exotic woman possessing the "rare perfumes, precious stones, fine silks, and spices that Europe desired" (p. 149). This image of the opulent East being cast as the richest possession of Europe, demurely presenting her wealth at the alter of the highest European authority - the Queen - speaks volumes for the colonial image of Europe's global power and glory.

This fictive painting has two historical reference points. The first is an actual painting of the Delhi durbar of 1877, where, the addition of "Kaiser - i - Hind" or "Empress of India," to Victoria's titles was celebrated. But the fact remains that Victoria had never come to India, and so when Indian princes mounted the dias under the scarlet canopy, they had to pay homage to a framed image of the Queen instead. Sharpe points out that the whole purpose behind this colossal sham was to present the British as the legitimate descendants of the Mogul Empire in India. The lavish pomp and ceremony was another way of an attempt to erase the violent history behind the royal succession. The other historical fact attached with the painting is the presentation ceremony of another gem to the Queen. The presentation of the Koh-i-noor diamond in 1850, to celebrate the 250th year of the East India Company.

Behind the uncomplicated reading of the children is, in fact, hidden the true import of the painting. This is where the framed picture symbolizes the plunder and rape of the colonized land. This evocative painting informs the entire tetralogy with this implicit sense of a brutal possession of a conquered country. But the other equally potent image of the white woman being raped by black men tries to overshadow the violence of the earlier history. And what finally emerges from the clash between these two equally suggestive images, is the inherent British fear of the Mutiny. The fear of "homeless" and "defenseless" people from a far-off island country caught in the middle of a vast "immensity", surrounded by a multitude of alien peoples with an equally alien culture.

III

India has formed part of England's idea about herself and for the same period India has been forced into a position of being a reflection of that idea. Up to say 1900, the part played by anything we possessed which we believed it was right to possess, ... Since 1900, certainly since 1918, the reverse has obtained. The part played since then by India in the English idea of Englishness has been that of something we feel it does us no credit to have. Our idea of ourselves will now not accommodate any idea about India except the idea of returning it to the Indians in order to prove that we are English and have demonstrably English ideas.... But on either side of that arbitrary date (1900) India itself, as itself, that is to say India as not part of our idea of ourselves, has played no part whatsoever in the lives of Englishmen in general (no part that we are conscious of).

(*Division*, p. 105)

If the dominant trope of colonial discourse is the attempt to find a language that will allow one to know and to describe the Other, the alien, the strange, then Guy Perron's words, from *Division*, suggest the difficulty that even such a powerful author as Scott has in writing about "India itself, as itself". Scott's self-consciousness about his own representation of India anticipates much recent work in cultural studies. More than anything else, *Jewel* describes the ways in which the subcontinent became the proving ground for British identity, turning India itself into the missing term in a rhetoric that was supposed to be about it.

For this, the most notable criticism has come from Salman Rushdie. He argues that this amounts to a form of imaginative recolonisation in which

"Indians... remain, for the most part, bit players in their own history".⁴ Even with the Jallianwallah Bagh Massacre, Scott concerns himself as much with the Indian dead as with the British "suicide". Yet Rushdie, I think, misses the degree to which the *Quartet's* narrative / rhetorical structure itself critiques its own Orientalism.

In the *Jewel*, India's function as part of the British "idea about ourselves" excludes all attempts to come to terms with India "as itself". What Scott presents instead is an analysis of the ways in which the British used the subcontinent's "foreignness" as the substratum on which or against which to define their own self-portrait. And this attempt at defining a national identity, takes us back to that resonant passage about the Bibighar Gardens case, which "ended with the spectacle of two nations in violent opposition,... still locked in an imperial embrace of such long standing and subtlety that it was no longer possible to know ... what it was that held them together and seemed to have confused the image of their separate destinies" (JC, p. 9 - 10).

The Bibighar is a site within the text, especially loaded with conflicting histories and multiple significances. For the critic, it serves as a perfect instance of the Prattian zone of "transculturation", where, Chatterjee's "ghar" and "bahir" clash with each other and sometimes even threaten to merge together. As against the MacGregor House, the Bibighar is known and

⁴ Rushdie. "Outside the Whale" in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981 - 1991*, London: Granta. 1991. p.90.

identified as "the place of the black" (*JC*, p. 136), it is also "the one place in Mayapore where [Daphne and Hari] could be together and be utterly natural with each other..." (*JC*, p. 392). Scott's deliberate choice of the name "Bibighar", carries with it all the ominous memories of that other house in Kanpur which is fused together with the memories of the 1857 Mutiny in the British mind. But Scott's Bibighar comes attached with another, though fictive, piece of history. According to Mayapore legends, the Bibighar was built by an Indian prince, in the 17th century, for a singer he loved, who always eluded him and never allowed him to consummate his passion. After their death the prince's debauched heir lets the Bibighar fall into ruin and builds for himself another house for his courtesans. This prince is later deposed by the British on charges of corruption and the house is remodeled by a Scottish merchant named MacGregor. Before being killed himself in the Mutiny of 1857, he had burnt down the Bibighar. Now there are two competing strands to the end of this (hi)story. One says, that he burnt it "because he fell in love with an Indian girl and lost her to a boy whose skin was the same colour as her own" (*JC*, p. 135). Another version states that she ran away when she came to know that MacGregor was about to marry an English girl and would eventually move her out of his house, into the Bibighar. This history, then, also produces a romantic drama with four parts to it - the Scotsman, the anonymous Indian man, the English wife and the Indian mistress. It is this four part drama which is to be re-enacted again a century later, slightly altered. For this time, there aren't four characters, but four identities: male and female, colonizer and colonized. What the earlier story does, though is to present all the players in a typical colonial situation - the four hierarchical orders of the

white male, the black male, the white female and last of all the black female. It is worth noting that the white male and the black female are two entirely contradictory categories, the one supremely dominant while the other is the most dominated. But the figures of the black male and the white female are the most problematic categories - their particular combination of racial and sexual identities make them neither the supremely dominant nor the most subjugated. Meanwhile as regards the Indian woman, Sharpe makes the most insightful reading of the woman who ran away. In the last line of *Allegories of Empire*, she says.

I leave my readers with the image of an Indian woman who escapes not only from the master's house but also from the frame of a modern-day allegory of Empire.

(p. 161)

Sharp presents the figure of the female rebel as the one informed with choice and agency. I propose that this agency and choice is given her because she resides within the "ghar", which is entirely outside English influence and hence escapes. I propose that she is not a spectacle but the subject of action and agency.

My reading of the text sees this escaping figure of the Indian woman as informing other characters within the text with agency and choice. To go back to the figure of Miss Crane sitting in the mud with the hand of the dead Indian in her hand - the agency of the Indian woman has begun to work within her. "It's taken me a long time," she says, "meaning not only Mr. Chaudhari, 'I'm sorry it was too late'" (*JC*, p. 59). She realizes at this point that the British can no longer protect those whom it is their self-appointed mission to protect. The imperial mission, to which she was wedded in a way, had died of its own

contradictions. It is this realization which makes her wear a white sari (like a Hindu widow) for the first time in her life, lock herself into a garden shed, drench the whole place with kerosene and burn herself up. Instead of reading this as a defeat, an erasure, I would like to read into Miss Crane's action a conscious choice and agency. But in order to exercise this choice and escape from the rhetoric of colonialism, she needed to transform herself into the rebellious Indian woman. To quote Rajeswari Sunder Rajan on her reading of the Indian widow as a subject of pain,

... the sati is not a dead woman, but a burning women seeking to escape, not a spectacle but the subject of action and agency.⁵

This same agency and escape is provided to Daphne who also goes through a change of identity from Miss Manners to "that Manners girl". Daphne is abandoned by her own community when she refuses to testify against her assailants. She even scandalizes her people by suggesting that for all she knew, it could have been British Tommies with blackened faces who had raped her. Her decision to have her baby completes her identity change. She is claimed by the Indians as one of them when they come to know of her decision. Her escape is inevitable at this point, for she has crossed over into the space of the "ghar" and, therefore, she dies in childbirth.

Hari Kumar's escape is slightly more complicated. We learn about his change of identity from two accounts: from the deposition of a character

⁵ R.S.Rajan, "The Subject of Sati : Pain and Death in the Contemporary Discourse on Sati" in *Yale Journal of Criticism* 3, no. 2 (spring, 1990), p. 15, qtd. in Sharpe, p.104..

named Vidyasagar in *Jewel* and from Hari's own point of view, in answer to Nigel Rowan's questions in *Scorpion*. Vidyasagar's deposition records Merrick's surprise that none of the young men he's arrested have blood on their underwear or genitals "she wasn't a virgin, was she?" (*JC*, p. 355). She didn't bleed but Hari does. Vidyasagar reports that immediately after noting the absence of Daphne's blood, it was noted that Hari has blood on his buttocks. This has come from Merrick's brutal assault on him. Having stripped Hari naked, Merrick has him bent over and strapped to a trestle before he beats Hari into near unconsciousness. The presence of Hari's blood and the simultaneous absence of Daphne's, suggests the rape of a virgin. In this degrading act, Hari is reduced into a passive and subordinate position, occupying a feminized space. Hari begins to disappear from the text after his entry into prison. It is learnt that in 1947 he earned his living by giving lessons in the provincial capital. Nothing more is said about him.

It is only Merrick, who in the end is condemned to flit across the broad expanse of the whole tetralogy, Merrick is humiliated, transferred into the army and his repressed homosexuality exposed. All his lies, in the end, work against him and he is caught in his own traps until we find him strangled and hacked to death in his bedroom (*Division*).

It is ironic, that the category seemingly on the last rung of the colonial hierarchy, should in fact turn out to be the most elusive and independent. All the rest of the categories had to "become" her, in order to escape control, leaving only the white male colonizer - alone and unable to extricate himself

from the web that he had spun himself. In the last count then the great European narrative structure, created for restraining the deviant energies of the Other as well as for perpetuating the Self's myth of racial superiority, collapses on the Master himself.

In spite of all Scott's references to "Mr Gandhi preaching sedition" and the Indian Congress voting for the Quit India Movement, it is the figures of the Indian women who decided to stop going to Miss Crane's Tuesday tea parties by choice and the Indian bibi who ran away from her British master, that the image of an authentic Indian selfhood emerges most strongly.

CHAPTER - IV

*The Imperial Father Figure
John Masters' Bhowani Junction*

It meant Mother-Father, the relationship of the raj to India, of a man like colonel Layton to the men in his regiment, of a district officer to the people of his district, of Barbie herself to the children she had taught. Man-bap [sic]. I am your father and your mother. Yes... an illustration of this aspect of the imperial attachment; the combination of hardness and sentimentality...

(*The Towers of Silence*, p. 275)

When Paul Scott says, " 'It is fairly obvious that Masters regrets the passing of the *raj*. I don't,' "¹ he pinpoints the difference between writers like Forster and Scott on the one hand and writers like Masters on the other. While Forster and Scott had merely visited India and had read up diligently on the country, for Masters, India was his country, at least till her independence. Even though Masters mainly wrote novels in the genre of popular romantic adventure stories primarily aimed at the lucrative Western market, his "India" somehow rings truer than either Forster's or Scott's. This is a paradox since Masters wasn't really averse to glamourizing exotic aspects of India for his American audience (after leaving India Masters became a naturalized American, taking the easiest way out, since he didn't feel at "Home" either in England or in India after the passing of the raj) fed on Hollywood concepts of India. But above all, his novels are apt to induce nostalgia for what both India and Britain had lost - a mixture of a chauvinistic lament at the loss of Empire together with a feeling of disbelief at Indians forging a 20th century power from an underdeveloped nation.

¹ Paul Scott's words qtd in G. Narayanan's *The Sahib and the Natives*, Delhi : Chanakya Publications, 1986, p.26.

Whatever his personal feelings about leaving India (his family had served in the Indian Army since 1805²), he makes no secret of his displeasure with British racialism. In *Bugles and a Tiger*, he comments, "I found myself resenting England's total unawareness of this country, which she owned and governed at so long a distance of distaste" (p. 75). If at all Masters had an edge over most British writers writing about India, it was in his intimate knowledge of India. He never, for example, invents impossible and ridiculous names like "Pandirakkar Dingit Rao", "Vallabhai Ramaswamy Gopal" or "Mrs Gupta Sen", as Scott does. There is a tacit consent, in *Bhowani Junction*, that Indians should have the right to determine their own destiny. Masters regrets the British errors and indifference which prevented the Empire from achieving for Indians the lofty ideals cherished by the British. The irony, for Masters, is that the British Empire and Indian freedom are mutually exclusive propositions. Masters cannot surrender India to the Indians as easily as Forster or Scott can, but then his link with the country is much more intimate.

The fundamental relationship between Britain and India, was the political relationship between the ruler and the ruled. For those Britons informed with a sense of paternal responsibility for India, this relationship had emotional overtones and psychological satisfactions that were deeply personal. For the latter-day Prospero in India, his possessive love for his Indian subjects had deeper implications than mere economic gain. As

² Masters, *Bugles and a Tiger : A Volume of Autobiography*, London : Michael Joseph, 1956, p. 28.

Masters explains in *Bhowani Junction*, "In one sense we were the C.O., the S.M., and a rifleman of the 1/13th. Not in another sense, but in another plane of the same sense, we were father, son and grandson" (p. 328). Indians in Masters world reciprocated the committed imperialists paternalism by looking up to him with a sense of filial dependence, calling him their "man-bap". This imperial paternalism can be understood in the light of a modern colonial system's use of the homology between childhood and the colonized state. In his *The Intimate Enemy*, Asish Nandy says that,

... in the eyes of the European civilization the colonizers were not a group of self-seeking, rapacious, ethnocentric vandals and self-chosen carriers of a cultural pathology, but ill-intentioned, flawed instruments of history, who unconsciously worked for the upliftment of the under privileged of the world.

The growth of this ideology paralleled a major cultural reconstruction that took place in the West during the first phase of colonialism,.... the modern concept of childhood is a product of [this].

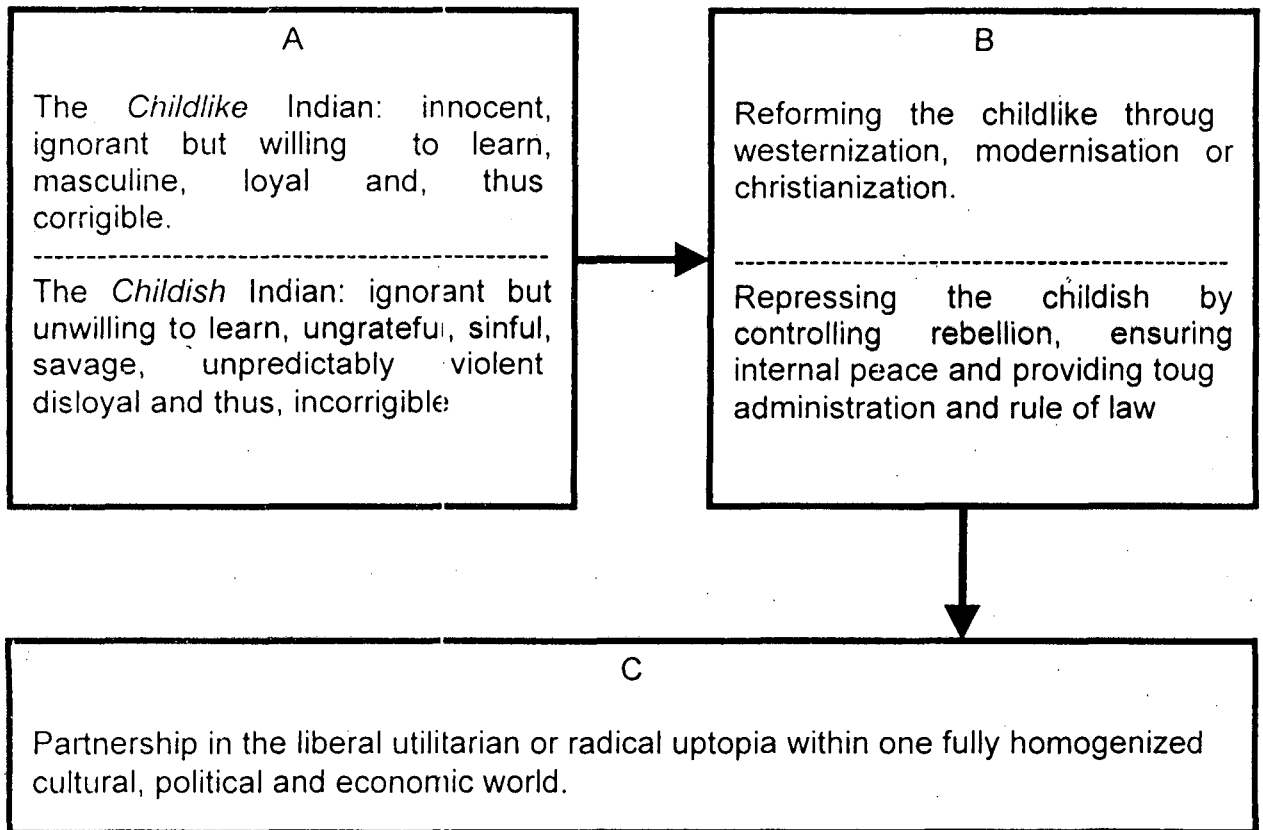
(p.14)

Before the seventeenth century, children were traditionally seen as innocent, angelic and generally happy creatures, but since then, children became an "inferior version of the adult" rather than a "smaller version of the adult". These "inferior adults", needless to say, had to be "educated" to grow up to be mature and responsible adults. Together with the Western ideas of progress and the Protestant Ethic, children also came to be seen as "less productive" citizens of the state as well as unrepentant and reprobate sinners who had to be "saved".

Colonialism dutifully picked up these ideas of growth and development and drew a new parallel between primitivism and childhood. Thus, the theory of social progress was telescoped... into the area of cultural differences in the colonies. What was childlikeness of the child and the childishness of immature adults now also became the lovable and unlovable savagery of primitives and the primitivism of subject societies.

The Intimate Enemy, p.15-16

Nandy illustrates this theory with the following table:



Despite Masters' professed familiarity with India and her people, Masters' empathy with Indians is limited to the brown Englishmen like Govindaswami the feudal societies of the Gurkhas and the tribals. Govindaswami, "the head man of the Bhawani civil district, the Deputy

Commissioner and District Magistrate and God knows what else besides..." (Bhowani, p.28) is more English than the Anglicized Victoria Jones and Patrick Taylor themselves. On his first meeting with Victoria, Govindaswamy says, "'Miss Jones?', he said in his la-di-da Oxford voice. 'Or Miss Victoria Jones?' I didn't know what the hell he meant. Nor did Victoria.... He said, 'I mean, are you the eldest sister?' " (Ibid.)

Masters portrays the Indian freedom fighters of the India of 1946 as either "childish" or "childlike". K.P. Roy, the hard-core communist extremist is presented as the evil "childish" figure, he murders a Hindu girl to start communal riots, derails trains, indulges in arson, kills Surabhai, and plots the assassination of Gandhi. Surabhai, the local Congress leader, on the other hand is portrayed as the comical "childlike" figure, he is dressed in multicoloured clothes, speaks an atrocious Babu-English and generally makes a fool of himself. Interestingly, the Indian freedom struggle is shown, as a disorganized and mismanaged affair.

The Government of India think trouble is brewing - industrial trouble, railway trouble, and perhaps worse. They think the situation will be much the same as in nineteen forty-two. That is, the Congress high command will recommend a campaign of non-violent, non-co-operation, with the object of hurrying the British out of the country. The degree of non-violence will depend, as it did in 1942, on the nature of the local Congressmen, and on whether they are of the Right or Left wing of the party. The high command will merely say "Don't co-operate". Mr. Surabhai, as the local Congress leader here, might say, "Don't give the Collector any petrol for his car." But the man at the garage might say, "Better still, why not pour

the petrol over the Collector and throw away
my bidi at the same time?"

(*Bhowani*, p. 30-31)

Sometimes the national liberationists are also depicted as collaborators of the British. Most political protests, within the novel, end up in an elaborate drama in which both the ruler and the ruled play their ritualized parts. For example, during the railwaymen's strike, the Congress supports the Indians in public but side with the British in private, in accordance with an "arrangement" with the British rulers. A similar drama is acted out during the 1946 Naval Mutiny of Bombay, a few anti-social elements affiliated to the Congress start a riot, triggering off an Indian and British confrontation. It is shown that the Congress high commands were in on this with the British Government. All this, therefore, has the effect of minimizing the magnitude of the Indian opposition to the British.

Interestingly, it is the British who save the Congress from extremist factions of their own party. The final pages of *Bhowani* carries the theme of saving India from themselves, when Gandhi is saved from an earlier assassination by the combined efforts of the British administration, the army, and the loyal Govindaswamy.

This incident has to be considered along with the earlier anachronistic reference to Gandhi's assassination in *Coral Strand*. In his abuse of the Indian crowd on 15th August 1947, Rodney accuses the Indian people of having killed Gandhi. But Gandhi was alive on that day. More significantly, Rodney

equates Gandhi's assassination with the death of his own father. "But don't forget my father, my father whom you murdered yesterday because he loved you... you don't believe in India because you're too, too small to understand India.... Whassa name that little man, no clothes, spectacles, spinning wheel?.... He understood... so you shot him. Like my father..." (*Coral Strand*, p.16)

In his eagerness to equate the two "fathers", Masters had predated the assassination of Gandhi. Both his references to Gandhi's death in his two novels certainly supports Barry Argyle's observation -- " for the British, Gandhi's assassination by an Indian excused so much that they and he had done." ¹

Govindaswami is the perfect example of the childlike Indian who has been 'reformed through westernization and modernization'. K.P. Roy is the exact flip-side of the Brown Sahib, he is the dangerous childish Indian who is 'repressed by controlling his rebellion through tough administration and rule of law'. It is primarily the fear of this one man, which brings Rodney's entire 1st Battalion 13th Gurkha Rifles down to the small town of Bhowani Junction.

Masters is so steeped in the belief that the British were after all, doing their duty in bearing their white man's cross, that his intense disbelief and melancholy at the loss of India, occasions him to construct a peculiar first

¹ Barry Argyle, "Narayan's *The Sweet Vendor*", in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Vol. 7, No.1 (June 1972), p.37.

chapter for his novel, the *Coral Strand*. A drunken Rodney is rude and abusive to an Indian crowd celebrating their Independence on 15th August, 1947, and explains his behaviour by saying that,

I love them. But its time to go. That's the whole sad story. Time to go. *But I'm not going.* Never, see ?

(p. 17, emphasis in the original)

CHAPTER - V

The Narration of a Nation
Conclusion

A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilization.

A civilization that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civilization.

A civilization that uses its principles for trickery and deceit is a dying civilization.

- Aimé Césaire,
*Discourse on Colonialism*¹

What is a nation? In Benedict Anderson's now classic text, it is essentially an imagined community, one where members are aware of the simultaneous existence of other fellow members whom they have never met, but with whom they believe in a shared existence. For Anderson that shared commonality lies in the community's language – or rather in the way that the development of printing has assimilated the “varied idiolects” spoken in “pre-print Europe” into languages, whose “new fixity” created the illusion not only of a permanence but also of a haloed ancestry.² Printing, according to Anderson, made it possible for people to imagine that their language and their community had always existed in time. It made them believe in an illusion of permanence, in the non-existence of either a beginning or an end of their nation. People could imagine it only in the state of a continued presence. Yet seeing the nation as an organism inevitably leads to a concern with the seed or the primitive tissue from which the community has grown. Languages remain “historical formations”, as Ernest Renan wrote in 1882, “which tell us

1 Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972, p.9.

2 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London and New York: Verso, 1991, p.46.

very little about the blood of those who speak them.”³ Nevertheless, the people who believe in the descendance from the “original speakers” of a modern language, also believe in a purity of identity from which others remain excluded. Interestingly, the more a people try to define their exclusiveness by “separating” and “differentiating” themselves from their others, the more they fail to comprehend the authentic core of that other against whom they claim to determine their own selves. This inability is best represented in Forster’s *Passage*, where he cannot even begin to articulate the subject of his text owing to the very nature of the language he was using. This, I understand to be the fatal flaw of our erstwhile colonizers. It was this failure to realize a basic defect in their image of themselves that led to the termination of the Raj. To quote Césaire, it was their “curse... to be the dupe in good faith of a collective hypocrisy that cleverly misrepresent[ed] problems, the better to legitimize the hateful solutions provided for them.”⁴ One of these “solutions” to “misrepresented problems” was the use of historical error as a crucial means of creating a selfhood. This is what Scott tries to do in *Jewel*. Such errors and erasures of memory help a people to forget “deeds of violence”⁵ which have also gone into the creation of a nation. This act of “forgetting” which is crucial to the construction of a national identity can also be extended to colonialism. As Fanon says, “...colonialism[w]as not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country.... By a kind of perverted logic, it [turned] to the past of the oppressed people, and distort[ed],

³ Ernest Renan. “What is a Nation”, Martin Thom (trans.) in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.) *Nation and Narration*, London and New York: Routledge, 1990, p.17.

⁴ Aimé Césaire. *Op.cit.*

⁵ Renan. *Op.cit.*, p.11.

disfigur[ed] and destroy[ed] it."⁶ This collective amnesia was to prove very costly for our British colonizers. It made them genuinely believe in their civilizing mission. Like Anderson and Masters, they really believed that they had "imagined" our nation for us. The most pertinent passage in *Bhowani Junction* is one in which Rodney Savage, very possibly representing a viewpoint close to Masters' own, describes his feelings when he celebrates a successful leopard hunt with simple rural Indians:

This was my India, not because of the capering or the drunkenness but because these people *had no desire to become like me*, nor I like them...The Ranjits and Surabhais, who were trying to change themselves....read Paine and Burke and spoke in English because the ideas they were trying to express *did not exist in their own language*. If I and my sort had an idea, it was to make Indian wood into better wood, not change it into Bakelite. In general though, our great virtue was *not* having an idea.

(p.353, emphasis added).

Masters' probably never knew how close and yet how far away he was from the real truth. The observation "these people had no desire to become like me", forms the core of my dissertation. In this work, I have tried to side with Partha Chatterjee in his vindication of Anderson's claim of the West having "imagined" our very existence for us. As an Indian student of English literature, I have tried to validate Chatterjee's argument that Indian nationalism as a cultural construct drew its inspiration from within its own traditions in order to establish its difference and autonomy - by reading

⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Constance Farrington (trans.). Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967, p.169.

Eurocentric literary texts about India through the model provided by him. My entire dissertation has been structured on Chatterjee's "ghar" / "bahir" dichotomy, and through this reading I have tried to show how the very narrative structures and languages of these texts fall apart whenever an "authentic" India threatens to emerge from them.

I have tried my best, though I don't believe it can be possible to entirely succeed in, not falling into the trap of using what Pratt terms the "colonizers' idiom" in describing the Self. I have tried to use non-Western models like the Mimamsaka epistemology of "Anupalabdhi" or negation and non-colonial one's like Nandy's theory of the homology between childhood and colonization or R.S.Rajan's and Sharpe's reading of the agency of Indian women. Lastly, armed with all these theoretical implements, I have tried not to define the emergent Self, in the words of the Other, but rather re-covered the Self from the Others definitions of itself.

In conclusion, I can safely observe that the image of India that has emerged from these three British texts about colonial India, is that of a nation with a fiercely protected and private inner core of selfhood which could never be penetrated into by the colonizers, despite nearly two centuries of material plunder. This alone is enough to prove that we always possessed a sense of Self which merely needed to be developed further. This is where, India as a nation needed a Gandhi-like figure to awaken and exercise our nascent Selves. We certainly weren't waiting for any external entity to entirely "imagine" our nationhood for us.

To go back to what I had commenced with in the introductory chapter, the Buddhist theory of Apoha, since the Self and its Other are really just two sides of the same coin, a complete recognition of the one will surely lead to the better comprehension of the Other and its modes of perception. In the light of the recent national border crises we have been confronting, it might be worthwhile to meditate on this sense of ourselves. It might benefit the entire subcontinent, if we begin tracing and understanding what modern India has meant for its citizens and neighbours over the past fifty years or so. And in order to do that, we need to start right at the inception of modern India just as it had begun to emerge from its colonial shell.

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