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ABSTRACT

Landscaping India investigates the use of landscapes in colonial and anti-colonial representations of India from the mid-nineteenth to the early-twentieth centuries. It examines literary and cultural texts in addition to, and along with, “non-literary” documents such as departmental and census reports published by the British Indian government, popular geography texts and text-books, travel guides, private journals, and newspaper reportage to develop a wider interpretative context for literary and cultural analysis of colonialism in South Asia. Drawing of materialist theorizations of “landscape” developed in the disciplines of geography, literary and cultural studies, and art history, *Landscaping India* examines the colonial landscape as a *product* of colonial hegemony, as well as a *process* of constructing, maintaining and challenging it. In so doing, it illuminates the conditions of possibility for, and the historico-geographical processes that structure, the production of the Indian nation.

The dissertation begins by examining the concept of the nation in spatial-temporal terms, and as imbricated in the uneven and global processes of capitalism. The next two chapters examine the deployment of landscape in British and Indian literary and cultural productions at two specific local sites. The second chapter focuses on British and Indian contestation of the landscape of the colonial city of Calcutta, the capital of British Indian space. The third chapter focuses on the British claims and Indian counter-claims over the Himalayan landscape. Both chapters demonstrate how the Indians counter the British landscaping of these sites to produce their own counter-conceptions. In other words, it shows how Indians appropriate for themselves the landscapes of Calcutta and the Himalaya.

The fourth chapter examines the idealization and idolization of the Indian landscape in *Vande Mataram* (1882), the national song of the post-colonial Indian nation-state, and its role in

structuring the idea of India as a motherland. I argue that while the song's anti-colonial spatial imagination is inspired by the quotidian reality of British India ravaged by famines, its reliance on a pastoral ethos and Hindu "commonsense" also posits the laboring classes and Muslims as outsiders to India, in addition to gesturing towards a patriarchal and hetero-normative national ethos. The fifth and final chapter examines the nation as a scalar manifestation of the landscape form, and explores the contending conceptions of the Indian nation-space, and Indians, in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) and Rabindranath Tagore's *Gora* (1907). It investigates how these novels address the questions of belonging to India, and "Indian-ness," by interrogating, in particular, the novels' depictions of their Irish foundling protagonists. The chapter contends that Tagore's idea of the nation as a universal space of humanity repudiates Kipling's imperialist vision of India as a space of irredeemable difference, and highlights how Tagore's articulation of "India" and "the Indian," provides a dissenting perspective from contemporaneous trends in anti-colonial nationalism that assumed a decidedly Hindu tenor. The chapter also highlights how Tagore, by focusing on the scale of the home, and the inequitable gendered division of labor within it, critiques Indian nationalists for their refusal to incorporate a critique of gender inequality and patriarchy within the framework of national liberation.

LANDSCAPING INDIA: FROM COLONY TO POSTCOLONY

by

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INTRODUCTION

Rabindranath Tagore (1861 – 1941) is one of the most important literary figures of British India, and arguably the most important literary figure of the Bengal region of South Asia. During his literary career, Tagore produced a vast canon comprising poems, songs, novels, plays, essays, short stories, dance dramas as well as paintings and sketches. Tagore’s writings on Bengal and India, some of which are in an explicitly anticolonial vein, provide a counterpoint to contemporaneous British depictions of India and Indians. His literary output was in Bengali, the language of Bengal, significant portions of which he translated into English himself making him a bilingual intellectual – a hallmark of colonial (and postcolonial) South Asia. In 1913, Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for his English works, making him the first non-European to win the award.¹ Importantly, Tagore was the second awardee of the prize for “English,” the first being Rudyard Kipling in 1907, and arguably the Indian writer’s “other” in the literary world of British India.

How do we locate Tagore within the field of English literary studies? Could we, for instance, place him within the field of postcolonial literary studies? Postcolonial literary studies take the dismantling of the British Empire in the aftermath of the Second World War as its originary impulse. Though the independence of India (and the founding of Pakistan) in 1947 was not the first historical instance of decolonization of the British Empire, this was, however, seen as a “key moment in the dynamic of the decolonizations of the twentieth century” (Sivanandan, 2004, p. 49). It is also, by definition, invested in a temporal logic of organization that implicitly understands decolonization as a break or rupture from the (colonial) past (See Ganguly, 2004).

¹ The official website of the Nobel Prize notes that the Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for 1913 “because of his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which, with consummate skill, he has made his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West” (*The Nobel Prize in Literature 1913*, italics in original)

By virtue of being of colonial Indian provenance, Tagore exists temporally before the moment of the arrival of the postcolonial. This posits him as a figure from the pre-history of postcolonial studies, making him but a prefiguration of the postcolonial era to be subsequently inaugurated. While this is arguably reasonable, it nonetheless robs Tagore and his literary productions of their historicity, and historical agency. This problem is somewhat mitigated in the relatively new organizational rubric “Anglophone literature,” where a figure such as Tagore would be situated as an “early” Anglophone writer from South Asia. This nomenclature, too, is not without its issues. The dictionary meaning of the term “Anglophone” notwithstanding, English literary studies understands “Anglophone literature” to denote English writing from outside Britain (and the United States), thereby holding firm to the historico-geographical distinction of the ‘West’ and the rest. The neo-colonial impulse of such a nomenclature is quite self-evident.

Moreover, Tagore’s own literary career straddles the Victorian and the Modern (twentieth century) literary periods that predate the postcolonial period in English literary studies. Does this mean that we can think of Tagore, a contemporary of the late-Victorians, as a Victorian writer? If that were to be the case, how then do we begin to think of the Victorian period in relation to the history of British India, and as a corollary, of metropolitan Britain vis-à-vis the colonial space of British India? Would the period begin in British India coevally with Britain, with the ascension of Victoria to the throne in 1837? Or would it begin the end of the British East India Company’s rule in 1858, when “India” was placed under the rule of the British Crown? Or would the Victorian era begin in 1876, when the British monarch formally assumed the title of Empress of India? If, as Spivak (1989) notes, in “postcoloniality every metropolitan definition is dislodged,” then the situation is clearly more acute under colonialism (p. 79).

My intention in focusing on the case of Tagore is to illuminate the limits of, and erasures within, the logic of canonization and periodization that plagues literary studies. On one hand, this logic allows a diachronic engagement between the colonial and postcolonial literary worlds, where, because of the manner in which the field is structured, the colonial is rendered secondary to the postcolonial. On the other hand, the near total absence of any synchronic critical analysis that engages simultaneously with metropolitan and peripheral literary cultures of the colonial period relegates the latter to the margins if not erases it altogether. Indeed, following Spivak's (1988) influential formulation of subalternity, we have come to understand the category as a structured inarticulacy at the elite levels; where the subaltern is always the object of discourse and never its subject; where subaltern practice cannot signify as itself across the divide separating the elites from their "others" (pp. 271 – 313). In the context of English literary studies, then, we find that the literary culture of, and the historico-geographical experience of colonialism at, the colonial peripheries, are rendered subaltern and consequently silenced. To put this in another way, I am arguing that the structuring logic of English literary studies continues to marginalize literary productions from the peripheral regions of the colonial world. In so doing, English literary studies, even in its contemporary moment, reflects, replicates, and is implicated in, the uneven spatial development of the world into cores and peripheries that reached its apogee in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries under European colonialism (See Amin, 1976; Smith, 1990; San Juan Jr., 2002).

In making this claim, I am reiterating, although differently, the agenda of critical scholarship that Edward Said (1994) outlined in his call to connect "empire to secular interpretation" that necessitates an "interpretative change of perspective ... to challenge the sovereign and unchallenged authority of the allegedly detached Western observer" (p. 51). While

stressing that “structures of location and geographical reference appear in the cultural languages of literature, history, or ethnography, sometimes allusively and sometimes carefully plotted,” Said (1994) has also urged literary and cultural critics to take western cultural forms “out of the autonomous enclosures in which they have been protected, and placed instead in the dynamic global environment created by imperialism” (pp. 51 – 52). This for Said (1994) is the basis for reading the (western) cultural archive “contrapuntally,” that is, with “a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and *of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts*” (p. 51, my italics).

The agenda of literary and cultural criticism that Said outlines is, given the state of literary studies, both hopeful and premature. It is hopeful because it does indeed outline a mode of dialectical criticism (my understanding of Said’s term “contrapuntal reading”) that takes seriously the uneven spatio-temporalities of literary studies and canonicity, and which could restructure, in decisive ways, contemporary perspectives in literary studies. More crucially, Said’s agenda is premature because the condition of possibility of this dialectical criticism – the awareness of “other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts” – appears to be a rarity in the western academy.² Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) has aptly termed this phenomenon “asymmetric ignorance,” that is, of non-metropolitan intellectuals requiring to know metropolitan theory, history, and literature to gain credibility without the converse being true (p. 28).

² To cite some examples: Mary Poovey’s (1995) *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation 1830 – 1864* makes its case by relying on Lefebvre’s concept of abstract space. However, imperialism is exempt from Poovey’s notion of “British cultural formation.” This is a peculiar omission since the British expanded and consolidated their Indian empire between 1830 and 1864. Other scholarship on the nineteenth century that engages with space such as the works of Patrick Joyce (2003) and Pamela Gilbert (2004) focuses on the metropole (Britain) or the metropolitan city (London, Manchester) where the investigation into colonial space is largely secondary.

To connect empire to secular criticism, and challenge the authority of the supposedly detached western observer, it is necessary, foremost, to think of the literary and cultural archive of “empire” in a holistic manner that does not necessarily privilege a metropolitan location. Crucially, Said (1994) notes that “most cultural historians, and certainly all literary scholars, have failed to remark the *geographical* notation, the theoretical mapping and charting of territory that underlines Western fiction, historical writing, and philosophical discourse of the time” (p. 58, italics in original). Therefore, despite outlining an agenda for critical examination that takes “other” histories and geographies seriously, Said retains his focus on the metropolitan literary and cultural archive.

However, for a truly dialectical criticism to develop, and to seriously address the question of “asymmetric ignorance,” we need to move beyond the metropolitan literary canon, and examine its “others” within their own specific histories and geographies. In other words, the task of such a critical project would be to examine peripheral literary and cultural archives to illuminate their historico-geographical experience of colonialism. This is important precisely to achieve what Said outlines in his critical agenda, that is, to take Western literary forms out of their autonomous enclosures and situate them in the dynamic environment engendered by European imperialism. Documenting, and producing critical knowledge about, the literary and cultural worlds of the peripheries, then, is to activate and articulate that “dynamic environment” that Said mentions. This forms the inspiration, and starting point of my project.

Landscaping India

My project is a historical materialist inquiry into the historical and geographical experience of colonialism in South Asia. More specifically, it investigates the use of landscapes in colonial and anti-colonial representations of India from the mid-nineteenth to the early-twentieth centuries. It

examines novels, travelogues, poems, songs and photographs, to understand the contested process through which the landscapes of British India were produced, and how those landscapes were transformed into the space of the Indian nation. These literary and cultural texts are constellated with “non-literary” documents such as departmental and census reports published by the British Indian government, popular geography texts and text-books, travel guides, private journals, and newspaper reportage encountered during my archival research at the India Office Records in the British Library in London, and the National Library in Calcutta, allowing me to develop a wider interpretative context for literary and cultural analysis of colonialism in South Asia. Examining the colonial landscape as a *product* of colonial hegemony, as well as a *process* of constructing, maintaining and challenging it, *Landscaping India* illuminates the conditions of possibility for, and the historico-geographical processes that structure, the production of the Indian nation. It therefore illuminates the relationship between representation, landscape and hegemony in the context of British imperialism and its aftermath.

By examining the literary and cultural archive of British India during Indo-British colonial encounter during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, my project allows me to excavate a geographically specific pre-history of the postcolonial field, while simultaneously illuminating a geographically specific “other” of the metropolitan canon. Significantly, my project examines texts written in English by the British and Indians, in addition to Bengali (and in one instance, a text written partly in Sanskrit) to not only highlight the multilingual nature of the literary universe of British India, but to also underline its contested nature. In so doing, my project privileges the spatio-temporal experience of colonialism in, and from, a peripheral location, in addition to developing an intellectual basis for a dialectical criticism that could

eventually speak across the extant unevenness in literary studies, and redress the question of “asymmetric ignorance.”

Moreover, by focusing on the processes of space-making, I not only underline the “geographic dimension as an essential aspect of the production of culture” but also situate the discipline of geography – in addition to history – as an interlocutor of literary studies (Warf & Arias, 2009, p. 1). My reliance on insights generated within the discipline of geography is helpful, not least because it provides a useful distention of the structure of literary studies, and the canon. This is analytically productive as it highlights, on one hand, the exclusions and myopias of contemporary English literary studies while simultaneously generating new insights and indicating towards new possibilities.

My reliance on historical materialism allows me to examine the political economic relationship between the metropole and the colony in, and from, a *non-metropolitan location*, and highlight the structures of domination and exploitation of the colonies that were central to European imperialism. Further, the historical materialist approach provides me a dialectical framework to analyze the metropole-colony relationship, as it plays out in Britain’s Indian colony, as a function of both similitude *and* difference. By interrogating colonialism from a specifically historical materialist standpoint, I situate my work within what Crystal Bartolovich (2002) has described as a Marxist postcolonial studies; where historical materialism engages with postcolonial studies at mutual sites of concern while – unlike dominant forms of postcolonial theory – retaining a focus on, and developing a critique of, global capitalism and its constitutive role in structuring the colonial life-worlds (1 – 16).

Further, my focus on the geographical dimension of colonialism in South Asia also addresses a crucial gap in the historical scholarly corpus of that region. Historians of Britain’s

Indian Empire largely remain incurious about the conceptual categories of space and landscape. This is especially true of historians of the Subaltern Studies collective (Chatterjee, 1986; 1993; Chakrabarty, 2000) who, despite articulating their projects in decidedly spatial terms, do not actually engage with space.³ While recent historical research on the spatial production of colonial India (Goswami, 2004; Basu, 2010a) has underlined the “territorialization of history” (Poulantzas, 1980), and in one instance attempted to develop a Foucaultian understanding of the colonial Indian landscape (Arnold, 2005), this critical corpus remains extremely limited.

The Landscape Concept

Underlying my project are materialist theorizations of landscape by Raymond Williams (1973), Henri Lefebvre (1991), David Harvey (1996), Kenneth Olwig (2002; 2005) and Don Mitchell (1996; 2002; 2003; 2005). I rely on them for specific reasons, not least because the concept of landscape, as conceptualized by Marxist scholars, provides a specific valence to the otherwise broad and generic notion of “space,” and the category of “place,” usually understood as local and affective. Moreover, in the context of colonial South Asia, it provides a spatial category through, and with, which to examine imperial social relations between the British colonizers and their Indian subjects, and the attendant spatial production of “India” during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Further, the landscape concept can be deployed to investigate, and articulate, a variety of spatial types (for instance, the sacred or affective landscape) as well as a range of spatial scales (such as the local, urban, regional, or national).

Literary critics, cultural geographers and art historians have theorized landscape in a variety of ways. From these, two primary senses of the term obtain. Landscape is the *built environment* of a place; it is also a *mode of representation* of the land. Further, as both built form

³ Partha Chatterjee (1993), for instance, claims to investigate the Indian nation and its *fragments*. On the other hand, Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000), in his study of colonial India, seeks to *provincialize Europe*.

and representation, landscapes are socially invested with significance and meaning. Landscapes must be understood as spatial expressions, and indeed expressions of space, that mediate between built form, representation, and their social significance. To retain this understanding of the landscape concept, then, I use the term “landscape form” instead of “landscape idea” as preferred by some cultural geographers. This allows me to speak of the landscape concept as built and representational forms *without* suggesting that it is primarily an idea.

As built form landscapes are can be understood, following Marx (1967), as expressions of human labor “acting on the external world and changing it” (p. 173). David Harvey (2006) has noted that in capitalist social formations, landscapes are a “spatial fix” of capital, besides being a “geographically ordered, complex, composite commodity” (pp. 431 – 38; p. 233). As representations, they are a specific way of seeing that implies “separation and observation” (Williams, 1973, p. 120). As Denis Cosgrove (1985) notes, they are a means of “composition and structuring of the world so that it may be appropriated by a detached, individual spectator to whom and illusion of order and control is offered through the composition of space according to the certainties of geometry” (p. 55).

This “illusion,” Cosgrove (1985) adds, “very frequently complemented a very real power and control over fields and farms (p. 55; also see Williams, 1973; Cosgrove, 1998; Berger, 2008). In other words, these critics have demonstrated how the landscape form is aligned to, and complicit in, the development of property rights in Europe, and to the idea of land as a commodity. They have also been understood as manifestations of the ideologies of gender, besides a specifically visual ideology of imperialism (Rose, 1993; Mitchell, 2002b). As representations, landscapes are also conceptions of space across geographical scales, produced through maps and plans, but also photographs and textual forms such as poems, and especially

travelogues and novels. A spatial concept that combines the notions of material and metaphorical space, they remain important sites of literary and cultural analysis.

Landscapes, Don Mitchell (1996) argues, are “both a thing ... and a social process, at once solidly material and ever changing” (p. 30). They are, he writes elsewhere, both “an outcome and the medium of social relations, both the result of and an input to specific relations of production and reproduction” (Mitchell, 2005, p. 49). Don Mitchell (2003) also notes that landscapes are the product, as well as a constituent dimension, of human labor (and the attendant social relations of production and reproduction), and obscure the process of their own making (pp. 233 – 48). Intimately tied to the processes of capitalist accumulation of surplus, they are, according to Kenneth Olwig (2005), manifestations and instruments of alienation.

Yet, while landscapes alienate, they also become a means of forming affective links with the land. Landscapes have therefore been constitutive in shaping national identity, particularly in nineteenth century Europe and America. This has been elaborated upon by Olwig (2002) and Stephen Daniels (1993) in the context of Europe and America, while David Matless (1998), Elizabeth Helsinger (1997), and Phil Kinsman (1995) have focused on the relationship between landscape and Englishness. As a corollary, landscapes determine questions of belonging: who belongs within the land(scape), and to whom the land(scape) belongs.

Importantly, landscapes – as built form and representation – work in specific ways. Williams (1973) and Cosgrove (1998) demonstrate how landscapes naturalize relations of property, and the attendant social division of labor. Moreover, physically and ideologically, they establish the “conditions of what is ‘natural’ or ‘right’ in a particular place” (Mitchell, 2005, p. 50). According to W. J. T Mitchell (2002a) they naturalize a “cultural and social construction, representing an artificial world as if it were simply given and inevitable” (p. 2). Further, allied

with the technology of perspective and subsequently, riding the indexical claims of the photographic image, visual representations of landscape could claim the authority of the “real” and “truth.”

The power of landscapes to *naturalize* historically specific social constructions indicates towards their ability to establish the conditions of possibility of how life, in terms of labor and leisure, is lived. Interrogating the concept of hegemony, Williams (1977) has commented that it is “a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world [and] a lived system of meanings and values – constitutive and constituting – which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming” (p. 110). Williams’s gloss demonstrates that landscapes not only align with the concept of hegemony but appear as hegemony spatialized; the naturalizing power of landscapes appear to be a function of their power to construct, in historically specific ways, the hegemony of specific classes over space, and of specific spatial forms. Indeed, if hegemony is, as Antonio Gramsci (2000) has noted, a complex of consent and coercion, then landscapes, by virtue of being the spatial form of hegemony, and the means for constructing the hegemony of specific spaces, coerce and/or extract consent from the people who live within them.

Williams (1977) also reminds us that lived hegemony – and landscapes are a spatial instance of this – is always a process that “does not just passively exist as a form of dominance [but has] continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified” (Williams, 1977, p. 112). Landscapes appear as “a kind of produced, lived, and represented space constructed out of the struggles, compromises, and temporarily settled relations of competing and cooperating

social actors” (D. Mitchell, 1996, p. 30). Consequently, as sites of social struggle, they also become spaces for the construction of (spatial) counter-hegemonies.

Contesting Space, Constructing Hegemony

My project takes up the insights into the landscape form developed in the disciplines of geography, literary and cultural studies, and art history, to conduct a historico-geographical inquiry into the space of British India. It explores how the British and Indian elites contested the space of British India from the mid-nineteenth to the early years of the twentieth century. I focus on this period for several reasons. Foremost, it follows the quelling of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 (the Sepoy Mutiny for British historians) and marks the rise of the Indian middle classes and the dominant social group within the space of British India, and its various provinces. More crucially, it signals the emergence of a commonsensical notion of “India” among the Indian middle classes, and the pre-emergence of Indian anti-colonial nationalism that would subsequently assume the nature of a mass movement under the leadership of Mohandas Gandhi, and the aegis of the Indian National Congress, around the time of the First World War.

It is undoubtedly true that this commonsensical notion of “India” would itself be contested, most notably by the Muslim League in their demand for a separate homeland of Pakistan for British Indian Muslims, but also through the Dalit and Communist movements of British India.⁴ However, it is important to keep in mind that the idea of “India” – of a decidedly male, Hindu, upper caste, and upper class provenance – became the socio-cultural and spatial norm against which the “other” imaginaries of the decolonized space of South Asia were situated. More importantly, this normative idea of “India” decisively – and often violently – structures contemporary socio-cultural and spatial self-imaginings of the postcolonial Indian

⁴ These alternative articulations of the Indian nation-space are beyond the scope of my current project.

nation-state, within and outside its borders, as well as in the liminal zones such as Kashmir and the north-eastern regions of South Asia. To *historicize* and *spatialize* the idea of “India” at the moment of its pre-emergence – as a “structure of feeling” – is, then, a critical enterprise of considerable importance and urgency. It enables us to understand of how and why it emerges and becomes hegemonic; its imbrication in the processes of European imperialism; the historical and geographical processes that have come to constitute the neo-colonial Indian present.

My project restricts itself to the literary worlds and spatial practices of the Indian middle class (the “*bhadralok*”) from Bengal, and investigates how this social class contested the colonizers’ material and representational landscaping of, and claims over, the space of British India. I do not focus on the Bengali *bhadralok* to valorize the middle class of a particular region of South Asia. Bengalis, as one historian has pointed out, were “the first Asian social group of any size whose mental world was transformed through its interactions with the West” (Raychaudhuri, 1988, p. ix). Colonial Bengal remains an important locus to study the historico-geographical processes of colonialism because it was the first, and most extensive, contact zone between the Asians and the Europeans.

Plan of the Dissertation

My project begins by examining the concept of the nation in spatial-temporal terms, and as imbricated in the uneven and global processes of capitalism. I begin by examining the historico-geographical processes that produce the coherent space of British India, and delineate how that colonial space profoundly structured the idea of an Indian nation-space. Subsequently, I engage with the more influential theorizations of the nation to conceptualize the nation as a spatio-temporal concept, and locate the emergence of the nation form, and scale, to the uneven, and global, movement of capital.

The next two chapters of my dissertation examine the deployment of landscape in British and Indian literary and cultural productions at two specific local sites. My second chapter examines British and Indian contestation of the landscape of the colonial city of Calcutta, the capital of British Indian space. The chapter documents a shift in the depiction of the city's landscape from James Atkinson's 1824 poem, called the *City of Palaces*, to Rudyard's Kipling's anthology of essays on Calcutta called the *City of Dreadful Night*, initially published serially in 1888, and situates them in relation to the built form of the city, in addition to government reports on the city's conservancy and gardens, as well as tourist guides, and popular geography texts. The chapter also investigates these colonial literary texts and documents vis-à-vis contemporaneous Indian accounts of the city. Organized under the sign of the "invention of tradition," the chapter argues that late-nineteenth century British texts moved away from the earlier notion of Calcutta as a second London to begin projecting the city as the epitome of filth. It also documents how, around the same time, Indian elites had begun to claim that urban space as their own.

The third chapter focuses on the British claims, and Indian counter-claims over the Himalayan landscape. It examines Samuel Bourne's picturesque photographs of the mountains (1863 – 1870), and situates them in relation to the built form of the colonial hill-stations. The chapter also investigates Bourne's picturesque images in relation to his anti-picturesque travelogues on the Himalaya to interrogate the politics of the picturesque in articulating the *dominant* colonial understanding of the mountains as an "empty" space for building and settlement. The chapter also draws upon Debendranath Tagore's autobiography to delineate a *residual* pre-colonial understanding of the mountains as part of a Hindu sacred geography. Organized under the sign of "structures of feeling," the chapter finally explores Jaladhar Sen's

travelogue *Himalay* [*The Himalaya*], first published serially in 1893, to contend that it draws upon the pre-colonial notion of sacred geography to posit the mountains as a spatial metaphor of a future nation, thereby signaling towards a *emergent* idea of the Indian nation-space.

The focus of my project then shifts to the scale of the nation. The fourth chapter examines how the Indian nationalists produced the idea of the nation through landscapes, examining in particular the idealization and idolization of the Indian landscape in *Vande Mataram* (1882), the national song of the post-colonial Indian nation-state. Engaging with the gendered articulation of the Indian landscape, it relates this spatial imagination to the quotidian reality of British India ravaged by famines. Crucially, my investigation into the spatial imagination of *Vande Mataram* delineates how the landscape form connects the local (countryside), the regional (Bengal), to the national (India), and how, ideologically, the spatial hegemony of the nation is maintained. Moreover, it understands the song's spatial imaginary as a means for the indigenous middle class to counter the colonizers' hegemony over the space of India, and establish their own. By documenting the song's reliance on a Hindu "commonsense," it delineates how that anti-colonial imagination of the Indian nation also excludes the laboring classes and Muslims from its ambit.

The fifth and final chapter examines how colonial and anti-colonial authors have engaged with the question of belonging to the Indian landscape. Examining the nation as a scalar manifestation of the landscape form, it explores the contending conceptions of the Indian nation-space, and Indians, in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) and Rabindranath Tagore's *Gora* (1907). I investigate how these novels address the questions of belonging and 'Indian-ness' in relation to the Indian nation-space. I do this by interrogating, in particular, the novels' depictions of their Irish founding protagonists within the space of India. The chapter contends that Tagore's idea of

the nation as a universal space of humanity repudiates Kipling's imperialist vision of India as a space of irredeemable difference. Further, it delineates how Tagore focuses on the scale of the home, and the inequitable gendered division of labor within it, to critique of contemporaneous trends in anti-colonial nationalism that take on a decidedly Hindu tenor.

CHAPTER 1

THE NATION-SPACE OF INDIA

On 25 October 1936, Mohandas Gandhi, at that time the undisputed leader of the Indian nationalist struggle under the aegis of the Indian National Congress, inaugurated a temple within the precincts of the Kashi Vidyapeeth in Varanasi. The temple was dedicated to “Bharat Mata” or Mother India, but this is not where its uniqueness lay. The temple had no idol or image of god and goddesses; instead, the “deity” at the heart of its sanctum was a relief map of British India made of marble, set to scale and laid out on a grid (see Figure 1). According to a report from the *Hindustan Times* that covered the inauguration of the temple, the production of the relief map “31 feet and 2 inches long, and 30 feet and 2 inches broad,” used all the latest geometrical knowledge to show each of British India’s physical features – over 400 peaks, rivers with their relative length, breadth, and depth, and principal lakes; these features are also set to scale, where “each surface inch being equal to 6 miles and 704 yards, and an inch of height meaning 2,000 feet” (qtd. in Ramaswamy, 2010, p. 154).

As the historian Sumathi Ramaswamy (2010) has noted, “this memorial to Bharat Mata ... arrests a moment in time ... when much of this space was seemingly unitary and singular and operated under the sign of ‘India’” (p. 158). While Ramaswamy’s observation is acute, it can also be productively excavated and expanded, for she fails to note the geographical notation underwriting this exercise in memorializing the Indian nation. The reliance on the relief map form to depict “India” demonstrates a coming together of the material and metaphorical realms, where the map re-presents the physical features of the land through a translation across geometric scales. In so doing, it allows the viewer a detached, bird’s-eye view of the nation – in all its constitutive parts and constituting scales – as a *unified space in a moment* in time. In other

words, this relief map of India presents the Indian nation-space *as a landscape*. At the same time, it also presents the landscape form *at the spatial scale of the nation*.



Figure 1: Relief Map of British India as Deity at the Bharat Mata Temple, Varanasi, India.

The landscape form, Cosgrove (1985) reminds us, visually renders space “the property of the individual detached observer, from whose divine location it is a dependent, appropriated object” (p. 49). The use of the map in the Bharat Mata temple by the colonial subjects, then, is an

act of appropriating the landscape form, and its attendant claims on space. Since perspectival mapping and the landscape form were established in British India by the colonizers, the Indians' claim over the space appears as a counter-claim, and a contestation of that space. Moreover, the presence of a map, presupposes the spatial entity that is being represented, and its spatial unity. It implies the presence of a "British India" – a geographically specific expanse of South Asia landscaped into existence through the socio-spatial processes of British colonialism – that is represented in the map, in turn contested and claimed by the Indian nationalists.

There is another important aspect about the act of viewing the map of British India, either at the temple or elsewhere. The map, as I have outlined, presupposes the spatial unity of space being viewed and represented. Further, the act of viewing the map would *promote* the understanding, among its viewers, about them existing within the space and the same time, that is, of spatial and temporal simultaneity. I use the word "promote" advisedly, and to mark my divergence from Benedict Anderson's (2006) reliance on "print capitalism" to understand the temporal simultaneity that, for him, engenders national consciousness (pp. 9 – 46). Instead, I am indicating the need to conceptualize the nation as function of spatial *and* temporal simultaneity – a specific chronotope – where print capitalism is an expression of a larger and more powerful social process, namely, global capitalism, and in the context of British India, its colonial manifestation.

In this chapter, therefore, I will discuss the two issues that I have raised. In the section that follows, I will outline the historico-geographical processes that produce British India, the spatial entity which serves as the condition of possibility for Indian nationalists to claim the space of "India" for themselves. In the subsequent section, I will examine some of the more

influential theorizations of the “nation” and, relying on a spatialized idea of uneven development and geographical scale, arrive at a conception of the nation-space of India.

The Spatial Production of “British India”

In 1903, the British civil servant in India John Strachey (1903) wrote:

There is no such country, and this is the first and most essential fact about India that can be learned ... India is a name which we give to a great region including a multitude of different countries ... there is not, and never was an India, or even a country of India, possessing according to European ideas, any sort of unity, physical, political, social, or religious; no Indian nation, no “people of India,” of which we hear so much (pp. 1 – 5).

Strachey’s vigorous denial of the entity of India, and Indians, represents a dominant opinion that emerged among the British towards the late-nineteenth century, and can be traced to nascent Indian nationalism. Since its formation in 1885, the Indian National Congress had begun articulating questions about the “condition of India,” especially its economic drain by Britain and critiquing the doublespeak of British liberalism that advocated rights at home but withheld them in the colonies.⁵ Francis Hutchins (1967) notes that the body of opinion that Strachey represents, which stressed India as simply a geographic expression, was significantly different from earlier years when British liberals and conservatives shared a consensus on India’s nationhood. The denial of India’s nationhood, Hutchins (1967) comments, was an attempt to reconcile the “conflicting claims of national self-determination, and England’s desire to be a trans-national state” (p. 141). Indeed, this line of reasoning argued that since India was “not a nation then England could not be accused of depriving her of her rights as a nation to self-government” (Hutchins, 1967, p. 141).

⁵ The most important spokesperson of early Indian nationalism was Dadabhai Naoroji who also wrote extensively about Britain’s economic drain of India, especially in his *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1901). Naoroji was also President of the Indian National Congress in 1886, 1893, and 1906.

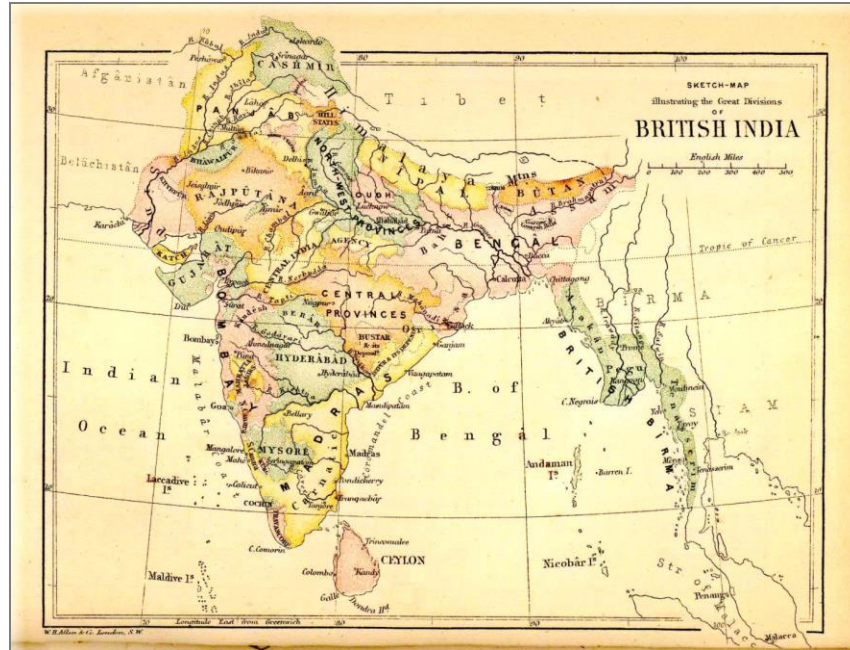


Figure 2: Map of British India.

More crucially, Stratchey’s assertion of “India is a name which [the British] give to a region” underlines a deep contradiction at the heart of Britain’s imperial project in South Asia.⁶ While it denies India as a unified space, Stratchey himself was part of a long line of colonial administrators who, owing to the demands of colonial government, made every effort to produce (British) India as a coherent – if not homogenous – space since the mid-eighteenth century. These efforts took the shape of material interventions into the physical space of the Indian sub-continent that restructured its landscape, as well as constructing regimes of historical, geographical, and ethnological knowledge about the space. This perceptual and conceptual

⁶ Colonial historians have long debated if an “India” existed before colonial rule. There clearly existed a cultural idea of “India” in South Asia long before the advent of the British. Alexander decided to invade “India” in 326 BC. A century later, Megasthenes, a Greek ethnographer and diplomat in the court of Chandragupta Maurya would write his *Indica*. Most crucially, a notion of the geographical unity of the Indian sub-continent is in evidence in Kalidasa’s Sanskrit poem *Meghdut* [*The Cloud Messenger*] written in the 4th century AD. It narrates how a *yaksha* (a mythical creature) after being exiled in the Ramgiri mountains of Central India, convinces a passing cloud to take a message to his wife in the city of Alaka, in the Himalaya. The *yaksha* accomplishes this by describing the many beautiful sights the cloud will see on its northward course to the city where his wife awaits his return. In other words, *Meghdut* articulates a vision of a coherent and contiguous lived space of the Indian sub-continent.

transformation of the Indian sub-continent was deemed scientific and therefore “truthful;” they were institutionally disseminated within, and outside the confines of South Asia, and would have a significant impact in the ways in which the colonizers and the colonized lived in that space. To put this in another way, the British East India Company, and subsequently, its successor colonial state, put in place a number of politico-legal, technological, institutional, and ideological measures that produced British India, physically and conceptually, into a coherent and unified space that structured the way its inhabitants related to, and lived in, that space (Figure 2).

Politically, this production of coherent space was shaped with the consolidation of British rule in India, mostly between 1757 and 1818. Arriving in India as merchants, seeking trade concessions in the early decades of the seventeenth century, the British established trading outposts in what were villages within the space of Mughal India, namely, Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay. These spaces would develop into cities, becoming centers of the “presidencies,” the principal administrative (and spatial) units of the British East India Company.⁷ In the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the British East India Company expanded the spatial extent of the Bengal, Bombay, and Madras Presidencies through a series of wars and annexations. Their victory at the Battle of Plassey in 1757, against the Nawab [Mughal governor] of Bengal, gained them the rights to collect revenue in what was the most prosperous province in late-Mughal India. In 1799, they defeated Tipu Sultan of Mysore, annexed Mysore to the Madras presidency, and established themselves in complete control over the southern Indian peninsula. By this time, the British in South Asia had graduated from being mere merchants to one of the most significant political forces in the sub-continent, matched only by the independent Sikh

⁷ The Madras Presidency was established in 1640, the Bombay Presidency in 1687, and the Bengal Presidency, with Calcutta as its center, in 1690. Under the rule of the East India Company in India, which formally commenced with the establishment of Calcutta as the capital, and Warren Hastings as the Governor General in 1772, the Bombay and Madras Presidencies were made subordinate to Bengal.

kingdom in Punjab, the Emirate of Afghanistan, and the Maratha Confederacy that ruled all of central and western India.

In the first couple of decades of the nineteenth century, the British went on to defeat the Maratha confederacy, first in 1805, and then conclusively in 1818, bringing all of western and central India under the Bombay presidency, and establish themselves as the paramount political force in South Asia. After 1818, the British exiled the head of the Maratha Confederacy, the *Peshwa*, Baji Rao II, to Bithoor in northern India. This event would come back to haunt them, as the *Peshwa*'s adopted son, Nana Sahib, would emerge as the leader of the 1857 Rebellion and after its pacification, become the symbol of Oriental rapacity and despotism in British cultural productions on India (See Brantlinger, 1988).

With the signing of the Russo-Persian treaty of 1813, Russia emerged as an important influence in Central Asia. This began what came to be regarded as the “Great Game” – the strategic rivalry between Britain and Russia in Central Asia and Tibet that lasted for most of the nineteenth century.⁸ In part to secure its South Asian domain, and to counteract Russian influence in Persia, Afghanistan, and Central Asia, British forces launched two campaigns against Afghanistan, in 1839, and again in 1878. At the conclusion of the second campaign, in 1880, the Treaty of Gandamak was signed between the British and the Afghans. The terms of the treaty permitted the Afghans to maintain internal sovereignty, but their foreign relations were ceded to the British. The British also fought two wars against the Sikh Empire, first in 1845, and then again in 1848. In 1849, after the end of the second Anglo-Sikh war, Punjab was annexed to

⁸ The term itself was coined by Arthur Connolly, an intelligence officer in the Sixth Bengal Light Cavalry of the British East India Company, who was beheaded in Bokhara in Central Asia while “playing” the Great Game in 1842. The Great Game was not – as Ian Baucom (1999) suggests – a way of “colloquially” referring to the “mapping of the [Indian] sub-continent, officially known as the Survey of India” (p. 93).

British India. Finally, the dominion of Oudh (Awadh) in the Gangetic Plains was annexed in 1856, setting the stage for the Rebellion of 1857.

The 1857 Rebellion hastened the end of British East India Company rule in India. After the Rebellion was quelled, the Company was formally dissolved by the Government of India Act 1858, and its Indian dominions were transferred to the British Crown. A new British government department, the India Office, was established to govern India, and its head, the Secretary of State for India, was entrusted with formulating Indian policy. In India, a number of provinces were set up to administer the region better, and the representative of the British Crown came to be known as the Viceroy, instead of the Governor-General. Moreover, the Indian Civil Service, a bureaucratic apparatus, to assist the rulers in the governance of the colony, was established in 1858. In 1876, almost two decades after India coming under the British Crown, the British monarch Victoria assumed the title of Empress of India, which was proclaimed in the Delhi Durbar of 1877. At this time, direct British rule extended to over two-thirds of the Indian sub-continent; the rest was ruled by native princes, who were under the suzerainty of the Viceroy or India, or other administrators under the Viceroy.⁹

The aftermath of the 1857 Rebellion, then, established British India more firmly as a colonial space. It was indirectly ruled by Britain during the Company era, and after coming under the direct rule of the British Crown, was given a greater degree of spatial coherence than before. This coherence is best demonstrated in the Interpretation Act of 1889, passed by the British Parliament. Seeking to define “British India” and “India,” the Act unequivocally states:

The expression ‘British India’ shall mean all territories and places within Her Majesty's dominions which are for the time being governed by Her Majesty through the Governor-General of India or through any governor or other officer

⁹ At the time of Indian independence in 1947, there were a total of 565 Princely States in India, and all of them acceded to either India or Pakistan, and the princes were pensioned off. This process was largely peaceful except in the cases of Kashmir, Hyderabad, and Junagadh.

subordinate to the Governor-General of India *The expression 'India' shall mean British India together with any territories of any native prince or chief under the suzerainty of Her Majesty exercised through the Governor-General of India, or through any governor or other officer subordinate to the Governor-General of India.* (Ilbert, 1901, p. 348, my italics)

If this definition of “India” and “British India” gesture towards an unevenness of political space, and rule, it is further underlined in the tiered administration structure of British rule over that space. The imperial administration had the British monarch at the top, and extended down to the Secretary of State for India, in London, and the Viceroy, in India. The Viceroy in turn oversaw the Armed forces, the major Native Princes, and the Lieutenant-Governors of the various provinces in British India. These Lieutenant-Governors, in turn, oversaw the affairs of the minor Native Princes.

This tiered structure of rule is critiqued by Gramsci (2000) as an exemplar of “bourgeois discipline,” by drawing on Kipling’s representation of British India in his story “Servants of the Queen” from *The Jungle Book*. He writes:

In one of the stories in *The Jungle Book* Rudyard Kipling shows discipline at work in a strong bourgeois society. Everyone obeys in the bourgeois state. The mules in the battery obey the battery sergeant, the horses obey the soldiers who ride them. The soldiers obey the lieutenant, the lieutenants obey the regimental colonels; the regiments obey a brigadier general; the brigades obey the viceroy of the Indias [sic]. The viceroy obeys Queen Victoria ... The queen gives an order: the viceroy, the brigadier generals, the colonels, the lieutenants, the soldiers, the animals, all move in unison and go off to the conquest. The protagonist of the story says to a native who is watching a parade: ‘Because you cannot do likewise, you are our subjects.’ (Gramsci, 2000, p. 31 – 32)

There are three important insights to gain from Gramsci’s comment. First, it describes the hierarchical – and uneven – distribution of colonial power in British India. Moreover, by underlining the claim of the story’s protagonist that natives were *unlike* their rulers, he gestures towards the category of anthropological and spatial difference that underwrites colonial rule.

Further, by characterizing this phenomenon as an example of “discipline” in a “bourgeois state,” Gramsci posits a identity between the categories of “colonial” and “bourgeois.” This highlights the class character of colonial exploitation, in which the classical Marxist formulation of bourgeois and proletariat assumes a world-historical spatial dimension: of the bourgeois metropole appropriating the labor power, and extracting the surplus, from the proletarian periphery. To put this in another way, this Gramscian insight allows us to think of the category of class in spatial terms, and, as a corollary, of the role of the global social division of labor in the production of a globally uneven space or “second nature” (Marx, 1967; Amin, 1976; Smith, 1992; Said, 1994).

It is important to remember that British India – a proletarian space in this schema – was also produced as a coherent colonial space to aid the colonizer’s search for surplus and raw materials. However, for this to be successful, the colonial state had to take several legal measures that produced the colonial territory rule as a *unified* and *bounded* financial space. The production of a common financial space of British India, in which a common currency, that is, the abstract money form, could circulate, began under the rule of the British East India Company. Act XVII of 1835 established the “silver rupee” as the “standard coin for the whole of British India,” further stipulating that “no gold coin shall henceforth be a legal tender of payment in any of the territories of the EIC [British East India Company]” (qtd. in Coyajee, 1930, p. 5). In effect, this move standardized the money form, and the currency system, which until then was issued in a variety of forms by regional rulers backed by the authority of the pre-colonial Mughal state.

The production of the uniform financial space was followed by the setting up of a number of banking institutions regulated by the colonial government that issued rupees at a standardized value. Further, in 1861, Act XIX introduced the circulation of state paper currency, and the new

colonial state monopolized the right to issue currency within British India. Concurrent to this, was the standardization of weights and measures, as well as the construction of a coherent temporal regime in India.¹⁰ Crucially, the construction of the unified financial space, and the common abstract money form, allowed the basis for setting up of a pan-Indian system of equivalences, with local variations, that enabled the payment of wages for labor, and the setting the prices for other commodities. It, therefore, created a pan-Indian space of trans-regional labor, and sowed the seeds of a capitalist market economy. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Indian Succession Act (1865), the Indian Companies Act (1882), and the Indian Income Tax Act (1886) were introduced to regulate speculation, inheritance, and taxation, and further streamlined the colonial Indian economy (See Birla, 2009).

The colonial government undertook further centralizing, and therefore unifying, measures in the Indian sub-continent. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the British Indian government decided to make English the official medium of instruction as an “implicit tactical maneuver in the consolidation of power” (Viswanathan, 1989, p. 2). This finds its finest expression in Thomas Macaulay’s oft-cited comment from his “Minute on Indian Education” from 1835. Macaulay (2003) writes:

it is impossible for us ... to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country ... and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. (p. 237)

¹⁰ By the late nineteenth century India unofficially had two time zones based on the times at Calcutta and Bombay. The Indian Railways, however, unofficially followed Madras Time, based on the observatory established there in 1799, over the whole sub-continent, across Lahore, Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. In 1905, the time of Allahabad (at 82.5°E and 5 hours 30 minutes ahead of GMT) was established as the Indian Standard Time and adopted by the Indian Railways.

The same year as Macaulay’s minute, the British promulgated the English Education Act in 1835, replacing Persian with English as the official medium of instruction in British India. Over time, English became “the language spoken [not only] by the ruling class ... [but also] the higher class of natives at the seats of Government” (Macaulay, 2003, p. 231). It became – to appropriate Bernard Cohn’s (1996) evocative turn of phrase – “the language of command,” and the hegemonic language vis-à-vis the Indian vernaculars, and a constituent dimension of colonial hegemony (pp. 16 – 56).¹¹

Aijaz Ahmad (1992) reminds us that the main claim of English in India under colonization was decidedly a non-literary one; it was a “centralizing language to sustain ... [India’s] national unity – the ‘nation’ in this conception was co-terminus with exigencies of administration” (p. 74). Modhumita Roy (2004) and Ahmad (1992) contend that English was not only the official medium of colonial transaction but also aided the centralization of the colonial state apparatus. Moreover, Roy (2004) has convincingly argued that for the vast majority of middle class Indians, acquiring a degree of felicity with the English language was not simply a cultural choice but one structured by economic necessity – the ability to earn a living – in the colonial labor market where English was the medium of transaction (pp. 92 – 97).

In this context, then, English becomes a means of production in the colonial Indian middle class. This is because the knowledge of English determined, often solely, the candidate’s suitability for employment. This made the language a marker of class position (and privilege) among the natives within the colonial Indian social formation, and mapped on to the social division of labor engendered by the colonizers. Since English was the official language of the

¹¹ Cohn (1996) details British efforts at mastering Persian (the language of the Mughal court), Sanskrit (the other “classical” language of India), as well as the “vulgar” languages of India, namely, Bengali and Hindustani to argue that Hindustani became the British “language of command” in India (pp. 16 – 56). However, Cohn does not engage with the significance, and status, of English, especially after the 1835 promulgation of English Education Act. This appears to be a rather curious omission.

colonial state, and the language of administration in its higher echelons, such as move prevented the vast majority of Indians, who did not have access to the English language, from actively participating in it. However, English also became a vital means for people of a certain class from the different ethno-linguistic homelands to communicate, and co-operate, within the unified colonial state-space of trans-regional labor, engendering the Anglophone literary universe and public sphere of British India. By enabling the English-educated upper classes (of which the Bengali *bhadralok* was a constituent) to communicate and co-operate, it allowed for the development of a *classed* social consensus regarding the unified space of British India.

British India was also, importantly, produced as a bounded space, where the border demarcated the extent of British political and juridical authority. The British reconfigured the conception of political sovereignty in India. Before their advent, sovereignty was conceived of as a power whose exercise was delegated by the center to various groups. While those groups drew their authority and legitimacy from the center (the Mughal emperor, in early nineteenth century India), the actual exercise of sovereignty was independent of the center's will. Under colonial rule, the colonizers established what was termed British paramountcy over their dominion, where the exercise of sovereignty was the sole preserve of the British. Thinking of the space of British India as a unified space of trans-regional labor also provides an additional gloss on the British obsession with boundaries. From this perspective the boundary becomes a crucial aspect for determining wages for labor power, and maintaining the rate of profit associated with surplus extraction. This, therefore, necessitated the clear establishments of the limits of control.

The most crucial insight regarding the colonial origins of the boundary-concept comes from the Thai historian Thongchai Winichakul.¹² Documenting the evolution of the border in the

¹² The historical evolution of the border-concept remains an under-studied area in Indian history. One of the earliest works on this is Embree (1977). For a critique of Embree (1977), see Barrow (2005). The postcolonial cartographic

context of Siam, Winichakul (1994) notes that “the limits of a kingdom could be defined only by [border] townships’ allegiance to the center of a kingdom [and the] political sphere ... only by power relationships, not by territorial integrity,” and the interactions between the British and the Siamese were rife with discrepant understandings of what a border signified (p. 79). He writes that while Siam did not

lack the terminology and concepts for ... boundaries ... [They tended] to signify areas, districts, or frontiers, not boundary lines. They mean a limit – an extremity without a clear-cut edge and without the sense of division between two powers (Winichakul, 1994, p. 75)

Winichakul’s observations also have an important critical valence for colonial India, for through the nineteenth century British India’s rulers set about demarcating the spatial extent of their rule.

The colonizers viewed the Himalaya as demarcating the northern boundary of British India. This is evident in George Curzon’s (1907) lecture at the University of Oxford where he remarked that the “Himalayas are beyond doubt the most formidable natural Frontier in the world” (p. 18).¹³ This sentiment is echoed in government documents, one of which notes that “Nature ... imposes a scientific frontier along the Mustagh (Karakoram) range and the Himalayas” while describing the northern extremity of Britain’s Indian dominion (*The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1909, p. 58). Regions of British India that did not have natural frontiers, too had to be bounded and in particularly evident in the case of British India vis-à-vis Afghanistan.

British efforts to set up a clear boundary between British India and Afghanistan began in 1893 when the colonial government deputed Mortimer Durand to Kabul to obtain the consent of the Afghan Amir, Abdur Rahman Khan, to define the margin between the two realms. The Amir

anxiety in South Asia regarding the border is discussed by Krishna (1996). For an examination of the theoretical salience of territoriality in South Asia through a discussion of the comparative histories of the Durand, McMahon and Radcliff lines, see Mishra (2008).

¹³ George Curzon was the Viceroy of India between 1898 and 1905.

acceded to the British request, and between 1894 and 1896, a joint Afghan and British team mapped and demarcated the 800 miles long “border,” the Durand Line. British India and Afghanistan would fight a third war in 1919 – two earlier wars were fought in 1839 and 1878 – following which the Durand Line would be reaffirmed by the Afghans, and the British would grant Afghanistan complete sovereignty.

This has a number of critical consequences for the production of British Indian space. The establishment of the Durand Line underlines, foremost, the emergence and crystallization of the concept of the boundary that demarcated the limit of a political territory and the extent of political sovereignty, in the Indian sub-continent under colonial rule. Moreover, it also demonstrates the process by which Afghanistan, considered a part of pre-colonial “India,” was separated out from British India owing to colonial exigencies, namely, the creation of a buffer state between the Russian and British Empires. Crucially, it underlines the process through which a historically diffuse and fluid spatial entity called India was given fixity in space by the British.

This geographical vision of India would be supported through extensive cartographic and surveying practices. This would also be taught as the discipline of geography in Indian schools and colleges. In fact, colonial geography text-books from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, written by the British and Indians, describe India as bounded by the Himalaya in the north, and by Afghanistan in the north-west (See, for instance, *Geography*, 1859; *General Geography*, 1871; Sircar, 1879).

The unified and bounded space of British India was also, importantly, extensively connected under colonial rule. A crucial step in this was the introduction of the railways in India since 1850. Within ten years of this, “colonial India had the ninth largest railway system in the

world, by 1890, the seventh largest, and by the turn of the century the fourth largest system” (Goswami, 2004, p. 51). In fact, by 1914, every Indian village was located within “seven miles of a railway line” (Derbyshire, 1985, p. 42). It allowed the Indian people to travel across the expanse of British India for work and leisure, and between the end of the nineteenth, and the opening decades of the twentieth century, passenger traffic in British India grew exponentially. Goswami (2004) notes that the annual number of railway passengers “rose from 80 million in 1880 to 200 million in 1904, and to more than 500 million by 1920 – 21” (p. 108).

The railways enabled the circulation of labor, commodities, and capital throughout British India. They also connected British Indian ports to the interiors, and allowed for people to migrate from the Indian hinterland to these ports, and through these ports to other colonial dominions as indentured laborers. Consequently, more and more of Britain’s Indian subjects were experiencing British India as a coherent and unified space. The connected nature of this British Indian space was further supplemented with the establishment of the telegraph system, and of the Indian postal service, during the course of the nineteenth century.

Importantly, the colonizers also produced diverse histories “India,” territorializing it in specific ways. This colonial historiography, pioneered by James Mill, John Stuart Mill, James Todd, Henry Elliot, and Mountstuart Elphinstone, presented positivist accounts of Indian history where British rule was explained as the teleological end in the process of political domination of the Indian sub-continent, progressively by Hindus, Muslims, and the British. Moreover, these histories presented Muslims as tyrannical foreign conquerors of India.¹⁴ “India,” then, was produced by the colonizers as a specific chronotope, that is, a space-time complex with a definite

¹⁴ For the impact of James Mill’s ideas on Indian history see Majeed (1992). For an analysis of Elliotts’s engagement with Islam in Indian history see Eaton (1993) and for Todd’s influence on nationalist imaginations of Indian history see Peabody (1996). For an analysis of the role of historiography in informing Hindu-Muslim relationships, see Basu & Das (2005).

spatial extent, and a specific history. Crucially, the production, dissemination, and re-production of this colonial historico-geographical understanding of “India” were further supported by the establishment of a colonial education system in various parts of British India, especially through the establishment of universities in the presidency cities of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras in 1856, modeled after the British universities at Oxford, Cambridge, and London.

After 1858, the British initiated the decennial census, the first of which came out in 1871. There was also an older trend to document, among others, the ethnographic details of their Indian subjects. Most notable among these ethnographic surveys is the eight-volume compendium titled *The People of India*. Published between 1868 and 1875, this collection of 468 albumen prints of “native types” owed its origins to the desire of Charles Canning and his wife, who wanted to “carry home ... a collection ... of photographic illustrations ... [of] the peculiarities of Indian life” (qtd. in Pinney, 1997, p. 34).¹⁵ For this, the Governor-General encouraged civilians and army officers to travel with cameras and deposit copies of their photographs with his office. After the 1857 Rebellion, the project was given official status and in 1863, the government decided to turn it into a publication documenting Indian communities from across the country. The compendium that emerged, according to Christopher Pinney (1997), displayed “a concern with political loyalty (or its lack) and an ongoing desire to provide practical clues to the identification of groups which had so recently had the opportunity to demonstrate either their fierce hatred of British rule or their acquiescence” (p. 34).

The People of India put the featured native types on virtual display through the photographs, as if being exhibited in a museum. In conjunction with this act of displaying, the compendium erratically labeled the “native types” according to caste, tribe or sect. These

¹⁵ Charles Canning was the last Governor-General of the Company era, and the first Viceroy of British India. He was in office between 1856 and 1862, and headed the colonial administration in British India during the 1857 Rebellion.

captions were supplemented with more detailed descriptions that outlined the characteristics of these Indians, often according to the position they adopted vis-à-vis the British during the 1857 Rebellion. Take, for instance, the image of the Gujar [member of the Gujjar tribe of northern India] from *The People of India* (Figure 3). He is shown holding a bamboo stick and a *hookah*; described as powerful, handsome and fair-complexioned; but also deemed dishonest, untrustworthy, lawless, and addicted to marijuana.



Figure 3: Photograph of Goojur Landholder from *The People of India*.

The textual captions and the more detailed descriptions appear to hold their respective images in an epistemological matrix where the words and the images complement and validate each other. This points to James Ryan’s (1997) comment that the meaning of photographic imagery is “frequently framed by linguistic messages in the forms of titles, captions and

accompanying texts” (p. 19). In this instance, the articulation of the Gujar’s “dishonesty,” “untrustworthiness,” and “lawlessness,” as well as his addiction to marijuana, are reinforced by the elements within the photographic frame, namely, the bamboo stick and *hookah* in his hands.

The language of the preface of *The People of India* is also particularly illuminating. It states:

The great convulsion of 1857 – 58 ... imparted a newer interest to the country which had been the *scene*, and to the people who had been the *actors* in these *remarkable events*. When ... the pacification of India had been accomplished, the officers of the Indian services, who had made themselves acquainted with the principles of practices of photography ... went forth and traversed the land in search of *interesting subjects* (qtd. in Pinney, p. 35, my italics)

It is important to note that preface speaks of British India as a “scene,” the 1857 Rebellion as a series of “remarkable events,” and the Indians as “actors” and “interesting subjects.” In so doing, it transforms the colonial space into a theater. In this formulation, Indian history becomes a tableau of events, and Indians, figures of ethnographic curiosity to be watched as “interesting specimens.” Crucially, it withholds from Indians any agency to shape their own history, in effect transforming India into a museum of ethnology, rendering it ahistorical, static, and passive.

The historico-geographical process that I have outlined above, namely, the production of British India into an interconnected and bounded geographical and historical entity, peopled with “interesting” people, can be productively thought through using Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) notion of “social space”. Lefebvre (1991) tells us that social space is a social product as well as social process; it is secreted through the spatial practice of a society; its production is the function of the interconnection and interpenetration of perceived, conceived, and lived spaces (p. 26 – 40). Moreover, Lefebvre (1991) tells us that

the lived, conceived, and perceived realms should be interconnected, so that the ‘subject’, the individual member of a given social group, may move from one to another without confusion ... [and] they constitute a coherent whole ... in

favorable circumstances, when a common language, a consensus and a code can be established. (p. 40)

Lefebvre’s observation has important consequences when thinking about colonial landscapes. In the case of the landscape of British India, we find the emergence of a “coherent whole” that incorporates within it physical spaces, the ability to move through them, as well as concrete conceptions of that space. These necessarily mediate, and are in turn mediated by, the lived dimension of that space.

Further, Lefebvre’s comment on “consensus” indicates hegemony. British India can be understood as space of hegemony – and a hegemonic space – that articulated the colonizers’ rule and expropriation of surplus. This colonial spatial hegemony was constructed through the introduction of the “rule of property” and wage relations, as well as by establishing a common financial and labor space throughout British India (Guha, 1963; Sarkar, 1992; Goswami, 2004). It is key to remember that this hegemony was maintained using a complex of sheer force, as well as through a number of politico-legal, technological, and ideological measures that mediate the larger political economic processes of colonial capitalism, which extract the consent of the colonized to colonial rule. Further, this hegemonic spatial entity of British India would be, at once, the condition of possibility of the Indian nation-space, and its spatio-temporal “other.” In the section that follows, I will engage with some of the more influential theorizations of the nation, to develop a spatial understanding of the concept.

Theorizing the Nation

Theorists of the nation have repeatedly underlined the nation as a product of history, and of a recent provenance that does not go back further than the eighteenth century. Tom Nairn (1975) has located metropolitan and peripheral nationalism to the processes of uneven development

unleashed by the processes of global capitalism. Commenting on peripheral nationalism, Nairn (1975) notes that “on the periphery ... [people] learned quickly enough that Progress in the abstract meant domination in the concrete, by powers which they could not help apprehending as foreign or alien” (p. 10). This meant, according to him, that the elites of the peripheries “had to mobilize *against* ‘progress’ ... to contest the concrete form in which ... [domination, that is, colonialism] had taken them by the throat, even as they set out to progress themselves” (Nairn, 1975, p. 11).

On the other hand, Ernest Gellner (1983) has documented that the nation is inextricably linked to the onset of (European) modernity; where it emerges as “high culture pervades the whole of society, defines it, and needs to be sustained by the polity” (p. 18). Gellner’s (1983) notion of nationalism as the “principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent” has also influenced other theorists of nations and nationalism profoundly (p. 1). For instance, Eric Hobsbawm (1991) relies on this definition as he develops his understanding of the nations as functions of the ‘invention of tradition’ that relates to a “certain kind of modern territorial state” even though he remains critical of Gellner’s perspective of a process of modernization from above (p. 9). Hobsbawm develops his research agenda from Gellner’s (1983) comment that nations “as a natural God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent ... political destiny are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that* is a reality” (pp. 48 – 49). Indeed, this inspires Hobsbawm (1991) to claim that nations “do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round” (p. 10).

In his influential book *Imagined Communities*, Anderson (2006) takes issue with Gellner’s conceptualization of the nation as “invented” for, he claims, this equates “‘invention’

to ‘fabrication’ and ‘falsity,’ rather than to ‘imagining’ and ‘creation’” (p. 6). Instead, Anderson defines the nation as a “imagined political community ... imagined as inherently limited and sovereign” (p. 7). Anderson (2006) notes that nations are

cultural artefacts of a particular kind ... [Their creation] towards the end of the eighteenth century was the spontaneous distillation of a complex ‘crossing’ of discrete historical forces ... once created, they became ‘modular,’ capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations. (p. 6)

Relying on what can be understood as a theory of gradual secularization of time, Anderson goes on to contend that the idea of the nation emanates from the development of the idea of temporal simultaneity. Borrowing from Walter Benjamin’s notion of “homogenous empty time,” Anderson (2006) claims that as ‘time’ is freed from the clutches of its sacral, that is, Christian antecedents, it acquires the sense of “simultaneity [that is] ... transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfillment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar” (p. 24; Benjamin, 1969, pp. 253 – 264). Anderson situates this emergent sense of “simultaneity” as the condition of possibility for the nation, that is, for imagining the limited, political community. This process, Anderson (2006) claims is aided through “print capitalism” – the development of the novel and the newspaper – that enables readers to imagine themselves to be simultaneously inhabiting the expanse of the nation (pp. 43 – 46).

These theorizations of the nation, powerful as they are, however fail to address several crucial issues. Foremost, none of them have much to say about the nation as a spatial (and spatially bounded) concept. This is especially true of Anderson who, while stressing the importance of the temporal in thinking about the nation, does not engage with space in his analysis. The *limited* in the formulation of the nation as a *sovereign and limited imagined political community* simply gestures towards the territorial extent of the nation that he examines

in his discussion of the census, map, and museum. Even Hobsbawm’s (1991) understanding of the nation as an “invention of tradition” relating to the modern territorial state constructs an equivalence between the notions of territory (the physical spatial extent) and space (an abstract concept).

Further, these theorizations, except for Nairn (1975), do not appear to take into account, or account for, anti-colonial or postcolonial nationalism in any rigorous way. In fact, for any postcolonial scholar thinking about the nation, these appear to be exceptional and Eurocentric. For instance, Gellner and Hobsbawm make the congruency of the national and political units the starting points of their analyses. This is impossibility in the cases of Africa and Asia because the loss of congruency between the political and the national – however understood – seems to be a hallmark of colonization. This is attested to by the “Scramble for Africa” as well as the partition of British India, that divided distinct pre-colonial spaces and cultures across various nation-states, in addition to the several instances of forced migration of people from, among others, the Indian sub-continent to spaces as diverse as Mauritius, Fiji, and Trinidad that fundamentally transformed the composition of the population. Moreover, Hobsbawm’s equation of the state (and state-space) and the nation (and nation-space) is also problematic as this does not allow room for thinking about nationalisms that have an uneasy relationship with states, for instance, Kashmiri nationalism in India, Palestinian nationalism in the West Asia, and Baloch and Pathan nationalism in Pakistan, to name a few.

Anderson’s culturalist argument too, is not without its flaws. To begin with, it is structured by a secularization hypothesis of time that is, in turn, dependent on a certain Christian understanding of linear time inaugurated by St. Augustine in his *City of God*. This formulation, then, suggests that national consciousness arrives to the heathen only after s/he has entered

secularized Christian time. Moreover, Anderson develops his print capitalism argument to speak of the development of a linguistic fixity and territorialization that would, subsequently, develop into a national consensus and consciousness. Such an argument necessarily privileges literate cultures over oral ones, in effect suggesting that the advent of nationalism would have to wait until the arrival of the printing press. This then appears to be another version of what Chakrabarty (2000) has called the “waiting room of history” – the hallmark of liberalism – where non-Europeans are supposed to wait and develop into maturity before being allowed the fruits of modernity.

Anderson has been critiqued extensively by Partha Chatterjee, arguably the most influential theorist of anti-colonial nationalism. Chatterjee (1993) argues against thinking of the postcolonial world as “perpetual consumers of modernity [who choose their] imagined community from certain ‘modular’ forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas” (p. 5). Instead, Chatterjee argues that the trajectory of Indian nationalism was different from its Western European counterparts. For him, “anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society ... by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains – the material and the spiritual” (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 6). Chatterjee (1993) claims that anti-colonial nationalism acknowledges the superiority of the West in the “outer,” material domain, but declares the spiritual realm as its “sovereign territory and refuses to allow the colonial power to intervene in that domain” (p. 6).

It is in this “inner,” spiritual domain – the domain of vernacular language, the family, and religion – then that the imagined community of the Indian nation is brought into being. It is only after constituting a horizontal comradeship in this domain, Chatterjee claims, can nationalism launch its struggle against the modern regime of disciplinary power, namely, the colonial state.

Eschewing any analysis of the “sociological characteristics” of the late nineteenth century Bengali middle class, Chatterjee proceeds to outline three broad themes of the nationalist project. These are the appropriation of the popular, the classicization of tradition, and the contradictory impulse of the hegemonic domain of nationalism to stress colonial difference in the “inner” domain while attempting to eradicate it in the “outer” (Chatterjee, 1993, 72 – 75).

Chatterjee’s claims beg some important theoretical questions. Given the generally Foucaultian flavor of his work, Chatterjee appears to indicate anticolonial nationalism as a discursive formation that emerges, and becomes dominant in India from the late nineteenth century until Indian independence. Likewise, Chatterjee appears to conceive of the material and spiritual realms as discursive domains, though he does not explicitly characterize them as such. Class, which appears foundational to his claims, however, remains an absent category of analysis. Despite a fleeting reference to nationalism as a “bourgeois hegemonic project,” Chatterjee (1993) neither examines, nor articulates the relationship between the Indian national bourgeoisie and the project of Indian nationalism (p. 11). Further, Chatterjee (1993) claims that the trajectory of anti-colonial nationalism he outlines in his work delineates the “fundamental feature of anticolonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa” (p. 6). This begs some important methodological questions. It bears asking how, or why, colonial Bengal is an adequate model for other parts of colonial India, let alone Africa.

Chatterjee’s selective reliance on Anderson is also problematic. While he draws upon Anderson’s notion of print capitalism, he is silent on the argument about linguistic territorialization, that is, the linguistic units of Western Europe forming the basis of future nation-states. This elicits an important question in the context of India: if a bunch of Bengalis were indeed imagining the nation, what explains the production, and persistence of the nation-

space of India? Why was an *Indian* nation (with various linguistic provinces, of which one was Bengal) imagined and not, say, a *Bengali* nation? In other words, what explains the synergy of the discourses of nationalism from various urban centers of the country? To put that same question a little differently, what are the conditions of possibility for the co-operation of the various middle classes in colonial India?

In recent years, Manu Goswami has critiqued Chatterjee by drawing upon Henri Lefebvre’s materialist theorizations of space. She argues that instead of “presupposing an autonomous sociocultural domain exempt from colonial and capitalist mediation or positing indigenous practices as untranslatable in any but local terms [one must think of the colonial and nationalist forms as] coproduced within a common, if asymmetrically structured, social field” (Goswami, 2004, pp. 23 – 25). Goswami (2004) claims that Chatterjee “presupposes what must be accounted for, that is, the sociohistorical constitution of notions of India as a bounded national space” (p. 26). Building on Lefebvre’s (1991) claim of the state as a “spatial framework of power,” she argues that Indian nationalism produced the nation-space of India from the colonial state-space of British India (p. 281; Goswami, 2004, 165 – 208).

Goswami (2004) devotes much analytical energy to *Puranic*, that is, mythical spatio-temporal schemas from pre-colonial India to demonstrate a “complex re-articulation and re-signification [of these mythical spaces that were] sacral, concentric, infinite, and fundamentally open [with] no demarcated or fixed limit” (Goswami, 2004, 154; 158). Goswami (2004) concludes that the nation-space of India is produced as a chronotope; through the “territorialization of [*Puranic-Itihas*, that is, mythical histories of India] ... that marked a modernist and historicist discourse of nationhood [which] identified upper-caste Hindus as the organic, original, core nationals from the standpoint of ... a fictive unity between past and

present” (p. 10). Yet, her development of the idea of the chronotope of the Indian nation relies on the territorialization of pre-colonial spatial abstractions, that is, an *idea* of space that, in true Hegelian fashion, is made manifest on earth. As I will argue later in this dissertation, it is necessary to engage with pre-colonial understandings of pan-South Asian territoriality, such as the space of Hindu sacred geography, in both its *conceived* (abstract) and *perceived* (material) forms to understand how it informs the spatial production of “India.” In the following section, I will focus on the scalar processes of global capitalism to understand the spatial form, and scale, of the nation.

The Chronotope of the Nation

Karl Marx (1967) notes that human beings, by “acting on the external world and changing it ... at the same time change ... [their] own nature” (p. 173). This act of interaction between human labor and external nature begins the production of nature. This is also spatial in nature, and is an act of producing space as well. The process of commodity production, one of the hallmarks of the capitalist mode of production, can be understood as an extension and intensification of the first step outlined by Marx. The process of commodity production, Neil Smith (1990) observes, “produces a crack in the unity of place and nature ... [that] is not tied to immediate place but implies the possibility of abstracting from immediate place, and of conceiving of spatial extension beyond immediate experience” (pp. 107 – 108). Smith goes on to outline the conceptual separation of society and space, where social space – as distinct from natural space – is produced; that is a function of the social division of labor and also the socio-economic organization of society, and the attendant development of the state.

Smith (1990) also connects this process to the move from concrete labor to the realization of abstract labor as value for, he notes, the latter “requires the construction of specific

transportation and communication links between individual places of concrete production, and demands that we are able to conceive of space in relative as well as absolute terms” (p. 113). As more and more concrete (and isolated) labor processes are made abstract and brought together in relations of exchange (as wage-labor), more and more absolute spaces are made relative, that is, integrated into the wider world economy resulting in the spatial integration at a global scale, and the concomitant realization of value. Yet, the complete integration of the world market would also be anathema to capital and its drive for ceaseless accumulation since the availability of cheap labor power and raw materials is a fundamental necessity for capitalism’s production of surplus and value. Consequently, the production of the *universal* world economy must also be internally *differentiated* to account for this need of capital drive towards greater accumulation, a fact that reflects the inherent contradiction within the operations of capital. To cite Smith (1990) again, the entire globe is, consequently, “partitioned into legally distinct parcels ... [and the] world is divided into 160 or more nation-states, and this is as much a necessity for capital as the geographical partitioning of private property” (p. 116).

This process of equalization or universalization as well as differentiation underlies Smith’s conceptualization of uneven development of spaces into cores and peripheries. Indeed, as he demonstrates elsewhere, this dialectic of equalization and differentiation also produces what geographers call “scale,” that is, the “geographical resolution of contradictory social processes of competition and cooperation” (Smith, 1992, p. 64). Developing the idea of “scale” to speak of the nation, Smith (1992) notes that it is

a territorial compromise between differing needs of the capitalist class. On the one hand competition between producers is basic to the capitalist economy, yet unrestrained competition threatens anarchy; the capitalist class also cooperates internally in order to create the appropriate conditions for capital accumulation and social reproduction, and to deal with challenges to its power ... the nation-state represents an enduring but ultimately temporary and historically specific

territorial resolution of this contradiction between competition and cooperation (p. 65)

While this conceptualization of the space of the nation – as a scalar manifestation of uneven development – is crucial for understanding the development of the spatial form of the nation, Smith’s comments, however, require a couple of additional, and important, historical glosses.

Foremost, it is important to remember that the nation as a spatial entity and scale is a contemporary formulation, or at least one of considerably recent provenance. This scale is preceded, historically speaking, by what could be called the colonial scale, that is, the scale of the colonial state that divided the world into colonial possessions belonging to specific metropolitan spaces. It is this spatial scale that is the historical precursor of, as well as the condition of possibility for, the scale of the nation. Further, while this colonial scale produces, and is the product of, colonial globalization, it also produces a very specific type of absolute space that defines its own spatial extent, as well as that of its successor scale of the nation. This is the space of the border, another spatial concept of relatively recent historical provenance.

An examination of the processes of capitalism also illuminates the notion of temporal simultaneity. In other words, the idea of “homogenous empty time,” central to conceptions of the nation, can be understood from a historical materialist standpoint and be rescued from explanations rooted in Christological world-views, such as Anderson’s. Indeed, E. P. Thompson (1967) and Georg Lukacs (1971) have pointed out that the quantification, structuring, and ordering of time is a function of the deepening of the capitalist social relations of production.

Lukacs (1971) notes that under capitalism, time

sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature; it freezes into exactly delimited, quantifiable continuum filled with quantifiable ‘things’ (the reified, mechanically objectified ‘performance’ of the worker, wholly separated from his total human personality): in short, it becomes space (p. 90).

To exist in a temporal universe structured by capitalist processes is to *live* the hegemony of a specifically organized and shared temporality. This entails living by a life that is organized in specific temporal units: beginning with seconds and moving up the temporal scale to years. As the labor process determines the temporal organization of life into, for instance, workdays and holidays, the idea of being “in sync” with others – and by extension, inhabiting the same chronotope – becomes commonsensical.

I am relying on the influential theorization of the Soviet critic Mikhail Bakhtin in invoking the concept of the chronotope. For Bakhtin (1981) the term chronotope, literally meaning “time-space,” refers to “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (p. 84). The concept of the chronotope allows for connecting space and time with literary forms, and therefore, the social with the figural. Bakhtin (1981) also tells us that in the

literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out concrete whole. Time ... thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history (p. 84)

The concept therefore provides a particularly helpful way of thinking about the nation, and also for thinking of the landscape form as a specific chronotope.

The idea of inhabiting the chronotope of the nation (or the colony) does not, however, mean that all chronotopes are equivalent in time and space. The uneven processes of capitalist development that stress simultaneous homogenization and difference also disrupt the coevalness of humanity across the globe. If, as Marx (1973) noted that capitalism tended towards “the annihilation of space by time” (p. 524), the uneven character of capital is both an expression, and result of this. This material phenomenon which Marx mentions also finds ideological and affective expressions in the metropole-colony relationship. At the ideological level, it promotes

the idea of the colony and its inhabitants as “backward” while at an affective level it encourages the perception of the colony, and the colonized, as “filthy,” “disgusting,” or “lazy.” The task of anti-colonial nationalism is, then, to oppose this process of annihilation; to counter the denial of coevalness of spaces and people.

I have discussed the spatio-temporal form of the nation at the very outset because it is the liberatory horizon of anti-colonial nationalism. In the chapters that follow, I will focus on the constitutive parts and the local scale of the Indian nation-space. I will investigate how Indians contested British claims over the land in specific locales, namely, the city of Calcutta and the space of the Himalaya.

CHAPTER 2

“INVENTING” COLONIAL CALCUTTA

In the Foreword to his 1971 book on the city, the British journalist Geoffrey Moorhouse (1986) spoke of Calcutta as “both a monstrous and a marvelous city” (p. 7). Moorhouse is arguably the last in a long line of Englishmen to have produced travelogues on Calcutta since it developed as a colonial urban center in the eighteenth century. Moorhouse’s notion of the city as both “monstrous” and “marvelous” illuminates divergent, and antithetical, perspectives on it, in addition to gesturing towards a profoundly contradictory idea of postcolonial Calcutta. His opinion of Calcutta is, however, far from unique; neither is it restricted to the city’s postcolonial avatar. He appears to be rearticulating the contradictory ways of perceiving, and expressing, the city that are as old as the city itself.

In this chapter I examine British and Indian depictions of Calcutta’s colonial landscape to argue that they are inspired by the contradictory nature of the city’s built form. Examining British representations of Calcutta I trace a shift from thinking about it as a “City of Palaces” to imagining it, following Kipling, as a “City of Dreadful Night.” In contradistinction to this, I demonstrate how native depictions of the city shift from seeing it as a fundamentally alien space to being thought of, as in the case of Bholanath Chunder, as an Indian city. In laying out these representational trajectories, I also argue that they illuminate two distinct – and contrasting – efforts towards what Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) calls the “invention of tradition.” Kipling *disavows* Calcutta’s centrality to the space of British India and *disparages* the city’s colonial heritage. Repudiating the place of the colonial city in the British imperial imaginary, he empowers the rhetorical tradition where the erstwhile city of palaces becomes little besides a

space of physical and moral filth. On the other hand, Chunder *negates* India's pre-colonial Mughal past, and Delhi's centrality to Mughal India, in order to claim Calcutta as an *Indian* city.

The Lineaments of the 'White' Town

Calcutta's tryst with the British, and colonial urbanization, began in the last decade of the seventeenth century. In 1690, the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, and the Nawab [governor] of Bengal, granted Job Charnock, an agent of the British East India Company, permission to carry on trade in Bengal, and establish a trading outpost at the village of Sutanuti, on the eastern bank of the western distributary of the Ganges (which the British named Hugli), in lieu of the annual payment of 3,000 rupees. At that time, Bengal was a province of the Mughal Empire, and ruled from the city of Murshidabad by a Nawab appointed by the Mughals. By 1695, the British East India Company declared Sutanuti the seat of their trade in Bengal, and in 1698 purchased the jagirdari [taxation rights] to the villages of Sutanuti, Gobindapur, and Dihi Kolikata from the Sabarna Roy Choudhury family of zamindars [landlords]. This set the stage for the landscaping of this space, and transforming it into the city of Calcutta, that would in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries develop into the center of Britain's Indian Empire and one of the premier urban centers of colonial India and Asia.

One of the first material interventions into the local landscape by the British was the fortification of their trading outpost. The construction the fort at Calcutta began in 1696 even though the British had no legal title to the land. It was named Fort William in 1700, after William III of Britain, and completed in 1703 (see Figure 4). Fort William remained at the heart of British commercial and military operations in eastern India. In addition to constructing the Fort, the British undertook other construction projects in these three villages that fundamentally

altered the landscape of the region as it transformed into the urban center of Calcutta. A hospital was built in 1709, and Calcutta's first church, St. John's, in 1716.

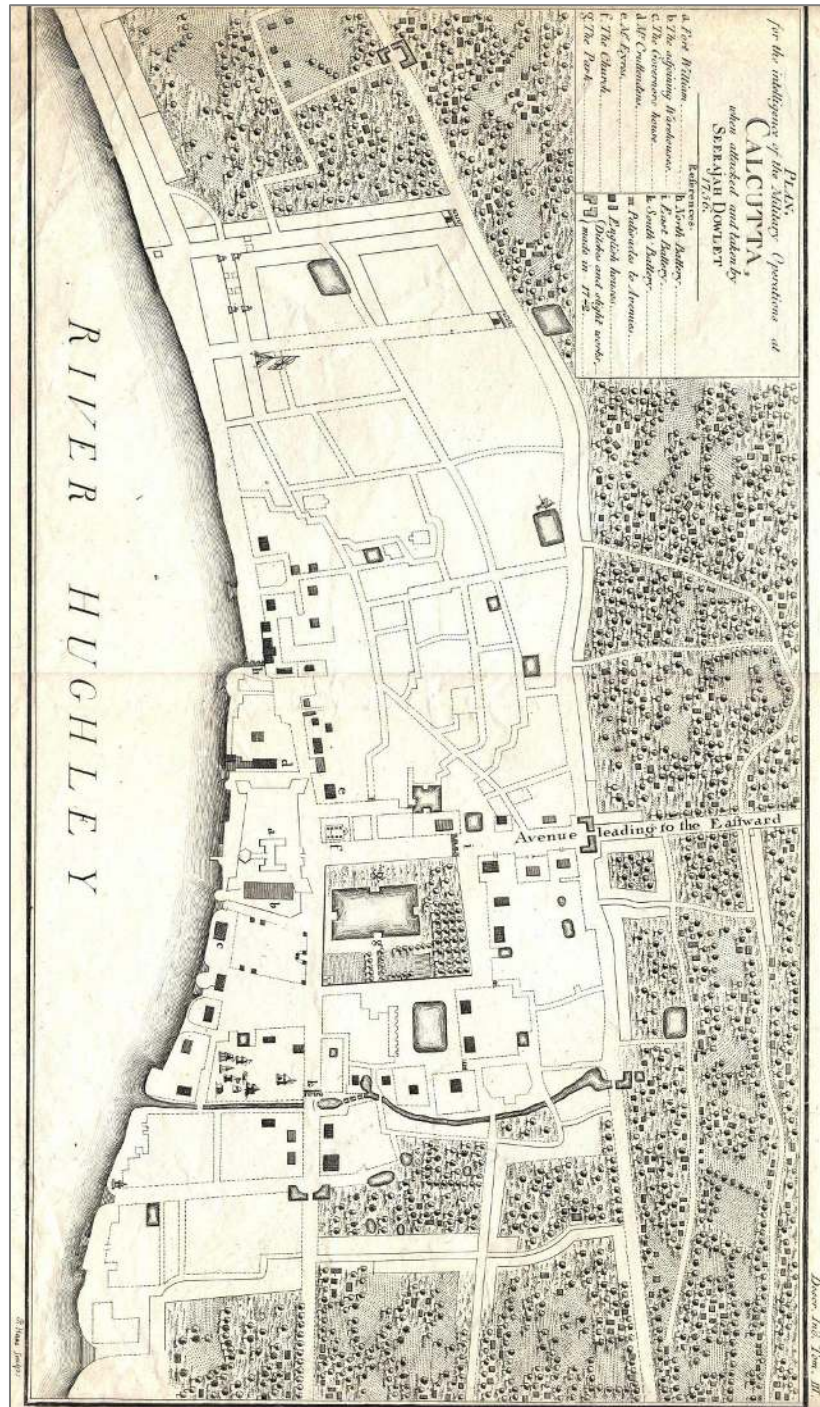


Figure 4: Map of Calcutta from 1757 showing the old Fort William. North is towards the top of page.

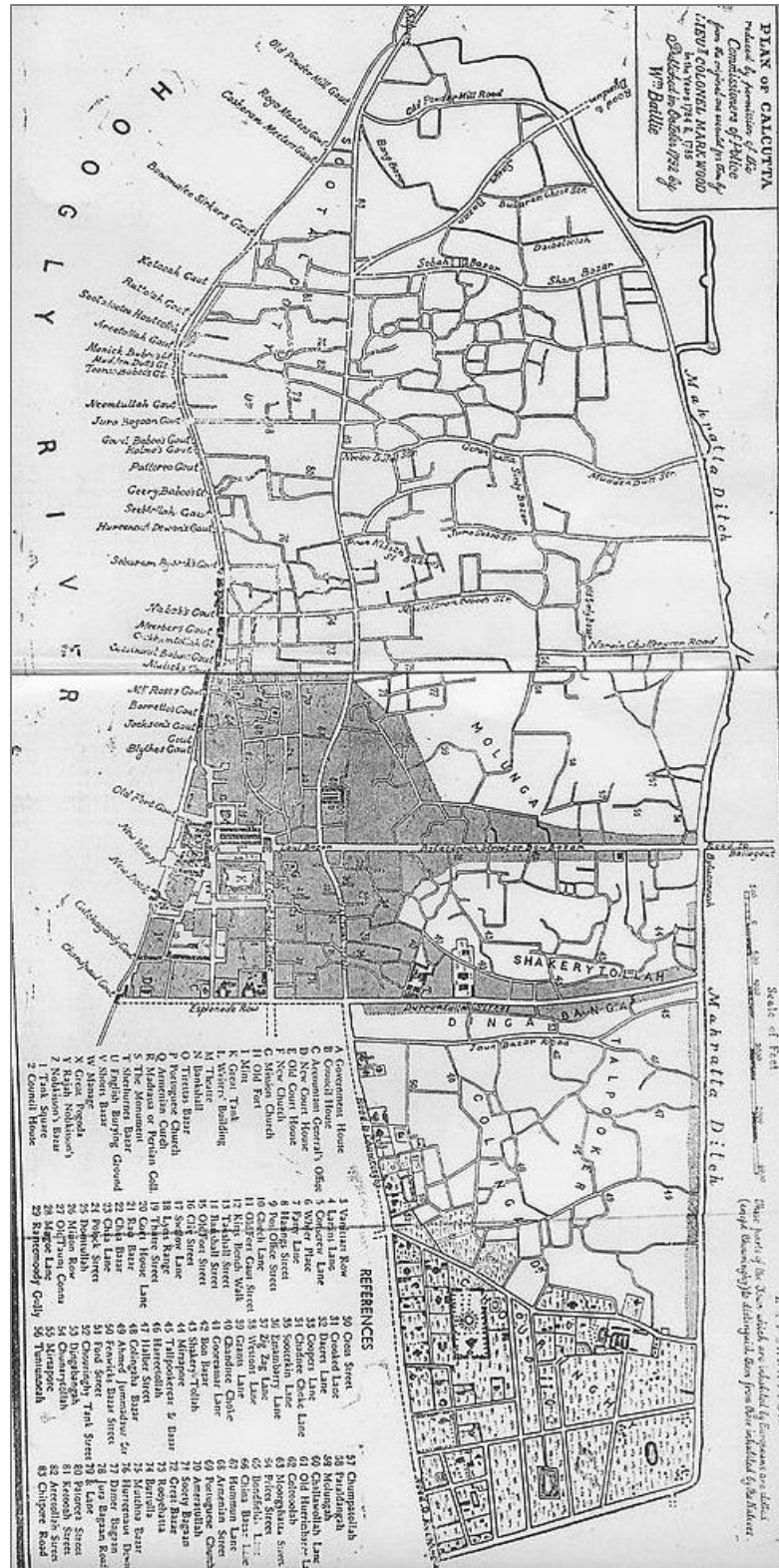


Figure 5: Map of Calcutta from 1794 showing the ‘White’ Town (shaded grey) and Maratha Ditch. North is towards the top of page.

In 1717, the Mughal emperor Farukh Siyar granted the British permission to rent or acquire zamindari [landlordship] rights in the thirty-eight villages surrounding the British settlement. While the British acquired the majority of the land rights, independent native zamindars continued to exist until 1757, “remaining outside the authority of the Company and Fort William” (Nair, 1990a, p. 11; also see Nair, 1986). In the early days of the British settlement, the Governor’s house was situated within the precincts of the Fort, and the grounds were landscaped to meet the needs of its residents. According to Alexander Hamilton (1746) the “Company had pretty good gardens ... [furnishing] the Governor with herbage and fruits ... [and] fish ponds to serve the kitchens with good carps, callops, and mullets” (p. 10 – 11). In his history of Calcutta, James Rainey (1876), recounts that during the early days of the Company “fishponds were ... in the centre of what was shortly afterwards called the “Park,” and they were subsequently converted into the “Great Tank” ... that was dug ... to provide the inhabitants of Calcutta with water” (p. 22).

In 1742, after a series of attacks by the Maratha raiders on a trading outpost across the river from Calcutta, the Europeans and Indians co-operated to excavate a ditch, about three miles north of the Fort, that came to be known as the Maratha Ditch (See Figure 5).¹⁶ In 1756, the British began extending their fortifications in Calcutta. Seeing this as a challenge to his authority, the new Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-daulah, attacked and defeated the British garrisons at Fort William, and destroyed much of the fort itself.¹⁷ The Company’s forces, under Robert Clive, retook Fort William later that year. Subsequently, Clive entered into a conspiracy with a group of

¹⁶ The Ditch began at a point where the northern Chitpur creek joined the river, and was meant to extend in a three-quarter-circle back to the river thereby girding the British settlement. This, however, was never completed and was filled up in 1799 to create the Circular Road (See Nair, 1986).

¹⁷ The Nawab’s officers confined the confined British residents in a small room within Fort William, some of who died from suffocation the next day. This was exaggerated into the “Black Hole” of Calcutta and invoked through the eighteenth to twentieth centuries as evidence of Indian brutality against the British. Crucially, this incident would also mold British perceptions about Calcutta negatively in the years to come (See Teltscher, 2002, pp. 196 – 197).

indigenous merchants headed by Jagat Seth who were unhappy with the Nawab's financial exactions from them. They decided to replace Siraj with his disaffected general Mir Jafar, who would be a more pliable Nawab. The following year, in 1757, the Company's forces defeated Siraj's army at the Battle of Plassey. This was largely achieved because a significant section of the Nawab's troops under Jafar stood aloof from the fighting. Jafar became the puppet Nawab maintained in power by Clive and the British East India Company. Crucially for the British presence in Calcutta, he rid the British of all the independent zamindars inside the Maratha Ditch, granted them 600 yards of land outside the Ditch, and rented to them all the land in the south of Calcutta (up to Kulpi) for an annual sum of 225,000 rupees (See Nair, 1990a, p. 12 – 13).

The sacking of Fort William prompted the British to build a new fort, and the village of Gobindapur, south of the old fort, was selected as its site (See Figure 6). The work on the new fort, also called Fort William, was started by Clive in 1758, and completed in 1781 at a cost of approximately two million pounds.¹⁸ The construction of the new fort had a crucial impact on the city's native population, both elite and subaltern, as “the village and Bazar of Govindapar [sic] were on the site of the Fort, and the houses ... [had to be] removed to make room for the citadel” (Raine, 1876, p. 56). Consequently, the prominent Bengali landlord families were compensated and resettled in other parts of the city, mainly the north; the subaltern classes also moved to these neighborhoods, giving further shape to the ‘Black’ Town or native quarter that had already begun to form in the northern areas of Calcutta. Recalling the shifting of the native population in the second census of the city, Henry Beverly (1876) notes that much “ground was cleared to make room for a new fort; many thousand huts thrown into the holes from whence they had been taken, to form roads and an esplanade” (p. 40).

¹⁸ The old Fort was repaired and used as a customs house from 1766 onwards.

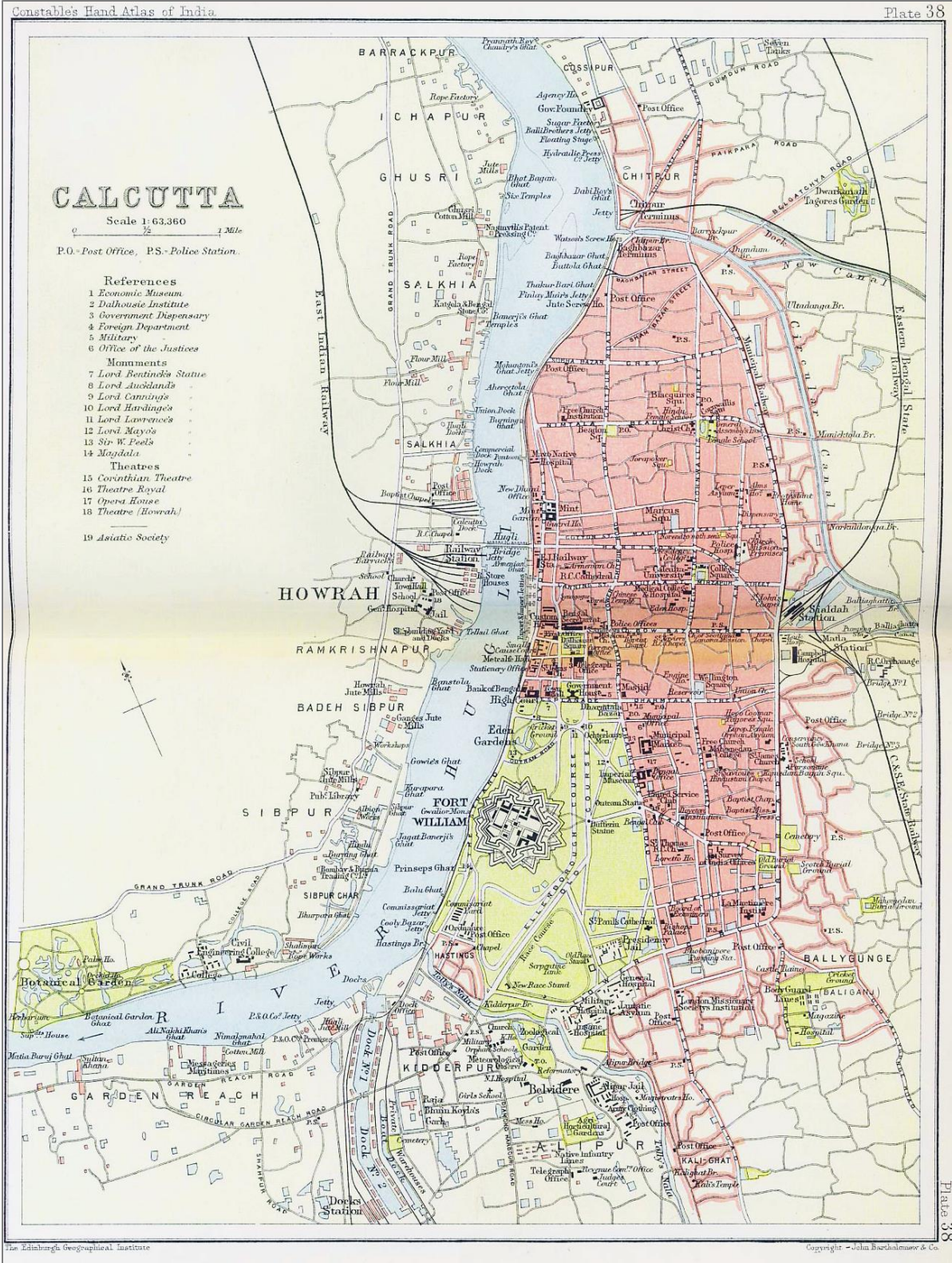


Figure 6: Map of Calcutta from 1893 showing the Maidan (in green) and the new Fort William within it. North is towards the top of page.

Rainey (1876) also notes that in 1762, to expedite the building of the Fort, the Company decided bring “8,000 Kulis [coolies] from the interior ... by force” (p. 59). They were tasked, in addition to building the fort, with clearing the dense jungles that surrounded the site. This resulted in the creation of a mammoth park at the heart of Calcutta that came to be known as the Maidan (see Figures 6 and 7). Commenting on it, Rainey (1876) writes that the Maidan was once

a good cover for tigers, and Warren Hastings [the first Governor-General of the British East India Company] hunted them on elephants there and thereabouts ... [It was also] a capital find for wild boars, and pigstickers of those days could indulge in this favorite pursuit where the gallant Volunteer Lancers now parade, and where fair equestrians now fearlessly roam (p. 61).



Figure 7: Photograph of the Maidan from Government House showing the gate on the left. The ‘palaces of the Chowringhee’ can be seen across the Maidan.

The Maidan was an attempt at setting up a Hyde Park of sorts in colonial Calcutta, but it also provided the cannons mounted on the new Fort William an unrestricted view and command of

the city and the river (Chattopadhyay, 2010).¹⁹ Significantly, the Maidan altered the look of the land quite fundamentally, and became a visible marker within the Calcutta landscape (see Figure

7). Writing in the early years of the twentieth century, Evan Cotton (1907) commented:

The great Maidan presents a most refreshing appearance to the eye, the heavy night dew, even in the hot season, keeping the grass green. Many of the fine trees with which it was once studded were blown down in the cyclone of 1864. But they have not been allowed to remain without successors, and the handsome avenues across the Maidan still constitute the chief glory of Calcutta. (p. 268).

By the latter half of the eighteenth century, Calcutta was firmly associated with British presence in Bengal owing to its growing politico-economic stature, as well as its developing European looks. In addition to the fort and the Maidan, Calcutta developed into a networked space that connected the administrative areas (centered around the old fort area) with the port, the commercial areas of offices, banks, warehouses and wholesale markets, the residential neighborhoods of mansions around the business district, as well as the garden houses in its outskirts.

In addition to the British and the native Bengalis, Calcutta at this time attracted a substantial number of people from other communities from within, and outside, India. It became home to Marwaris from northwestern India, Oriyas from the southeast, Urdu and Hindi speakers from the northern Indo-Gangetic plains, as well as communities of artisans from other parts of Bengal (See Banerjee, 1989; Sarkar, 1997). This cosmopolitan character of the city would continue to grow in the nineteenth century, and by 1901 its Bengali speakers were a slender majority, just above 51% of the city's population (Sarkar, 1997, p. 166). Calcutta also had a significant presence of Armenian and Jewish merchants, in addition to the Portuguese, French, Dutch, Chinese, and the Scottish businessmen and traders. These communities, as well as

¹⁹ The new Fort William was shaped as a rough octagon. Five sides of the fort faced the Maidan, and the other three the river (See Figure 6).

Eurasians, Muslim service groups, and the poor whites, settled around the edges of the ‘White’ Town, meeting its “indispensible service requirements ... [and developing it into] a heterogeneous intermediate space” (Sarkar, 1997, p. 166).

As the British East India Company strengthened its position in Calcutta, it became more assertive in local politics. In 1760, dissatisfied with Jafar, the Company forced him to abdicate in favor of his son-in-law, Mir Qasim. Unlike his predecessor, however, the new Nawab decided to reassert his authority over his dominion. This provoked another confrontation that culminated in the 1764 Battle of Buxar. In this the British troops defeated the combined forces of Mir Qasim, the Nawab of Bengal, Shuja ud-Daulah, the Nawab of Awadh, and the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II. The Company’s victory not only consolidated British presence in Bengal, but also laid the foundation for their future rule over India.

In 1765, following a treaty with the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II, the British East India Company, based out of Calcutta, was granted the *diwani* rights, that is, the right to collect revenue, from the Mughal province of Bengal in return for an annual tribute. Calcutta, then, became the city-space that appropriated, and survived on, the surplus of the Bengal countryside (Williams, 1973; King, 1976b; Ross & Telkamp, 1984). The administration of justice (*nizamat*) remained the preserve of the Nawab, based out of Murshidabad. This system of dual administration, from Calcutta and Murshidabad, remained until 1793, when the British East India Company forced the Nawab to hand over the *nizamat* to them. Importantly, while Bengal remained a Mughal province *de jure*, the Company in fact controlled it. In this dispensation, the Company, based out of Calcutta, operated under nominal Mughal sovereignty symbolized in the Mughal emperor based out of Delhi, and was legally seen as the emperor’s revenue minister in Bengal. From 1765, then, the British East India Company “gained control of India’s richest

province ... [providing them with the resources from a substantial revenue base] to dominate other regional players ... field a larger army than its Indian rivals, and organize a more efficient state structure” (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006, p. 55).

In 1773, The British parliament passed the Regulating Act that aimed to overhaul the British East India Company administration in India. It elevated the Governor of Bengal (at that time, Warren Hastings) to the position of Governor-General, and placed the presidencies of Madras and Bombay under the control of Bengal. It also appointed four additional officials to assist the Governor-General, all of who were to work from Calcutta; a Supreme Court was established at Fort William. At this time, then, Calcutta emerged as the principal city of British India, a position it would further consolidate in the nineteenth century.

In 1799 Governor-General Richard Wellesley decided to build a residence for himself, and his successors. Completed in 1803 and designed by Charles Wyatt on the lines of the Curzons’ family mansion of Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire, Calcutta’s Government House followed a neoclassical style with distinct Baroque overtones (See Figure 8). Comprising a central core with four radiating wings, its state rooms were located in the central core, and accessed from the outside by a flight of grand steps on the north, “large enough for an elaborate retinue of servants and for soldiers to present arms at the side” (Chattopadhyay, 2000, p. 166). On the south was a portico surmounted by a colonnaded verandah with a dome above. The plan of the wings allowed for a great deal of natural ventilation in the spaces while also permitting its residents “to gather the view and breeze of the *maidan*” (Chattopadhyay, 2000, p. 167). A balustraded wall surrounded the entire compound of the Government House with a grand arched gateway at each of the four cardinal points, and the figure of a lion mounted on it (see Figure 7).



Figure 8: Government House by Francis Frith (taken between 1850 and 1870).

In 1899, George Curzon, whose ancestral mansion had served as the model for the Government House, occupied the house as British India's viceroy. Curzon went on to write a two volume tome on the British government in India, subtitled "The Story of Viceroys and Government Houses," where he called Calcutta's Government House "without doubt the finest ... occupied by the representative of any Sovereign or Government in the world" (Curzon, 1925, p. 28). Visitors to the 'White' Town in the nineteenth century found its broad streets and avenues, its parks, as well as the stately neoclassical looks (sometimes with a touch of baroque) of its business and administrative districts, and the grand residential mansions along the main streets, distinctly impressive. The lineaments of the 'White' Town (*sahebpara* [white locality] in Bengali) were now in place, and Calcutta's built landscape would become a key subject of literary and visual representations in the nineteenth century.

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, in addition to being the capital of British India, Calcutta developed into a thriving commercial city. A transit point for Indian raw materials, labor for overseas colonies (often in the form of indentured workers), and manufactured products for distribution within India, it so central to the global British interests that it was reasonable to claim that with “the exception of London, no city in the great British Empire can be compared to Calcutta in point of size, beauty, and commercial and political interest” (Deb, 1905, p. 1). This period also saw the rapid industrialization of the Calcutta hinterland, particularly with the development of the jute industry (see Basu, 2004). Jute not only provided a stimulus to the cash-starved peasant economy but also acted as a cash crop that was traded with the outside world to meet the trade deficit of the British Empire vis-à-vis the newly industrializing zones of the north Atlantic (see Goswami, 1991; Bose, 1993). Importantly, the rise of colonial capitalism diminished the significance of land revenue for the colonial state. It facilitated an amalgamation of banking and industrial capital through umbrella economic institutions such as managing agency houses, leading to the emergence of new Indian intermediaries such as the Marwaris – the backbone of later Indian bourgeoisie in Bengal (See Timberg, 1977).

The British landscaping of Calcutta’s ‘White’ Town continued apace in the late-nineteenth century. The Calcutta High Court was built in 1862, on the model of the Stadt-Haus of Ypres; the General Post Office in 1864, its dome reminiscent of London’s St Paul’s Cathedral; in 1878 the Indian Museum moved to a building constructed along neoclassical lines; in 1889 a Corinthian façade was added to the Writers’ Building, seat of the colonial bureaucracy (see



Figure 9: The erstwhile heart of colonial Calcutta. The white building is the General Post Office. The water tank shown was dug by the British and supplied the old Fort William with potable water.



Figure 10: The Victoria Memorial Hall in Calcutta.

Figure 9). After Victoria's death in 1901, the viceroy Curzon sanctioned constructing a "National Valhalla of British Indian worthies" in the memory of the late empress (Chakrabarti, 1990, p. 256). This took shape between 1906 and 1921, and became the Victoria Memorial Hall. Attempting a fusion of Mughal and Baroque architectural styles and built completely in white marble, it arguably manifests the colonizers' desire to inscribe the native landscape with a British version of the Taj Mahal (See Figure 10).

Ways of Seeing the "City of Palaces"

During the early-nineteenth century, the 'White' Town of Calcutta had earned itself the title 'City of Palaces.' This epithet can be traced to James Atkinson's 1824 poem by that name, although Kate Telscher (2002) writes that "descriptions of Calcutta's 'palaces' date from the 1780s" (p. 195). Atkinson's poem, begins with a reference to past empires, before claiming that Calcutta "with its tombs / And dazzling splendors, towering peerlessly" was the porch of India, the blooming "garden of Hesperides" of the British (Atkinson, 1824, p. 5). It is of course important that Atkinson imagines India as a blooming garden, the description suffused with a sense of cornucopian plenitude associated with colonial possessions. More crucially, perhaps, is his terming of Calcutta the "porch" of the garden, that is, the man-made vantage point from which to view this 'natural' pleasant prospect of India. Indeed, the opening lines of the poem underline Calcutta's centrality to the British colonial mission in South Asia.

A few stanzas later, Atkinson describes his moment of arrival in the city. He describes the view of the city from the river as he arrives up the river, a trope of arrival that recurs in adulatory descriptions of the city's landscape through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (See, for instance, Stavorinus, 1798, pp. 122 – 123; Hickey, 1916, p. 120; Parks, 1975, p. 102; Fay, 1986, pp. 171 – 172). Atkinson says that:

I stood a wandering stranger at the *Ghaut*,²⁰
 And, gazing round, beheld the pomp of spires
 And palaces, to view like magic brought;
 All glittering in the sun-beam ... (p. 7)

The landscape of Calcutta represented through the “spires” and “palaces,” underline the city as a premier space of colonial urbanization in British India. It is apprehended visually, the ocularity of the experience underlined by the use of words such as “gazing,” “beheld,” “pomp,” “view,” and “glittering.” Moreover, the viewer is “like magic brought” to the city. Here, the claim of “magic” occludes from view the material and social processes of colonial capitalism that produced the built landscape of the city in the first place, and provided the colonial viewer the ability to view Calcutta and, as in the earlier instance, the “garden of Hesperides” that is India.

Calcutta for Atkinson (1824) remains, however, not a city in itself but an imitation of London. He calls Calcutta “a little London in Bengal,” his simultaneous use of “London” as well as its diminution, both crucial for understanding the ideological production of the colonial city as secondary (p. 15). The city is “A microcosm; loose, and yet compact; / A smug epitome, a capital” and most certainly a product of the British colonial venture that is “formed like island on the main / Amidst a sea of pagans, to exact / Allegiance from their millions ... For intellect hath power, to bind as with a chain” (Atkinson, 1824, p.15). The stress on Calcutta as an imperial possession continues throughout the poem, and extends on to the other crucial aspect of the city’s landscape, the river. Addressing the river, Atkinson (1824) notes that “The Brahmins called thee theirs for ages ... now navies ride / Upon thy waters, – Strangers now have sway, / And various nations throng to bear thy wealth away (p. 28). Though undoubtedly self-reflexive in its awareness of the looting of its colonial possessions (“various nations throng to bear thy wealth

²⁰ The word Ghat (spelt “Ghaut” here) refers to the stepped landings for boats on the banks of inland water bodies, especially rivers.

away”), the line also articulates a self-assurance and confidence in the British military superiority (the “navies” riding on the Ganges), and the inviolability of British rule in India (“Strangers now have sway”).

There is another aspect of the *City of Palaces* that merits attention. An early nineteenth century poem (it was published from Calcutta in 1824), it, however, appears to display traits of Augustan literary creations reminiscent of the poems by John Dryden, Alexander Pope, and Samuel Johnson from around a century ago. This is evident in its constant deployment of personifications such as Nature, Victory, Fashion, Desolation and Death throughout the poem (Atkinson, 1824, pp. 11 – 27). More crucially, the poem invokes figures from Hellenic history and myths, referring to Diogenes, Antisthenes, Socrates, the Bacchanals, the “Syrens of the east,” and “Heracleian Zeuxis” in addition to Pallas Athena, Jove, and Venus (“Love’s fair queen”) (Atkinson, 1824, pp. 12 – 21). The neoclassical traits of seventeenth and eighteenth century English literary creation – itself a curious mix of contemporaneous Britain and figures of Graco-Roman myth and history – in Atkinson’s lines is rendered even more bizarre, not least because the Greek gods and notables in Atkinson’s poetical universe co-exist with a variety of native Indian markers that include social groups such as “Brahmins,” “Moonshees,” and “nautch-girls,” as well as the “Ganges” and the “hookah.” However, the poet’s use of the neoclassical style for depicting Calcutta, and its consequent bizarreness, are both quite illuminating of the colonial production of this urban space.

Atkinson’s use of the neoclassical style for the poetic rendering of the city appears to draw sustenance from the neoclassical lay of Calcutta’s ‘White’ Town. It was a heartland of neoclassical architecture surrounded by neighborhoods whose habitations overwhelmingly comprised thatched huts. In the business and commercial districts of the city, native workers and

clerks inhabited the neoclassical buildings during the day, making the landscape profoundly contradictory. The bizarreness of Atkinson’s neoclassical style is therefore the result of a successful construction of verisimilitude as regards the urban space. However, by virtue of it being too successful, it conveys the contradiction of the city space and its attendant bizarreness, all too well; in so doing the poem reduces itself to a pastiche thereby failing to cohere (and convince) as a literary text.

During the high imperial era on the late-nineteenth century, Calcutta was considered a city of global importance. It found regular mention in popular geography texts of the late-nineteenth century. Texts from the “great cities of the world” genre regularly listed Calcutta along with other major cities from across the world. An 1886 text opens the description of Calcutta with these lines:

WE approach the “City of Palaces” by the river ... Everywhere there are tokens that we are drawing near to a great city. As we proceed up the river ... here and there are detached bungalows, factory chimneys, fishing and trading boats; farther on still, merchantmen lie anchored in the stream, and steamers pass and re-pass, filled with passengers. At the beautiful suburb of Garden Reach, the eye, weary of the low swampy banks and interminable jungle, is refreshed with a profusion of elegant and stately residences in the midst of masses of luxuriant verdure. In front of the ornamental villas, grassy lawns and rich flower-beds slope down to the water’s edge; the river, as Calcutta is neared, is crowded with shipping – amongst it some of the finest vessels in the world; and by-and-by the usual landing-place in front of the Maidan is approached. (Hodder, 1886, p. 62).

From this lengthy extract we can see that the popular geography text, by using of the trope of arrival, underlines its importance, and contributes to its prevalence, in literary depictions of the city. The opening section draws attention to what by then had become iconic about the Calcutta landscape: the busy port, the ornamental villas, stately residences, luxuriant verdure, and the Maidan by name. This tenor continues in speaking of other aspects of the city’s built environment:

The main streets of Calcutta are broad and clean, with pleasant squares and avenues of trees delighting the eye with their refreshing greenness ... The business streets are lined with the shops of European traders, and mostly run directly down to the river, or along its banks. Here auction marts, warehouses, shops and offices, crowding carriers and porters, and bustling merchants may remind the Englishman of scenes nearer home ... (Hodder, 1886, p. 175).

As a text that disseminated notions of cities from the world in the metropole, it also makes the reader see the city in a certain way, thereby reifying a fixed perspective: a specific way of seeing the city. It therefore partakes in, and continues the process of constructing, the iconicity of the city, itself a function of Calcutta's centrality to British colonial enterprise in Asia. Yet, unlike Atkinson's view of Calcutta, which was unequivocally adulatory, the Hodder text would also provide another equally reified perspective of the city. As a product of the late-nineteenth century, it would also participate in the representational trend of sensationalizing the filth and squalor of Calcutta. I will discuss that aspect of the city, and its representations, later in this chapter.

The Native Quarter of the City

The Bengali landed gentry of the eighteenth century became a comprador class to the British when the latter established their affairs on the banks of the Hugli. Working as interpreters and intermediaries – as banians (brokers to British traders) and diwans (intermediaries in judicial and revenue administration) – to the fledgling British East India Company operations, this class amassed a huge fortune. By the end of the eighteenth century, these families of fortune makers “had combined to give a definite shape to Calcutta's comprador elite as the top-most layer in the ‘native’ economic community in the city” (Sinha, 1978, p. 37). They would dominate the city's indigenous society, and lay the foundation of elite Bengali culture.

Crucially, these families gave a specific shape to the urban space of the ‘Black’ Town.

Pradip Sinha (1978) claims that these families re-enacted the socio-spatial practices of

the little *rajyas* [fiefdoms] of the earlier period. These little *rajyas* accommodated centres where a kind of urbanism, at a level other than that of commercial cities or great politico-military centres, persisted through the centuries ... The comprador purchased land and settled it with tenants ... [but also had to] distribute patronage on an elaborate scale ... to acquire prestige and status. (p. 59)

This resulted in the development of bazars and hutments in the ‘Black’ Town where artisans and laborers lived. They drew clusters of people around them, and provided household labor to the elite families. These localities “became replicas of old landed estates owned by feudal chieftains, their contours changing in response to urban needs” (Banerjee, 1989, p. 29). Calcutta’s ‘Black’ Town, over time, became a city of palatial buildings of the elite Bengalis surrounded by bazars and slums of hutments.

The depression of 1848 radically altered this socio-economic topography of Calcutta as many pioneering Bengali industrialists lost their fortunes with the collapse of the Union Bank, a pivotal business organization of the city. Consequently, an entire class of indigenous entrepreneurs lost their ability to participate in the industrial development of nineteenth century Bengal (See Kling, 1976; Misra, 1999). This class of Bengalis sought pecuniary refuge in the land revenue that was guaranteed to them by the Permanent Settlement. Instituted in Bengal in 1793 by the British East India Company, this system gave tenure holders ownership of the land and right to its revenue.²¹ In return, these landlords were expected to pay an annual tax to the British East India Company that was fixed in perpetuity. If the landlords defaulted on taxes, their newly instituted proprietary estates could also be confiscated and auctioned off by the British

²¹ Following the introduction of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal, property rights were subsequently instituted in the Bombay and Madras Presidencies through the Ryotwari System, and in northern India through the Mahalwari System during the 1820s.

East India Company. Owing to the high revenue demand instituted by the British, many landlords did indeed default on taxes and “up to one-third of the estates in Bengal changed hands in the twenty years after the 1793 Permanent Settlement” (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006, pp. 78 – 79). Those who bought these estates were upper caste Hindu employees of the erstwhile landlords, and native officials of the British East India Company. In the aftermath of 1848, the Permanent Settlement provided a secure source of income for the erstwhile merchant class. Introduced by the British to foster a rule of property in Bengal, and incubate a class of improving yeomen farmers, the Permanent Settlement, ironically, produced an intermediate, tenure-holding social class of rentiers who survived by appropriating the surplus of the Bengal peasantry (See Guha, 1963; Islam, 1979).

Constant fragmentation of property, and sale – mostly caused by the landlords’ failure to pay taxes to the British – kept “the size of the individual rentier income quite small, and increasingly inadequate for the demands of gentility” (Sarkar, 1997, p. 169). Consequently, this intermediary class embraced colonial education enthusiastically, to join the labor force of the colonial economy. They worked as clerks in government and mercantile offices, and also as lawyers, doctors, and teachers, to supplement their income from land revenue (See Sarkar, 1992). High caste Hindu men became the overwhelming majority among professionals and landholding elites living in Calcutta or other urban areas, while Muslims constituted a substantial segment of the peasant, artisanal, and working classes in Calcutta, and more so in the Bengal countryside (McPherson, 1974). By 1872, census reports clearly established non-Muslims as a minority in Bengal proper.

Importantly, unlike their predecessors of the eighteenth century, who worked with the Company to overhaul the country’s economy and political system, this new generation of

English educated intermediaries “had very little to do with the city’s economy and growth” (Banerjee, 1989, p. 50). In fact, by the time the First World War commenced, “81 percent of investments in Calcutta were of European origin as compared to only 3 per cent purely Indian (the comparative figures for Bombay were 41 ... and 49 per cent)” (Sarkar, 1997, p. 164). Calcutta, however, was central to this colonial middle class as it provided institutional networks crucial for their existence under British rule, and eventual dominance in post-colonial India. The city provided the jobs that sustained this class; further, it had the schools and colleges that became indispensable entry points into the liberal professions as well as the world of clerical wage labor; in addition, it was center of print culture in colonial Bengal, an aspect of the city that this class would dominate in order to establish their ideological superiority over the subaltern classes (Sarkar, 1997, p. 170).

In an attempt to ameliorate their loss of economic status from the earlier era, this emergent class developed a distinct Bengali culture that they could, and would, dominate. Besides remolding contemporary elite Bengali society along decisively Hindu and rigid caste lines, they set about “improving” the Bengali language and introduced several words into the Bengali language that spoke of their conception of the colonial Bengali social formation. They coined the term *bhadralok* (literally, “the refined folk”) to define themselves and denote their own middle-class identity suffused with connotations of refinement.²² This term also set them apart from the *abhiyatlok* (the pre-colonial aristocracy, as well as the eighteenth century elites) on one hand, and the *itarjan* (the rude or unrefined lot) on the other. Words such as *borolok*

²² It must also be noted that the term in its Bengali usage refers both to a social group, as well as to a member of that group. Moreover, in both forms of its use, the term refers to a male identity. Another word, depicting the female counterpart of the *bhadralok*, the *bhadramahila* (literally, the “refined woman”) would subsequently come into being. However, in its usage in Bengali, it refers *only* to individuals is *not* a group identity. It is instructive to note that Meredith Borthwick (1984), in her pioneering study of the *bhadramahila*, defines her object of research as “the mothers, wives and daughters of the many schoolmasters, lawyers, doctors, and government servants who made up the English educated professional Bengali ‘middle class’ as *bhadralok*,” thereby gesturing towards the patriarchal nature of the colonial Bengali social formation (p. xi).

(literally, the big people, but meaning the rich) and *chhotolok* (literally, the small people, but having the same sense as the English phrase “the lower orders”) also gained currency (See Banerjee, 1989). Acquiring a degree of influence far in excess of their numerical size, the *bhadralok* constructed “new forms of public discourse, laid down new criteria of social respectability, set new aesthetic and moral standards of judgment and ... fashioned the new forms of political mobilisation” (Chatterjee, 1993, pp. 35 – 36). They became the principal agents of nationalism in colonial Bengal and – along with the middle-classes elsewhere in India – constituted colonial India’s nationalist elite.

This conception of class-divided society would also inform the spatial production of nineteenth century Calcutta. By the mid-nineteenth century, the city had been produced as a fundamentally contradictory landscape. Calcutta had developed along class lines into the ‘White’ and the ‘Black’ Towns, both products, and spatial expressions, of the colonial social relations of production. The native quarter of the ‘Black’ Town was, further, internally stratified along the lines of the elite and subaltern classes, buttressed by the *bhadralok* conception of *itarjan* and *chhotolok*. The elite spaces of the ‘Black’ Town dominated over its subaltern spaces, while simultaneously being dominated by the ‘White’ Town.

Following Cosgrove’s (1989) reconceptualization of Williams’s notions of the “dominant,” “residual,” and “emergent” in spatial terms, it is possible to conceive of the ‘White’ and ‘Black’ Towns as emergent spaces in the eighteenth century (pp. 128 – 133; Williams, 1977, pp. 121 – 128). By the nineteenth, the European quarter was clearly the dominant space of the city. Indeed, owing to the socio-economic character of the inhabitants of the ‘Black’ Town in the nineteenth century, a time of industrial colonial capitalism, both its elite and subaltern spaces became stagnating, residual spaces, produced by the operations of the earlier generation of

colonial capitalism, that is, mercantile capitalism. In other words, the city of Calcutta expressed, spatially, the social life of the city: its social formation with its inherent hierarchies and attendant contradictions.

Of Contradictions, Centers, and Peripheries

In outlining the development of the ‘White’ and ‘Black’ towns of colonial Calcutta, and its attendant unevenness, I am outlining my intellectual debt, and allegiance to scholars who have repeatedly demonstrated the contradictory nature of the city’s landscape as evidenced in the development of the city’s ‘White’ and ‘Black’ Towns (See King, 1976b; Mukherjee, 1977; Sinha, 1978; Ross & Telkamp, 1984; Banerjee, 1989; Mukherjee, 1993; Sarkar, 1997). Despite this extant body of work documenting the contradictory spatial character of colonial Calcutta’s urban space, this model has come under intense attack from Swati Chattopadhyay.

Chattopadhyay (2000) has argued against, and indeed rejected, the notions of the ‘White’ and ‘Black’ Towns of Calcutta to claim, instead, that the boundaries between these spaces were blurred and fluid owing to the “heterogeneous use as well as the heterogeneous population who inhabited the buildings” (p. 154). Chattopadhyay (2000) further charges historians of Calcutta with a refusal to move from the city scale to the architectural scale, and contends that instead of focusing simply on the buildings’ looks, an investigation of plans demonstrates that these seemingly European buildings were structurally substantially modified (p. 154). She reads building plans to demonstrate that the functions of the buildings of Calcutta changed frequently, that is, residential properties were often used for non-residential purposes and vice-versa (Chattopadhyay, 2000, pp. 158 – 170). Developing on her reading, she contends that “the landscape of Calcutta was too complex to be usefully described in terms of the duality of black and white towns ... [since] Exclusionary measures, intended to organize this heterogeneity, were

defeated by the inherent contradictions of colonial life” (Chattopadhyay, 2000, pp. 157). To underline the last point, Chattopadhyay (2000) insists that because the “service spaces [of buildings] were inextricably linked to the served spaces [this effectively constituted] one fabric, even when the site plan showed physical separateness” (p. 172).

Chattopadhyay’s (2000) claims have proved to be influential, and her work has spawned a new corpus of scholarship on colonial urbanism that privileges her arguments of heterogeneity of colonial urban spaces.²³ Her deconstructive emphasis on the notions of heterogeneity, hybridity, and fluidity aligns her with the post-structuralist accents of postcolonial studies that, in addition to its abiding lack of curiosity about questions of labor and the political economy, also ignore the coercive dimension of European colonialism and the attendant asymmetric structuring of human agency. Indeed, as I will demonstrate, Chattopadhyay’s peculiar contentions do not stand up to empirical scrutiny.

Let us consider her first claim about the architectural scale of the city. In her championing of architectural scale, Chattopadhyay (2000) posits *one kind* of building as the *only* kind of building in colonial Calcutta. The idea of architectural plans necessarily presupposes houses built of masonry, the kind of residences used by Europeans and the more affluent Indians in the colonial city. Figures from the 1891 Census of Calcutta – Table II showing the number of houses, divided into kinds: Masonry and Others – show that there were 23,739 occupied houses built of masonry in the city, while another 2,331 others were unoccupied (Maguire, 1891, p. ii). In contrast to this, there were 43,789 occupied and 3,562 unoccupied houses that are classified as “others” (Maguire, 1891, p. ii; see Appendix A for details). The category of “others” refers to

²³ Chattopadhyay (2005) has developed her argument further in a subsequent book *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny*, and has inspired several recent scholarly investigations into colonial cities that reject the binary model of colonial urbanism. For instance, Chopra’s (2011) study on colonial Bombay takes up Chattopadhyay’s (2005) notion of fluidity to argue that “British Bombay was envisioned and built jointly by colonial rulers and Indian and European mercantile elites to serve their various interests” (p. xv).

houses *not* built of masonry but of mud or matted bamboo, with thatched or tiled roofs. The 1891 census figures, then, unequivocally demonstrate that about 65 per cent of the colonial city’s population lived in huts.

These huts, it is important to remind ourselves, were built with a design in mind but *without* the help of a document such as an architectural plan. Despite attempting to valorize the agency of the colonized, Chattopadhyay, however, omits the majority of the city’s population – likely to be all native, and from the poorer classes – from the purview of historical analysis. Her enthusiasm to highlight the agency of the Indian comprador classes, in effect, ends up relegating the majority population of the city invisible, and robbing them of any historical agency. She, ironically, performs in the contemporary moment what the colonizers have typically being accused of in the past.

Chattopadhyay’s point about the fluidity of boundaries, too, is overstated and must be read in relation to Sumanta Banerjee’s (1989) observation about the “frequency of orders from Fort William banning the entry of ‘natives’ into the ‘White’ Town” (p. 23). For instance, an 1818 order from the Fort states that “to preserve the Esplanade, lying West of the Road, leading from the Government House to Kidderpore Bridge, Peons will be stationed ... where hitherto Native foot passengers have crossed the plain, to prevent such practice in the future” (qtd. in Banerjee, 1989, p. 212). Again, Banerjee (1989) highlights an order issued from Fort William in 1821 that noted:

considerable inconvenience is experienced by the European part of the community ... from the crowds of Native workmen and Coolies who make a thoroughfare of the walk. His Lordship is pleased to direct that Natives shall not in future be allowed to pass the Sluice Bridge ... from 5 and 8 in the morning and 5 and 8 in the evening (p. 212).

While these notices were directed at the subaltern classes, it must not be assumed that the Indian elites were equal to the colonizers. The Bengal Club of Calcutta, one of the most elite spaces of British India, refused membership to Dwarakanath Tagore (a lifelong comprador, and the grandfather of the Nobel laureate Rabindranath) who was granted audience by Victoria herself when he visited London in 1842. His cousin, Prasanna Kumar Tagore was refused membership by the same club in 1855 on the grounds that “the personal habits of Bengallee [sic] gentlemen cannot in the relaxing moments of convivial intercourse be found agreeable to the rest of the members” (qtd. in Banerjee, 1989, p. 40). These instances, therefore, underline the fact that despite the colonizers’ collaboration with the native comprador, colonialism was fundamentally premised on the rule of difference.

Chattopadhyay’s assertion that the linking of served and service in buildings of colonial Calcutta transformed them into one social fabric is obvious and undeniable. However, this statement does not account in any way for the class differential between these spaces. It is illuminating, of course, that Chattopadhyay (2000) notes that the colonizers’ close proximity with their servants “occasioned distrust, and ... [they] came to be regarded as a necessary nuisance ... And yet *no one suggested abolishing the system*” (Chattopadhyay, 2000, p. 175, my italics). Indeed, by suggesting that “no one suggested abolishing the system,” she appears to indicate that despite the “occasioned distrust” the labor of servants and other service staff would provide the colonizers with a colonial version of “the good life.” Moreover, it is known that Victoria was served by Abdul Karim and Mohammed Buksh from the time of her Golden Jubilee in 1887 (See Basu, 2010b). Though initially appointed for a year, their appointments were extended, and Buksh remained Victoria’s table servant until his death in 1899. Karim became her “favorite servant” and later her secretary until her death in 1901, and in 1888 was allocated a

room in Balmoral castle (Nelson, 2007). The logic of Chattopadhyay’s argument, then, would make Balmoral castle one great “social fabric” but, as is evident, not necessarily heterogeneous or fluid. It is therefore important to retain a focus on contradictions within the landscape, not simply to make a facile point but to emphasize history in the face of its spectacular disavowals. Moreover, the material and metaphorical manifestations of the Calcutta’s contradictory landscape also enable us to comprehend the attendant unevenness across geographical spaces and scales, especially in relation to the colonial city and its countryside.

For instance, the production of the ‘White’ Town and ‘Black’ Town within the space of Calcutta, as well as the production of elite and subaltern spaces within the ambit of the ‘Black’ Town, replicates at the local scale, the global divide between the metropolitan and peripheries spaces. Further, the production of Calcutta as the colonial center, positions it as an expropriator of the surplus generated by the countryside. If the city-form by its very nature serves as an appropriator of surplus, this gets further underlined in the case of the *colonial* city-form, which appropriates the surplus of the countryside not only for the colonial center, but also for the metropolitan center. This, then, produces the difference between the rich (and progressive) city and its inhabitants, and the poor (and backward) countryside and its residents.

The most momentous manifestations of the economic divide between the city and the country were the famines that ravaged Bengal (and India) from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries under colonial rule. Of these, the famine of 1770 was the first, and the deadliest reducing the population of Bengal by a third (See Visaria and Visaria, 1983). Rainey (1876) recounts from a contemporary source that the “Hoogly [Hugli] every day rolled down thousands of corpses close to the porticos and gardens of the English conquerors ... [and the] streets of Calcutta were blocked up by the dying and the dead” (p. 71). He also adds that the “English,

candour compels us to admit, must be held responsible for making no effort to assist the famine stricken people, in their terrible calamity” (Rainey, 1876, p. 71). This would continue through the nineteenth century, and as famines afflicted the countryside, villagers would be forced to come into the city in search of jobs and food, often selling their children for the latter.

By the nineteenth century, Calcutta came to be seen as a “modern” city, often compared to the “backward” countryside as well as other urban spaces of India. The Bengali term *gainya* (meaning “a country simpleton”) also gained currency at this time, underlying the class difference between the country and the city. This is best exemplified in the Bengali satirical tract, *Kalikata Kamalalay* that appeared in 1823, a year before Atkinson’s *City of Palaces*. The title of the tract literally translates into “Calcutta, the Abode of Kamala” (Kamala being another name of the Hindu goddess of wealth, Lakshmi), thereby underlying the economic status and power of the city. A collection of four short parts (its author calls the parts “waves”), the text is ostensibly designed to introduce the country folk to the city. Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay (1990), the author, claims that when people

come to Calcutta from villages and other smaller towns and cities ... they sit silently among the Calcuttans in a rustic manner ... when a large number of citizens (of Calcutta) sit together and argue ... [and] a man from a village offers even a correct reply ... the noblemen of the city would not agree to it ... [and tell him] you are a rustic ... you need not bother about these things ... (p. xi).

He therefore justifies his project of “giving a crude description of the great city of Calcutta ... [so the reader can] realize easily the behavior, customs and the art of speaking prevalent [t]here” (Bandyopadhyay, 1990, p. xi). Such an introduction therefore illuminates the social difference between the Bengal countryside and Calcutta.

The author’s primary concern in *Kalikata Kamalalay* is to critique the lax religious Hindu codes in the city. For this, he delineates an experiential landscape of the city that revolves around

money, ceremony, and commerce. It is a melting pot of people on one hand, and the site for the ‘corruption’ of Hindu mores on the other. He also underlines the ‘distortion’ of the Bengali language in Calcutta, that is, the entry of a host of loan words from English, Portuguese, Urdu, Arabic, and Persian into what was traditionally a Sanskrit-based vocabulary. Despite his articulated conservatism, some of his observations are illuminating. Describing the city as a sea, Bandyopadhyay (1990) writes that

Calcutta is full of wealth like unfathomable water of the sea which is undrinkable ... [During] a big ceremony money flows like water in different directions. Different kinds of money transaction make the money circulate constantly like the rivers constantly carrying water to the sea (pp. xiii – xiv).

The construction of equivalence between the circulation of money and the flow of water describes, quite accurately, the flow of capital into the nineteenth century city, in addition to outlining Calcutta’s location as a node in the global circulation of capital. This is further underlined by the author’s equation of Calcutta with the sea, as it points towards the city as the destination, and repository, of capital from the hinterland, thereby highlighting once again, its role in the expropriation of the countryside.

Moreover, as the center of British imperial power, and their premier urban center in Asia, Calcutta lay at the heart of British colonial operations, and became a symbol of British supremacy, in the continent. This impacted the Calcutta landscape, most notably with the erection of the Burmese pagoda in the Eden Gardens, a riverfront park and promenade in the northwest corner of the Maidan (See Figure 11). The pagoda, which stands to this day at the site, was brought to Calcutta by in 1854, after the First Burmese War. A 1900 guide to the city, noting the “unique and interesting” history of the pagoda, writes:

The Government of India decided that it would not only be a proper lesson to the Burmese but would also serve the purpose of a memorial of a successful campaign to bring away the Pagoda [from the Burmese city of Prome] ... [It] was

carefully dismantled by skilled workmen, and as carefully erected again, piece by piece, in the Eden Gardens ... flanked by two great dragons in stone, also brought from Prome, ... [they are] supposed to represent the guardians of the Pagoda (*Calcutta*, 1900, p. xl).



Figure 11: Burmese Pagoda at Eden Gardens, Calcutta.

The relocation of the Burmese Pagoda in Calcutta establishes the British not only as the “guardians” of the Pagoda, and also of its guardian dragons. It also displays for local residents and visitors, the might of the British presence in Asia, and the centrality of Calcutta to British colonial operations in Asia. Moreover, it heightens the contradictory nature of the Calcutta landscape, in addition to highlighting the attendant unevenness of colonialism.

The Emergence of a “Filthy” City

In 1869, David Smith, the Sanitary Commissioner of Calcutta, authored a report on its drainage and conservancy that drew attention to the more unsavory aspects of the city. Citing from an

earlier report from 1864 by John Strachey, the President of the Sanitary Commission for Bengal, Smith (1869) claimed that the earlier report provided a “graphic picture” of the city’s prevalent sanitary condition (p. 4). In his report, Smith (1869) presents an extract from Strachey’s Minute with some its sections italicized:

The state even of the Southern Division of the Town, which contains the fine houses of the principal European inhabitants, is often most offensive and objectionable, while, with regard to the Northern or Native Division of Calcutta, which contain some hundred thousand people, *it is no figure of speech, but the simple truth, to say that no language can adequately describe its abominations. In the filthiest quarters of the filthiest towns that I have seen in other parts of India, or in other countries, I have never seen anything which can be, for a moment, compared with the filthiness of Calcutta.* This is true, not merely of the interior portions of the town or of the bye-ways and places, inhabited by the poorer classes but it is true of the principal thoroughfares and of the quarters filled with the houses of the richest and most influential portion of the Native community. If a plain unvarnished description of the streets of the Northern Division of Calcutta, bordered by their horrible open drains, in which almost all the filth of the City stagnates and putrefies, were given to the people of England, I believe that they would consider the account altogether incredible ... *the state of the Capital of British India, one of the greatest and wealthiest Cities in the world, is a scandal and a disgrace to civilized Government.* (p. 4, italics in original)

The reports by Smith and Strachey clearly spoke of a crisis in public amenities that was part of the daily existence of Calcutta in the late-nineteenth century. Both reports mention this need for better drains and sewers, and need for upgrading the infrastructure for both the ‘White’ and the ‘Black’ Towns of the city. In other words, the prevalence of filth everywhere – even if more prevalent in the ‘Black’ Town – was in a perverse way mitigating the contradictory character of the Calcutta landscape. This is a noticeable shift from the earlier half of the century when the native quarter was understood to be unhealthy and unfit for human, that is, European, habitation. For instance, in 1837, James Ranald Martin, an official of the British East India Company and one of the pioneers of superorganicist thought in the context of India, wrote:

The mass of laboring classes live in huts, the walls of which are of mud, or of matted reed or bamboo, roofed with straw or tiles ... these would not be so bad,

but these are uniformly placed on the bare ground, or on damp mud, but little raised, which continually emits injurious exhalations (Martin, 1837, p. 19 – 21).

While Martin’s observations seem tinged with a racial understanding of urban space, the comments of Smith and Strachey, more crucially, highlight the failures of the colonial administration to effectively manage and govern the city.

As I have noted earlier, the grant of the *diwani* of Bengal to the British East India Company in 1765 made them the revenue minister of the Mughal monarch. It did not imply a legal or moral obligation on the Company to render civic services to the city, and none were provided. The demand for municipal services grew after 1773, when Calcutta became the center of British operations in India and statutory civic services began only in 1794, with the setting up of the Justices of Peace for the Town of Calcutta. The Justices of Peace were the Governor-General, the members of his Council, and the judges of the Supreme Court, and the actual running of the municipal affairs was entrusted to the Chief Magistrate who combined the functions of the present-day Municipal Commissioner and the Commissioner of Police.

Nair (1990b) notes that from 1785, Calcutta was divided into 31 *thanas* [wards] for municipal and police purposes with four bullock carts per *thana* for the ‘White’ Town, and two for every *thana* in the native part of the city, to remove garbage (p. 226). By 1802, Calcutta had 85 bullock-carts, with two municipal depots to house the bullocks and the carts. The sewerage system of Calcutta also took a while to develop. In 1695, a trench was dug around the Sutanuti factory and in 1710, another, deeper trench was created “to separate the British settlement from the native quarters and keep the former dry and wholesome” (Nair, 1990b, p. 227). The Maratha Ditch, which had begun to be dug in 1742, served as the grand drainage outlet of Calcutta before it was filled up between 1799 and 1801. By 1857, the city had surface drains everywhere and in 1859, a plan for underground drainage was sanctioned and completed in the next 15 years.

1864 was particularly important in the civic history of Calcutta. That year, the Calcutta municipal administration acquired land at Dhapa, in the eastern fringes of the city adjoining the salt marshes, and created the “municipal square mile,” the giant garbage dump of the city. Until that year, Calcutta’s human excreta – the evocative euphemism for which is “night soil” – were collected by *mehtars* [sweepers] who were privately engaged for the task. This was taken to “night soil” depots and from there by bullock-cart to the Night Soil Ghat on the banks of the river. From there, boats hired by the municipality carried it out on to the Hugli and dumped it downstream at ebb tide, 200 tons of it daily (Nair, 1990b, p. 227). This practice was, however, rendered “more objectionable still by lax execution, the greater part of the filth thrown into the public drains under cover of darkness” (Nair, 1990b, p. 227). From 1864, the municipal administration arranged for trenching part of the human waste at Dhapa, and more trenching sites were opened by 1896. Finally, in 1867, a railway was built to carry the city’s refuse to the municipal square mile of Dhapa.

By the late-nineteenth century, the knowledge of Calcutta’s dismal lack of civic infrastructure, and the gradual improvements made in that area, were most certainly in the public domain. In fact, the popular geography text that wrote approvingly about Calcutta’s vista from the river, also had a section titled “ITS UNHEALTHINESS” that spoke of the city having “little regard to sanitary arrangements [claiming instead that] some parts of it being below the level of the river [made] ... drainage ... a difficult problem to reformers of later date” (Hodder, 1886, p. 171). While suggesting that sanitary conditions were improving in Calcutta, it would also cite from Strachey’s 1864 report to state that the situation had reached its nadir two decades ago. Hodder (1886) writes:

Of late years there have been vast sanitary improvements, and greatly they were needed. Only twenty years or so ago the president of a Sanitary Commission in

Bengal wrote thus: “In the filthiest quarters of the filthiest towns that I have seen in other parts of India or in other countries, I have never seen anything which can be for a moment compared with the filthiness of Calcutta.” There was then a lamentable absence of drainage; the streets were saturated with sewage, the air was filled with poisons, and in consequence dysenteric diseases were as common as catarrhs are in England ... Since then the sanitary state of the city has been improved from time to time and measures taken to modify the glaring contrasts which existed during the early part of the present century between the native town and the English quarter ... It is an old joke of residents who are complimented upon their “City of Palaces” to speak of it in return as the “City of Pale Faces.” (p. 171)

The text’s description of Calcutta’s unhealthiness is interesting for a variety of reasons.

Foremost, while it accurately speaks of the lack of civic infrastructure, the text, crucially however, omits mentioning that though the Calcutta was a British city, which they controlled uninterruptedly since 1757, they had failed to build up the necessary facilities. Instead, this lack and filth is ascribed to features intrinsic to the land itself by suggesting, inaccurately, that the city was below the level of the river. Further, the popular geography text quotes from Strachey’s report to back its contention up without, of course, mentioning the author’s indictment of the city’s British administrators (“a scandal and a disgrace to civilized Government”). Instead, the text undercuts its earlier presentation of Calcutta as a city of palaces by introducing a gentle dose of humor, by making a pun between “palaces” and “pale faces,” and between “faces” and “feces.”

The text, moreover, deploys the space of the “Native” town to present Calcutta as a city *unlike* London or any other European city. For instance, the same popular geography text, using a language reminiscent of Martin’s report on Calcutta’s medical topography, writes that

a large portion of the extensive area covered by Calcutta presents scenes such as have no counterpart in European cities. The native city, or Black Town ... consists chiefly of narrow, dirty, and unpaved streets, crowded and stifling with dust and heat, with long rows of low brick buildings used as shops and warehouses, huts built of mud, or of cane and matting, wooden cottages raised on piles, all mixed in motley confusion (Hodder, 1886, p. 175).

The text in making the claim that Calcutta's 'Black' Town had no counterpart in European cities seems, or chooses, to forget the existence of London's East End, the poor neighborhood of the metropolitan city. It is instructive to remember that there exists a robust corpus of contemporaneous writing on the condition of the urban poor in Victorian England. The most notable among this is Friedrich Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England* published in 1845, and Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and London Poor*, serialized initially during the 1840s in the *Morning Chronicle*, and subsequently published in 1851 in three volumes. Another work from this corpus is *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: An Inquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor* by Reverend Andrew Mearns from 1883. Mearns documents the residents of London's East End in a language that parallels the descriptions of not only the colonial government's reports and the popular geography text, but also that of Kipling's descriptions of Calcutta that I will discuss subsequently. For instance, Mearns (1883) writes:

Few who will read these pages have any conception of what these pestilential human rookeries are, where tens of thousands are crowded together amidst horrors which call to mind what we have heard of the middle passage of the slave ship. To get into them you have to penetrate courts reeking with poisonous and malodorous gases arising from accumulations of sewage and refuse scattered in all directions and often flowing beneath your feet; courts, many of them which the sun never penetrates, which are never visited by a breath of fresh air, and which rarely know the virtues of a drop of cleansing water (p. 4).

The Hodder text, then, clearly disavows this corpus of writing on London to set up Calcutta as an exceptional space. Yet, at the same time, it uses this descriptive and rhetorical mode – the “slumming narrative” – popular with, and familiar to, metropolitan readers in Britain, to fashion an evocative anti-aesthetic description.²⁴ It presents the poverty of Calcutta, and its 'Black'

²⁴ A classic study of the lower classes, and inter-class relationships, of Victorian London remains Jones (1971). For a detailed examination of the classed and gendered nature of sanitary and sexual regulations, as well as Victorian thinking on dirt and filth, see Walkowitz, 1980; Stallybrass & White, 1986; Mort, 1987; McClintock, 1995; Poovey, 1995; Koven, 2004; Cohen, 2005.

Town in particular, as both singular and iconic. What is particularly important to note here is by the late-nineteenth century, Calcutta is depicted not *only* as a “City of Palaces” but also being presented as a “filthy city.” To put this another way, by the late-nineteenth century Calcutta’s contradictory built environment was informing British representations of the city, which was presenting it as *both* a city of splendor and squalor.

Reports on Calcutta in British-run English newspapers of British India also highlighted the contradictory nature of the city’s landscape. Reports in newspapers such as *Englishman* and *The Statesman* of Calcutta, as well as *The Pioneer* of the “up-country,” that is, north Indian, town of Allahabad, significantly contributed to the increasing equation of the city with filth and squalor, further crystallizing this view of the city. Further, the publisher Thacker, Spink and Company, publishing out of Calcutta, Bombay, and London, incorporated the pieces on Calcutta’s ‘Black’ Town from *The Statesman* and *Englishman* in their 1890 edition of the *Thacker’s Guidebook to Calcutta*. This necessarily provided the articles with a pan-Indian audience, as well as a readership in Britain, thereby disseminating the negative perspective on the city widely.

The structure of the *Thacker’s Guidebook to Calcutta* is particularly interesting as it is divided into two sections. The first deals exclusively with the ‘White’ Town, outlining in detail the various colonial constructions of the city in addition to the history of the colonial buildings (Mitchell, 1890, pp. 1 – 112). This section provides empirical details about specific sites – concrete spaces locatable on the city’s map – that visitors could visit, and witness the material signs of British rule in the urban landscape. The second section, however, presents vignettes on the ‘Black’ Town published earlier in the *Englishman* and *The Statesman* (Mitchell, 1890, pp. 113 – 224). Moreover, as the titles of these pieces (“The Lepers and the Poor,” “The Lunatic

Asylums” and “The Municipal Square Mile”) suggest, these spaces were quite beyond the purview of the city’s visitors. In addition to mapping out in textual form the spatial contradiction of Calcutta, the guide also posits another kind of contradiction in the cityscape: between the rational space of progress marked by the physical form of the ‘White’ Town, and the deviant, backward space of the ‘Black’ Town that is presented in an affective register.

Noteworthy in the *Thacker’s Guidebook to Calcutta* is the invocation of the “Municipal Square Mile,” the city’s open garbage dump. Describing the space with more than a hint of irony, the text notes that this was a place that would “make the proverbial thousand distinctive smells of Cologne fade into insignificance” (Mitchell, 1890, p. 196). It describes the vegetation and animal life around the place, and also informs that it is bordered by human habitation. Describing the villagers as paddy cultivators and fisher-folk, its readers are told that the villagers “eat their food only after dark, owing to the swarm of flies which in the day time rendered even cooking a matter of difficulty” (Mitchell, 1890, p. 199). However, amidst this vision of intense degradation, the narrative holds out some hope of “improvement” for the elite residents of Calcutta. It claims that while the distinctive smell of Dhapa sometimes waft towards the city – and as we will see subsequently, Kipling makes much of this issue while writing about Calcutta – the liquid sewage, though the breeding ground for malaria, does not actually flow into the Hugli because of several locks that regulate its flow (Mitchell, 1890, pp. 201 – 202).

The articles from the Calcutta-based newspapers replicated in *Thacker’s Guidebook to Calcutta*, then, speak of underline the contradictory nature of the city landscape. It presents the ‘White’ Town as a city of stately buildings while also depicting the native spaces of the city, marked by filth and stench, in an affective register and as deviant. Importantly, the articles appear to suggest that efforts were not only being made by the British administrators to mitigate

the deviance and backwardness of the ‘Black’ Town, but that progress was being made in that direction. In contradistinction to this, the articles on Calcutta penned by Kipling, and published in the pages of *The Pioneer* undermine the contradictions in the city’s landscape. Invoking the “Big Calcutta Stink” as the great leveler, these articles proclaim Calcutta as an infernal space, where the native quarters of the city are simply the deeper circles of the same hell.

The Clammy Odor of Blue Slime

Kipling’s vignettes on Calcutta were published as individual articles between February and April 1888, and later anthologized as *The City of Dreadful Night* in 1890. A series of eight essays on the city, it narrates the author’s experience of the ‘White’ Town before proceeding to introduce readers to the city’s native quarters. The journey into the various areas of the ‘Black’ Town is presented as analogous to a descent into the various circles of hell (one of the essays is titled “Deeper and Deeper Still”), with the members of the Calcutta Police playing Virgil to the author’s Dante.

The City of Dreadful Night opens with a comparison between the urban landscapes of London and Calcutta. Kipling (1899) claims that anyone driving across the bridge into the city would claim that he has “left India behind [to enter] foreign parts” (p. 7). This is, however, quickly rearticulated as “No, not wholly foreign. Say rather too familiar” (Kipling, 1899, p. 7). The play on un/familiarity is of course conditioned by the visual similarity between the landscapes of London and Calcutta, and the colonial city reminds Kipling (1899) of the “lost heritage” of London: “the roar of the streets, the lights, the music, the pleasant places, the millions of their own kind, and a wilderness full of pretty, fresh-colored English-women, theaters and restaurants” (pp. 7 – 8). Calcutta however simply *reminds* him of London: it holds out “false hopes of some return” where the falsity of the Calcutta landscape is indicated through a reliance

of the imagery of smoke and foul smell (Kipling, 1899, p.7). In the Indian city, the “dense smoke hangs low, in the chill of the morning, over an ocean of roofs, and, as the city wakes, there goes up to the smoke a deep, fill-throated boom of life and motion and humanity” (Kipling, 1899, p. 8). The colonial landscape of Calcutta signals a similarity with London; yet it is profoundly different. While London is described with a degree of specificity in words such as “streets,” “lights,” “music” and significantly, “fresh-colored English women,” the smoke of Calcutta obscures any such descriptive effort becoming instead, an “ocean of roofs” housing an indistinguishable “humanity.”

Importantly, Kipling (1899) proceeds to disavow the faculty of vision for in India, he claims, the European “eye has lost its sense of proportion, the focus has contracted through overmuch residence in up-country stations ... and the mind has shrunk with the eye” (p. 9). Consequently, he can mock the sentiment of seeing Calcutta and exclaiming “Why, this is London! ... This is Imperial” (Kipling, 1899, p. 9). The author’s disavowal of vision, of course, has important consequences. It exhibits a decided skepticism regarding the faculty of vision, and underlines its fallibility as well as its inability to grasp reality in this alien colonial space. If landscape is understood as a visual ideology, and indeed the visual ideology of empire, then the visual similarity between the prospects of the metropole and the colony can become a disturbing fact, destabilizing the difference between the ruler and the ruled (Mitchell, 2005; Mitchell, 2002b). The colonial narrative strategy must therefore necessarily repudiate the faculty of vision, and retain the distinction between the two landscapes in order to uphold the rule of difference.

In this context it is important to remember Kate Flint’s observation on the visual culture of the Victorian era. Flint (2000) claims that Victorian society was

characterized not just by the accelerated expansion of diverse opportunities for differing sorts of spectatorship, but [also] by a growing concern with the very

practice of looking, and with the problematisation of that crucial instrument, the human eye (p. 2)

Flint's contention regarding the Victorians' contradictory impulse regarding vision acquires a more potent shade in the colonial context. On one hand the visual register, primarily through the technology of photography, claimed a "stern fidelity" to truth (Pinney, 1997). Through its use in colonial mapping and ethnography, it proclaimed the backwardness of India and Indians, and legitimized colonial rule. On the other hand, the disavowal of vision and its attendant technologies, allowed for the repudiation of sameness, and helped consolidate the rule of difference that underwrote colonial rule. Importantly, the dual relationship of the colonial project to vision circumscribes the agency of the colonizers in both instances. Kipling's denial of sameness between the looks of Calcutta and London, and the consequent repudiation of vision must, therefore, be seen in this light.

With the visual register out of the way, the narrative must now rely on other sensory perceptions in order to construct London and Calcutta as different. In Kipling's narrative, the faculty of smell becomes the key for anchoring its affective claim; to cement the difference between London and Calcutta. Consequently, Kipling (1899) invokes the "Big Calcutta Stink" for his readers (p. 10). Playing on similitude and difference again, but this time as regards the stench of various British Indian cities vis-à-vis Calcutta, Kipling (1899) lets his readers know that while Benares [Varanasi] is "fouler in point of concentrated, pent-up muck, and there are local stenches in Peshawur [Peshawar] ... for diffuse, soul-sickening expansiveness, the reek of Calcutta beats both Benares and Peshawur" (p. 10). He tells his readers that the smell of Calcutta "resembles the essence of corruption that has rotted for the second time – the clammy odor of

blue slime” before being given a guided tour of the Calcutta landscape through the travels of the stench (Kipling, 1899, p. 10). Kipling (1899) claims that

There is no escape from it. It blows across the *maidan*; it comes in gusts into the corridors of the Great Eastern Hotel ... the “Palaces of Chouringhi” carry it; it swirls round Bengal Club; it pours out of by-streets with sickening intensity, and the breeze of the morning is laden with it. It is first found, in spite of the fume of the engines, in Howrah Station. It seems worst in the little lanes of Lal Bazar ... but it is nearly as bad opposite the Government House and in the Public Offices ... Six moderately pure mouthfuls of air can be drawn without offence. Then comes the seventh wave and the queasiness of an uncultured stomach. (p. 10)

The introduction of the olfactory in Kipling’s description serves the important function: of introducing an experiential register into the landscape form. While the landscape of London is seen and heard, Calcutta’s is seen, heard and, importantly, *smelt*. In other words, it is articulated as *experienced* and becomes a *felt* reality. Significantly, all the places mentioned in the narrative are colonial buildings from the city’s ‘White’ Town. The smell that hangs on the buildings makes them, and therefore the landscape these constitute, decidedly different from London’s. It is the experiential register of the landscape, then, that really structures the text’s charge of Calcutta as a differential urban space.

Kipling’s deployment of the experiential to represent Calcutta’s landscape provides an important avenue for us to think about the category of “affect” that has been typically understood as non-narrative, pre-social, and unmediated (Massumi, 2002). Kipling privileges the sense of smell to produce Calcutta as a “disgusting” place and, crucially, does so by dehistoricizing the smell, that is, by refusing to examine the context of its production. In so doing, he can produce the equivalence between the categories of “smell” and “disgust” *without* situating it within the structures that mediate them. In other words, in Kipling’s narrative “smell” and “disgust” appear *unmediated* while being, in fact, profoundly structured by social processes. This then allows us to see affect as the *narrativization* of the *socially mediated* as *unmediated*.

Indeed, not only does Kipling (1899) not justify his claims regarding Calcutta’s “stink,” he also blames it on the lack of “high-handed oppression” claiming

If an up-country station holding three thousand troops and twenty civilians owned such a possession as Calcutta does, the Deputy Commissioner or the Cantonment Magistrate would have all the natives off the board of management or decently shoved into the background until the mess was abated. They then might come on again and talk of “high-handed oppression” as much as they liked (p. 11).

The reference to the “board of management” is illuminating because an elective system was introduced in the municipal administration from 1876. From that time two-thirds of the Municipal Commissioners were elected, and the rest – including the Chairman – nominated by the government. Kipling’s racial outburst appears to be a critique of the any form of participatory government between the colonizer and the colonized. From this construction of a correlation that is passed off as causality – a process that is itself mystified through the deployment of the affective, that is, *mediated unmediation* – we begin to see the “political” deployment of affect, where readers are presented with a kind of “hyper-real experience” that is not ostensibly grounded in material reality. In this way, depending on the context, this “hyper-real experience” can be mobilized to produce any number of affective responses, and directed at any causes with which it is correlated. In the case of Kipling, then, the affective modality produces disgust, while at the same time mystifies British inefficiency, pointing instead towards participatory government as the “cause” of the city’s degradation.

Kipling continues to provide his readers with a view of Calcutta: its sights, sounds, smells, and people. The Bengali, always the butt of Kipling’s racist barbs in his fiction and non-fiction (except, arguably, the character of Huree Mookerjee he creates in *Kim*) is not spared in Calcutta either. Kipling (1899) mocks the Bengali characters he meets, especially their penchant for speaking in English, most notably, a Bengali speaker in the Bengal Legislative Council

chamber who quotes John Stuart Mill to argue for giving prominence to the “popular element in the electoral body” (p. 29). Calcutta’s landscape remains for Kipling (1899) populated by native and foreign types. On the banks of the Hugli, near the offices of the Calcutta Port, he finds

Malay-Hindus, Hindu-Malay-whites, Burmese, Burma-whites, Burma-native-whites, Italians with gold earrings and a thirst for gambling, Yankees of all the States with Mulattoes and pure buck-niggers, red and rough Danes, Cingalese, Cornish boys ... tun-bellied Germans, Cockney mates ... unmistakable “Tommies” who have tumbled into seafaring life ... cockatoo-tufted Welshmen ... broken-down loafers, grey-headed, penniless, and pitiful, swaggering boys, and very quiet men with gashes and cuts on their faces (pp. 43 – 44).

Calcutta for him is not a melting pot of humanity brought into one space by colonial globalization; instead it is an “ethnological museum where all the specimens are playing comedies and tragedies” (Kipling, 1899, p. 44).

Subsequently, Kipling (1899) goes into the ‘Black’ Town at night with the Calcutta Police, claiming that “the darker portion of it, does not look an inviting place to dive into at night” (p. 57). As he moves about with his Police escort, he is told that he is in “St. John’s Wood of Calcutta – for the rich Babus” (Kipling, 1899, p. 59). Calcutta’s St. John’s Wood is, however, filled with

mysterious, conspiring tenements as Dickens would have loved ... [with] no breath of breeze ... and the air ... perceptibly warmer [than the ‘White’ Town] ... There is ... the utmost niggardliness in the spacing of what, for want of a better name, we must call the streets. The air is heavy with a faint, sour stench – the essence of long-neglected abominations – and it cannot escape from among the tall, three-storied houses (Kipling, 1899, p. 59)

Accompanying the police in this dark side of the Calcutta landscape, Kipling (1899) reaches the palatial mansion of an Indian woman, possibly a prostitute, who “stands revealed, blazing – literally blazing – with jewelery [sic] from head to foot” (p. 61). Kipling (1899) spends a considerable amount of space extolling the beauty of this “Dainty Iniquity;” he also describes,

and tries to estimate the value of her ornaments; further, he also provides an account of her house, furniture, and decorations (pp. 60 – 61). Kipling’s effort is particularly revealing as it aims to unveil for his readers, undoubtedly overwhelmingly European, that “part of the world [of Calcutta] ... shut to Europeans – absolutely,” where the presence of a “Dainty Iniquity” smothered in gold and jewels was bound to appear sensational.

This sensational tenor of the narrative continues as the colonial Dante ventures deeper and deeper into the circles of his tropical hell. In another, more profound, space of Calcutta’s darkness, Kipling (1899) encounters another prostitute, a Mrs. D, the Eurasian widow of “a soldier of the Queen” (p. 73). He writes that Mrs. D “has stooped to this common foulness in the face of the city ... [and] has offended against the white race” (p. 73). Interestingly, the members of the Calcutta Police do not share his sense of indignation telling him that “You’re from up-country, and of course you don’t understand. There are any amount of that lot in the city” (Kipling, 1899, p. 73). Particularly interesting to note is the policeman’s subtly dismissive response to Kipling. His comment of Kipling being from “up-country” and therefore not quite understanding is reminiscent of what Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay, writing over half a century before Kipling, had complained about Calcuttans in *Kalikata Kamalalay*. The policeman’s dismissive reaction to Kipling underlines the latter’s small-town provenance, the north Indian town of Allahabad being very far removed from any big city, let alone Calcutta.

Importantly, Mrs. D is described as a Eurasian, that is, someone born of Indian and English parents; moreover, she is depicted as a prostitute who entertains Indians as customers. Not only does Mrs. D profoundly violate Kipling’s neatly racialized world-view, she also appears to re-enact as an individual and through her profession, the racial mixing that characterizes her social group. This figure of Mrs. D serves a number of purposes for Kipling.

By displaying her character as an incarnation of moral degeneracy, Kipling underscores the widely held belief that Eurasians, by virtue of their racially mixed provenance, were morally inferior, besides providing a sort of warning against breaking the racial boundaries. This prompts Kipling (1899) to speak of the “good old days [when the administrators] deported him or her that misbehaved grossly, and the white man preserved his *izzat* [honor]. He may have been a ruffian, but he was a ruffian on a large scale” (p. 73). Moreover, the story of Mrs. D, suffused with the senses of repugnance as well as luridness, would be a ‘sensational read’ for Kipling’s audience. In addition to appealing to the tastes of the normative English readership in India, it also underlines the base nature of Calcutta’s ‘deeper’ and ‘darker’ areas.

So irredeemable is the nature of Calcutta’s landscape for Kipling that he does not even spare the English dead who lie buried in the city. His diatribe against the city extends to the South Park Street Cemetery, one of the earliest non-Church cemeteries in the city that was opened in 1767 and used until the 1830s. Commenting on the built form of the obelisks that mark the graves, Kipling (1899) says:

The eye is ready to swear that it is as old as Herculaneum and Pompeii. The tombs are small houses. It is as though we walked down the streets of a town, so tall are they and so closely do they stand – a town shrivelled by fire, and scarred by frost and siege (p. 82).

Clearly Kipling has no sympathy for the structure of the tombs that combine Gothic elements with the Indo-Saracenic style, made using bricks and lime that forms the predominant style of the tombs marking the graves. Continuing to mock the built form of the tombs, he proceeds to add:

They must have been afraid of their friends rising up before the due time that they weighted them with such cruel mounds of masonry. Strong man, weak woman, or somebody's infant son “aged fifteen months” – it is all the same. For each the squat obelisk, the defaced classic temple, the cellaret of chunam [lime], or the candlestick of brickwork – the heavy slab, the rust-eaten railings, the whopper-jawed cherubs, and the apoplectic angels. Men were rich in those days and could afford to put a hundred cubic feet of masonry into the grave of even so humble a

person as “Jno Clements Captain of the Country Service 1820” (Kipling, 1899, p. 83 – 84).

Kipling appears intent to prove the appalling nature of the city’s landscape and especially underline the derivative nature of its built form. In his evocation, the *second* city of the British Empire transforms into the *secondary* city of the British Empire. In so doing, then, Kipling begins to disavow *history* – the centrality of Calcutta in Britain’s Asian enterprise – to invent a rhetorical tradition that holds up Calcutta as the epitome of filth and squalor.

This is best exemplified in the manner in which Kipling (1899) directs his barbs at the “big and stately tomb sacred to Lucia who died in 1776 AD aged 23” (Kipling, 1899, p. 85). What follows from Kipling’s pen is a virtuoso display of high imperial British arrogance (and sexism) of the late-nineteenth century that, understandably, ridicules the British East India Company. He writes:

What pot-bellied East Indiaman brought the “virtuous maid” up the river, and did Lucia “make her bargain,” as the cant of those times went, on the first, second, or third day after her arrival? Or did she, with the others of the batch, give a spinsters’ ball as a last trial – following the custom of the country? No. She was a fair Kentish maiden, sent out, at a cost of five hundred pounds, English money, under the captain’s charge, to wed the man of her choice, and *he* knew Clive well ... and talked to men who had lived through the terrible night in the Black Hole. He was a rich man, Lucia’s battered tomb proves it ... (Kipling, 1899, p. 85, italics in original).

Kipling caricatures the dead Lucia and her “pot-bellied East Indiaman,” something he has done to living residents of Calcutta elsewhere in his articles. This act of caricature serves to reduce the characters being represented, just as his depiction of the city serves to reduce the stature of the city (Gombrich, 1971). It must also be noted that Kipling chooses to focus on the tomb of Lucia, instead of the many other colonial notables who are buried at the cemetery, such as the renowned Orientalist William Jones. This emphasis on an unknown character from the colonial history of

Calcutta allows Kipling the rhetorical leeway to reduce the city's residents along with its landscape; to articulate it as a secondary and second-rate city; implicitly suggest that the British are in Calcutta owing to the bad judgment of the Company officials. It therefore makes it possible for him to continue his project of disavowing history and inventing a tradition.

Claiming Calcutta for the Indians

Sumit Sarkar (1997) has argued that the nineteenth century Bengali *bhadralok* “seldom wrote about Calcutta, and tended to emphasize the negative features of its life when it did” (p. 177).

While this is mostly accurate, as in the case of *Kalikata Kamalalay*, there were some notable exceptions. The most striking example of a Bengali's valorization of nineteenth century Calcutta is Bholanath Chunder's travelogue of Bengal and northern India, which sets up Calcutta in contradistinction to Delhi, the pre-colonial capital of the Mughal Empire, which extended to almost the entire Indian sub-continent.

Chunder's travelogue is one of the earliest Indian travel accounts written in English by an Indian. Published in 1869 – the same year that Smith was writing his report condemning Calcutta's civic infrastructure – it provides a detailed account of Delhi based on the author's travels to the city in 1866, and sets up South Asia's pre-eminent pre-colonial city in contradistinction the colonial city. It presents its readers with a survey of Delhi's built environments under different rulers, before proceeding to describe Shahjahanabad, the city built by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. Shahjahanabad served as the capital of the Mughal Empire from 1649 to 1857, and was the site of the intense and bloody battles of the 1857 Rebellion between the British and the Indians. Shahjahanabad would, with the construction of 'New' Delhi in the twentieth century, be designated 'Old' Delhi by the British.

Chunder's narrative displays the distinctive Hindu ethos of the *bhadralok* and their attendant disavowal of India's pre-colonial Muslim past. For him Mughal Delhi becomes a seat of moral decrepitude, arguing that Mughal rule was emblematic of the moral degradation of Muslims in general. Chunder (1869) locates this moral degradation in the built environment of Shahjahanabad, providing a fantastical description of the Mughal Emperor and "his progeny ... multiplying by compound multiplication, till ... his palace, styled the paradise upon earth, became [a] ... sty, by being crowded with Sultans and Sultanas, who lay about in scores, like broods of vermin" (p. 346). A loyal supporter of British rule in India, Chunder writes approvingly of the public killing of the sons of Bahadur Shah Zafar [the last Mughal emperor] by General Hodgson after the British takeover of Delhi in 1857. In fact, he is thankful that the British ended Mughal rule in India, saying:

It is well that the Great Mughal is extinct ... No curse that has afflicted the human race has ... been so baneful as ... Mahomedan rule ... to mankind. The Moslem rose as a storm-wave to entomb all the great works of ancient power and wisdom ... and to plunge the world into a state of barbarism that has perpetuated despotism, ignorance and anarchy (Chunder, 1869, p. 355).

This disparaging tone continues in Chunder's (1869) description of Delhi which he finds lacking in "elements of true greatness ... [with] no intelligence that enlarges the mind ... no fraternizing sympathy ... no public spirit ... and no patriotic devotion" (pp. 243 – 244). Describing the central marketplace of Chandni Chowk, he notes that the "moving throng of richly-dressed natives riding on caparisoned horses, lounging on elephants, or borne ... in palankeens [sic] have passed away for ever" (Chunder, 1869, p. 279). However, Chunder (1869) cautions the reader against feeling too nostalgic: this may indeed be a pity for the lover of the picturesque, but "the British residents of Delhi probably feel more certain about their lives now that the offscourings of Bahadur Shah's court are no longer in place" (p. 279).

While Chunder posits an explicit equation of the pre-colonial city with the moral corruption of the Muslims in general, underlying this is an implicit claim of a moral superiority of British rule in India, manifested most clearly in the ‘modern’ city of Calcutta. This becomes clear when he discusses the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, the founder of the Shahjahanabad.

Chunder (1869) calls Shah Jahan a tyrant who obtained his wealth

partly by presents, partly by purchase, and partly by plunder [to build Shahjahanabad] ... the city of a despot – [with] no colleges, no hospitals, no museums, no public squares, no promenades, and no ghauts [sic]. He builds only ... for himself, and leaves the people to shift for themselves” (p. 274).

Not averse to gently taunting Shah Jahan’s desire to build a new city, he puts the Mughal monarch’s decision to a fit of imperial whimsy. Comparing the “unreasonable” Mughal monarch to the “reasonable” British Viceroy, Chunder (1869) claims that in British India, money has to be made through “honest and life-long labours – and not by looting ... [The] health of the viceroy cannot be a reason ... for the building of a new City” (p. 273). Demonstrating the reasonableness of British rule, Chunder (1869) goes on to argue that though

three successive Governors-General shortened their lives, one Financier came and was consigned to the grave, and another broke his health and went home to recruit it, still the removal of the metropolis from Calcutta has not taken place considering the immense interests jeopardized ... [for] such a removal would be worse than an earthquake or an inundation (pp. 272 – 273).

Any attempt to move the capital from Calcutta, Chunder (1869) notes with an air of quiet confidence, would not only jeopardize the fortunes of the city’s house owners but would also devalue the crores of rupees invested in building Fort William, the Government House, the Town Hall, the High Court, the Bank of Bengal, the Post Office and “the innumerable palace like buildings of our city would not then retain any value in the estimation of men ... [and the] The greatest house owner who is now esteemed a *millionaire* would find himself reduced to a

provincial gentleman” (p. 273, italics in original).²⁵ Chunder’s comments demonstrate the complete identification of the propertied sections of the *bhadralok* with the colonial city of Calcutta, not least in his reference to Calcutta as “our city.” Of course, Chunder’s fears appear profoundly prescient, and deeply ironic, in light of the British decision to shift the capital from Calcutta to Delhi a few decades later, in 1911.

The comparison between Calcutta and Delhi becomes explicit as Chunder concludes his description of Delhi. For him, the former capital of India may have the features of a metropolis but Calcutta has the “advantage in general magnificence” as Delhi has nothing like Calcutta’s splendid squares; no places for driving and walking such as the Maidan or the Strand (Chunder, 1869, p. 375). Relying on the already popular reified perspective of seeing the Calcutta landscape from the river, Chunder (1869) dismisses the view of Delhi from across the Yamuna, claiming it is not “half so grand and striking” as the prospect of Calcutta from across the Ganges (p. 375). Finally, Chunder (1869) notes that “it is much to be doubted whether, in its best days, Delhi had any such tasteful buildings as *our* Fever Hospital, *our* Metcalfe hall, and *our* classical Mint. It is not fair ... [to compare] a fallen and a rising city” (p. 376, my italics). Once again, Chunder refers to Calcutta as “our city” that refers to his own class, the Bengali *bhadralok*, thereby providing his claim with a strong comprador flavor. Obliterated from this perspective of the city is the contradictory landscape of the city’s ‘White’ and ‘Native’ quarters, or the broader contradiction of Calcutta vis-à-vis the Bengal countryside.

Most crucially, by stressing the superiority of Calcutta over the pre-colonial city of Delhi, and by claiming it as “our” city, Chunder gestures towards another route of disavowing history to invent the tradition of colonial Calcutta as an Indian city. Over the years, this idea would gain ground, and by the start of the twentieth century it would be commonsensical enough to claim, as

²⁵ A “crore” is a unit in the South Asian numbering system that is equal to ten million.

did Binay Krishna Deb (1905), one of the first native historians of the city, that Calcutta was “as much a European and a Marwari as a Bengalee [sic] town” (p. 3). Indeed, the material manifestation of this claim can be seen haunting the pages of the reports filed by the curator of colonial Calcutta’s Public Gardens in the opening years of the twentieth century.

The annual reports on the “Calcutta Gardens” from this period repeatedly speak of the impossibility of landscaping Calcutta. For instance, in the 1910 – 11 report, the curator of the Calcutta Gardens recalled that the Dalhousie Square gardens “suffered from the deprivations of cattle and ... the surroundings, that include a rubbish tip, [we]re as unaesthetic as ever” (*Report on the Royal Botanical Gardens*, 1911, pp. 3 – 4). This tenor continues in the subsequent report from 1911 – 12, where the curator notes that the circumstances permitting the upkeep of the Calcutta Gardens are “not ... the most favorable, for pedestrian traffic pays no particular regard to the paths provided, and with regard to the Eden Garden in particular the section of the public that crowds through the Garden when football matches are being played in the neighbourhood shows scant respect for the work of the horticulturist” (*Report on the Royal Botanical Gardens*, 1912, p. 3). The same report also notes that the “Curzon Garden ... suffered a great deal of damage at the feet of the enormous concourse that assembled on the occasion of Their Imperial Majesties' visit to Calcutta” (*Report on the Royal Botanical Gardens*, 1912, p. 3). By 1918 – 19, the situation appears a touch more cataclysmic, with the report noting that during “the Armistice Celebrations most of the annuals in the Curzon and Dalhousie Square gardens were destroyed by the feet of the rejoicing crowds, and both gardens had to be replanted” (*Report on the Royal Botanical Gardens*, 1919, p. 2).

This shows that the local population in Calcutta was, in small but telling ways, claiming the city of Calcutta as their own at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Bengali middle

class at this time were also traveling across the space of British India, owing to the improved road and in particular rail networks connecting various parts of South Asia since the mid-nineteenth century. The Himalaya would emerge as a favorite destination for the *bhadralok* traveler. They would draw upon pre-colonial notions of Hindu sacred geography to contest the colonizers' claims of the mountains, and begin to articulate a sense of a putative Indian nation-space. I will examine this problematic in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER 3

LANDSCAPING THE HIMALAYA

Commenting on the state of Himalayan exploration in the early decades of the twentieth century, the British explorer and colonial administrator Francis Younghusband (1927) noted

there is much to do before even the map of the Himalaya is complete ... the map is after all not the end: it is only the means. What mankind in general wants is a *description* of the Himalaya – a *picture* of it. Men living in far-distant countries want to have it described so that they can see it themselves (p. 454, italics in original).

Younghusband’s comment on the “map” and the need for a “description” and “picture” of the mountains is significant for the acts of mapping, describing, and picturing were central to the colonial project of representing the Himalaya. The expansion of British presence in India, and up to the Himalayan region, in the course of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of a plethora of texts and images on the mountains. The Himalaya became the focus of numerous travelogues as well as memoirs, journals and diaries of explorations and surveys. Concurrently, it also became the subject of visual representation in paintings, sketches, prints, and, after its advent into the Indian sub-continent during the mid-nineteenth century, of photography. Many of the printed texts on the mountains contained images, enabling readers – especially European readers – a composite experience of reading about as well as “seeing” the Himalaya.

In addition to representing the mountains, the British intervened into the physical environment of the Himalaya to materially re-form it. In the course of the nineteenth century, the length of the mountains within the territory of British India became the site of what came to be known as hill-stations. Established initially as sanitarium for the British to escape the tropical summer of the Indian plains, these were transformed into picturesque locales by the British as a

“home away from home” for their own residence and settlement. By mid-century, the hill-stations, such as Shimla and Darjeeling, would develop into colonial administrative centers with political headquarters and military cantonments. Besides setting up these hill-stations, the British also altered the Himalayan landscape by setting up plantations of tea and cinchona, and beginning the commercial production of these agricultural commodities with local indentured labor.²⁶ In addition, the Himalaya also served as a source of raw material with the vast forests of its foothills providing timber for the burgeoning colonial economy.

The Himalayan foothills (also known as the *terai* region) had other purposes too: its erstwhile substantial population of tigers, elephants and other wildlife made it a favorite hunting ground for the colonial administrators. The *terai*, along with the mountainous regions of Ladakh, Kashmir, and the Karakoram with their species of high altitude wildlife, made the Himalaya a space of recreation and adventure for the colonial administrators. Moreover, as Everest, K2, Kanchenjunga and Nanda Devi came to light as the highest places on earth, they attracted European mountaineers for who the allure of Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn had begun to wear thin. The advent of mountaineering into the Indian sub-continent in the closing decades of the nineteenth century further underscored the notion of the Himalaya as a space of adventure (See Isserman and Weaver, 2008; Macfarlane, 2003; Hopkirk, 1983). Further, the British continued to explore and survey the higher Himalaya through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries producing new and updated maps. Inspiring this was not simply a desire to expand the imperial archive of geographical knowledge but to know about the minerals and other natural resources of the mountains for purposes of extraction; to develop new trade routes to Central Asia; to understand the practices and customs of the local population for purposes of taxation and for

²⁶ Cinchona was brought from Peru and planted in India. This was supervised by Clements Markham who for a while headed the Geographical Department of the India Office in London. Markham subsequently published an account of this. See Markham, 1862.

including them into the colonial economy as laborers.²⁷ Moreover, the Himalaya grew in strategic importance in relation to Tibet, especially in the context of the Great Game in Asia. This led to the Himalaya gradually being seen as a boundary space separating the colonial space of British India from its others, namely, Afghanistan and Tibet. Indeed, by the start of the twentieth century, it was commonsensical for the British to refer to the Himalaya as the “natural” boundary of British India.

This combination of re-presentation and re-formation produced the colonial landscape of the Himalaya. A composite of diverse colonial spatial conceptions and attendant spatial practices, this colonial landscape of the Himalaya emerged as a novel spatial form in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. As the century progressed, it gained ascendancy and became the *dominant* spatial form of the mountains. However, by the turn of the century, the emergent Indian middle class would begin to contest the colonial Himalayan landscape through its own conception of space and spatial practice. Relying on the pre-colonial, that is, the residual spatial form of Hindu sacred geography, this class would articulate an indigenous Himalayan landscape.

This chapter begins by engaging with one aspect of the historical process of the production of the colonial Himalayan landscape. It begins by excavating the ideology of the picturesque aesthetic that was central to the built form of the colonial hill-stations as well as to the visual representations of the Himalaya in British India. Importantly, the chapter’s focus on the picturesque mode marks its divergence from, and disagreement with, the recent work of Ann Colley. Colley (2010) situates her work as an extension of the insightful (and pioneering) study on the development a “mountain aesthetic” by Marjorie Nicolson (1959) to stress the centrality of the sublime for any assessment of Victorian attitudes towards the mountains, especially the

²⁷ For instance, James Bailie Fraser, one of the first Europeans to reach the headwaters of the Ganges also repeatedly speaks of the Himalayan landscape in terms of its produce. He also comments on the viability of taxing the local inhabitants. See Fraser, 1820.

Alps (Colley, 2010, pp. 1 – 5). In her final chapter that is almost an afterword, Colley (2010) notes the “persistence of the sublime” in the case of Victorian mountaineers in the Himalaya (pp. 217 – 228). Citing from the *Alpine Journal* and select travelogues, she contends that Victorian explorers and travelers in the Himalaya “were never really part of a “Master-of-all-I-survey” scene” (Colley, 2010, p. 222).²⁸

While the idea of the sublime was indeed an important aspect in human *perception* of the mountains, especially the Himalaya, we must remind ourselves that humans have always *interacted* with the mountains. Humans have climbed, trekked, mapped, surveyed, measured, drawn, photographed and written about them; they have built houses and towns on them, and cultivated on their slopes bringing to mind William Blake’s trenchant comment that “Great things are done/ When men and mountains meet.” It is therefore crucial to underline that human interactions with mountains have always marked an attempt at scaling back the effect of the sublime; to make them more describable and representable; to bring them within the ambit of ordinary human existence. Moreover, Colley (2010) does not engage with the picturesque mode anywhere in her work. This is a curious omission because the picturesque, since its emergence as an aesthetic ideal in the eighteenth century, has been an important mode of depicting nature, especially mountainscapes, in Europe and elsewhere. In contradistinction to Colley (2010), then, this chapter contends that the landscape form and the picturesque mode, serve to reduce, materially and metaphorically, the sublimity of the Himalaya. It therefore aims to understand, not so much the *persistence* of the sublime but rather how it is *tamed* through the deployment of the picturesque mode in colonial representations of the Himalayan landscapes during the Victorian era marked.

²⁸ See Mary Louise Pratt (1992) for an exposition of the “monarch-of-all-I-survey” trope (pp. 201 – 208). Also see Spurr, 1993.

Subsequently, the chapter investigates the *residual* pre-colonial notions of Hindu sacred geography of which the Himalaya was – and continues to be – a central aspect by engaging with the autobiography of Devendranath Tagore. Finally, the chapter looks at the travelogue on the mountains by Jaladhar Sen from the closing years of the nineteenth century to argue that his travelogue attempts to synthesize the divergent landscapes of the colonial Himalaya with that of Hindu sacred geography to articulate an indigenous Himalayan landscape where it becomes a spatial metaphor of a putative nation-space.

Picturesque Landscapes and the Colonial Himalaya

Landscape, W. J. T. Mitchell (2002a) tells us, is not an “object to be seen or a text to be read, but ... a process by which social and subjective identities are formed” (p. 1). Elsewhere, Mitchell (2002b) argues that landscape is “a particular historical formation associated with European imperialism” (p. 5); a medium of cultural expression, it is a representation of “something that is already a representation in its own right” (p.14). Underlying Mitchell’s claim is the belief that landscapes do not use inert natural objects as its subject matter. Mitchell (2002b) argues that landscapes’ subject matter is “always already a symbolic form [because categories such as] the Ideal, the Heroic, the Pastoral, the Beautiful, the Sublime and the Picturesque ... [have already determined] the kinds of objects and visual spaces that maybe represented” in a landscape (p. 14).

Mitchell’s comments find critical resonance in the Indian photographs of Samuel Bourne. Arguably the single-most important British photographer working in India in the late-nineteenth century, Bourne came to India in January 1863 from Nottingham and worked as a commercial photographer until 1870 when he returned to England. During these seven years, Bourne’s output was prolific: he produced over two thousand images of Indian architecture, hill-stations,

cantonments, cities, memorials and parks. However, despite the variety of his photographs, scholars agree that Bourne’s reputation rests largely on his picturesque landscapes of India (See Sampson, 2002, pp. 84 – 85; Pal and Dehejia, 1986, pp. 188). Bourne’s natural and architectural landscapes of India were among the most widely disseminated images of the country in Europe as well as in India, playing a crucial role in the visual construction of India in the late-nineteenth century.

Notable among Bourne’s images are the picturesque landscapes of the Indian Himalaya, including the first known photographs of the source of the Ganges. These were taken during his three treks into the Himalayan hinterland between 1863 and 1866. Bourne also published serialized accounts of his travels in the Himalayas in the London-based *British Journal of Photography* between 1864 and 1870.²⁹ Unlike his picturesque images, however, these travel accounts were written in a decidedly anti-picturesque vein. Read together, Bourne’s texts and images provide two distinct spatial conceptions of the colonial Himalayan landscape.

In the section that follows I examine Bourne’s deployment of the picturesque mode in his Himalayan landscapes. I situate them in relation to the material practices of the British with relation to the Himalaya, namely, the establishment of hill-stations as picturesque locales in the Indian sub-continent. As Bourne’s images – especially those of the Indian Himalaya – highlight the coming together of the landscape form and the picturesque mode through the medium of photography, I discuss their mutual affinities and inquire into the ideological power of this triangulation in the colonial context of British India; how the truth-claims of photography

²⁹ Samuel Bourne’s travel narratives in the *British Journal of Photography* were titled “Ten Weeks with the Camera in the Himalayas” (1864), “Narrative of a Photographic Trip to Kashmir and Adjacent Districts” (1866) and “A Photographic Journey through the Higher Himalayas” (1869 – 70). In addition, he had also published an article titled “Photography in the East” (1863) in that journal. These texts have been edited and published as *Photographic Journeys in the Himalayas* by Hugh Ashley Rayner in 2004. All references to Bourne’s narratives are from the Rayner edition.

validate, and indeed naturalize, the relations of power immanent in the ideas of landscape and the picturesque; how they re-present the Himalaya in the image of the Alps thereby taming their sublimity, and articulate the mountains as a spatial fetish. Moreover, since the photographer's images circulate as commodities, I draw upon Guy Debord's (1995) notion of the "spectacle" to contend that they present the mountains as a "spectacular" space.

Bourne's anti-picturesque travel narratives, on the other hand, project the Indian Himalaya as disorderly, peopled with locals, and different from the European Alps. I contend that while his images present the Himalayan landscape as a spatial *product*, the textual accounts highlight the social relations that produce and re-produce the mountainscape. They illuminate the *process* underlying the production of the Himalayan landscape. Read in conjunction with each other, then, Bourne's photographs and travel accounts highlight the landscape form as a spatial product and a spatial process, in addition to providing insights into the production of colonial Himalayan landscape.

The Picturesque Photographs of Samuel Bourne

During his trek of 1866, the most ambitious of his three journeys into the Indian Himalayas, Samuel Bourne trekked to the Gangotri glacier, the source of the Ganges. There, he writes, he took "two or three negatives of this holy and not altogether unpicturesque object" (Bourne, 2004, p. 96). These photographs were among the first images of the glacier from which the river emerges and underlines Bourne's reliance on the picturesque mode. Before proceeding with a discussion of Bourne's images, however, I want to briefly examine the idea of the picturesque.

The picturesque was introduced into the English cultural vocabulary by William Gilpin in the late eighteenth century as a mediating category between the ideas of the beautiful and the sublime. The beautiful was traditionally understood as unthreatening and defined by gentle

curves and soft contours and associated with the female form and male sexual desire. The sublime on the other hand addressed the “impulse towards self-preservation ... [that afforded the viewer with] the *frisson* of contemplating terrifying things from a position of safety” (Buzzard, 2002, p. 45). The sublime is then a category that is invested with the capacity of generating fear and awe in the viewer. Further, the sublime is also characterized by a sense of ineffability and indeterminacy. It is a realm that cannot be described or represented and owes its power to “its chaos ... [and] its wildest and most irregular disorder and desolation” (Kant, 1952, p. 92).

The picturesque, then, can be understood as not simply a mediating position between the beautiful and the sublime but, more crucially, as a mode that disciplines the sublime by evacuating it of its inherent capacity to generate fear and awe in the viewer. It draws the sublime into a more normative affective region, in effect pacifying it and making it describable. This aspect of the picturesque is of critical importance and, informs what several critics have noted as its tendency to depoliticize views of the natural world (See Leask, 2002, pp. 180 – 183; Sampson, 2002, pp. 84 – 91; Andrews, 1999, pp. 166 – 167). Indeed, this tendency of the picturesque to produce “depoliticized views” enables Bourne’s landscapes of the Indian Himalaya to be spaces of similitude in relation to Europe.³⁰

Further, the affective potential of the picturesque mode rests on three fundamental criteria. It incorporates within it an ordering impulse that harmonizes the elements within the frame of view. It also screens out the unseemly to structure its affect. Finally, the picturesque

³⁰ The extant scholarship on Bourne’s images has restricted itself to descriptive accounts of the photographer’s use of the picturesque mode or has largely stressed his artistic genius (See Ollman, 1983, pp. 5 – 22; Williams, 1981, pp. 7 – 13) without firmly situating his photography within its historical context. Notable exceptions to this trend are Gary Sampson (2002) and Shakuntala Rao (2000). Sampson (2002) tries to investigate Bourne’s use of the picturesque mode within the historical context of British India in the aftermath of the 1857 Rebellion but restricts the full scope of his enquiry by limiting his essay to a discussion of only seven photographs of a colonial park in Barrackpore, outside Calcutta. Rao’s (2000) discussion of Bourne’s images and narratives places the photographer more squarely within the context of late-nineteenth century British India, but implicitly posits a separation of aesthetics and politics by claiming that Bourne vacillated between “a desire to represent India and the Himalayas and his political position” (Rao, 2000, p. 10).

anchors its view through an act of familiarization that makes the foreign, familiar and the unknown, knowable and known. I shall refer to these aspects of the picturesque as the ordering impulse, the screening effect, and the associationist aesthetic respectively, and demonstrate how they interact with each other to produce a “European” image of the Himalaya.

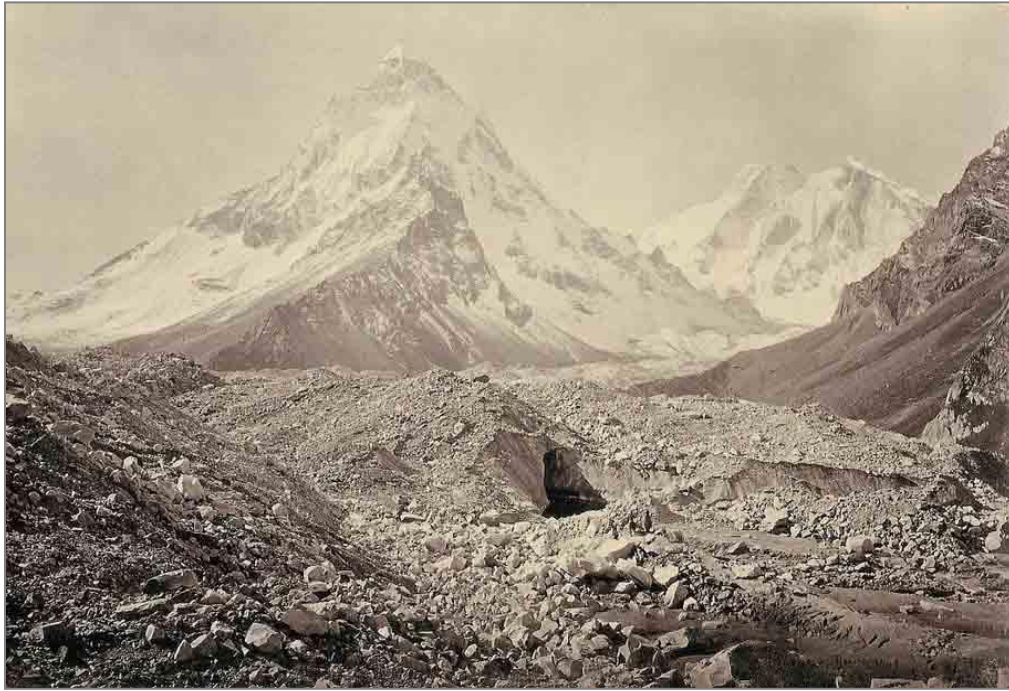


Figure 12: *Mount Moira, and other Snows, from the Glacier.* 1866. Samuel Bourne.

Bourne’s 1866 image of the Gangotri glacier (Figure 12) highlights the operations of the ordering impulse, the screening effect and the associationist aesthetics of the picturesque mode. It captures the tall mountain peak within its frame, and the neatly arranges the elements within it. The view is structured around the central image of Mount Shivling, which exists as a visual counter-point to the ice cave.³¹ As Arthur Ollman (1983) has noted

The mountain itself is ... a dramatic and imposing pyramid of rock isolated and framed by surrounding rises on both edges ... that cause a bowl-shaped depression in the center of the image which perfectly cradles the massive

³¹ Bourne calls the peak behind the Gangotri glacier Mount Moira. I refer to it by its name of Shivling in this essay. Bourne’s reason for calling the peak Moira is unclear.

triangular shape ... Huge boulders are strewn randomly in the foreground ... a triangular shadow in the middle of the foreground predicts the pyramidal domination ... in the rear (p. 19).

This is the ordering impulse of the picturesque at work.

This image also screens the unseemly from within the frame of view. This perfectly balanced image of precise order, for instance, evacuates any trace of the dangers and hardships of the trek that Bourne mentions in his narrative, a trek that remains as dangerous, if less difficult in the twenty-first century as it did in 1866. Further, there are three human figures in the frame of the photograph whose presence is not immediately obvious (see Figure 13).³² Ollman (1983) notes that “the realization of their size is almost baffling” and claims that “the confrontation of the microscopic humans with an archetypal mountain, can be seen as the ultimate metaphor for Bourne” (p. 19).

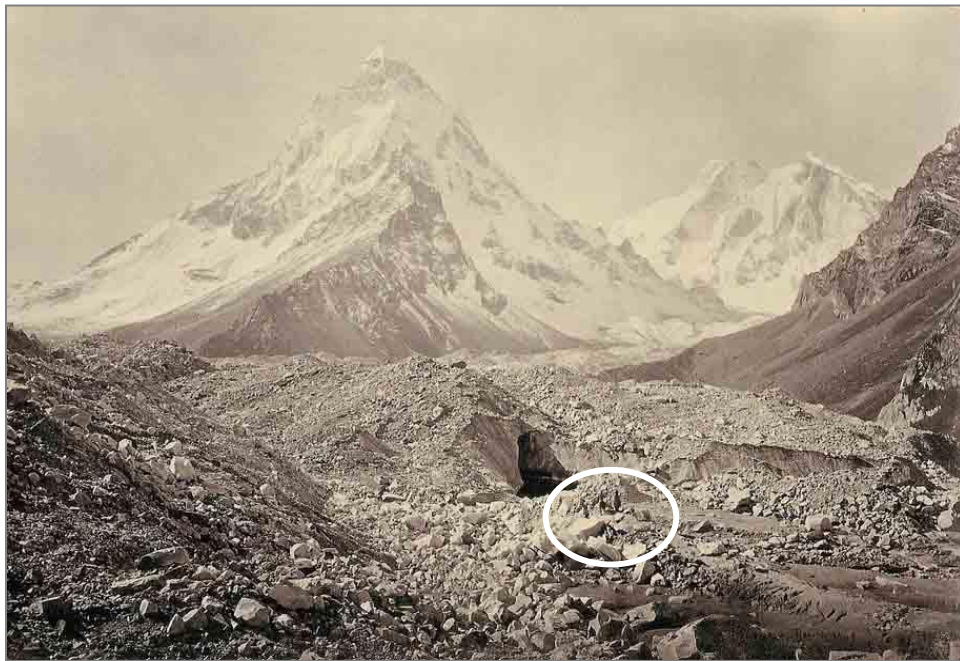


Figure 13: *Mount Moira, and other Snows, from the Glacier. 1866. Samuel Bourne. With human figures marked.*

³² I noted three figures in that photograph (see Figure 13) while Ollman notes two. This confusion further highlights my claim that Bourne reduces human presence in his photographs to near insignificance.



Figure 14: *Manirung Pass*. 1866. Samuel Bourne.

In fact, in most of Bourne’s landscape photographs, the frame is vacated of human beings. In the instances they are present, their presence indeed appears “microscopic” and as visual anchors to gauge the magnitude and the grander aspects of nature. By ordering them into visual pointers, the images evacuate the locals of any agency. For instance, in the photograph of the Manirung Pass (Figure 14), Bourne’s coolies appear as little more than dots in the landscape to provide the visual anchor that highlights the vastness of the Himalayan peaks. However, the aesthetic appeal of the photograph obfuscates the rather crucial fact that the figures would have stood on the glacial slopes, amidst the snow and freezing winds, for a considerable amount of time for the photograph to be composed. This is because photographic technology from the late-nineteenth century had not yet developed to allow for instant photography. Moreover, by

presenting the locals as coolies, that is, wage laborers for the photographer, the picturesque image disavows any sense of a lived relationship between the people and their land.

There is another crucial aspect about this photograph that Ollman either fails to notice or ignores: the image of Shivling evokes the Alpine Matterhorn. Indeed, the Himalayan peak was called the “Gangotri Matterhorn [by the] German [and British] expeditions of the 1930s” (Pyatt, 1984, p. 115). This is in evidence in the mountaineering literature of the 1930s, most notably in writings of the British mountaineer Marco Pallis. Writing in the *Himalayan Journal*, Pallis (1934) would call the Himalayan peak “a horrid-looking mountain with a striking resemblance to the Matterhorn, as it might appear in a nightmare” (p. 111). In his book *Peaks and Lamas*, first published in 1939, Pallis (1949) would describe Shivling as “the huge pinnacle that *we called the Matterhorn*, half spire, half tower, red rock at the bottom, snow-powdered yellow at the top; beautifully alluring, hideously inaccessible” (p. 40, my italics). In re-presenting the Himalayan (Indian) peak in its Alpine (European) image through the deployment of the associationist aesthetic of the picturesque, Bourne, then, anticipates – and in some part also contributes to – this later construction of spatial analogy by the European mountaineers.

Bourne repeatedly displays his familiarity with the images of the Alps, and his awareness of the surge in interest for mountains, especially the Alps, among his contemporaries in Europe. In his serialized narratives, Bourne (2004) claims that “the world has resounded with the doings and exploits of the Alpine Club,” in addition to displaying a deeper acquaintance with that institution when he speaks about the appeal of “Peaks, Passes and Glaciers,” a probable allusion to the club’s publication (p. 19). Moreover, he acknowledges his familiarity with Alpine photography, writing that he had not “seen Switzerland, except in some of M. Bisson’s and Mr. England’s photographs” (Bourne, 2004, p. 35).

Bourne here refers to the Alpine photography of William England, and more importantly to the work of the Bisson brothers, Louis and Auguste. Significantly, the Bisson brothers photographed the Savoy Alps in 1860 as part of Napoleon III’s climbing expedition to Chamonix. In 1861, Auguste Bisson climbed Mont Blanc and became the first person to photograph from its summit (Gernsheim, 1986, p. 48). In fact, while recounting his experience of photographing Taree Pass in the Himalaya during his first trek of 1863, just two years after Auguste Bisson scaled Mont Blanc, Bourne’s (2004) comment that he was at “an elevation of 15,282 feet, or about 200 feet higher than the summit of Mont Blanc” attempts to set up his achievement of high altitude photography with respect to Bisson (p. 20). More importantly, it also appears to signal to his readers – potential customers of his images – the similarity between the Himalaya and the Alps.



Figure 15: *The Source of the Ganges, Ice Cave at the Foot of the Glacier.* 1866. Samuel Bourne.



Figure 16: *Glacier des Bossons, Savoie. Circa 1860. Bisson Frères (Louis-Auguste Bisson & Auguste-Rosalie Bisson).*

Bourne's reliance on the aesthetics of Alpine photography in his Himalayan images is further highlighted in another image that takes a closer look at the Gangotri glacier (Figure 15). For the European viewer, this image would recall the photographs of Alpine glaciers that were being produced and disseminated in Europe in the 1860s. It is, in terms of visual composition, remarkably similar to the photograph of the Bossons glacier taken by the Bisson brothers in 1860 (Figure 16). Both images highlight the roughness of the terrain, while the crooked lines and the interplay of light and shade in the composition stress the jagged features of the glaciers. In addition, the presence of humans is rendered insignificant in both images. In the image of the Bossons glacier, the train of 'tiny' explorers provides a visual contrast against which the vastness of the natural formations around them can be viewed. Similarly, the two people in the frame of Bourne's image of the Gangotri glacier direct the viewer's eye, allowing them to gauge the vastness of the source of the Ganges (see Figure 17). Bourne's photographs of the Himalaya, by

reconstituting it in a picturesque mode, then, attempts to produce a space of sameness between the Alps and the Himalaya and – by extension – between Europe and India.



Figure 17: *The Source of the Ganges, Ice Cave at the Foot of the Glacier.* 1866. Samuel Bourne. With human figures marked.

The deployment of the picturesque has several critical consequences in the colonial context of British India. It presents an ordered view of space where the indigenous people are absent (or rendered microscopic), and the represented space is constituted in its European image. Such a representational strategy articulates the power of the colonizers to order – materially and metaphorically – the land. Further, by evacuating the locals or by rendering them (and their agency) insignificant, it obfuscates the social relations that produce and re-produce the landscape, especially those between the colonizer and the colonized. In other words, it produces a fetishized image of Himalayan space. Moreover, by recreating the Himalaya in its European

image, the picturesque landscapes indicate towards an epistemic colonization of the mountains, and by extension, the Indian sub-continent.

The Material Context of the Colonial Picturesque

Materialist approaches to “landscape” have repeatedly stressed the need to examine the built environment of the land, in addition to, and in conjunction with, its representations, to gain a more holistic understanding of the social significance of the landscape concept. This critical imperative, then, encourages the examination of Bourne’s images of the mountains in relation to the “hill-stations” that the British built in the Himalaya in the course of the nineteenth century.³³ Such an investigation becomes more crucial since the ordering impulse, screening effect, and associationist aesthetics of the picturesque mode find their material expression in these Victorian hill stations of British India.

Hill-stations emerged in the Indian sub-continent during the course of the nineteenth century with the largest numbers in the strategically important area to the west of Nepal. Began as sanitary enclaves for convalescing Europeans, especially European troops, the hill-stations evolved to become sites that served to “maintain the social structure and social behavior of the British colonial community in India” (King, 1976a, p. 196). Dane Kennedy (1996) notes a three-fold progression in the evolution of the hill-stations in British India through which these places went from sanitarium to high refuge, high refuge to hill-station and finally, from hill-station to town (pp. 11 – 12). The process of creating Himalayan sanitarium began in the second decade of the nineteenth century with the defeat of Nepal in the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1815. The outcome

³³ There exists a small body of scholarship on British hill-stations in colonial India. Among these only Anthony King (1976a) and Dane Kennedy (1996) provide a holistic discussion of hill-stations as a specific spatial form. Other scholars have typically focused on specific hill-stations of colonial India. For instance, Nora Mitchell (1972) discusses the hill-station of Kodaikanal in South India; Pamela Kanwar (1990) and Aditi Chatterji (2007) examine Shimla and Darjeeling respectively in their works; Judith Kenny’s (1990) doctoral dissertation focuses on another South Indian hill-station Ootacamund [Ooty].

of the war resulted in British building settlements in Shimla, Mussoorie, and Almora – to the west of Nepal – in territories gained from that kingdom. A decade later, Darjeeling – to the east of Nepal – also began to be developed into a sanitarium (see Figure 18).

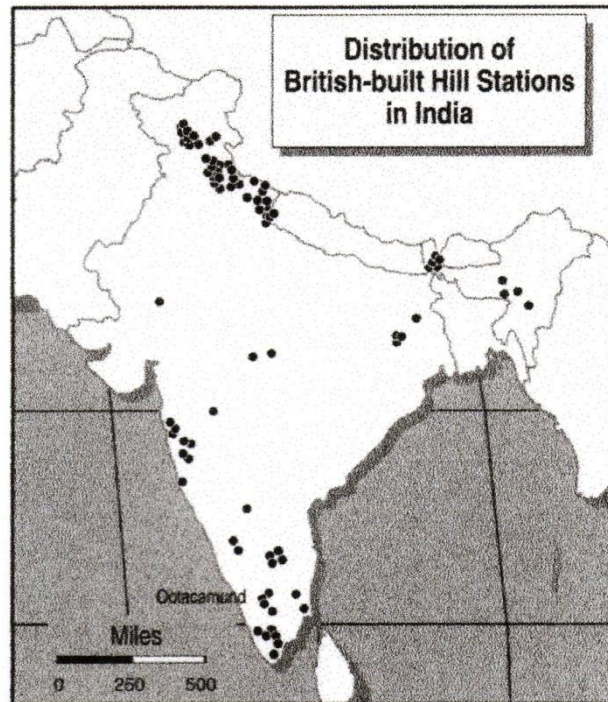


Figure 18: Distribution of British-built hill-stations in India. Source: Mitchell, 1972.

Importantly, these hill-stations developed as mountain landscapes were “brought within bounds, subdued and domesticated” (Kennedy, 1996, p. 46). Kennedy (1996) further notes that though these towns were located at elevations of six to eight thousand feet, the appellation hill-station indicates “an etymological effort to minimize the disturbing implications of the sublime ... To speak of hill-stations rather than mountain stations rhetorically scaled back the overwhelming force of the landscape” (pp. 46 – 47). This domestication of the landscape by the British took the form of interventions in the physical world that literally transformed the locations and recreated them in the picturesque image of English towns and countryside. The British also set up gardens and orchards, created lakes, and planted trees brought in from as

diverse locations as England, Australia and Japan. They also developed the water bodies and wooded areas around these hill-stations for recreational activities such as fishing and hunting, providing the British with a very tangible sense of home away from home within India. Such was the transformation of these Indian locales that Viceroy Lytton, visiting the hill-station of Ootacamund in the 1870s would gush about it as “a paradise ... [with] such beautiful *English* rain, [and] such delicious *English* mud” (cited in Kennedy, 1996, p. 51, italics in original).

Most crucially, the hill-stations served to underline British identity in colonial India. They were typically described as racially “pure” zones that were peopled by colonial administrators and military officers as well as planters and retired European civil servants. Significantly, they also attracted European women and children for lengthy stays, especially since the British officers sent their wives to give birth in their salubrious climes, and their children to boarding schools that came up in these hill-stations. In 1864, Shimla became the summer capital of British India, and Darjeeling, the summer capital of the Bengal presidency. The construction of grand colonial edifices dramatically transformed these townships in the final decades of the nineteenth century: the Lieutenant Governor’s mansion was built in Darjeeling in 1879 while the Viceregal Lodge and other administrative buildings came up in Shimla in the 1880s.

These hill-stations underlined not only the distinction between the Indian hills and the Indian plains but also the racial difference between the colonizer and the colonized. As Kennedy (1996) comments

From the increasingly accessible vantage point of the hills, the plains seemed a stark, heat-shimmering, monotonously unvarying landscape, teeming with millions of idol-worshipping, disease-ridden people ... These lofty lands appeared unsullied by lowland hordes, untouched by their contaminating influence ... [and] offered an environment so pristine, so free of human admixture, so empty of

history that is seemed to invite the British to engrave their own dreams and desires on its unmarked surface (p. 61).

However, despite attempting to project the hill-stations as a zone of racial purity of picturesque proportions, the British ironically ended up attracting more Indians – upper and middle class, as well as working class natives – than they intended. As the hill-stations expanded during the latter half of the nineteenth century, they became attractive as places of employment for Indians, most of them from the same plains from which the British were seeking to escape. Moreover, a retinue of porters, servants, and cooks invariably accompanied the British who came to these hill-stations for the summer months.³⁴ This resulted in a substantial number of natives in these pristine locales that resulted in the setting up of ‘native’ spaces within these settlements, as well as markets with its local vendors that catered to the indigenous population.

This contradiction between the idea of the hill-station as a “pure” British space of imperial grandeur, and its reality of being a place with a significant native population is succinctly recorded by George Curzon in his personal diary during his visit to Shimla in 1894 – 1895, a few years before assuming the office of Viceroy. Curzon (n. d.) notes:

Simla was pretty much what I expected with two exceptions. I had no idea that there was so large a native and shop town and I had always imagined the station on the northern instead of the southern slope of the mountains and fronting the snowy peaks. As a matter of fact the Viceregal Lodge – which surprised me with its palatial proportions – is one of the few buildings that face both ways and the majority of the houses get no snow view at all ... As I entered the Viceregal Lodge I could not help wondering if I should ever do so as its master. I should like to succeed Elgin in 5 years time ... (n. p.)

Curzon’s surprise at the “large native and shop town” as well as at the absence of a view of the “snowy peaks” is significant. It underlines the ideological power of the picturesque landscape

³⁴ Kennedy (1996) notes that “to sustain their comfortable existence: an average of ten or more Indians were employed directly or indirectly in the service of each Briton” in the hill-stations (p. 8).

photographs of hill-stations produced by the British photographers among who Bourne was the foremost. Indeed, much of Bourne’s landscape photography occurred in these hill-stations such as Simla, Mussoorie, Nainital and Darjeeling as well as Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. For a photographer in search of the picturesque, these locations were already physically ordered along those lines, waiting for the invocation of associationist aesthetics. It would simply require the deployment of the screening effect of the picturesque to evacuate the unseemly natives from the frame and recreate the landscape in the image of Britain (see Figure 19). In other words, the picturesque mode would enable the visual translation of the Indian hill-stations into a Victorian landscape.



Figure 19: *Simla in Winter, View from the Bowlee near “Glenarm.”* 1868. Samuel Bourne.

Elective Affinities: The Landscape Form and the Photographic Medium

This process of visual translation of Indian space into a Victorian landscape was of course substantially aided by the affinity between the idea of landscape and the medium of photography. Their kinship, in fact, centers on the perspectival ordering of space that is fundamental to both the landscape form and photography. Moreover, the social sanction of photography's truth-claims further validates, and indeed naturalizes, the relations of power immanent in the idea of landscape.

Williams (1973) reminds us that the “idea of landscape implies separation and observation” (p. 120). Cosgrove (1985) echoes Williams (1973) when he defines landscape as “a way of seeing, a composition to be appropriated by a detached, individual spectator to whom an illusion of order and control is offered through the composition of space according to the certainties of geometry” (p. 55). Crucially, both these statements underline the importance of perspective for the landscape form. Like the landscape form, photography is a “way of seeing” and a mode of representation; it is a perspectival ordering of space that provides the viewer with the illusion of control while simultaneously separating him from the view. Further, like the landscape form, the photographic image draws its power from its ability to circulate across physical spaces and cultures. Both the landscape form and photography can then be understood as visual ideologies that seek to control and dominate space.

At the time of its advent, photography was seen as essentially a mechanical and technological representational practice with no claims as a medium of artistic potential. This enabled photography to be seen as “passive *recordings* of preexisting sights” (Snyder, 1994, p. 176, italics in original). This assumption of photography as “passive” is particularly important: it allowed for the cultural belief that “photographs stand in a special relationship to vision, but

vision detached from any particular viewer” (Snyder, 1994, p. 183). Unlike painting and other graphic arts that were seen as depicting the realm of the “imaginative, cognitive and the ideal,” photography came to belong to the realm of “the factual, material, the physically real” (Snyder, 1994, p. 181). Consequently, this idea of a detached – and therefore disinterested – way of seeing informed the indexical claims of the photographic image. It invested the photographic image with a cultural power that allowed it to masquerade as truth. Photography, Snyder (1994) notes, played “the role of the mechanical and non-artistic outsider to established and evolving landscape practices that seem[ed] internal to painting” (p. 185). By establishing it as the normative way of looking at nature, photography naturalized the landscape form. Riding the truth-claims of the photographic image, what was “a way of painting landscapes and viewing ... became ... *the way of looking at nature*” (Snyder, 1994, p. 185, italics in original).

Photography came to India a few years after its invention in Europe. By the decade of the 1850s, photography was an established practice among India’s European residents and the local elite.³⁵ The Rebellion and its aftermath heralded the mobilization of “all the mechanisms of the colonial apparatus, from repressive to ideological ... [and the deployment of] revitalized programs for greater hegemonic control – economic, political, cultural, and epistemic – over the Indian population” (Chaudhary, 2005, p. 67). At this time photography was appropriated by the state and emerged as an apparatus of imperial control. In effect, it became a means of

mastering space ... [and formed] part of a practico-symbolic management of the vast sub-continent which demanded the classifying, recording, census-taking, mapping, displaying and licensing of everything ... rendering it knowable, imaginable and controllable by means of European systems and on British terms (Osborne, 2000, pp. 39 – 40).

³⁵ For a detailed discussion on colonial photography in British India, see Chaudhary, 2012. Also see Ryan, 1997 and Pinney, 1997, pp. 17 – 71.

Photography, then, became a tool in the imperial project of documenting India and its people and fundamental to the construction of the imperial archive. Importantly, the colonizers harnessed the truth-claims of the photographic image to validate imperial representations of India and its people as truthful. Consequently, photography not only naturalized the landscape form and made it *the* way of seeing nature; it also established the landscape form as the visual ideology of empire (Mitchell, 2002b).

Bourne's images of the Indian Himalaya demonstrate a coming together of the photographic medium, the landscape form and the picturesque mode. In Bourne's case, the ideological power of this triangulation is further accentuated by the wide circulation of his images. The extensive dissemination of his images was assisted to a great degree by the establishment of his own commercial photography studio in Shimla, which, after several mutations, came to be known as *Bourne and Shepherd* from 1865. Bourne and his partner Charles Shepherd

adopted various strategies for the dissemination of an ever-increasing stock of landscape, architectural, and ethnographic views and group portraits of colonial officers, at once developing and stimulating a demand for such pictures by making certain that they could be obtained relatively cheaply and without difficulty" (Sampson, 1992, p. 336).

Photographs could be ordered by negative number from the studio in Shimla and by 1866, Bourne's images could be obtained in Calcutta through the bookseller and supplier W. Newman and Company. By that year his photographs could also be purchased at all the major cities and hill-stations of British India such as Bombay, Madras, Lucknow, Agra, Allahabad, Mussoorie and Muree (a hill-station now in Pakistan). A Calcutta branch of the studio opened in 1867 and, incidentally, continues to remain in business to this day by that name, although under an Indian

owner. By 1870, Bourne's photographs of India were also being "distributed in London and Paris by the French publishers A. Marion and Company" (Sampson, 1992, p. 338).

The reliance on the perspectival ordering of space by both the photographic medium and the landscape form produce a sense of alienation that diminishes the presence of locals substantially. This is further underscored by the screening effect of the picturesque mode that evacuates the locals from view. In effect, the picturesque landscape photographs of Bourne obfuscate the lived (and living) landscape from view; they mystify the social relations that produce and re-produce the mountainscape.

In addition, Bourne's images of the Indian Himalaya circulated as commodities. As commodified images of alienated space (and spatial alienation), Bourne's photographs present the Himalaya as a double spatial fetish – it becomes the fetishized representation (photograph) of a fetish (hill-station). In other words, they approximate what Guy Debord (1995) has termed a "spectacle," that is, commodities that are not simply "a collection of images ... [but] a social relationship between people that is mediated by images" (p. 12). Debord (1995) reminds us that spectacles are better viewed as a "world view transformed into an objective force" and Bourne's images are no exception (p. 13). His "spectacular" Himalayan landscapes in the picturesque mode, then, not only "epitomizes the prevailing model of social life ... [but also] serves as a total justification for the conditions and aims of the existing system" (Debord, 1995, p. 13). These images are, on one hand, the function of colonization that serves as their condition of possibility; on the other hand these images articulate and reaffirm the ideology of alienation that forms the bedrock of colonialism. These photographs, then, allow their buyers what one critic calls the "picturesque possession" of the Himalaya, albeit vicariously (See de Almeida & Gilpin, 2005, pp. 189 – 194). More crucially, viewed from Britain (a Victorian space), they would appear as

images of another “spectacular” Victorian space (British Indian hill-stations) that would completely mystify the labor, and historical conditions, of their making. Indeed, Bourne’s images articulate and reaffirm colonial alienation, the real conditions of which are immanent in the colonial landscaping of the mountains that transform them into “spectacular” spaces: through the construction of hill-stations and the setting up of plantations and the attendant commodification of land; through processes that physically evict locals from these “spectacular” spaces or turn them into wage laborers within them.

An “Other” View of the Himalaya: Bourne’s Anti-Picturesque Travel Narratives

If Bourne’s photographs present his viewers with images of a *formed* “spectacular” Himalayan landscape, his travel accounts demonstrate the process behind their *forming*. In fact, these anti-picturesque travel narratives present the reader with a reversal of the ordering impulse, the associationist aesthetic and the screening effect that form the basis of Bourne’s landscape photography. Such a move allows him to depict the Indian Himalaya as *different* from the Alps, thereby producing the Indian Himalaya as a space of difference. If the Himalayan peaks appear in Bourne’s photographs as perfectly balanced and neatly arranged representations, in his narrative he speaks of their vastness and his own difficulty in deploying the ordering impulse of the picturesque. He writes that the Himalayan scenery is “very difficult to deal with [through] the camera; it is altogether too gigantic and stupendous to be brought within the limits imposed on photography” (Bourne, 2004, p.17).

Further, Bourne’s disavows the associationist aesthetics in his travel accounts. Writing about the Himalayan scenery Bourne (2004) notes that it is

in general not picturesque ... [the Himalaya are] greater, higher, and altogether more vast and impressive; but they are not so naked in their outline, not so detached, do not contain so much variety, have no such beautiful fertile valleys [as the Alps]” (pp. 35 – 36).

Bourne’s travel narratives are also devoid of the screening effect of the picturesque. This enables him to describe Hindu rituals, quaint kings, his experience of crossing Himalayan rivers on inflated buffalo skins and report the “loathsome sight [of] several natives afflicted with leprosy” (Bourne, 2004, p. 26). Further, such a narrative strategy enables the articulation of danger, and the threat of violence and death. During his Kashmir trek, Bourne narrates his brush with death while swimming in a mountain stream. He writes:

I ... found myself carried away by a strong undercurrent, which defied ... all my powers of resistance. The more I struggled the worse I got, when, finding it hopeless I had just strength left to call out to one of my native servants on the bank who happened to be a good swimmer ... He plunged in and laid hold of my arm, just in time to prevent me being carried under the rock, and either dashed to pieces or drowned ... (Bourne, 2004, p. 26).

Not only does this extract highlight the entry of danger and the threat of death – a threat that comes from the land itself – the locals, too, are neither evacuated from the landscape nor robbed of their agency. In other words, the anti-picturesque travel narratives depict the social relations between the colonizer and the colonized.

The advent of colonial capitalist modernity in the Indian sub-continent under British rule saw the introduction, and establishment, of wage relationship that mediated the social relations between the colonizer and the colonized. Bourne’s depiction of his interaction between himself and his coolies demonstrates the establishment, and violent enforcement, of wage relations. Bourne (2004) tells us that he sought to employ the local inhabitants of the Himalaya as coolies, that is, load-bearers during his Kashmir trek. However, midway through the trek, he discovered that his coolies had deserted him, almost jeopardizing his journey. Bourne (2004) tells his readers that he “vowed vengeance against the rascals ... [and taking] a stout stick ... set out in search of them” (p. 31). On finding them at a neighboring village hiding inside huts, Bourne (2004) dragged them out and “made them feel the quality of ... [his] stick” (p. 31). In his

subsequent journey, he speaks about a “mutiny amongst ... [his] coolies” (Bourne, 2004, p. 71). At first, he tries to reason with these “resolute and stubborn” coolies; but when they declare that they simply would not follow his orders, Bourne (2004) proudly announces that he “took a handy stick and layed [*sic*] it smartly about the shoulders of several of them till they lay whining on the ground” (p. 71). He adds that

This bit of seasonable sovereignty had a good effect, as I never afterwards had the least trouble with these men, they stuck to me through heat and cold, climbing the highest and most difficult passes, and carrying their loads bravely over glaciers and places so difficult and dangerous that I, empty handed, only passed with fear and trembling. (Bourne, 2004, p. 71)

Indeed, subsequently in the narrative as he and his entourage climb higher into the Himalaya, Bourne (2004) describes it as not “fewer than eighty people, all told, wending their way up the mountains” carrying the white man’s burden (p. 83). Importantly, Bourne’s reliance on his coolies underlines the crucial importance of their labor for what is usually remarked upon as “colonial” enterprises such as exploration. It bears stressing that the labor of the colonized, in this case of Bourne’s coolies, forms the conditions of possibility for colonial forays into the Himalaya for their survey, mapping, exploration or photography.

The most striking instance of the establishment of wage relationship in Bourne’s narrative occurs when he details his procurement of supplies before setting out to cross the Manirung pass. Bourne (2004) tells his readers

I had considerable difficulty in some of these small villages ... and other places where the country was barren, to obtain food for all my coolies. The small patch of cultivated land attached to each village barely produced sufficient grain of all sorts to meet the requirements of the villagers, and I have sometimes had the whole village on their knees before me, begging that I would not take their flour or rice from them. It was a difficult case, but there was no alternative; my men must have food, and *all I could do was pay them well for everything they supplied.* (p. 82, my italics).

The extract highlights unequivocally the vehemence with which the social relations of production were altered in the Himalaya owing to the advent of colonization. Not only does Bourne’s comment exhibit his sense of entitlement over the produce of the land, he also treats them as commodities that can be, and are, purchased. In his interaction with the villagers regarding the procurement of flour and rice, he introduces the logic of exchange forcibly and relies on his colonial status to trump the locals’ argument for the logic of use. Further, Bourne’s act of forcibly purchasing food brings the locals within the ambit of wage relations with him. It therefore aligns Bourne firmly within the colonial logic of extracting the surplus of the colonized.

Bourne’s travel narratives then depict the social relations between the colonizer and the colonized, and the attendant asymmetry of power. They illuminate the process through which the *lived* landscape of the mountains – articulated by the coolies’ refusal to co-operate, or the villagers’ refusal to sell food – challenges its colonial *conception*; how the landscape of use is forcibly transformed into a landscape of exchange with the introduction of wage relations; the necessity of violence in order to effect this metamorphosis. The conflict between Bourne and the Himalayan natives can then be read as a prefiguration of the construction of hegemonic spaces, and indeed, the spaces of hegemony. It then demonstrates the process of contestation of colonization, and the extraction of consent that forms the bedrock of colonial hegemony, and the consequent construction of the colony. Crucially, thinking about the Himalayan landscape by foregrounding the category of “labor,” then, allows us to see how the landscape form mystifies its own historicity: the historical processes behind its constitution, and the violence inherent in that process. Bourne’s picturesque images of the Himalaya demonstrate the mountains as a *produced* landscape where the coolies, as well as their labor and agency, are obfuscated. In

contradistinction, the Bourne’s travel narratives demonstrate the *process* of landscaping the Himalaya. It, therefore, illuminates the labor power and agency of the colonized, but at the same time is marked by the use of violence that controls the labor power, and circumscribes the agency of the colonized.

The Himalaya and Hindu Sacred Geography

The idea of sacred geography is a key spatial conception of the Hindu belief system (See Eck, 1998; 2012). It is not only a spatial abstraction but is perceived through various sites across the Indian sub-continent: cities and towns believed to be patronized by various Hindu divinities; mountains, rivers and lakes considered sacred by the believers. Pilgrimages to these places can be seen as a form of spatial practice that not only produce (and re-produce) the sacred character of the places but also engender the notion of a larger sacralized landscape that contain, and in turn is constituted by, these sites of pilgrimage.

Central to this notion of Hindu sacred geography is the Himalayan landscape. Literally meaning “the abode of snow,” the mountains are revered by Hindus as sacred, and generally revered as a spiritual landscape. In the Hindu tradition, the peaks are respected as divinity, or associated with the mythology of specific gods.³⁶ For instance, Mount Kailas in Tibet is considered the seat of the god Shiva and his consort Parvati. Parvati is herself considered an aspect of the mother goddess, according to Hindu mythology, is referred to as the daughter of the personified figure of the Himalaya.³⁷ This also inspires the nomenclature of some of the peaks in the region, such as Annapurna (literally, “full of food” but having the sense of “the goddess who feeds”) and Nanda Devi (“goddess of bliss”).

³⁶ In addition to the Hindu tradition, the Himalaya is also considered sacred by Buddhist, Jain, and the Bon faiths.

³⁷ Parvati (also spelt Parvathy) literally means “daughter of the mountains” and derives from the word “parvat” which in Sanskrit – and in languages such as Bengali and Hindi that develop from it – means “mountain.”

Further, numerous pilgrimage sites dot the Himalayan region of Garhwal in India, and Nepal that are of pan-South Asian importance. Perhaps the most notable among these are the Shiva temples at Kedarnath, Tunganath, and Kathmandu, and the Vishnu temple at Badrinath (see Figures 20 and 21). There are also temples dedicated to the river Ganges at Gangotri, about 14 kilometers downstream from the Gangotri glacier, and the river Yamuna at Yamunotri, close to the source of that river. Situated at heights of over 10,000 feet, these pilgrimages necessitate difficult treks through high mountainous regions, and reaffirm the sacral character of the mountains. Moreover, according to Indic myths and legends, the meadows and forests in the higher Himalaya are considered sites where ancient sages lived, and meditated.



Figure 20: Temple at Tunganath in the Himalaya.



Figure 21: Temple at Kedarnath in the Himalaya.

In this section of the chapter I shall examine the section of Devendranath Tagore’s autobiography that details his visit to, and meditations around, Shimla between 1856 and 1858.³⁸ Written about half a century before the Bengali *bhadralok* travelogues, Tagore’s Himalaya are a landscape of immanent divinity and is marked by an Indo-Persian sensibility that was evanescent in Bengal under colonial rule during the nineteenth century. To speak of this in conceptual terms, Tagore’s idea of the Himalaya as sacred is, in the context of nineteenth century British India, a *residual* understanding of that space from an earlier era.

³⁸ Devendranath Tagore was the father of the more famous Tagore, and Nobel laureate, Rabindranath. Devendranath’s autobiography was published in Bengali after his death in 1905. It was subsequently translated into English by his son Satyendranath Tagore, and grand-daughter Indira Devi, and published in 1909 as *The Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore*. The English edition of the text was republished by Macmillan in 1914 from London and from Calcutta in 1915.

Tagore belonged to one of the largest land-owning families of Calcutta that also had commercial interests in banking, insurance and shipping in partnership with British merchants. Moreover, he was a public intellectual from nineteenth century Bengal and a notable social reformer. As part of his reforming agenda for Hinduism, Tagore founded the Tattvabodhini Sabha in 1839 to promote discussions on the religion. A few years later, in 1843, Tagore merged his Tattvabodhini Sabha with the Bramho Sabha founded by Ram Mohan Roy to form the Bramho Samaj. Under Tagore's stewardship the Bramho Samaj became a major institution advocating the reform of Hinduism in nineteenth century British India.

Tagore's lifetime witnessed momentous transformation of the Indian sub-continent under British colonial rule. The introduction of property rights and wage relations, and the consequent new social division of labor, saw the emergence of new socio-economic classes with their attendant privileges or disadvantages. As colonial capitalist modernity crystallized in South Asia, it attenuated the power of traditional elites, and the Indo-Persianate culture, associated with the late-Mughal court. This ethos was further eroded with the promulgation of the English Education Act in 1835, which replaced Persian with English as the official medium of instruction in British India, and heralded the emergence and rise of the newly instituted propertied classes of the Indian sub-continent. This class would promote an Anglo-vernacular outlook that displayed a rigid understanding of the Hindu and Muslim cultural spheres, and gradually supplant the earlier Indo-Persianate elites and their culture.

Tagore's writings on the Himalaya articulate the Persianate sensibility of late-Mughal India. As a member of the early-nineteenth century Bengali elite, Tagore was instructed in Sanskrit, Persian, and English. Shaped by the Indo-Persianate ethos of the late Mughal era, his writings on the Himalaya articulate this sensibility unequivocally. Most notably, Tagore

repeatedly juxtaposes Upanishadic verses with lines from Hafiz – the Persian Sufi poet – to express his pantheistic vision of the Himalaya. In fact, his writings on the Himalaya approximate what one critic has described – in the context of William Wordsworth’s poems on nature – as “natural supernaturalism” (See Abrams, 1973, pp. 97 – 116).

Tagore’s Himalaya is infused with an inner spirituality; it allows him the space for meditation and experiencing divinity. Describing his wonder at the forests of the Himalaya, Tagore (1914) writes

Covered with dense foliage, and outspread like the wings of a big bird, its branches bear the weight of a great load of snow in winter, yet instead of its leaves being seared and faded by the snow, they become more vigorous, and remain evergreen. Is this not wonderful? What work of God is not wonderful? ... Is it possible for any garden made by human hands to possess the grandeur and beauty of such a sight? (p. 242).

This descriptive tenor continues in his sketch of the river Nagari which for Tagore (1914) is a “mighty current ... fierce and foaming ... [that] with a thundering sound rolls on to meet the sea, by command of the Almighty” (pp. 243 – 244). The snow-clad mountains themselves stand “with head upraised like an uplifted thunder-bolt [proclaiming] the awful majesty of God” (Tagore, 1914, p. 245). Even the onset of the monsoons in the Himalaya are described as the “God’s waterworks [that] came into play night and day” (Tagore, 1914, p. 248). The Himalayan nights inspire Tagore (1914) to meditate on the “first principles of the soul” and remind him of God’s “intimate companionship” with creation (p. 251). Tagore (1914) expresses himself by quoting from Hafiz; he writes: “Do not bring a lamp into my audience-hall to-day. / To-night, that full moon my Friend is shining here” (p. 251). Hafiz’s poetry remains the vehicle of his expression of God’s mercy when he writes: “Thy mercy will endure in my heart and soul for ever and ever. / ... even though I were to lose my head, it would never depart from within my heart” (Tagore, 1914, p. 240).

Towards the end of his Himalayan narrative, Tagore (1914) describes his apprehension of the truth of the *Upanishads*; that the “secret Spirit exists in all creatures and in all things; but ... is not revealed” (p. 252). Tagore (1914) writes that by “pondering deeply ... I saw God, not with fleshly eyes, but with the inner vision, *from these Himalayan Hills, the holy land of Brahma* (pp. 252 – 253, my italics). He concludes this section by citing a verse from the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*: “Henceforward I shall radiate light from my heart upon the world; / For I have reached the Sun, and darkness has vanished” (Tagore, 1914, p. 253). Importantly, by describing the mountains as the “holy land of Brahma,” Tagore is not only relating his spiritual experience directly to the Himalaya but also reaffirming the sacral character of that landscape.

Tagore’s pantheism, however, does not extend to his descriptions of the local inhabitants of the mountains who he infantilizes as nature’s children. In so doing, Tagore constructs a sense of difference and hierarchy between the locals and his own patrician Bengali self, and by extension, the Bengali Hindu identity. Describing the locals, Tagore (1914) writes:

Some hill-people came up to me from the village ... and began to dance about in great glee with various contortions of the body. I noticed that one of them had no nose, his face was quite flat. “What’s the matter with your face?” I asked. He said, “A bear slapped me on the face ... [and] took off my nose with his paws.” How he danced, and how joyful he was with that broken face! I was greatly pleased with the simple nature of these hill-people. (p. 237).

Importantly, by stressing the “great glee” of the hill people and their “simple nature,” Tagore erases traces of pain, danger, and death from the mountain landscape.

The idealization of the “hill-people” is further emphasized during Tagore’s encounter of a local family. This family, he writes, lived in “a cave in the rocks. Here they cooked, and here they slept. I saw [the] wife dancing joyfully with a baby on her back, and another child of hers was running about laughing on a dangerous part of the hill” (Tagore, 1914, p. 244). Moreover, Tagore pastoralizes their existence in the Himalayan valley by almost evacuating their quotidian

labor. Tagore (1914) notes that the man of the family was “sowing potatoes in a small field” but nevertheless follows it up by stating: “God ... [has] provided everything necessary for their happiness here. Kings ... rarely found such peace and happiness” (p. 244). The construction of difference continues in his comment on the local custom of polyandry. Tagore (1914) notes that women “were scarce in their part of the country ... [so] all the brothers marry one wife, and the children of that wife call them all father” (p. 238). It is crucial to note that while Bourne, in his picturesque images, evacuates the locals from the landscape, by depicting the locals as “nature’s children,” Tagore also reduces them by turning them into a version of the noble savage.

Further, Tagore’s depictions of the Himalaya are devoid of any reference to politics or colonialism. Despite living in Shimla between 1856 and 1858, which had developed into a colonial hill-station by then, his autobiography has no reference to the British construction in the mountains. Further, despite writing during the 1857 Rebellion, he does not engage with the question of state power. In his autobiography, Tagore notes seeing a huge crowd outside Kanpur while traveling back to Calcutta. He is told that the British “are taking away the Badshah of Delhi [Bahadur Shah Zafar] captive” (Tagore, 1914, p. 265). Tagore (1914) notes:

On my way to Simla I had seen him happy, flying kites on the Jumna sands, and on my way back I found him a captive, being led to prison. Who can tell what fate will overtake anybody in this dissolving sorrowful world? (p. 265)

The shift from Mughal to British rule appears for Tagore, to be a reminder of the ephemerality of temporal power. Moreover, Tagore’s lack of engagement with the notion of the colonial state demonstrates that the emergent notion of sovereignty – British paramountcy – was still in the process of being established under colonial British rule.

Over the next half a century, colonial capitalist modernity would radically transform the social relations extant in Bengal – and indeed much of India – during Tagore’s time. The closing

years of the nineteenth century would see the crystallization of a certain normative Bengali identity, and of Hindu and Islamic cultural spheres. The Indo-Persianate sensibility, with its deep roots in the courtly culture of Mughal India, would be displaced by the Anglo-vernacular ethos championed by the Bengali *bhadralok* in Bengal (and by other middle-classes elsewhere in India). It would also display the naturalization of a more rigid understanding of political sovereignty rooted in the notion of the bounded space of the colony. The Indian middle class would attempt to synthesize the colonial landscape of the Himalaya with the notion of Hindu sacred geography to fashion an indigenous Himalayan landscape that would indicate towards the emergence of the Indian nation-space.

The Indigenous Himalaya and the Emergent Nation-Space

In 1893, the Bengali periodical *Bharati* began the serial publication of a travel account on the Himalaya by Jaladhar Sen. Sen's narrative recounted his experiences of traveling in and around the pilgrimage centers in the Garhwal region of the Himalaya from 1890. This was subsequently published, in 1900, as a travelogue *Himalay* [*The Himalaya*]. Written in conversational Bengali prose, *Himalay* is among the earliest texts of what would, by the middle of the twentieth century, develop into a corpus of travel narratives on the Himalaya written by the Bengali *bhadralok* or middle-class.

In this section I examine Jaladhar Sen's travelogue *Himalay*. I argue that Sen's travel narrative does not depict the mountains as a liminal space between domesticity and liberation. Neither does it mimic the normative colonial mode of projecting the Himalaya as an environmental frontier between the hot, humid plains and the pristine, untamed nature of the higher altitudes. Instead, these narratives infuse the sacred Himalayan geography with a secular

politics. They explore the dialectical relationship between space and the populace through a political lens.

Sen foregrounds his identity as a member of the Bengali *bhadralok* class. He repeatedly articulates his sense of belonging to the ethno-linguistic homeland of Bengal and indicates his sense of being “out of place” in the Himalaya. He also displays an acute awareness of their political, that is, colonized subjectivity as British Indian subjects. Moreover, as a traveler along traditional pilgrim routes through the Himalaya, the narrator indicates his awareness of Hindu sacred geography. In the travelogue, then, the Himalaya becomes a space for the dialectical intersection and interpenetration of distinct spatial conceptions: the colonial space of British India, as well as the pre-colonial notions of the ethno-linguistic homeland of Bengal, and Hindu sacred geography.

I contend that by stressing the mountains as a space that anchors these distinct spatial conceptions, Sen’s text projects the Himalaya as a spatial metaphor of a national civilization. In other words, the mountains become a metonymy for the Indian nation-space. Importantly, the travelogue articulates the Himalaya as a national civilizational space by drawing on pre-colonial notions of Hindu sacred geography. This process implicitly “secularizes” Hinduism by positing, and naturalizing, that religion as the civil religion of India. Significantly, such a move projects all other non-Hindu routes of construction of the South Asian homeland as “religious” and therefore non-secular. Moreover, the travel narrative demonstrates a distinct Anglo-vernacular ethos, and highlights the transformation in notions of sovereignty and political subjectivity in the Indian sub-continent through the course of the nineteenth century. Further, it illuminates the processes through which the Anglo-vernacular Bengali *bhadralok* class fashioned themselves (and other Anglo-vernacular middle-class groups from British India) as normative citizens of the putative

Indian nation-space. In other words, it documents the socio-spatial project of the colonial Indian middle-class – in Bengal, and elsewhere in India – to claim themselves as the primary subjects of the putative Indian nation.

I read this Bengali *bhadralok* travel narrative through the lens of “structures of feeling” (Williams, 1977, pp. 128 – 135). For Williams (1977) this conceptual category denotes social experience while still in process; it aims to understand social relations, and social experience that are emergent or pre-emergent, before they have been defined, classified and rationalized (p. 132). Sen’s narrative, then, not only portrays the Bengali *bhadralok* class’ social experience but also their spatial practice, and the attendant production of space, *as process*. Besides articulating their social experience as changes in presence while being lived, the travelogue simultaneously underline the dialectical interactions (and interpenetrations) between the conceived, perceived and lived notions of pre-colonial and colonial spaces of India (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38 – 41). In addition to highlighting emergent and pre-emergent social relations, the travel narratives also indicate towards the secretion of new spaces, that is, the indigenous landscape of the Himalaya.

The Indigenous Himalaya in Jaladhar Sen’s *Himalay*³⁹

Though set in a region that is central to all conceptions of Hindu sacred geography, Sen’s *Himalay* engages with the space of the Himalaya in a distinctly secular vein. It underlines the pleasures of the natural beauty of the mountains; often move beyond the traditional pilgrim routes to depict the joys of exploring scarcely visited mountainsides for its readers; depicts the local inhabitants of the mountains as not only different from, but also inferior to, the Bengali *bhadralok* traveler. In effect, the travelogue is imbued with a distinct socio-spatial politics where the depictions of the mountains, the local inhabitants, and the middle-class travelers become a

³⁹ Jaladhar Sen’s *Himalay* has not been translated into English. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Bengali are mine. Page numbers cited refer to the published Bengali texts.

means for articulating a vision of a putative nation-space and its citizenry. This socio-spatial politics of *Himalay* sets it apart from earlier depictions of the mountains suffused with a “natural supernaturalism” as evidenced in, for instance, the writings of Tagore (Abrams, 1973).

Sen began his career as a school teacher in Faridpur, in eastern Bengal (now in Bangladesh), in 1881. Subsequently, he moved to Dehra Dun, a town in the foothills of the Himalaya and a center of the British military-bureaucratic establishment to work as a teacher. Sen traveled to the Garhwal Himalaya from there in 1890, an experience he would subsequently recount in *Himalay*. In 1899, Sen returned to Bengal and began working as a journalist in Calcutta, editing two popular Bengali periodicals, *Bangabasi* and *Hitavadi*. He was also a prolific writer, and authored over forty books that included novels, short stories, biographies, children’s fiction, essays and translations besides his travelogues on northern India and the Himalaya.

In Sen’s travelogue, the sacred space of the mountains is repeatedly inflected by the state-space of British India. The narratives juxtapose descriptions of pilgrims and temples at the various pilgrimage centers with the secular markers of the colonial state. In *Himalay*, Sen narrates his travels through the various places of religious significance in the Garhwal region, namely, Devprayag, Rudraprayag, Karnaprayag, Vishnuprayag and Joshimath before reaching the temple-town of Badrinath, in the upper Himalaya. Sen’s description of these places is always intersected by his awareness of the state-space of British India: he notes that Garhwal was earlier an independent kingdom before coming under British rule; discusses the Indian National Congress and its leader Surendranath Banerjea as well as the experience of being under colonial rule with a native police officer in Karnaprayag. He describes the religious significance of the places in Garhwal that he passes through but these are mingled with comments about the

political facets of these places and their inhabitants. He writes about ordinary villagers and their habitations; describes astrologers and priests trying to earn a living from the pilgrims; mentions tea shops, hospitals and post offices, and details his conversations with the local people he meets in such places.

In Sen's writings, the conceptions of Hindu sacred geography and the colonial state-space are inflected by the authors' allegiance to the ethno-linguistic homeland of Bengal. This pre-colonial conception of space, typically a function of linguistic territorialism, has existed in the Indian sub-continent alongside the notions of Hindu sacred space, and the colonial state-space of abstract labor. Chris Bayly (1998) has termed these homelands "patria," and this sense is conveyed through the Urdu word *watan* and the Bengali word *desh*, both coded with an intimate sense of belonging (p. 25). Recent research on South Asia on spaces beyond Bengal has also demonstrated the profound sense of belonging that existed among the residents of these various ethno-linguistic homelands across the Indian sub-continent (See Deshpande, 2007; Rai, 2004; Zutshi, 2004; Irschick, 1994).

In Bengali, the word *desh* signifies many levels of spatial abstraction. Depending on its context of use, it could refer to a country, a homeland or could convey a more localized sense of belonging.⁴⁰ Sen uses this term and its compounds to refer to the space of Bengal. For him, Bengal is *swadesh*, that is, "one's own homeland;" other Bengalis are *swajatiya* – "people of one's own ethnicity" – and *swadeshi*, meaning "people belonging to one's own homeland" (Sen, 1990, p. 126). Moreover, though Sen travels in the Himalayan regions in northern British India, he consistently refers to these places as *paschimdes* and *paschimanchal*, that is, the western

⁴⁰ Depending on the context of its use, the word *desh* could refer to a nation-state (for instance, India or Bangladesh), to the idea of the homeland of Bengal (the region comprising the Indian states of West Bengal and Tripura, and the Republic of Bangladesh), or to a more localized sense of belonging as conveyed in a statement such as *amaar desh birbhume* [my home is in Birbhum].

lands or regions. Interestingly, these regions of northern British India are designated the “western” lands, that is, they are “western” in relation to Bengal. This underlines the centrality of Bengal in the cartographic imagination of Sen, and indeed other members of the Anglo-vernacular elite of colonial Bengal. In addition, Sen repeatedly mentions to his readers that he is traveling through *prabash*, the Bengali term designating spaces within the Indian sub-continent that lie outside the space of Bengal. Sen’s use of the term is of course instructive. It indicates towards a spatial conception of a nation-space of “India” that extends beyond the notion of the distinct ethno-linguistic homelands (such as Bengal) while at the same time incorporating them within it.

Further, Sen repeatedly invokes Bengal as a homeland presenting himself as a traveler “out of place” in the mountains who yearns to return “home.” As Sen travels through the mountains, he also writes about pining for the plains of Bengal. Speaking of the homeland in a distinctly nostalgic tenor, he writes:

The mountains, shorn of snow and displaying their cracks and crags, appear less than appealing. As I walked down the road I kept thinking of Bengal’s vast, green, and breezy plains; a small brook running through, in which the fishermen are catching fish in their nets; the shepherds crowded under a banyan tree – and chasing after a cow that has strayed towards the standing crops. My being would be satiated at these traditional and typical sights. It is tedious for the son of Bengal to clamber along the mountainsides with his belongings on his back. *The nature of the Himalaya and my nature are poles apart*, and I simply want to go back home. (Sen, 1990, p. 125, my italics).

Sen’s invocation of Bengal sets up a contrast between the mountains and the plains. This is underlined as he stresses the difference between his own nature – a cultural product of the space of Bengal – and that of the Himalaya. In other words, Sen sets up a distinction between the “natural” space of the Himalaya that is unmarked by human labor and the “cultural” space of

Bengal, a product of, as well as a process in, the interaction between human labor and their environment.

There are two important issues to consider from this extract of *Himalaya*. In Sen's depiction of the Bengal landscape, he is neither a fisherman catching fish in the brook, nor a shepherd tending to the cows. Instead, he represents himself as a distant observer of the Bengal landscape, separated from the people in the land, and their social activity. This viewing position of the narrator within the narrative – alienated from the productive social relations of a space, yet appropriating it to define himself and the space – articulates the author's class position, that is, the mediational position of the *bhadralok* class within the colonial social hierarchy. The landscape of Bengal is produced, in this instance, through the labor of the peasant (not explicitly mentioned, but indicated by the "standing crops"), the fisherman, and the shepherd; however, it is the member of the *bhadralok* class – surviving by appropriating the surplus of the working classes – who defines, and has the power to define, the landscape that is produced.

Moreover, the nature-culture distinction also temporalizes the distinct spaces of the Himalaya and Bengal. In other words, the narrative aims to transform the space of the "natural" Himalaya into a "cultural" one; Bengal is posited as what the Himalaya could, and indeed would, be. This ambition of the narrative is of course structured by material changes in the space of the Himalaya brought about by the colonial state, such as the expansion of rail and especially road networks, as well as the construction of hill-stations across the region during the course of the nineteenth century for the physical and social reproduction of the British colonial elite.

However, it is important to underline that the *bhadralok* travel narrative of Sen does not simply replicate the British colonial fantasy of re-forming the Himalaya into a racially pure and environmentally pristine landscape for the settlement of the British colonial elite in the Indian

sub-continent. Instead of focusing on the hill-stations such as Shimla and Naini Tal, Sen's travelogue structures itself and its spatial imagination by drawing upon the built form of the temples at the extant pilgrimage centers in the mountains and the spatial practice of pilgrimage. It contests the production and imagination of the colonial Himalayan landscape – the *dominant* space – by articulating (and conceiving) in its stead what could be understood as an *indigenous* space of the Himalaya, that is, the residual space of Hindu sacred geography.

The indigenous Himalaya in the Sen's travelogue is, then, structured by the colonial state-space of British India, and inflected by pre-colonial notions of ethno-linguistic homelands as well as the sacral space of Hindu geography. The travel narrative documents not only its author's awareness but also his negotiation of these distinct spatial conceptions. The interactions and interpenetrations between the distinct spatial configurations owing to the spatial practice of the *bhadralok* class, then, “secretes” – to use Lefebvre's term – a *new* space of the indigenous Himalaya. This newly produced space can therefore be understood as a structure of feeling – an *emergent* space that is in the process of crystallizing and taking shape, yet to be categorized and classified; one that reflects the developing social relations and spatial practices that engender it.

Though the articulation of the indigenous Himalaya in this travel narrative is structured by pre-colonial spatial configurations, in reality it anchors colonial as well as pre-colonial spatialities. In other words, this new space overlaps with the bounded colonial state-space of abstract labor, subsumes within it the distinct ethno-linguistic homelands, and mystifies its historical constitution by alluding to the “eternal” notion of Hindu sacred geography. By attempting to subsume all extant spatial conceptions under its sign, this *bhadralok* travel narrative projects the emergent space as the hegemonic space of the Indian sub-continent. In so doing, it presents the indigenous Himalaya as the spatial metaphor of the Indian nation.

The projection of the indigenous Himalaya as the spatial metaphor of the Indian nation has several critical consequences. Most crucially, this indigenous space (and its attendant indigenous spatial practice) can claim a degree of “authenticity” in relation to the colonial space (and the attendant colonial spatial practice). In other words, an indigenous notion of India can now be posited, resting on the implicit claim of an unbroken genealogy between this imagined nation-space and the mythical space of *Bharatvarsha* of Indic myths and legends. Moreover, this space can now be deployed in an anti-colonial vein to contest the idea of British India. Consequently, the *colonial* space of British India can be transformed into, and articulated as, the *colonized* space of India. This conceptual maneuver also sets up the Bengali *bhadralok* (and other Anglo-vernacular elites from elsewhere in the sub-continent), that is, male upper caste Hindu middle class members of the colonial Indian social formation, as the principal claimants of this emergent nation-space. This move is crucial to the middle class project of constructing their socio-spatial hegemony over the Indian nation-space.

Importantly, Sen anchors his articulation of the Indian nation-space on the conception of Hindu sacred geography. This finds its most cogent expression in his depiction of Joshimath, an important center of pilgrimage in the Garhwal Himalaya. He notes that Joshimath “is among the supreme pilgrimages of the Hindus” before proceeding to write:

Places with temples dedicated to Vishnu or Shiva are sacred for the Hindus. However, where *godlike humans*, in their serene holiness, make the surroundings pleasant and cordial; where human limitations are transcended to reach God’s grandeur; that place is not only sacred for Hindus but *the pilgrimage of all humanity*” (Sen, 1990, p. 71, my italics).

Sen’s exposition of the sanctity of Joshimath is significant for several reasons. It posits the Hindu as the norm through which the identity of humanity is expressed. Consequently, the space of Hindu pilgrimage becomes the arbiter of spatial sanctity. More importantly, this move from

“Hindu” to “pilgrimage of all humanity” charts a secularizing impulse that defines the secular in relation to, and in terms of, Hinduism. In effect, this posits Hinduism as the civil religion of the Indian nation-space (See Bhattacharya, 2007).

The idea of “civil religion” emerges from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who conceptualized it as an alternative to the state-sponsored Catholicism of France (See Rousseau, 1997, pp. 121 – 152). Rousseau understood civil religion as the original state of affairs, and its impact on the human mind. This concept has been powerful in the American context as well, indicating a type of bourgeois civic-mindedness that acted as an alternative to an overt religious culture. Dominant strands of Indian anti-colonial nationalism have also deployed this concept. From the nineteenth century onwards, Hinduism (with all its attendant contradictions) was repeatedly articulated and understood as a “way of life.” By positing it as a “way of life” and not a religion *per se*, Indian nationalists projected a particular belief system as the naturalized culture, that is, the civil religion of the Indian nation-space. Significantly, then, his conceptual manoeuvre not only equates Hinduism with Indian cultural life in general, but also attempts to present it as a secular entity. Moreover, in this dispensation, all other belief systems of the Indian sub-continent are conceived as Hinduism’s “others,” which are “religious” and therefore “non-secular.”

It is of course crucial to note that I am proposing a different reading of the category of the “secular” from its normative Eurocentric understanding (for instance in Skinner, 1978). In contradistinction to the notion of the secular as a strict separation between the church and the state, I am suggesting that the “secular” is the normalization of religion in the quotidian world. This charts a process that moves “religion” away from being a *mediating* category between the realms of the “human” and “supernatural” as evident, for instance, in Tagore’s writings. Instead,

it becomes an *organizing* device of the realm of the social existence of human beings.⁴¹

Moreover, from being a structuring category of the relationship between present existence and afterlife, it becomes one that shapes everyday life *in the present*. In the context of the Indian sub-continent, then, the ethos of dominant anti-colonial nationalism gestures towards Hinduism (in contradistinction to other religious systems) *not* as a religion that articulates a relationship between the past, present and future through, for instance, the doctrine of the transmigration of souls and rebirth. Instead, by enabling a construction of spatio-temporal and cultural continuity between the past and the present, Hinduism becomes a pre-eminent organizational component of culture – a “way of life” – in, and of, the newly imagined and produced nation-space of “India.” This sentiment is further underlined when Sen (1990) speaks of the renowned Vishnu temple of Badrinath in the Himalaya as “the foremost pilgrimage center of India” (p. 113). By claiming that the Hindu pilgrimage of Badrinath is sacred for all Indians, Sen once again makes “Hindu” the category for defining “Indian.” Such a move normalizes the sacred space of Hindu geography in order to express the space of the Indian nation.

Moreover, Sen’s notion of the “godlike human” (see italics above) in his description of Joshimath refers to the figure of Shankaracharya. Shankar was a Hindu philosopher who propagated the Advaita school of Vedanta philosophy. He is credited for reviving Hinduism against a dominant Buddhism in the Indian sub-continent during the eighth century of the Common Era, and for establishing Vedanta as the hegemonic interpretation of Hinduism. Hindu oral tradition claims Shankar – to ensure the continuance of Advaita philosophy in India – established four muths [seats of authority and doctrinal learning] under the supervision of his four disciples in four corners of the Indian sub-continent. These were in Puri, in the eastern coast of the sub-continent; in Dwaraka, in the western coast; in Sringeri in present-day Karnataka in

⁴¹ For a discussion of secular time in the European context see Thomas, 1971.

southern India; and in Joshimath, in the Himalaya. These muths – which exist even today under individual heads called Shakaracharyas after their purported founder – define a certain geographic expanse of Hinduism.⁴² Sen’s invocation of Shankar to describe the sanctity of Joshimath is therefore another instance in which Hindu sacred space is secularized in the project of articulating the secular space of the Indian nation.

In a subsequent passage of *Himalay*, Sen describes Shankar as savior of Hinduism. Making a distinction between the Advaita philosopher and the contemporary priests of Badrinath, he writes that Shankar was one

whose ardor exiled that world-conquering religion, Buddhism, from India; whose commitment to reforming Hinduism earned him the gratitude of the entire Hindu race; the person whose message of hope has provided serenity to the restless and despairing mass of humanity. It is difficult to believe that Shankar and the current priest [of Badrinath] are of the same people (Sen, 1990, p. 117).

Shankar here is presented as the person who rescued India (and Hinduism) from Buddhism. Besides being one of the few instances in the travelogue where Sen mentions “India,” this extract also shows the author constructing an equivalence between Hinduism and the space of the Indian nation. This also sets up Shankar as the person mediating this relation of equivalence and, therefore, as the notional founder of that space. Once again, Hinduism is posited as the civil religion of India in effect secularizing it as well as the Hindu philosopher.

If the landscape is both a social product and a social process; a product of social relations and, in the last instance, the social relations of production that also incorporates the social relations that go into its making, the corpus of *bhadralok* travelogues, to which Sen’s narrative

⁴² The position of these Shankaracharyas and the muths in modern Hinduism is nothing like that of the Pope and the Vatican in Roman Catholicism. The four Shankaracharyas do not issue catechisms for all Hindus, nor do they claim sole right to decide on doctrinal issues. Srimukhams [advisories] issued by the muths are very different in nature from papal bulls or encyclicals. Further, unlike the Vatican City, the four muths do not enjoy sovereign status: they are governed by Indian federal and state laws on religious and charitable trusts and endowments, and answerable to governmental bodies.

belongs, underscores this processual aspect of the Himalayan landscape, and the project of landscaping the Indian nation-space. The emergent nation-space of the *bhadralok* travel narratives is not only a *product* of their spatial practice that comes out a specific social division of labor within the colonial Indian social formation but also serves as the *means* for constructing a spatial hegemony of the *bhadralok* class. The indigenous Himalaya, as a spatial metaphor of the putative Indian nation-space, becomes a way of articulating and settling questions of belonging: who belongs to nation and to whom the nation belongs. In other words, the *bhadralok* travelogues deploy the indigenous Himalaya to construct a normative Indian citizenry with its attendant hierarchy.

The construction of *bhadralok* hegemony in the travelogues is dependent on a number of representational strategies. Most significantly, the indigenous Himalaya – despite being articulated through Hindu sacred geography – is presented as a secular space; the *bhadralok* becomes a “secular” sojourner in search of nature’s beauty who is distinct from the religious pilgrim. Sen reports his conversation with a police officer from Punjab in Karnaprayag. He tells Sen (1990) that he cannot believe “that a man of culture like you has been taking so much trouble to go see a shrine” (p. 53, original in English). In response, Sen (1990) comments:

Am I eating improperly, sleeping badly, and laboring along the mountainsides only to see a few ruined temples and ancient deities? Can these temples and idols soothe my inner being? The naked splendor of the mountains, the vivid scenes of nature, the silver spray of the crooked mountain rapids and the unrestrained ripples of the cool mountain breeze, these are the objects of my devotion. (p. 53).

It is important to note that Sen is, unlike Tagore, not interested in the “naked splendor of the mountains,” “the vivid scenes of nature,” “the silver spray of the crooked mountain rapids” or the “ripples of the cool mountain breeze” as a means of accessing a divine that lies beyond, or is immanent in, these natural forms. He is clearly stating that these natural forms are *in themselves*

the objects of his “devotion.” In other words, Sen is not simply outlining the project of his travels in the mountains here but also defining himself as a secular traveler in relation to the sacred Himalaya and its pilgrims. This move once again secularizes the sacred Himalaya besides becoming a space for the self-definition of the *bhadralok*.

Indeed, this process of *bhadralok* self-fashioning continues with Sen noting the pilgrims’ lack of curiosity about the beauty of the Himalayan surrounding. He observes that the pilgrims

do not pay attention to anything besides the temple and the deity. Perhaps they are so engrossed in their devotion that they walk the pilgrim trail without finding a moment to gaze on the surroundings; perhaps they find it superfluous. None of the pilgrims I have met ever mention a word about the beauty of the surrounding nature. (Sen, 1990, pp. 118 – 119).

This foregrounding of natural scenery once again marks him out as a secular traveler, and implicitly suggests the Himalaya as a secular space. More importantly, this allows the secular *bhadralok* traveler to represent himself as a modern, that is, rational subject with a progressive ethos. Here again Sen outlines his idea of nature that is similar to, yet crucially divergent from, Tagore’s. Like Tagore, Sen is foregrounding “nature” and the “natural” in his representation of the Himalaya. Crucially, however – and unlike Tagore – the Himalayan “nature” and the “natural” surroundings of the mountains do not express the immanence of the divine; instead, it is a distinct category that is separated from the religious domain. Therefore, not only is the Himalayan “nature” reified into an independent category, it is also transformed and normed into an independent secular entity.

Besides being a space of *bhadralok* self-fashioning, the indigenous Himalaya also becomes a space of co-operation between themselves and middle-class elites from elsewhere in British India. Sen’s depiction of his interactions with a doctor and a police officer in Karnaprayag illustrates this point quite well. He reports an extensive conversation with the

doctor on Indian politics, especially about the nationalist leader Surendranath Banerjea, as well as on newspapers published by Indians in English such as the *Bengali* and the *Mirror* (Sen, 1990, p. 53). Subsequently Sen writes approvingly of the police officer he meets there. His readers are told that the officer is from Ambala (in Punjab), and has a Bachelor of Arts from Lahore College. Sen (1990) and the officer discuss political issues such as the Irish Home Rule and the establishment of the Indian National Congress in addition to talking about the experience of living under colonial rule (p. 53).

Importantly, Sen takes great pain in pointing out that his conversations with the doctor as well as the police officer proceeds in English since neither of them is a Bengali. Indeed, the text of *Himalay* uses English phrases in the original or transliterated into Bengali to underline this. This stress on the knowledge of English among members of the Indian middle class, and their ability to converse is symptomatic of the establishment of the Anglo-vernacular ethos in British India. For the Indian middle-class, English became crucial for the communication between people coming from the different ethno-linguistic homelands within the space of British India. As the linguistic basis for social intercourse, English developed into a vital means of co-operation for the Indian middle-class, and in turn mapped on to the hegemonic space of trans-regional labor that was produced under the aegis of the colonial state. Importantly, the English language – as a marker of class position and privilege – allows the middle-class to underline their *cultural* hegemony vis-à-vis the other indigenous classes. The knowledge of English, then, separates the middle-class, underlines their cultural dominance over the other native classes, and is founded upon the middle-class' position of economic superiority in relation to other indigenous classes.

This has a number of important consequences for thinking about the manner in which the Indian nation-space is imagined and articulated in the Bengali *bhadralok* travelogues. Foremost, since English is posited as the norm for social intercourse that mediates the middle-class' co-operation, the travel narratives disavow other pre-colonial languages of pan-Indian importance, namely, Sanskrit and Persian, which could claim to produce alternate conceptions of a unified cultural space. Consequently, to underline the normative nature of the Anglo-vernacular ethos, Sen repeatedly underscores the redundancy of these languages in his narrative. For instance, he notes that his companion, the Bengali monk Achyutananda Saraswati, is learned in Sanskrit but does not fail to mention his lack of English (Sen, 1990, p. 14).

Throughout his narrative Sen depicts Hindu mendicants and monks as cheats. Not only does this move resonate with the refusal to grant Sanskrit – the language of Hindu scripture and liturgy – the status of the language of co-operation enjoyed by English, it also gestures towards the *bhadralok's* misgivings about the social group most familiar with it. According to Hindu scripture, taking the vow of renunciation is necessary to enter the fold of Hindu monks. This means that ordained monks not only renounce all property relations and familial ties to become a kind of universal citizen, they also voluntarily give up their place in the labor force and move beyond the pale of wage relationships heralded into the Indian sub-continent through the auspices of colonial capitalist modernity. Hindu monks, by virtue of their unique position within the Indian social formation – appropriators of surplus like the *bhadralok* but, unlike them, not part of any relationship founded on wage labor – must therefore be denigrated and rhetorically evacuated from the putative nation-space. In addition, Sen comments repeatedly about his own ignorance of Persian but is quick to emphasize that his knowledge of English trumps this lack.

Further, the *bhadralok*'s attempts at fashioning their hegemony in the space of the Indian nation lead to the projection of the local inhabitants of the Himalaya as “not quite Indian.” This allows them to differentiate themselves from their “others” and establish a hierarchy among the citizenry of the putative Indian nation. Importantly, the *bhadralok* travelers' representational means for fashioning this hegemony are singularly unlike those of the colonizers and their travel narratives. Unlike the colonial images and travelogues that rely on the screening effect of the picturesque mode to evacuate the natives from their land, the Bengali *bhadralok* deploys a more inclusive strategy of constructing hierarchy. They depict the local population of the Himalayan lands simply as different and inferior to themselves.

Importantly, Sen's travelogue completely excludes women from the space of their narratives. Apart from stray references to the Himalayan womenfolk none of the characters depicted by the author in the space of the Himalaya are women; neither does he mention women from the *bhadralok* fold. The total absence of women from the Himalaya and, by extension, the space of the putative Indian nation gestures towards the space of middle-class co-operation as one of male homosociality. This space of male companionship, however, serves another function. As a virile space it also allows for the construction and performance of masculinity that allows the Bengali – designated non-martial and effeminate by his colonial masters – to counter their stereotyping by the British (See Chowdhury, 1998; Sinha, 1994; Metcalf, 1994).

Sen's account of his being nursed back to health by his companions after being stung by a scorpion is an important instance of male homosociality in his narrative. He notes that when the sting of the scorpion left him in intense pain and with a high fever, it was his (male) companions who nursed him back to health. In what appears to be the ultimate image of male homosociality, Sen (1990) notes that his traveling companion, a Hindu monk, “not knowing what else to do,

placed me on his lap like my mother” (p. 8). The image of the monk holding the author in his lap evokes the image of care and nurture, typically associated with women. However, owing to the absence of women from the narrative, it is performed by another man underlining the homosocial nature of the Himalayan space of co-operation. Moreover, by stressing his endurance of the dangers and vicissitudes of the journey in the Himalaya, Sen gestures towards an ideal of Bengali virility.

The idea of the virile Bengali in the homosocial Himalaya is further underscored when Sen narrates his journey to the cave associated with Veda Vyas, the mythical author of the Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata*. He makes it quite clear that his interest in the cave is not religious, and proceeds with his companions despite protests from priests who warn him against the dangers of the way. Sen recounts how he and his companions braved frozen rivers and snow covered mountainsides to reach the cave; how he feared for his life during this trek. After reaching their destination successfully Sen (1990) is quite impressed with his achievement noting that “the *sons* of Bengal may not have discovered new and dangerous lands like Livingstone or Stanley and it is unlikely we shall ever do that ... However, if the need arises Bengalis can surely do what Livingstone and Stanley have done” (p. 143, my italics). It is crucial to note that Sen comments on the ability of the “sons” of Bengal to achieve the feats of exploration and discovery. By comparing himself and his companions to the renowned Victorian explorers, and the Himalaya to the “dark continent,” he constructs the idea of “masculinity” for himself and other members of the male *bhadralok* class. Such a move serves to underline the exclusion of women – even female members of the *bhadralok* class – from the Himalayan landscape and, by extension, the space of the putative Indian nation.

In the chapter that follows, I will focus on the poem (and song) *Vande Mataram* to examine how it articulates the ideas of virility, and belonging to the nation. I will investigate how it produces a pastoralized view of the countryside; how it is idealized and idolized to speak of that space as a Mother Goddess. I will also explore how the landscape imagination of the poem allows it to speak of not just the local, but also the regional and national scales.

CHAPTER 4

IMAGINING THE NATION

In 1777, the British East India Company commissioned the Italian painter Spiridione Roma to paint an allegorical ceiling piece for the Revenue Committee room in the East India House at London. Completed the next year, the painting titled *The East Offering its Riches to Britannia* depicts a dark-skinned woman representing “India,” offering pearls to Britannia, the personification of Britain (Figure 22). The painting also includes in its frame “China” (kneeling behind “India”), awaiting his turn to gift a Ming vase; a personification of the Thames, signifying the power of London; and the lion, symbolizing the British State. In the background is an East India Company ship with a flag bearing stripes, and St. George’s cross. While Roma’s painting is by no means the first depiction of Britannia, it nonetheless provides an important instance of the anthropomorphic depiction of Britain in the age of empire.



Figure 22: *The East Offering its Riches to Britannia*. 1778. Spiridione Roma.



Figure 23: *The British Lion's Vengeance on the Bengal Tiger.* August, 1857. *Punch.*



Figure 24: *Justice!* September, 1857. *Punch.*



Figure 25: *Sir Colin Campbell to the Rescue!* October, 1857. *Harper's Weekly*.



Figure 26: *Ready!* September, 1885. *Punch*.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the image of Britannia came to haunt Indians again and this time more forcefully. During, and in the aftermath of the Rebellion of 1857, the image of Britannia was deployed – most notably by *Punch* – to articulate British frailty and Indian brutality on one hand, and on the other, to speak of retribution and justice delivered upon the revolting mutineers by their colonial masters. For instance, the *Punch* cartoon from August 1857 called *The British Lion’s Vengeance on the Bengal Tiger* shows the British State (symbolized by the Lion) attacking the Bengal Tiger (representing India and the mutineers) for attempting to maul a British woman and her child (Figure 23). If the woman under the tiger’s paw was a vulnerable Britannia, the *Punch* cartoon from the following month of that year shows her in command, and in the thick of delivering justice to the natives (Figure 24). The posture of Britannia is, not surprisingly, mimicked in the depiction of Colin Campbell – the commander of the British relief forces in India during the 1857 Rebellion – in the issue of *Harper’s Weekly* from October 1857 (Figure 25). The figure of Britannia would continue to articulate relations between the colonizer and the colonized after the pacification of India in 1858. For instance, in 1885, at the height of the Great Game, when Britain expected a Russian invasion of British India, *Punch* would publish the cartoon titled *Ready!* that depicted Britannia with her “pets,” the Lion and the Tiger (now clearly tamed), waiting to confront the Russian advance into Afghanistan (Figure 26).

In a parallel development within the space of British India, “a land already thronging with all manner of gods and goddesses [,] there surfaced a novel deity of nation and country who at some moments in the subsequent years seemed to tower over them all” (Ramaswamy, 2010, p. 1). This was “Bharat Mata” or “Mother India” who came to be imagined as the embodiment of the Indian nation, and became a powerful symbol in the Indian anti-colonial struggle against the

British (Figure 27). This idea of “Mother India” originated in a poem called *Vande Mataram* that came from the pages of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s 1885 Bengali novel *Anandamath* [literally, “the Abbey of Bliss”].⁴³



Figure 27: Two images of Bharat Mata (Mother India) from the early-twentieth century. Her flowing saree draws out the map of British India. Sri Lanka is depicted as a lotus at her feet. Her trident (left) links her to Durga.

Vande Mataram draws from the Hindu iconographic tradition, and apotheosizes the Bengal landscape by conceptualizing it as a Mother Goddess. It was set to music and sung by Rabindranath Tagore in the 1896 session of the Indian National Congress. The spatial imagination of the poem proved to be extremely powerful in galvanizing anti-colonial sentiments. It became widely sung in the aftermath of the British Viceroy Curzon’s 1905

⁴³ Both Chatterjee and Chatterji are Anglicized versions of the Bengali surname Chattopadhyay. For the sake of consistency, I have used “Chatterjee” throughout the chapter.

partition of Bengal, was picked up by nationalists from other parts of British India, and, over time, the “mother” of the song came to signify India instead of Bengal. While the song became a nationalist slogan in the Indian National Congress circles, a significant section of British Indian Muslims deemed the song distinctly idolatrous, and therefore against the tenets of Islam. Moreover, owing to the decidedly anti-Muslim tenor of *Anandamath*, and the centrality of the song to the narrative, *Vande Mataram* was itself considered anti-Muslim by many of its Muslim readers. During the course of the anti-colonial struggle, the song became a significant source of conflict between Hindus and Muslims of British India. This rift played out in political circles as well, with the Muslim League vehemently opposing the formal adoption of the song in any official forum and the Indian National Congress cautiously championing it. Indeed, despite being instrumental in giving it a certain life and circulation, Rabindranath Tagore would end up being one of its staunchest critics, and repeatedly condemn the cultic nature of nationalism that the song spawned. After the independence of India in 1947, the constituent assembly framing the constitution of the postcolonial Indian nation declared *Vande Mataram* as the National Song of the postcolonial nation.⁴⁴

In this chapter I examine how *Vande Mataram* conceives of, and articulates, the Bengal landscape, and how the song’s spatial imagination allows it to be taken up to construct a scalar hegemony of the local, regional, and national landscapes. Moreover, I engage with how the song deploys a felt sense of landscape to settle the question of belonging to it. I contend that the song illuminates a crucial, spatial aspect of the larger project of the colonial Indian middle class to counter the dominance of the colonizers. It is also, at the same time, an attempt to construct the hegemony – a hegemony that is also *spatial* – of the middle class vis-à-vis the subordinate

⁴⁴ On January 24, 1950, Rajendra Prasad, presiding over the Constituent Assembly of India declared that “the song *Vande Mataram*, which has played a historic part in the struggle for Indian freedom, shall be honored equally with *Jana Gana Mana* [India’s national anthem] and shall have equal status with it” (*Proceedings*, 1950).

classes in the colonial Indian social formation. The song constructs the hegemony of the colonial middle class along the axes of not only class, gender, and caste but especially of religion. By imagining the nation-space in exclusively Hindu terms, the song renders Muslims “outsiders” to the space of India. In the section that follows, I will examine the relationship between *Vande Mataram* and *Anandamath* not only because the novel introduced the song to its readers but also because, crucially, it provided an interpretative framework for the song.

The Context of *Vande Mataram*

The song *Vande Mataram* first appeared in 1881, as part of the serialized publication of *Anandamath* in the Bengali literary journal *Bangadarshan*, edited by the author himself. The following year, in 1882, *Anandamath* was published in book form. Immensely popular on publication, it was reissued in several subsequent editions throughout the remaining years of the nineteenth century. The second edition of the novel was published in 1883 with a print run of 1000 copies. Its third and fourth editions were published in 1886 with print runs of 1000 and 2000 respectively. A fifth edition of 1000 copies was issued in 1892.

Moreover, *Anandamath*, and with it *Vande Mataram*, was also translated into English within a few decades. The first English translation of *Anandamath* was by Nares Chandra Sen Gupta; its fifth edition was published from Calcutta in 1906 as *The Abbey of Bliss*. In 1909, another translation by the Indian nationalist-turned-philosopher Aurobindo Ghose, and his brother Barindra Kumar Ghose was published from Calcutta. The third English translation by Basanta Koomar Roy, titled *Dawn over India*, was published from New York in 1941. Roy’s translation of the novel takes specific liberties that I will discuss later in this chapter. This wide

circulation of the novel provided the text with a readership extending well beyond the spatial confines of Bengal, in addition to familiarizing its readers with the poem.⁴⁵

At the time *Anandamath* was published, Chatterjee was already a pre-eminent literary figure in Bengal; his works were being translated into English, and published from Calcutta and London.⁴⁶ By 1910, Chatterjee had entered the pages of the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. It described him as “beyond question the greatest novelist of India during the 19th century, whether judged by the amount and quality of his writings, or by the influence which they have continued to exercise” (“Chatterjee,” 1910, p. 9). Importantly, the encyclopedia entry notes *Anandamath* as “by far the most important [of his novels, owing to its] astonishing political consequences” in addition to observing the importance of the song *Vande Mataram* to the novel (“Chatterjee,” 1910, p. 9).

Anandamath is set in eighteenth century rural Bengal, in the backdrop of the infamous famine of 1769 – 1773. The novel narrates the actions of a band of local insurgents called the *santan* (literally, “the children”) who have taken an oath of celibacy and organized themselves into a militant religious-political organization under the mystic, Satyananda. The *santans* are united in the common cause to overthrow a cruel and unjust regime of British revenue collectors who in turn prop up the political order of a weak and corrupt Muslim Nawab of Bengal.⁴⁷ The novel repeatedly underlines the devastation of Bengal owing to the British East India Company’s revenue policies, and the Nawab’s abdication of his responsibility towards the welfare of the

⁴⁵ For details of the circulation of the song beyond Bengal, see Bhattacharya, 2003, pp. 46 – 67.

⁴⁶ Chatterjee’s first Bengali novel was translated into English by C. C. Mookerjee as *Durgesa Nandini, or, the Chieftan’s Daughter: A Bengali Romance* and published from Calcutta in 1880. Miriam Knight’s translation of another, titled *The Poison Tree: A Tale of Hindu Life in Bengal, was published from London in 1884. In 1885, H. A. D. Phillips translated another of Chatterjee’s novel as Kopal-Kundala: A Tale of Bengal Life, which was published from London. Knight’s translation of Chatterjee’s Krishna Kanta’s Will was published from London in 1895.*

⁴⁷ According to some scholars, Chatterjee modeled his “santans” on an armed band of mendicants who robbed the British in Bengal during the famine of 1769 – 1773. Termed the “Sannyasi Rebellion,” this finds mention in W. W. Hunter’s (1868) *Annals of Rural Bengal*. Some critics suggest Hunter as that Chatterjee’s likely source. For details see Lipner, 2005.

people. They equate the British and the Muslim rulers of Bengal, and their explicit desire is to end Muslim rule. In the course of the novel, the *santans* win numerous victories against the British and raise the cry of *Vande Mataram* to celebrate each triumph. Importantly, the narrative repeatedly depicts Satyananda and his followers invoking “for the first time in public memory the figure of India as mother, ravaged by occupiers” (Joshi, 2002, p. 161).

Entwined within this larger narrative of *Anandamath* is the story of Mahendra, a local landlord, and his wife Kalyani. Mahendra’s wife and daughter are abducted by roving vagabonds in search of food, and eventually rescued by the *santans*. Mahendra, arrested by the Nawab’s men, is also freed by the *santans*. Eventually, Mahendra is united with his family and given shelter in the *santans*’ cloister by Satyananda, their leader. In his interactions with the *santan* leaders, especially Satyananda and Bhabananda, Mahendra is introduced to the song, *Vande Mataram*. The song becomes a vehicle for teaching Mahendra – an “outsider” to the *santan* fold – to feel and comprehend the nation as the mother.

The Spatial Imagination of *Vande Mataram*

Vande Mataram is a hymn to the ethno-linguistic homeland of Bengal personified as a mother, and a mother goddess. The formal structure of the song is unique in that it uses both Sanskrit and Bengali in its composition.⁴⁸ The phrase “vande mataram” is in Sanskrit and literally means “I revere the mother.” The song opens with this incantatory phrase which is repeated throughout the text. It then goes on to invoke the Bengal landscape and posits it as an image of plenitude. The landscape is not just “richly watered, rich in fruit,” it is also described as green from the standing

⁴⁸ According to the stanzaic enumeration of *Vande Mataram* by Lipner (2005), which I have retained in my own translation of the song, stanzas I, II, IV, VII, VIII and IX are in Sanskrit. Stanzas III and V are partly in Sanskrit and partly in Bengali while stanza VI is written entirely in Bengali (See Lipner, 2005, pp. 84 – 85). Importantly, the National Song of the Republic of India comprise only stanzas I and II of the original. For the English translation of the song, see Appendix B. For the original song, see Appendix C.

crops besides being “Cooled by the southern winds.” The song continues with this inter-play between landscape, homeland, mother and mother goddess in the subsequent stanzas. The song equates the homeland-as-landscape with the notion of the mother, speaking of her as adorned with flowers and trees; even the resplendent full moon is described as joyous. Further, the mother is described as “Smiling with grace, speaking sweetly,/ Giving joy and boons aplenty.” In other words, it develops the notion of the Bengal homeland-as-landscape as a nurturing space.

The tenor of the song undergoes a dramatic shift from the third stanza. The image of the nurturing mother(land) is transformed into an image of power – indeed, retributive power. The song critiques the notion of the mother(land) as “powerless.” Instead, it argues that she gains her strength from her seventy million children who are capable of wielding “Twice as many” swords. In the following stanzas the deified landscape is presented as a source of power – the mother is the savior who “drives away the hostile hordes.” The image of the personified Bengal homeland-as-landscape as an embodiment of power is also, importantly, matched with its conception as an object of devotion. The mother is presented as the source of wisdom and law; she is also projected as the vital essence that animates her children. In a display of extreme affect, the poem claims that the mother is “our heart ... our core;” she is also imagined as the living force that enlivens the bodies of her children. This affective turn continues in the next stanza where the mother(land) is conceived as the “strength of arm” and “devotion” in Bengali hearts.

While the personification of the homeland-as-landscape as mother implicitly gestured towards the Hindu notion of the mother goddess, the final line of the fifth stanza makes that explicit. The line moves, quite literally, from idealization to idolization by stating that “In every temple, we shape your form.” This explicit identification of the homeland-as-landscape with the

mother goddess continues, and is strengthened, in the sixth stanza where the space is equated with certain female members of the Hindu pantheon. The Bengal homeland-as-landscape now appears as Durga, the female goddess traditionally imagined with ten hands, bearing ten weapons of war, whose most notable exploit according to Hindu scriptures was the slaying of the male demon Mahishashur. Crucially, this identification would undoubtedly resonate with Chatterjee’s Bengali readers as the festival of Durga was – and continues to be – the most important annual festival of Bengal among Bengali Hindus.

The song further continues with its apotheosizing impulse. Not only is the homeland-as-landscape an embodiment of “the tenfold power,” it also becomes an incarnation of wealth and wisdom. In both instances the song articulates this by invoking the images of the goddesses of fortune and learning. In the concluding stanzas, the mother(land) is spoken of as untainted and incomparable; it also repeats the line from the first stanza (“richly watered, rich in fruit”) to further underscore the idea of the Bengal homeland-as-landscape as a space of plenitude. *Vande Mataram* concludes with the image of the mother(land) who is “richly dressed” in verdure; one who is a life-giver, providing for and nourishing her children.

There are certain crucial aspects to the spatial imagination of *Vande Mataram*. Most significantly, the song’s conception of homeland is expressed through the idea of landscape. Raymond Williams (1973) reminds us that the category of landscape is premised upon a certain notion of separation and observation for a “working country is hardly ever a landscape” (p. 120). *Vande Mataram* presents Bengal to the readers as a riparian land of fecundity and plenitude; as a prospect that is replete with trees, flowers, fruits and standing crops. This is undoubtedly an idealization of the Bengal countryside – a move that not only valorizes but also pastoralizes the landscape, by evacuating from the space all traces of human labor. Implicit in such a conception

of the country is that its plenitude as symbolized in, for instance, the verdant crops is “natural” and a voluntary gift of the mother(land) and not a product of human labor. If Williams’s statement above can be considered one of the first principles for the production of a landscape, *Vande Mataram* fulfils that criterion quite convincingly. In so doing, it also produces the Bengal homeland-as-landscape as a spatial fetish. The idea of a fetish – understood in the historical materialist sense of the term – presupposes a commodity (Marx, 1967, pp. 76 – 87). In the case of a spatial fetish, it presupposes the commodification of land. Indeed, the establishment of the property relations in Bengal was one of the first, and most significant, steps taken by British East India Company during the opening years of their rule.

After the British were granted the diwani of Bengal in 1765, they initially used the Nawab’s officials as tax collectors before beginning to auction, and lease out the right to collect taxes. These experiments in revenue collection dramatically worsened the effect of the Bengal famine of 1769 – 1773 that claimed the lives of 10 million people, that is, thirty percent of the population of the region (Visaria & Visaria, 1983, p. 527). By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the British were convinced that private property of land alone ensured stability and progress. In 1776, Philip Francis, member of the Bengal Council, advanced a plan for the “rule of property” in the province (See Guha, 1963; Islam, 1979). In what appears to conform to the eighteenth century Whig notion of the importance of hereditary landed aristocracy, Francis wrote that “if private property be not once and for all secured on a permanent footing, the public revenue will sink rapidly with the general produce of the country” (qtd. in Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006, p. 78). This scheme took juridical form in 1793 as the Permanent Settlement of Bengal.

The Permanent Settlement initiated a radical social transformation of Bengal. Not only did this introduce new relations of property and therefore, a new social division of labor, it also

engendered a new social class. The spatial imagination of *Vande Mataram* is, then, structured by this history. In other words, as a conception of space of the emergent colonial Bengali middle class, the song's idealization and pastoralization of the Bengal landscape articulates, and aims to naturalize, the relations of property introduced by the colonial government and the ideological imperatives of its author's class position.

It is also important here to draw attention to the colonial construction of landscapes, especially to the trope of *terra nullius* that is repeatedly deployed by the colonizers to project a notion of “empty space” to justify their claims, and legitimate their ownership, of native lands. In this ideological formulation, the native spaces were deemed “empty” not because they were not peopled but because they were considered untouched by western civilization. While this is particularly true of settler colonies such as the United States of America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, it was just as frequently used to rationalize colonial sovereignty over other colonies that were deemed “imperial possessions” such as India.

In his study on the English pastoral tradition, Williams (1973) notes that the “locus amoenus” poems on English country houses naturalize the bourgeois ethic by mystifying the social division of labor (pp. 30 – 34). For this, the Christian myth of fall is activated, and the “magical extraction of the [attendant] curse of labor is ... achieved by a simple extraction of the existence of laborers” (Williams, 1973, p. 32). The invocation of Christianity and the myth of fall then serve a historically specific ideological function in the country house poems: to justify and naturalize a hierarchical and inequitable English social order.

Williams's insight has important consequences for thinking about the relationship between landscape representation and the colonial trope of *terra nullius*. Extending his logic, one can argue that colonial landscapes pastoralize the native lands in order to mystify the global

racial division of labor engendered through the process of global colonization (or colonial globalization). For this, the myth of civilizational progress, that denies the colonized temporal coevalness with the colonizer, is activated (See Fabian, 1983). The attendant curse of the “white man’s burden” is extracted through the simple extraction of the existence of the colonized from their own lands. In this instance, the invocation of the myth of progress also serves a historically specific ideological purpose: to justify and naturalize a hierarchical, inequitable and racialized global social order.

Seen through this lens, the pastoral landscape of *Vande Mataram* appears a variant of the *terra nullius* trope. It replicates the colonial logic in its erasure of any sign of the labor of cultivators, and their role in the production of the Bengal landscape. This is particularly significant because at the time of the production of *Vande Mataram* in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, Bengal – and indeed India – was overwhelmingly the land of peasant cultivators. The 1881 census data for British India shows that “the share of agriculture (defined to include activities allied to agriculture as well as general labor) ... [was] 72.4 ... per cent of the [total male] workforce” (Krishnamurty, 1983, pp. 533 – 534).⁴⁹ The absolute numbers behind these already overwhelming percentage figures would be significantly higher if one included women, who typically worked alongside men on the fields during cultivation. *Vande Mataram*, then, unequivocally asserts the Bengali middle class’ ascendancy; it attempts to construct the hegemony of this minority class over the other classes, and over the space of Bengal.

The song, however, performs more than this simple ideological maneuver. It projects Bengal as a nurturing space through its invocation of the image of the mother. This image

⁴⁹ The male workforce estimates for 1881 made by Krishnamurty (1983) relate only to “a territory which comprises Ajmer, Bengal, Berar, Bombay, Central Provinces, Coorg, Madras, North-West Provinces, Punjab, Baroda, Central India, Mysore and Travancore” (p. 533). According to the 1881 census, the combined male population for these regions was 114.6 million while there were 110 million women. The 1881 census notes the total population of British India (excluding Burma) was 250.2 million people. For details, see Appendix D.

underlines the notion of plenitude displayed in the lines “richly watered, rich in fruit” as well as “Verdant with her standing crops.” Further, it displays an equation between landscape, homeland, womanhood and fecundity thereby normalizing a hetero-normative ethos (See Olwig, 1993). Importantly, the homeland-as-landscape-as-mother is described as “Smiling with grace, speaking sweetly;” it is also “Cooled by the southern winds.” Here, the appeal of the homeland-as-landscape is not structured through only the visual register but also the aural and tactile ones. Further, the idea of the mother “Smiling with grace, speaking sweetly” produces a synaesthetic effect by combining the visual, aural and the gustatory within its ambit. Such a construction moves beyond the traditional understanding of the landscape as a visual ideology (Mitchell, 2005; Cosgrove, 1985; Williams, 1973). Instead, it attempts to produce a landscape that is to be apprehended through a totality of sensory perceptions. Crucially, the homeland-as-landscape is imagined as a mother. By anchoring its synaesthetic appeal on the image of the mother, *Vande Mataram* presents the Bengal homeland-as-landscape as one that is not only *seen* but also *experienced*. It therefore attempts to construct an *unmediated* relationship between the Bengal homeland-as-landscape and its inhabitants in an experiential register. In so doing, *Vande Mataram* constructs what I term an *affective landscape*.

This produced affective landscape has important consequences. Foremost, the notion of the homeland-as-landscape-as-mother implicitly posits inhabitants of the land as her children. Consequently, it gestures towards the question of belonging: not only of who belongs to the land but also, crucially, to whom the land belongs. It therefore constructs a distinction between insiders (the implied “children” of the “mother”) and outsiders (“the hostile hordes”). Moreover, such an articulation of homeland-as-landscape conceives of belonging solely in an affective register. In other words, the question of rightfully *belonging* to a homeland becomes a question

of *feeling* the homeland. In this scenario, the question of rights – especially, rights to the land – is not rationally argued for or articulated. Instead, imagined as a human and filial bond and expressed as a felt relationship, it is naturalized into something that is ahistorical and eternal. Such a conceptual move also, simultaneously, dehistoricizes the space of Bengal and makes it stand outside the ambit of social relations.

The affective register of the Bengal homeland-as-landscape is further accentuated as *Vande Mataram* moves from the idea of the mother to that of the mother goddess. The song draws upon Hindu imagery to extend the equation of the homeland-as-landscape with the mother, to the mother goddess. This apotheosis of the homeland-as-landscape transforms the mother-son “filial” relationship into a “spiritual” one between the deity and the devotee. The deity is conceived as the animating principle of life. If earlier the mother was conceived through a patriarchal prism, as the producer and life-giver, the song now proposes a kind of idealism. Drawing on Hindu elements, it fashions an affective argument that attributes life, and other aspects of it such as law, wisdom, strength and devotion to the mother goddess. Moreover, if we think back to the socio-spatial dialectic – to the idea of space and social relations being mutually constitutive – this formulation mystifies one aspect of that dialectic (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1989). This idealist conception of space underlines the constitutive dimension of an idea of space to social relations and life; it occludes, as in the instance of pastoralization earlier, the constitutive function of social relations and human labor to the production and re-production of space.

The evocation of the mother goddess, especially the figure of Durga, in the articulation of the Bengal homeland-as-landscape is significant. It, most importantly, points towards the move across India in the late nineteenth century that used “a selective array of ... [Hindu] discourses and rites ... to define a political community” (Bhattacharya, 2007, p. 920). This process

implicitly posits Hinduism as the civil religion of India in what has been termed the “secularization of Hinduism” (Bhattacharya, 2007; also see Sarkar, 2001). Further, this feature of *Vande Mataram* also resonates with the increasingly public nature of the festival of Durga in Bengal during this time (Bhattacharya, 2007).

Importantly, Tithi Bhattacharya (2007) notes two modalities of anti-colonial rhetoric in India during the late nineteenth century that she terms the “Hindu revivalist” and the “liberal/reformist” (p. 920). She observes that while the former “through official and bureaucratic means, was negotiating its modest demands with the colonial state, the former [drawing on Hindu discourse and practices] was creating a compelling image of a grievously wronged community that demanded retribution for past wrongs and transgressions” (Bhattacharya, 2007, p. 920). By relying on explicit Hindu symbols and imagery, *Vande Mataram* marks its allegiance to what Bhattacharya (2007) calls the rhetoric of Hindu revivalism.

Moreover, this has important ramifications for the insider-outsider distinction, and the question of belonging to the land. Not only is the idea of the “insider” construed in decisively Hindu terms, it also presupposes Hindus as the originary inhabitants of Bengal (and India). In other words, the song articulates an anti-colonial vision of the British as colonizers, and therefore, outsiders to the space of Bengal. However, by the same logic it also alienates Bengali (and Indian) Muslims from that space. This does not, however, mean that all Hindus, even when deemed insiders, have the same status.

The song *Vande Mataram* is largely written in Sanskrit, the language of Hindu liturgy, and enjoys a similar status as Latin does in Roman Catholicism. Moreover, the study of Sanskrit and the sacred texts written in the language have traditionally been the province of the sacerdotal caste, the brahmins, considered the highest among the Hindu castes. Moreover, brahmins as

priests also supervise the believers' performance of rituals; they also perform priestly duties during the worship of the deities.

In India, the various gods and goddesses of popular Hinduism have annual festivals in their honor. Owing to the plenitude of divinities in the Hindu pantheon, there are several such festivals in the country across the year. However, only a few of these gods and goddesses are uniformly important for all regions in India. Traditionally, there have been local and regional favorites; for instance, Ganesh, the elephant-headed god is typically venerated in Western India. In Bengal, the deities most worshipped are the various forms of the mother goddess, of which the ten-handed Durga is the most important. During these festivals, idols of these deities are shaped from clay. These idols are worshipped during the ceremony, and subsequently immersed in the nearby river, or any other water body. The ritual and liturgical functions of these ceremonies are performed by priests who are from the brahmin caste.

Theoretically, Hinduism understands the clay idols not as the divine itself, but a manifestation of the infinite and formless divinity in a finite form. Consequently, for the idols to be worshipped as divinity, they must first be ritually processed and transformed. Liturgically, this translates into the performance of *pran pratistha* (literally, the establishment of vital energy) that is supposed to instill life into the clay idol, that is, animate the inanimate (See Rodrigues, 2003, p. 168). The apotheosizing impulse of *Vande Mataram* that idolizes and deifies the land – the Bengal landscape – into the mother goddess, and its reliance on Sanskrit, then, replicates this liturgical trajectory. In so doing, the song appears to recuperate the lost dimension of the socio-spatial dialectic.

However, its apparent reinstatement of social relations as a constitutive dimension of space – imagined as the homeland-as-landscape-as-mother (goddess) – is really at the expense of

the social. What is inscribed into the dialectic is the implied individual performing a priestly function. It therefore underscores its idealism at the expense of the material social relations of production that underpin the production and re-production of social life and social space. Moreover, owing to the formal nature of the text as a song that could potentially be sung by any of the “mother’s children,” it also claims to democratize the caste-specific sacerdotal functions. The quasi-egalitarian claim of this move also goes hand in hand with the normalization of the sacerdotal functions *per se*, and of the attendant priestly class. In other words, the song replicates the extant caste hierarchy of the colonial Bengali social formation although in a more nuanced manner. Consequently, *Vande Mataram* attempts to produce the hegemony of the brahminical caste.

The use of Sanskrit and Bengali together in the song serves another ideological function. It implicitly suggests the relationship between the two languages, and the spatial units demarcated by them. By the start of the nineteenth century, following the work of Orientalist scholars such as William Jones and Nathaniel Halhed, Sanskrit was understood to have been the language of “ancient” India. Sanskrit was also the language from which the major vernaculars of northern, western, and eastern India, such as Bengali, originated. This makes Sanskrit the “mother” language of the vernaculars spoken in the Indo-Gangetic region of the subcontinent, placing them in a “filial” relationship to Sanskrit.

Moreover, there exists within the space of India, pre-colonial notions of ethno-linguistic homelands whose identities are a function of linguistic territorialism. The homeland of Bengal, for instance, in one such region that is understood as the space over which Bengali is spoken. Through its use of Bengali and Sanskrit, *Vande Mataram* then invokes Bengal as well as the space of “ancient” India, understood as the mythical space of *Bharatvarsha* in Indic myths and

legends. Further, by drawing upon the filial relationship between the languages, the song implicitly gestures towards the filial relationship between the spaces of Bengal and the mythical space. This, then, aids the classicization of Bengal, already rendered ahistorical and eternal. In other words, this allows Bengal to be constructed, and construed, as a present-day version of the mythical *Bharatvarsha*. This construction of an unbroken spatio-temporality between the real space of the present, and a mythical space – conceived as a space of the past – becomes a means for the invention of tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983).⁵⁰

The question of gender is also of utmost importance here. *Vande Mataram* imagines the Bengal homeland-as-landscape in the form of the mother goddess. This female divinity is projected as the provider of the basic needs as well as the source of all other attributes of life such as power, wealth, wisdom, devotion, and law. Importantly, while the mother remains the source of power and love, the song details her children as the expressions of that power and devotion. In other words, while *Vande Mataram* denotes the woman as the source, it accords agency and the active life only to her children. The normative children of the mother are most certainly male, especially when the song (and its implied singers) is construed through their original narrative context of the novel *Anandamath*. The novel depicts the mother’s children as a band of male warrior-monks who are united in the vow of celibacy and have pledged to liberate the mother from the “outsiders.” The song (and the novel) unequivocally gesture towards a masculinist and homosocial ideal. *Vande Mataram* foregrounds the question of gender and appears to privilege the female only to perform a carnivalesque gesture on that front. In so doing, it reinscribes the patriarchal ethos of an inequitable gendered division of labor.

⁵⁰ In the context of colonial Bengal and India, Chatterjee (1993) describes this process as the “classicization of tradition” (p. 73). Chatterjee’s (1993) analysis, importantly, engages with the colonial middle class’ historiography and does not have anything to say about space(s) of the nation.

Moreover, the song's choice of the figure of Durga is also significant. The goddess is considered the slayer of the male demon Mahishashur, and it is in this form that she is worshipped annually in Bengal (See Figure 28). However, it is crucial to stress that while she is formally venerated as a warrior goddess and a slayer of evil, the social affect surrounding her conceives of Durga's annual advent to Bengal in terms of a daughter's visit to her natal home from her husband's.⁵¹ This is the dominant feeling evoked in the *agamani* and *vijaya* songs – the corpus of traditional Bengali devotional sung lyrics to Durga that commemorate, respectively, her annual arrival to, and departure from, Bengal, imagined as her natal home. During the annual festival dedicated to her she is also worshipped *en famille*, with her daughters and sons (see Figure 29). While Durga symbolizes feminized political agency, that image of hers is tamed by the more immediate and affective one of familial domesticity that presents her as the ideal daughter and mother. As Bhattacharya (2007) has compellingly argued, it is this dual symbolism of Durga that makes her ideal for appropriation by the Hindu revivalist rhetoric; to link her with nationalist desire of the middle class – who are almost without exception Hindu, upper caste, and male – that comprised the nationalist elite of colonial Bengal (and India) (pp. 925 – 933).

Moreover, *Vande Mataram*'s imagination of the landscape as a “mother goddess” also enables it to stitch together a scalar hegemony. The song explicitly equates the local landscape with female divinity, which is in turn equated with the region (Bengal) or the nation (India). Consequently, the figure of the mother goddess produces the logic of equivalence required for the construction of hegemony across spatial scales because it *stands in* for the local, regional,

⁵¹ Bhattacharya (2007) also notes that the goddess had non-brahminical and non-Hindu roots. The Hindu texts that mention her before her incorporation into the pantheon of brahminical Hinduism, such as the *Mahabharat* and *Harivamsa*, describe her as “a fearless virgin, hunting and living in mountains ... Her companions are ghosts and wild beasts ... she is dressed in peacock feathers” (Bhattacharya, 2007, p. 925). Bhattacharya (2007) also observes that her diet mentioned in these texts consist “mostly of meat and alcohol, is not very brahminic either” (p. 925).

and the national. Indeed, this explains the popularity of the song among Indian nationalists *across* the space of British India.

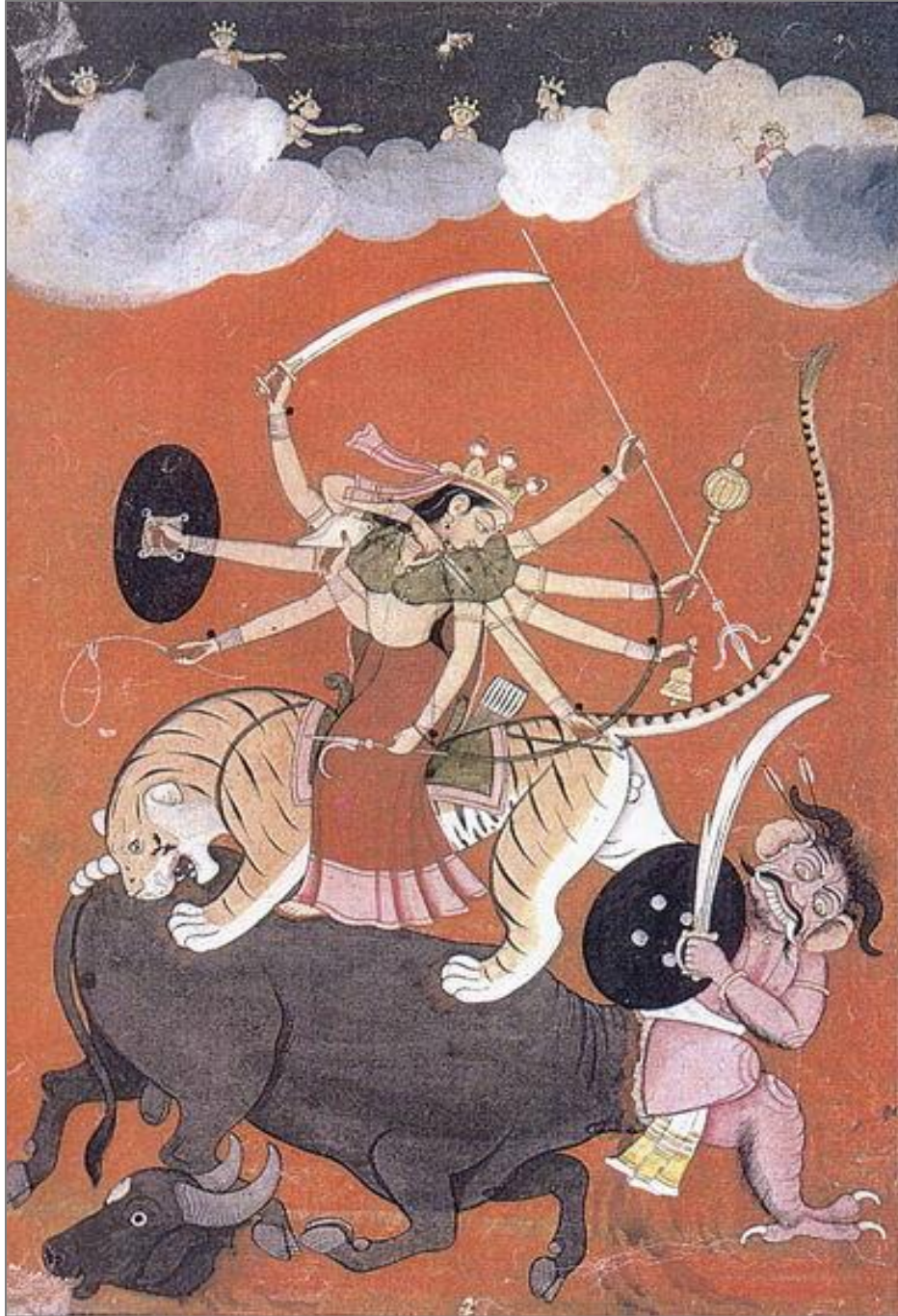


Figure 28: Painting from the pre-colonial Mughal era depicting Durga killing the demon Mahishashur.



Figure 29: Durga *en famille*. This is the typical form in which the goddess is worshipped during her annual festival in Bengal.

Vande Mataram, then, performs several inter-related conceptual maneuvers to fashion a spatial imagination, and a conception of space, that makes and justifies the ideological claims of the colonial middle class on the land of Bengal. Anchored on their class identity, this cements their hegemonic position of dominance not only along the axis of class but also across the categories of race, religion, caste and gender.⁵² The song, and its formulation of the Bengal homeland-as-landscape, then aim to establish these upper caste, male members of the middle

⁵² It could be argued that with the departure of the English from the Indian subcontinent in 1947, and the partition of British India into the Hindu-majoritarian secular state of India, and the Islamic state of Pakistan, the category of “race” and “religion” have become conflated with Indian Muslims becoming minorities in postcolonial India. In recent times, the readiness of Indian Muslims to sing *Vande Mataram* has become a touchstone for judging their “patriotism” by the Hindu right elements of the Indian polity.

class as the principal claimants of the land. Since this works not only at the regional, but also at the national scale, it enacts this ideological claim across the entire space of British India. The song, therefore, displaces the colonizer's claim in the affective register making it an anti-colonial and counter-hegemonic articulation. At the same time, it remains a neo-colonial formulation insofar as it does not indicate towards social equity.

Importantly, this displacement of the colonizer's claim and its replacement by the middle class' own sense of entitlement is operationalized from within; from the "middle" of the colonial Bengali (and Indian) social formation. It is important to remind ourselves of Chatterjee's (1993) comment that the notion of "middleness" is central to all conceptions of the colonial middle class, especially its Bengali incarnation (p. 35). Moreover, Chatterjee (1993) calls the project of Indian nationalism one of "mediation," in the sense of "the action of a subject who stands "in the middle," working upon and transforming one term of a relation with another" (p. 35). He notes that the Calcutta middle class were not only social agents preoccupied with leading their followers but also those "who were conscious of doing so as a "middle term" in a social relationship" (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 35). It then follows that such conceptions of "middleness," "mediation," and "middle terms" are a function of the "middleness" of the intermediary class in colonial social relations, and particularly the social relations of production. Since Chatterjee (1993) eschews any mention, let alone analysis, of class relations in colonial Bengal to illuminate what he terms the "discourse of anti-colonial nationalism," it bears underlining that his articulation of the mediational nature of the middle class' social agency is a function of their class position.

The song, importantly, also illuminates the political appropriation of affect. Beverly Best (2011) has recently pointed out that the post-interpretative approach in critical theory (Lash,

2007; Thoburn, 2007; Massumi, 2002; Hardt and Negri, 2000) rejects “depth models” of analysis to conceptually “flatten out” the social world; they also dismiss the category of mediation as redundant in the analysis of power which is conceived as affective, non-narrative and unmediated (p. 61). In contradistinction to this, Best (2011) argues that affect and mediation are dialectically linked; they “can be understood as two different but interrelated effects of a single historical process” (pp. 61 – 62). In light of the preceding analysis of the production of affect (and the affective landscape) in *Vande Mataram*, I propose to expand upon Best’s (2011) argument to contend that affect is, in effect, the expression of a *mediated unmediation*. The “unmediated” in this formulation, then, is not only “mediated,” but profoundly so; its roots securely in the field of the social relations of production.

Moreover, Best (2011), like much of the metropolitan materialist theorizations of affect, locates the “predominance of affect, [and] the imperceptibility of mediation ... [as] objective forms of advanced consumer capitalism” (p. 62). Such a temporalization of affect is problematic on two counts. Such a conception of capital’s history, assumes that the affective is absent in earlier forms on capitalism. As we have seen in the case of colonial Bengal (and India), mediated unmediation is present at the onset of colonial capitalist modernity; in the pre-history of the capitalist relations of production in the colony. By ascribing affect unquestioningly to late capitalism, such a theorization, moreover, ignores the history of capital in the colonies of the global periphery. It therefore does not engage with a *global* socio-spatial totality. Instead, it passes off the *metropolitan* history of capital as the *universal* history of capital. When such a history of capital (with its underlying assumptions) is spatialized, colonial spaces and their histories are rendered intelligible in what is ultimately an “orientalist” register (Said, 1994; 1979). Let me explain my contention through the example of the nation-space and nationalism.

As I have argued in the second chapter, I think of the nation-space as a spatial form and scale – and nationalism, is its affective expression – engendered by a moment in the *global* history of capital. Moreover, the nation-space exhibits the contradictory impulse of capital to produce sameness and difference *simultaneously*. When the history of capital is spatialized, the affective appears alongside the colonized and their nations during “early” capitalism. This can either mean that affect is not an objective form of late capitalism, and present in earlier forms of capitalism; or it can mean that the historicity of anti-colonial nations are tainted by the affective, and is therefore an impure form of metropolitan nationalism. Since the equation of affect with late capitalism prevents the first conclusion, it necessarily points towards the latter. Such a move then refuses to accord anti-colonial nationalisms with a full historicity, and consequently, complete historical agency.⁵³ Moreover, by refusing to engage with the affective dimension of metropolitan nationalisms, it reproduces the orientalist notion of the west (and western nations) as embodying “reason” and “history” while the others and their nations are not quite reasonable or historical. It is therefore necessary to underline affect as an objective form produced at every moment in the global history of capital. Seen in this light, the notion of affect as mediated unmediation can be understood as the binding agent that glues together a social hegemony – any social hegemony, anywhere in the globe.

In the course of the anti-colonial struggle in British India, *Vande Mataram* served this purpose. It was taken out of the pages of the novel in which it appeared, and became a stand-alone text in its own right. Indian nationalists within and outside Bengal adopted it

⁵³ Dipesh Chakrabarty’s (2000) notion of the colonized being placed in the “waiting room of history” is undoubtedly insightful. However, Chakrabarty (2000) does not engage with the ramifications of this claim in his reading of the history of capital. Instead of engaging the history of capital in a global social totality, he rejects the centrality of capital in thinking about colonial and postcolonial histories. This leads him towards the reified understanding of postcolonial difference that verges on essentialism. My argument expands the history of capital to read sameness and difference as a dialectical formulation of the global history of capital.

enthusiastically; its first line, “vande mataram” meaning “I revere the mother” became a nationalist slogan and entered the public sphere as a rallying cry against colonial subjection. As a song and slogan, it became an affective tool for the co-operation between the colonial middle-class across the regions of British India; a means for claiming and forming a social anti-colonial coalition against the colonizers. In this process, the song’s spatial imagination of the Bengal homeland-as-landscape was transformed into that of the Indian nation-as-landscape. The equation between Durga and the Bengal homeland metamorphosed into one between the mother goddess and the Indian nation.

“National” History in *Anandamath* and *Vande Mataram*

Anandamath is set in eighteenth century rural Bengal with the infamous famine of 1769 – 1773 as its backdrop, and opens with the image of the Bengal landscape devastated by famine. Famines, however, was not an issue of the past, but an existing reality in nineteenth century Bengal, and India. B. M. Bhatia (1967) notes that under British East India Company rule between 1765 and 1858, India experienced twelve famines and four severe scarcities; however, between 1860 and 1908, famine or scarcity prevailed in some part of the country or the other during twenty of these first forty nine years under the direct rule of the British Crown (p. 8).

In the decades that followed the first census of British India in 1871, the average life expectancy of Indians never exceeded 25. It was 24.6 in the decade of 1871 – 1881; rose to 25 for 1881 – 1891 and, subsequently, dipped as low as 20.1 during 1911 – 1921 (See Klein, 1973, p. 640; also see Appendix E). Ira Klein (1973) notes that the epidemics of malaria, cholera and plague through the late nineteenth century wreaked further havoc in British India. The question of famine would develop into an important issue circulating in the colonial public sphere from the last decade of the nineteenth century. By the start of the twentieth century, Romesh Chunder

Dutt had begun publicizing the matter by publishing pamphlets on it from London, besides writing a series of letters to the Indian viceroy Curzon (See Dutt, 1901; 1900).⁵⁴ Further, Dutt's economic history of India under colonial rule is also one of the first indigenous articulations of the colonial deindustrialization thesis (See Dutt 1908; 1906).

Anandamath was serialized in 1881 and published as a book the following year; it was republished throughout the last decade of the nineteenth century. The Indian social reality of famine and epidemics framed the novel's appearance in the literary market-place. While the text itself evokes the memory of the deadly famine in the region from the preceding century, it was being read while human mortality from famines and epidemics was a quotidian presence for all Indians. In such a situation the narrative's articulation of the *santans'* ideal of ridding the country of the ravages of the colonizers would undoubtedly resonate with its Indian readers. The *santans'* scheme of overthrowing an unjust political-economic order would also be a welcome expression of native agency against the British. Moreover, the affective appeal of *Vande Mataram*, idealizing and idolizing the space of Bengal as a divine and nurturing mother would also be a utopian contrast to the lived reality of that space as one of distress, marked by death and devastation.

Importantly, *Anandamath* introduces a radically novel understanding of Indian nation-space and history. Significantly, this new conception of space is articulated through images of the mother goddess. In a central moment in the narrative, Satyananda takes Mahendra for a tour of the temple in the *santans'* abbey. Mahendra is shown three images of the mother goddess: the mother-as-she-was, the mother-as-she-is, and the future mother-as-she-will-be.⁵⁵ The idols of the

⁵⁴ Dutt was a former British Indian civil servant and an economic historian. He was also a lecturer on Indian history at University College, London.

⁵⁵ The Bengali phrase “ma ja hoiyachen” is used to describe the mother-as-she-is. While this translates, literally, into “mother-as-she-has-become,” it has also conveys the sense of “the state which mother has been reduced to.”

mother goddesses shown to Mahendra in this scene are those of Jagaddhatri, Kali and Durga respectively (See Figure 30). During each of these viewings, Mahendra is asked to utter the phrase “vande mataram” by Satyananda underlining its conception as a sacred *mantra*.⁵⁶ By proposing all the temporal incarnations of the nation-space in unabashedly Hindu terms, the novel implies the nation-space as a Hindu-space.

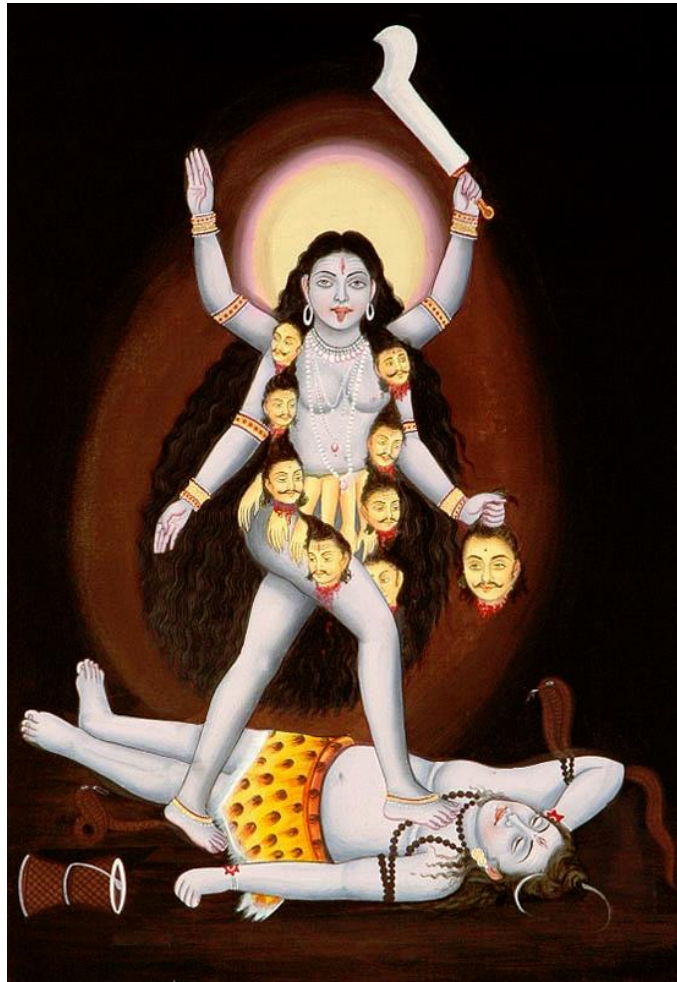


Figure 30: Popular representation of the goddess Kali.

⁵⁶ The most compelling Indian (and Bengali) critique of the religious tenor of anti-colonial nationalism and the “cult” of vande mataram is Rabindranath Tagore’s *The Home and the World* (1919). Tagore (1919) constructs the charming nationalist leader Sandip in the novel to underline the problematic nature of this religiosity. Moreover, the novel principal female character Bimala (symbolizing a secular notion of the space of Bengal) is also invested with a high degree of agency.

The use of these specific icons of the mother goddess to depict the nation is significant. For this, Chatterjee once again relies on the “common sense” of popular Hinduism, and its symbols. For instance, the word “jagaddhatri” literally means “the bearer of the earth;” her popular conception is that of the “beautiful” deity who creates and nourishes the universe. The use of Kali is even more noteworthy as it is the “sublime” form of the mother goddess. She is traditionally imagined as terrible, to be held in fear and awe; she is conceived as wandering the cremation grounds; she holds a severed head in one hand, and a scimitar in another; she is also formally depicted as bare-chested, wearing a garland of human heads, and a frock of human hands across her waist. Most crucially she is always shown stepping on the male god, and her husband, Shiva. The word “kali” refers to a “time” (*kal*) in its feminine form while the word “shiva” literally means “well-being.” The goddess’ act of trampling of her husband is traditionally interpreted as inversion of the cosmic order. In other words, it is a Hindu allegorical representation of the trope of “woman on top” that challenges, and indeed overturns, the patriarchal social relations of production and reproduction.⁵⁷

The use of the image of Kali to speak of the present state of the nation-space then allows the narrative to achieve two ends. By anchoring the conception of present space on this image of the mother goddess, it expresses the sense of devastation of the land under colonization in an affective vein. However, the image of Kali in this context also speaks of a gendered anxiety regarding the cosmic order in general and the space of the nation in particular. It then comes as little surprise that the male *santans* of the mother strive to transform the nation (and the mother-image associated with it) to that of a more “picturesque” Durga. As I have recounted earlier, in the popular imagination, the warrior goddess Durga had already been domesticated into an ideal

⁵⁷ For a discussion of the “woman on top” trope, although in the context of early modern France, see Davis, 1975, pp. 124 – 151.

mother and daughter. She, unlike Kali, becomes an unthreatening female divinity. Naturalizing her as the embodiment of the future nation-space also corrects the cosmic (and social) inversion; it reaffirms the “natural” order that reverses the idea of the “woman on top.” In so doing it normalizes the patriarchal vision of a hierarchical society (and space) premised upon an inequitable, gendered social division of labor.

It is also important to note that Basanta Coomar Roy, in his 1941 translation of *Anandamath* (titled *Dawn over India*) into English substitutes the idols of the mother goddesses with maps of India. The articulation of the past nation-space becomes “a gigantic, imposing, resplendent ... almost a living map of India;” the present, a “map of India in rags and tears;” the future nation-space, “a map of golden India – bright, beautiful, full of glory and dignity” (See Chatterjee, 1941, pp. 62 – 63).⁵⁸ Roy depicts the national landscape by relying on its rational and scientific forms, in what appears to be an attempt to diminish the novel’s unabashedly Hindu spatial imaginary. This effort to articulate the Indian nation-space in non-Hindu terms, nonetheless exists in an oblique – and ironic – relationship to the move seen in the Bharat Mata temple of Varanasi, where the physical relief map of British India was installed as a deity.

The ideas of the past, present, and future nation-spaces insert a notion of spatio-temporal *telos* into the understanding of history. It effects a move that transforms the traditional indigenous understanding of history as episodic, to history as teleological and, ultimately, progressive. This understanding of history is underscored in the ending of the novel. After a climactic battle between the British and the *santans*, the forces of the former are routed. However, instead of celebrating the insurgency’s victory over the colonizers, Chatterjee (2005) devises a mysterious seer who urges military restraint upon Satyananda and his followers. He

⁵⁸ In the same translation the *santan* leader Satyananda also becomes “Mahatma Satya” in what appears to be an allusion to Mohandas Gandhi, popularly referred to as Mahatma, who at that time was the undisputed leader of the Indian anti-colonial struggle.

notes that the santans had destroyed Muslim rule in Bengal. The British, instead of being mere revenue collectors, would now have to rule their Indian subjects. Crucially, the novel is set in the eighteenth century but produced in the late nineteenth. This sense of historical hindsight allows the narrative to produce a secular theodicy, and to justify its contemporary history to Indians.⁵⁹

This enables the unnamed seer in the narrative to prophesize British rule as a necessary *period* in the history of India. He says:

For a long time now the outward knowledge has been lost in this land, and so the true Eternal Code has been lost too. If one wishes to reinstate this Code, one must make known the outward knowledge first ... The English are very knowledgeable in the outward knowledge, and they're very good at instructing people. Therefore we'll make them king. And when ... our people are well instructed about external things, they'll be ready to understand the inner ... And till that day comes – so long as the Hindu is not wise and virtuous and strong once more – English rule will remain intact (Chatterjee, 2005, p. 229).⁶⁰

According to Priya Joshi (2002), Chatterjee's real achievement lay not only in “discovering a *form of the novel* to suit India ... [or simply providing] a perspective on the present, as Lukács has suggested à propos of novelists such as Scott, but a version of the past itself that was usable in the present” (p. 162, italics in original). By connecting and mediating the past and the present through the space of the nation, Chatterjee orders historical events and, in effect narrativizes history allowing his readers to make sense of it (Kaviraj, 1995).

Importantly, this process of ordering and narrativization of Indian history in *Anandamath* draws upon the colonial historiography of India pioneered by James Mill, James Todd, Henry Elliot, and Mountstuart Elphinstone. These positivist accounts of Indian history posited British rule as the teleological end in the process of political domination of the Indian subcontinent,

⁵⁹ This narrative device is not unlike Books XI and XII of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* or the vision of the future glory of Rome presented to Aeneas by the Cumaean Sibyl in Book VI of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

⁶⁰ The Eternal Code is Lipner's (2007) translation of “sanatan dharma,” a term from the Hindu conceptual vocabulary that refers to what is typically called “Hinduism” or “the Hindu way of life.”

progressively by Hindus, Muslims and the British. Moreover, these histories presented Muslims as tyrannical foreign conquerors of India. The historical vision of *Anandamath* is, however, not simply structured by this colonial historiographical tradition. By projecting a future spatio-temporal reality of India under Hindu rule, it also uses the colonial logic of progressive history against itself. *Vande Mataram*, then, provides the affective dimension to this historical vision.

The subsequent adoption of *Vande Mataram* as a nationalist slogan would indicate towards the normalization of a Hindu majoritarian ethos across the space of British India; of the idea of the nation-as-mother; indeed, of the idea of the eternal Indian motherland. The song, then, must be understood as being structured by, while at the same time producing, this ideology. Moreover, the song's popularity also speaks to the naturalization of Hinduism as the civil religion of India. *Vande Mataram*, importantly, raises the crucial question of belonging to the space of India. In the chapter that follows, then, I will examine this problematic in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, and Rabindranath Tagore's *Gora*.

CHAPTER 5

THE QUESTION OF BELONGING

E. M. Forster's (1924) *Passage to India* ends with a conversation on the possibility of friendship between the novel's two protagonists, one Indian and the other English. While riding together, Aziz tells Fielding "if it's fifty or five hundred years we shall get rid of you ... we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then ... you and I shall be friends" (p. 316). In response, Fielding appears to protest, asking "Why can't we be friends now? ... It's what I want. It's what you want" (Forster, 1924, p. 316). Forster (1924) devises a solution to this impasse where the landscape intervenes to settle the question. The novel ends with the lines:

But the horses didn't want it – they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single-file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap ... they didn't want it ... they said in their hundred voices, 'No, not yet,' and the sky said, 'No, not there.' (Forster, 1924, p. 316).

The ending of the novel provides what could be understood as a liberal solution to the question if Indians and the English can be "friends." It acknowledges that possibility in the future, but denies it in the present. Implicit in the novel's ending is the sense that Indians will have to wait until they can be friends of the English, that is, considered equal to their former masters. It is of course crucial to note that for Forster, the "temples," "tank," "jail," and "Guest House," as well as the "horses," "birds," and "carrion," that is, the landscape in its built, and natural forms, settles the question.

While the question of intimacy between the colonizer and the colonized runs through Forster's novel written at the dusk of the British Empire, two novels produced in the opening decades of the twentieth century appears to be singularly concerned with this question. In this chapter, I will examine Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and Rabindranath Tagore's *Gora* to explore how

they depict India and Indians, and especially how they articulate the issue of belonging to the space of India. I argue that Kipling posits India as a space of absolute *difference* that stands outside the field of history, and a *possession* of the colonial state. Indians in Kipling’s text are British *subjects* who are products, and agents in the reproduction, of colonial hegemony. Indeed, against the grain of earlier readings of *Kim* – many of which ignore the protagonist’s Irish origin – I argue that the construction, negotiation, and maintenance of colonial hegemony over the space of India, and its people, and the attendant anxieties produced in this process, is the key problematic of Kipling’s text.⁶¹ In contradistinction to Kipling, Tagore presents India as a cosmopolitan and *universal* space, whose inhabitants are *citizens* of the world, and active *agents* in its production and re-production. In fact, by inaugurating a spatial vision that moves from the scale of the home to the world at large – where the nation becomes little besides a metonymy of the world – Tagore destabilizes the spatial category of the “nation” itself. Consequently, Tagore’s *Gora* provides an understanding of “India” that is fundamentally anti-colonial without being nationalistic.

I constellate *Kim* and *Gora* for specific reasons. Foremost, Kipling and Tagore were unquestionably the most widely read authors on either side of the colonial divide by the first decade of the twentieth century. While Kipling wrote in English, Tagore wrote in Bengali, and often translated his works into English himself. Kipling was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1907, becoming the first writer in English to attain this recognition. Tagore was awarded the literature Nobel in 1913, becoming the first Asian (and non-white) to be given the prize. Crucially, as I have mentioned earlier, Tagore was awarded the prize in literature for his

⁶¹ Most readings of *Kim* elide the issue of the protagonist’s Irish origin. Said (1994) is a notable exception but does not actually engage with the question in any great length. The most remarkable omission in this list is Baucom (1999) who reads *Kim* as a “dramatization of the labors of imperial subject formation” but has absolutely nothing to say about his Irish identity (p. 89).

English works, making him the second Anglophone author to be honored after Kipling. Further, their pre-eminence as authors on either side of the colonial divide, and their renown in the global literary market-place during their time, encourage a comparative study of the works by Kipling, the “Bard of Empire,” and Tagore, arguably the most significant public intellectual of India, during British rule and since.

Kim and *Gora* are suited for constellating because of their striking similarities in form and structure, in addition to their fundamental preoccupation with the spatial entity of India, and the idea of Indianness. *Kim* and *Gora* are both novels; more specifically, they are both structured as a *bildungsroman*, that is, a coming-of-age story that stresses the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood through his or her self-awareness. More importantly, both protagonists in these eponymously named novels are Irish foundlings who grow up in India, under the guardianship of Indians.

Kipling (1987) tells us that Kim is Kimball O’Hara, an orphan of Irish parents, who was initially brought up by a Eurasian foster-mother. However, at the outset of the novel, Kim is presented as a street urchin who lives, and is at home, in the streets and by-lanes of Lahore (now in Pakistan, but the principal city of the Punjab province in pre-colonial and colonial India) where he appears to survive from the gratuitous benevolence of ordinary Indians, and from helping Mahbub Ali in his spying activities for the colonial state (pp. 1 – 18). Tagore’s *Gora* is also an orphan of Irish parents. His father was a military officer killed during the 1857 Rebellion, and his mother died after giving birth to him. *Gora* is adopted as their younger son by Krishnadayal and Anandamoyi, and grows up in that Indian (Bengali *bhadralok*) family in Calcutta, the principal city of British India (Tagore, 1997, pp. 30 – 31). Reading these texts by situating them alongside each other, that is, “contrapuntally,” then, illuminates differing

conceptions of India and the Indian, but also the contestation of space and subjecthood by the colonizer and the colonized (Said, 1994, p. 51).

The Anxiety of Influence: India and Indians in Kipling's *Kim*

Kipling's *Kim* was first published in 1901, and is a *bildungsroman* about an Irish orphan, Kimball O'Hara, who grows up in India. At the start of the novel, Kim meets a Lama from Tibet outside the Lahore Museum. The Lama is in India to search for the river that emerged where the Buddha's arrow fell on earth. Kim decides to travel with the Lama to assist in his quest for the river, and in course of his peregrinations, meets *The Mavericks*, his father's regiment. The officers of the regiment "rescue" Kim from "India" (and from the Lama) to send him to St. Xavier's school in Lucknow where he would be trained to become a *sahib*.⁶² Curiously, in what is reminiscent of Pip's relation to Abel Magwitch in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, the cost of Kim's education is borne by the Lama. Kim with the help of Mahbub Ali, the horse trader of Lahore, comes into contact with Colonel Creighton, a senior officer of the Survey department who also oversees British spying activities for the Great Game. In due course, Kim is inducted into the Great Game, travels to the Himalaya with the Lama, and foils the espionage activities of French and Russian spies.

Kim opens with the protagonist perched on the cannon Zam-Zammah, outside the Lahore Museum. Zam-Zamah, we are told, is a "fire-breathing dragon" and who holds it, "hold the Punjab" (Kipling, 1987, p. 1). Kipling (1987) tells us that Kim had "kicked Lala Dinanath's boy off it," and was justified to do so since Kim was English (p. 1). Soon, when Abdullah, the sweetmeat-seller's son, would try to dislodge Kim, he retorts by saying "All Mussalmans [Muslims] fell off Zam-Zammah long ago" (Kipling, 1987, p. 4). This is striking because Kipling

⁶² The Oxford English Dictionary defines "sahib" as "A respectful title used by an Indian in addressing an Englishman or other European (= 'Sir')." In the colonial times it also had the sense of "master."

appears to be providing his readers with a concrete instantiation of colonial progressive history of the Indian sub-continent that proclaimed British rule as the ultimate telos in its conquest and rule, after successive rules by Hindus and Muslims.

Kipling's concern with temporality continues in his reference of the space of the museum, where the narrative actually begins. A museum is a place for storing artifacts and curiosities from the past, in the present. In fact, it can be conceived of as a miraculous space that stands outside history, because it is where time, as it were, stands still. Interestingly, Kipling refers to the Museum using its Urdu and Hindi appellation, "Ajaib-gher," that underlines this sense as the word translates into "a house of wonder." By situating the novel's opening in the shadow of the Lahore Museum, Kipling appears to hint at an analogical relation between this local, ahistorical space, and the larger space of India, a living museum teeming with native types that his readers will encounter in the subsequent pages of the text.

Kipling's concerns regarding Indian temporality continue throughout the text of *Kim*, not least in its repeated assertions of Indians having, and keeping, Oriental time. When Kim receives his message for Colonel Creighton from Mahbub Ali, Kipling (1987) notes that "even an Oriental, with an Oriental's views of the value of time, could see that the sooner it was in the proper hands the better" (p. 22). Likewise, while describing Indian passengers sleeping in the Lahore railway station, readers are told that all "hours of the twenty-four are alike to Orientals" (Kipling, 1987, p. 26). Similarly, after Kim had preempted an assassination attempt on Mahbub Ali, the latter tells him that he and Kim should proceed for Simla *swiftly*. Kipling (1987) follows this up by a sentence imbued with a significant dose of irony to write: "Swiftly, – as Orientals understand speed, – with long explanations, with abuse and windy talk, carelessly, amid a hundred checks for little things forgotten" (p. 142). This line, as with the other instances in the

novel that stress Indian time as being out of sync with “normal,” that is, colonial capitalist time, is illuminating as it constructs a lack of coevalness between the colonizer and the colonized, setting the latter up as fundamentally different from the former (See Fabian, 1983).

Thompson (1967) and Lukacs (1971) have pointed out that the quantification and structuring of time is itself a function of the deepening of the capitalist social relations of production. Their comments provide an important critical basis for thinking about Kipling’s insistence on Indians keeping a “different” time. Foremost, it aligns Kipling’s colonial perspective on Indians with that of capital: looking on a people that form a frontier against its penetration, and therefore in need for subjugation. Moreover, it illuminates the intimate relationship between the colonial project (and state) and capitalist social relations of production. Further, Kipling’s structuring of racial difference through time, crucially, points towards a fundamental incommensurability of spaces, that is, between the “normal” space that keeps “normal” time (Britain), and the space where time is yet to be quantified and delimited, and outside the pale of “normal” history. In effect, then, Kipling constructs colonial India as being profoundly different space from the normative space of Britain. Such a move then allows Kipling to suggest that India is an anachronistic space, a living museum of sorts much like the Lahore museum that houses images of the Buddha.

This idea of India as a living museum is underlined during Kim’s travel in the Indian railways and on the Grand Trunk Road. In the railway compartment, Kipling provides his readers with a collection of native types where the carriage appears to be a representation of India in the microcosm. The crowded third-class carriage from Lahore to Ambala (Umballa) is populated by a “burly Sikh artisan,” a blue-turbaned “Hindu Jat,” a fat “Hindu money lender,” a young “Dogra (Kashmiri) soldier,” and a “courtesan” from Amritsar (Kipling, 1987, p. 27 – 28). It is interesting

that none of these characters have proper nouns, but are represented as native types whose castes, religions, communities, and professions are detailed, as if they have come alive from the pages of *The People of India*.

This theme is repeated once again in the novel, when Kim travels with the Lama through the Grand Trunk Road, the most important highway in northern and eastern South Asia.⁶³ As Kim and the Lama approach the road, an old soldier, their companion up to the road exclaims, “See ... the Great Road which is the backbone of all Hind [India] ... In the days before the rail-carriages the Sahibs travelled up and down here in hundreds. Now there are only country-carts and such like” (Kipling, 1987, p. 57). The old soldier then proceeds to catalogue the Indians, quite like his colonial masters. He says, “Look! Brahmins and chumars [tanners of low caste], bankers and tinkers, barbers and bunnias [traders], pilgrims and potters – all the world going and coming. It is to me a river” (Kipling, 1987, p. 57). It is illuminating that the soldier describes Indians in twos, along the axes of caste and occupation, displaying the colonial sensibility of statistical enumeration.

This is unsurprising from the soldier, though an Indian, because he is described as a British subject who has internalized colonial rule. In his earlier conversation with Kim and the Lama, the soldier had spoken of the 1857 Rebellion as a “madness [that] ate into all the Army;” how he “rode seventy miles with an English mem-sahib [lady] and her babe on [his] saddle brow” before singing for his companions the “old song” of those who fought under *Nikal Seyn* [Nicholson] to take Delhi and finally quell the Uprising (Kipling, 1987, pp. 52 – 55).

⁶³ While the The Grand Trunk Road existed in ancient India as Uttar Path (Northern Highway) connecting Bactria in Central Asia to the sea port of Tamralipta (Tamluk, in Bengal in eastern India), its present incarnation can be traced back to Sher Shah Suri who briefly defeated the Mughal Emperor Humayun and ruled north India from 1540 to 1545. Suri built the road to connect Agra in north India to Sasaram in the east. The Mughals, who returned to power after Suri’s death, extended it westwards to Kabul, in Afghanistan, and eastwards to Chittagong, in present-day Bangladesh. It was improved by the British to connect Peshawar, the last major city in British India near the Afghanistan border, to Calcutta, the capital of British India. Until the advent of the railways, the Grand Trunk Road was the most important connector between northern and eastern parts of the Indian sub-continent.

As Kim walks down the Grand Trunk Road with the Lama, he too soaks in the atmosphere of seeing all of India on the move. Kipling (1987) notes that Kim encountered “new people and new sights at every stride – castes he knew and castes that were altogether out of his experience ... [on this] broad, smiling river of life” (p. 61). This broad river of life, however, remains structured by the colonial imaginary. Kim sees “a troop of long haired, strong scented Sansis [nomadic people] with baskets of lizards and other unclean food on their backs” (Kipling, 1987, p. 61). He also encounters an Akali [member of a Sikh sect] who is described as a “wild eyed, wild haired Sikh devotee in the blue checked clothes of his faith” (Kipling, 1987, p. 61). Here again we find a complete absence of proper nouns to describe Indians but instead they are described according to their peculiarities. Indeed, while all the British characters have names, very few Indians are actually named in the novel, in what appears to be an act of withholding from them any sense of actual selfhood. Further, Kipling relies on the landscape form to structure Kim’s view for it is one predicated on separation, underlined by the procession of native types.

Yet, some of the Indian characters who populate the Indian landscape are named. For instance, Kipling (1987) names the first characters the readers meet in the opening pages of the novel, such as “Lala Dinanath’s son” and “Abdullah” as well as “Jawahir Singh, the Museum carpenter” (pp. 1 – 4). While the characters are undoubtedly minor and their primary role appears to be restricted to simply setting up the narrative, they are also those with who Kim has a lived connection. This indicates towards a tension in the character of Kim, who is both within, and outside, the Indian landscape. This tension, as I will discuss subsequently, fundamentally informs Kim’s in/ability to belong to India.

Kim's lived relationship with India is further underlined in the course of the narrative, as we meet the Pathan horse dealer Mahbub Ali, and later, the Bengali *babu*, colonial ethnologist, and British Indian spy Huree Chunder Mookerjee. Ali and Mookerjee are both central to the narrative's progress and in Kim's interactions with them, there is more than a hint of colonial stereotyping. Ali is depicted as a Pathan, and while Kipling relies on the colonial notion of the Pathan as a "martial race," there is, however, a genuine affection that shines through in his depiction of their mutual relationship. Likewise, Huree Mookherjee is presented as a "fearful Bengali" but is also someone who is an accomplished spy and ethnologist. Not only does he help to train Kim in his quest for a position in the Great Game, Mookerjee's desire to have an "F. R. S." next to his name, that is, to be a Fellow of the Royal Society is met with approbation from Colonel Creighton, depicted as the most powerful person in the narrative universe of *Kim*. On hearing Mookerjee's ambition, Kipling (1987) notes that Creighton "smiled, and thought the better of Hurree Babu, moved by like desire [as himself]" (pp. 174 – 175). Here too emerges a sympathetic, and almost affectionate, picture of the English-educated Bengali, typically deemed cunning and lazy by the British, an image that Kipling himself helped disseminate in his earlier writings. Importantly, both Ali and Mookerjee are depicted as loyal native subjects. This is unlike the historical reality of the Pathans and the Bengalis, both social groups who resisted British rule continually, and often violently: the Pathans for much of the nineteenth century, and the Bengalis through the late-nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. This construction of sympathy is important for the larger British project of hegemonic control over the space of India, a project into which Kim is inducted.

The project to maintaining hegemonic control over India took a renewed shape with the advent of the Great Game between Britain and Russia, especially following rumors that Russia

might invade British India. This led to a flurry of spying, surveying, and cartographic measures that included the discreet mapping of Tibet. In the late-nineteenth century, the Indian Survey Department under Captain Thomas Montgomerie trained a number of Indians in surveying techniques, and sent them on spying missions into Tibet to collect geographical and ethnographic information. These British spies dressed up as Buddhist pilgrims and carried sextants and thermometers in their prayer wheels. Further, they counted their paces, and had rosaries of a hundred beads (instead of the traditional 108) to calculate the distances they traveled. Notable among them were Pandit Nain Singh Rawat, Pandit Krishna, Ugyen Gyatso and Sarat Chandra Das.⁶⁴

Rawat traveled into Tibet in 1865 and reached Lhasa in January 1866, staying there until April 1867. He determined the location and altitude of Lhasa for the first time besides mapping a large section of the River Tsangpo (Brahmaputra). Rawat visited Lhasa again in 1874, and was awarded the Patron's Medal by the Royal Geographical Society in 1877 for his achievements. Krishna reached Lhasa in 1878, and traveled around Tibet before returning to India in 1882. Gyatso and Das journeyed into Tibet for six months in 1879. Das traveled to Tibet again, in 1881, when he visited the Dalai Lama in Lhasa. The British Indian government published Das's reports of his journeys but kept them strictly confidential until 1890. They were subsequently edited and published by the Royal Geographical Society in 1902. Gyatso visited Tibet and Lhasa again in 1883, before returning to India the same year. The maps created from the information the spies collected were later used by the British during their military expedition into Tibet under Francis Younghusband in 1903 – 1904.

⁶⁴ Many critics have conjectured if characters in *Kim* are based on real people from the British Indian Survey Department, particularly those who were involved in covert spying operations in Tibet. Critics have, for instance, claimed that Colonel Creighton is the literary avatar of Thomas Montgomerie, and Huree Chunder Mookerjee of Sarat Chandra Das (See Hopkirk, 1983).

The politics of the Great Game suffuses *Kim* and Kipling is credited with placing the term “Great Game” firmly in the British imaginary (Hopkirk, 1992). Published in 1901, the novel appears between the two publications of Das’s account of his activities in Tibet. The covert operations in Tibet are most directly mentioned by Creighton when he journeys to Lucknow with Kim. On the train he asks Kim to learn how to make pictures of roads and rivers; he also claims that someday he might ask Kim to “Go across those hills and see what lies beyond” and that there are “bad people living across those hills who will slay the chain-man [surveyor] if he be seen to look like a Sahib” (Kipling, 1987, p. 118). Indeed, the repeated invocation of surveying and Kim’s possible future as a chain-man in the British Indian Survey Department continue to highlight the preponderance of geography in Kipling’s literary imagination. In the course of the narrative, Kipling (1987) tells us that Kim showed a great aptitude for mathematical studies and map-making in school, passed the examination in elementary surveying, and while his name “does not appear in the year’s batch of those who entered for the subordinate Survey of India,” against it stood “the words ‘removed on appointment’” (pp. 164 – 165).

Kim’s introduction as a trainee in the activities of the Great Game is supplemented by the reader’s knowledge of his great ingenuity with disguises. He could be a Muslim one moment and a Hindu the next; he can also be attired in Buddhist garb and travel as the Lama’s *chela* (disciple). The idea of disguise is particularly crucial as it gestures towards India, much like the preface to the *People of India*, as a theatrical stage. More importantly, it reinscribes the game ethic which is repeatedly invoked in the novel, especially in the context of the “Great Game.” Not only are the diplomatic maneuvers referred to as a game that one plays until one’s death, Mahbub Ali also repeatedly refers to Kim in conversations with Creighton as the “young colt” who would one day play polo, and sometimes as a “polo-pony” (Kipling, 1987, p. 127).

While Kim graduates to being a player in the game to consolidate British hegemony in South Asia, he has a curious position in it. He is both a *sahib* and Irish, therefore an outsider to India; however, he repeatedly speaks of India as his country, and Indians as “my people” (Kipling, 1987, p. 135). He helps consolidate British rule in India on one hand, while on the other, he becomes one with India, underlying what Richards (1993) notes is Kim’s nomadic tendency (p. 19). This tendency, Richards (1993) argues had to be translated into cartographic stability, and brought into the service of the colonial state through the figure of Creighton (p. 21).

This tension inherent in Kim’s character is most prominently evident in the manner in which the landscape form is deployed in the novel. Kim is often described as engaging with the space of India as a vast landscape. Traveling down the Grand Trunk Road, Kim notes that it was “beautiful to watch the people, little clumps of red and blue and pink and white and saffron, turning aside to go their own villages, dispersing and growing small by twos and threes across the level plain” (Kipling, 1987, p. 63). In other words, the space of India is rendered a sea of color where its inhabitants are reduced into specks. The country becomes a pleasing prospect, in relation to which Kim, quite like the colonial administrators, is a detached and alienated observer.

The structuring of Indian space as a prospect, to be apprehended through the faculty of vision meets the cartographic imagination during Kim’s travels in the train. As the train passes through the north Indian countryside, Kim observes that “golden, rose, saffron, and pink, the morning mists smoked away across the flat green levels. *All the rich Punjab* lay out in the splendor of the keen sun” (Kipling, 1987, p. 31, my italics). Kim grasps the landscape of Punjab as a unity, quite like the conjectured monocular viewer of a landscape. Indeed, his visual

appreciation of the landscape of Punjab appears as an expression of the cartographic imagination for it is only possible to see “all the ... Punjab” at once on a map.

However, at the same time, the landscape form and its attendant alienation is destabilized throughout the novel. Kim provides readers with the alienated and alienating view of the Indian landscape (as above) and also, crucially, a sense of the lived landscape of India. For instance, during his journey with the Lama through northern India, Kim speaks of strolling through “the hard-worked soil [that] gives three and even four crops a year – through patches of sugar-cane, tobacco, long white radishes and *nol khol* [pumpkins] ... rousing village dogs and sleeping villages at noonday” (Kipling, 1987, p. 44, italics in original).

This sense of simultaneously being inside and outside the landscape is further accentuated when Kipling (1987) writes that Kim and the Lama “followed the rutted and worn country road that wound across the flat between the great dark-green mango-groves, the line of snow-capped Himalayas faint to the eastward” (p. 51). This extract appears to present a normative colonial landscape of India that is predicated on a sense of alienated view of Indian space structured primarily through the faculty of vision. However, the next line disrupts the stability of this construction as we are told that all of “India was at work in the fields, to the creaking of well-wheels, the shouting of ploughmen behind their cattle, and the clamour of the crows” (Kipling, 1987, p. 51). Crucially, the stability of the landscape form is broken by inserting the aural into the description where the “creaking,” “shouting,” and the “clamour” undermines the authority of the visual register of the preceding lines. The subsequent line brings the focus to bear on Kim himself, as we are told that the “pony felt the good influence and almost broke into a trot as Kim laid a hand on the stirrup-leather” (Kipling, 1987, p. 51). This sentence not only highlights Kim’s presence, but also locates him squarely within the space of India (in

fact, riding on the pony in that space), by inserting a tactile and experiential element into the description.

Kim’s position of being both an insider, and an outsider to the space of India, then, makes him a perfect candidate in the project of consolidating colonial hegemony. He can be, and is, a *sahib* but is also someone who can not only “go native” but also *be* native. As the novel shows, he is, at various points in the narrative, a Hindu, a Muslim, and a Buddhist; he can become a member of the high castes or the low; he can also become “white” when the need arises. This allows him the ability to infiltrate the ranks of the colonized, know them from within, and use that knowledge in the service of the colonial state. From the colonial perspective Kim is someone who might one day become a Creighton, a figure of British paternalism in South Asia, who maintains colonial rule not by brute force but by working with the natives, and by acquiring their consent to rule. Creighton, despite his paternalism and ability to know the Indians, continues to retain the ruler-subject distinction, and with it, the spatial distinctiveness of the metropole and the colony. He *knows* Mahbub Ali and Hurree Mookerjee, but can never *be* them.

Kim, however, by virtue of his ability to *be* a native, becomes a mediating subject category in the relations between the colonizer and the colonized. Speaking of the “median category,” Said (1979) has commented that it “allows one to see new things ... as versions of a previously known thing ... [that is] not so much a way of receiving new information as it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things” (pp. 58 – 59). Following from Said’s observations, Don Randall (2000) has suggested that the narrative can establish “putative control over this by envisioning [Kim] as a kind of child ... [A] boy suffers little from the stigma generally associated with ‘going native.’ The adult colonizer who ‘goes native’ [like Conrad’s Kurtz] is beyond recuperation” (p. 145).

In the case of *Kim*, Kipling uses the protagonist's age and race simultaneously, to structure the narrative. It is useful to remember that the colonized has typically been equated with children, and their civilizational "immaturity" held up as a justification of colonial rule, understood as a form of paternalism. Kipling, moreover, presents his protagonist as Irish. After introducing him as "English" in the first page of the novel, he is labeled "Irish" a few pages later. At the climax of the novel when Kim beats the Russian for hitting the Lama, Kipling (1987) notes that the Russian's blow to the Lama had "waked every unknown *Irish* devil in the boy's blood" (p. 242, my italics). Indeed, Kipling's sympathetic vision of the relationship between Kim and the Indians, as well as his ability to dwell across racial and spatial difference, then, can be articulated convincingly within the realm of fiction largely because of Kim's Irish origin. For it would be unthinkable for an English boy of fifteen or sixteen to mingle with Indians in the late-nineteenth century, let alone eat and smoke freely with them. This is therefore possible only because of the specificity of the protagonist's age and race.

Owing to his ability to be both native and foreigner, Kim appears to be dangerously collapsing the racial – and by extension, the spatial – division between the ruler and the ruled. Critics such as Ian Baucom (1999) and Don Randall (2000) have read Kim's subjectivity through the conceptual lens of hybridity. However, the notion of hybridity as developed by Homi Bhabha is not an adequate way of theorizing Kim's subjectivity. That is because the concept largely evacuates the social from its understanding of subjectivity, and more importantly, conceptually flattens out the subject that emerges from the process of colonial contact. More importantly, the term "hybrid" itself presupposes a purity (or stability) of the constituent parts without either acknowledging the historical constitution of the parts, or their relation to each other. If on the

other hand, we think of the parts that constitute the hybrid subject as themselves hybrid, the concept of hybridity becomes a universal condition and loses all conceptual purchase.⁶⁵

Instead, it is more productive to view Kim as the product, and a logical correlate, of the project of hegemonic control. It is a subject who is a product of colonial contact who exists in a space-time that is neither the “normative” space-time of the metropole, nor the “different” space-time of the colony. If one thinks of the production of differential space-time as a necessity of colonial capitalist relations of production, a project in which it only partially succeeds, then the subjectivity of Kim could be understood as the product that emerges from the failure of capitalism to completely revolutionize the social relations of production and re-production. Such a subject, like Kim, would not *solely* be a colonizer or the colonized but can simultaneously inhabit *both* these space-times. In other words, this subject is potentially both the greatest asset, as well as the greatest threat, to regimes of colonial capitalism. This becomes a source of tremendous colonial anxiety, and it is hardly surprising that Kipling spends the greater part of the novel obsessing over Kim’s “education.” His nomadism has to be circumscribed and put into the service of the colonial state for if it remains uncontrolled, it could be the basis of a counter-hegemony that would destabilize colonial capitalist rule, and undermine the globally uneven space-time it has labored to create.

Throughout the narrative Kim is shown repeatedly questioning his identity: “What am I” he says aloud to Mahbub Ali, and then goes on to say that “In all India there is no one so alone as I” before exclaiming “Who is Kim – Kim – Kim?” (Kipling, 1987, p. 143; 185). Finally, convalescing after his encounter with the Russian and the Frenchman, the question reappears to him. His attempt to answer the question leads him to asking not *who* but *what* he is: “I am Kim. I

⁶⁵ For instance, Said (1994) argues that history of cultures across the world is one of continual borrowing. The historian Martin Bernal (1987) has also convincingly argued that European culture has strong Afro-Asiatic roots.

am Kim. And what is Kim?” (Kipling, 1987, p. 282). Kipling fails to provide a convincing answer, or for that matter, any answer to this question but its illuminating to see what Kipling presents his protagonist as doing after this moment.

Kim is depicted as walking from his bed on to the open ground where he lies down in the “hopeful dust that holds the seed of all life” (Kipling, 1987, p. 283). By stressing “dust,” that is, space in its most particularly material form, and also its most general form, Kipling appears to suggest a return to the lost organic link between humans and the world that they inhabit, that is, to a universe without alienation. Kim the person (the “who”) and the subject (the “what”) is therefore someone who can dwell anywhere and everywhere, and, therefore, nowhere. He is, then, the unalienated subject in an alienated world.

While the narrative ends with the conclusion of the Lama’s search for his holy river, it could be reasonably expected that Kim goes back to the service of the colonial state. However, what is perhaps more important is to see how Kipling’s novel on colonial India, despite itself, offers its readers a glimpse of its counter-hegemonic possibility, and with it articulates the instability of the imperial project of control. I want to be clear that I am not arguing that the text of *Kim* deconstructs the British Empire; not am I claiming that it is self-reflexive or self-critical about the imperial project. I am saying that the novel illuminates the contradictions within the imperial project, and articulates how the material conditions that produce the imperial project of control and extraction in the first place also gestures towards the possibility of its own undoing.

Claiming Universalism for India: Tagore’s *Gora*

Tagore’s *Gora* first appeared serially in 1907 in the pages of the Bengali literary magazine *Probashi*, before being published as a book the next year. *Gora* was translated into English by W. W. Pearson, and published from London in 1910. It presents its readers with an anti-colonial

vision of the space of India. Importantly, while the novel engages with “India” throughout, it does not ever represent the nation or the countryside using the landscape form.

Tagore’s *Gora* is, like Kipling’s *Kim*, also structured as a *bildungsroman* that charts the protagonist’s moral and intellectual growth and development. The novel’s protagonist Gora, like Kim, is also an Irish foundling, who is adopted into a Bengali *bhadralok* family during the 1857 Rebellion. *Gora* is set in the late-nineteenth century Calcutta, at a time when the city was witnessing a number of indigenous reform movements aimed at purging Hinduism and Hindu society of its “social evils.” It was also a time of the rise of Hindu reactionary orthodoxy in the face of colonial rule and extensive missionary proselytizing in British India.

The foremost sect among the progressives was the Bramho Samaj, established by Tagore’s father Devendranath. Under Tagore’s stewardship, the Bramho Samaj would become a major institution advocating the reform of Hinduism in nineteenth century India (see Hatcher, 2007). Since 1830, especially in opposition to British attempts to ban the practice of sati, the orthodox Hindus of Bengal, led by Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay, had organized themselves under the banner of the Dharma Sabha.⁶⁶ Attitudes of the members of the Bramho Samaj and the Dharma Sabha towards colonial rule ranged from outright hostility to its complete acceptance. However, they were fundamentally opposed to each other; the groups avoided social contact and refused to partake of food in the other’s company.

The novel is set in the milieu of this hostility among various sections of the Bengali *bhadralok* class. As the novel opens, we find Gora as a fiery orator who is championing the cause of Hindu orthodoxy, and claiming India (using the Sanskrit name for it, “Bharatvarsha”) as a Hindu space that keeps intact the caste inequalities of traditional Hinduism. Such is his

⁶⁶ Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay, we may recall, was the author of *Kalikata Kamalalay* (1823). I have briefly discussed that text in my chapter on Calcutta.

orthodoxy that he refuses to eat or drink in the room of his mother, Anandamoyi, because she has a Christian maid. It must be noted that the word “gora” that Tagore uses to name his protagonist means “fair-skinned” in Bengali and Hindi. It is also the word used to refer, sometimes derogatorily, to Europeans and races considered “white.” More crucially, the Bengali word “gnora” – a nasal variant of the proper noun – also means orthodox or dogmatic, and Tagore’s use of the word appears a deeply conscious choice.

Through the novel *Gora* discusses philosophy with his friend Binoy, who is almost like a brother, and runs the Hindu Welfare Society that is committed to serve Hindu society, and desires to save India from the yoke of the colonizers. Binoy comes into contact with the elderly gentleman Poresh who is a renowned member of the Bramho Samaj, begins visiting his house, and is introduced to his middle daughter Lolita, as well as his foster daughter, Sucharita. Over time Binoy realizes that he is attracted to Lolita, but cannot marry her as they are on opposing sides of the sectarian divide. Gora too visits Poresh at his residence and despite arguing about India and Hinduism from an orthodox standpoint against Sucharita, who espouses a more progressive and equitable view, both become attracted to each other.

The narrative of *Gora* charts the protagonist’s change from being an orthodox Hindu to being a person who transcends sectarianism to realize that all people share a common humanity. Likewise, it also charts the development of the characters of Binoy, Sucharita, and Lolita. Binoy develops into an independent person, who steps out of Gora’s shadow; Sucharita and Lolita also shed their dogmatism to develop into independent persons. In the end, Binoy and Lolita get married in the course of the novel, while the narrative ends when the marriage of Gora and Sucharita appear imminent. Tagore projects Poresh and Gora’s mother as the two independent-minded individuals who stand above sectarian concerns. In fact, they appear to be like

Gramscian organic intellectuals, who nudge family members and others to reflect on their beliefs and practices in order to build a more equitable and open-minded community. In stark contrast to Poresh and Anandamoyi are the characters of Sucharita’s aunt, Poresh’s wife, and Haran, a preacher of the Bramho Samaj, who are depicted as deeply sectarian and therefore divisive in the process of building a universal community, at home and in the world.

The idea of the community appears central to Tagore’s understanding of the nation; and central to the idea of the community is the idea of the family. I want to clarify that my use of “community” to speak of Tagore’s work is not akin to the manner in which the term is deployed by historians of the Subaltern Studies Group who see it as a category that exists beyond the pale of capital. Instead, Tagore’s notion of “community” and “family” appear to indicate towards a descriptive category of social organization. For him, therefore, “family” comes to denote both one’s own family, that is, the social unit of individual and social reproduction, but also others, people who are not members of one’s own family. In both case Tagore’s appears to stress the reforming one’s thoughts and actions to allow the bonds of affiliation to appear.

Consequently, when Lolita and Binoy realize they are in love, Poresh tells them that they can get married but they will have to resist the denunciations of Hindu society at large. Their conjugal union, even at the cost of Gora’s disavowal of Binoy, is for Tagore the correct course of action as it transcends sectarian behavior. While this act of marriage between a Bramho and a Hindu does not appear tremendously radical in the twenty-first century, it was indeed quite unthinkable in nineteenth century Bengal. Moreover, Tagore’s narrative continues to be relevant in the context of inter-religious or inter-racial marriages in our contemporary times.

Similarly, when Gora – even as an orthodox Hindu – finds an aged Muslim man nearly run over by a carriage, he tries to help him collect his goods that were strewn on the street.

Tagore (1997) writes that

Gora was aware that he was not really helping, aware also that the person he was trying to help was feeling embarrassed ... [but] by going down to the level of the victim at least one upper-class person was trying to make up for the brutality of another upper-class person against a common man (p. 103)

Here again is an act that would be construed as strikingly radical in nineteenth century India as most upper class and upper caste Hindus would not only refuse to help a lower class Muslim man, but would also not want to be touched by him. Further, by introducing realistic Muslim characters into novel, Tagore appears to be not only challenging their stereotypical depictions as rapacious tyrants in earlier Bengali novels, such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Anandamath* (1882), but also making a case for India as not a space that belongs exclusively to Hindus.

The issue of sectarian division and the figure of the Muslim return in the novel when Gora visits the villages of Bengal. Tagore (1997) comments that “Gora was seeing what [the] country was like outside the cultured and affluent segments of [Calcutta] society [for the first time] ... How isolated, narrow-minded, weak – how completely unaware of its own strength, ignorant and indifferent to its welfare” (p. 170). Tagore here is on one hand critiquing urban (and urbane) social reformers who spoke of social welfare and rarely traveled to the rural Indian hinterland. On the other hand, he speaks of how the people had ended up secluding themselves from the larger world because they were unwilling to break social custom and venture beyond. Importantly, Tagore (1997) speaks of how some of the villagers were unable to join hands to save themselves when a fire broke out in one of the villages as there “was much running to and fro, much wailing and weeping, but no organised action” (p. 170). By situating Gora amidst

these people in the narrative, Tagore is underlining the foolhardiness of his venture of “liberating” India while remaining dogmatic and sectarian at heart.

Perhaps the most crucial moment in Gora’s trajectory of self-awareness is in another village where Gora comes across a Hindu family that has adopted a Muslim boy as their son. Gora is hungry and thirsty from his travels but cannot eat at their house because the presence of the Muslim boy violated his idea of ritual purity. When Gora chides the Hindu barber for breaking social custom by adopting a boy from another religious community, the barber tells him “There is very little difference ... We take the name of Hari [Krishna], they call to Allah, that’s all” (Tagore, 1997, p. 171). At this time in the narrative, readers are aware of Gora’s own history of being adopted into the Bengali family – a knowledge that the novel’s protagonist himself does not possess – imbuing this exchange with a sense of dramatic irony.

Moreover, the barber narrates to Gora a tale of colonial oppression and the forced extraction of surplus from the peasantry. The boy’s father was an indigo farmer who, along with other farmers, clashed repeatedly with the landlord and the European indigo-planters over cultivation rights. The farmers wanted to cultivate rice while the planters insisted they grow the indigo plant, a cash crop. That year the farmers had “managed to raise an early crop of ... paddy on the freshly deposited stretch of silt ... [but the] manager of the indigo factory had come with a band of ... [armed goons] and forcibly harvested the grain” (Tagore, 1997, p. 172). In the ensuing melee, the boy’s father had fought with the manager who had had to have his arm amputated. Tagore (1997) tells us that after this incident

police oppression in the villages had spread ... like fire. Tenants were unable to keep possessions ... women were harassed almost to the point of being dishonoured ... Foru Sardar [the boy’s father] and many others were put in jail ... Foru’s household was without food and his wife could not appear in public because the only sari she owned was in tatters ... [The barber’s wife, seeing

Foru's] only son, the boy Tamiz ... had nothing to eat at home, had brought him to her own house" (p. 172)

This realistic depiction of the life of rural Bengal has some important consequences. Foremost, it underlines the violence of colonial rule and its resultant dispossession that was felt keenly in the nineteenth century Indian countryside. Moreover, by demonstrating the solidarity between the Hindu barber and the Muslim farmer, Tagore indicates that people can, and do, break ossified social customs of untouchability, even if it was a conceptual impossibility for the urban Bengali *bhadralok*.

Tagore's depiction of the real conditions of existence in the Bengal countryside underlines how the farmers and the lower classes, irrespective of their religious beliefs, are uniformly oppressed and exploited by the colonial state. Moreover, he appears to be undermining the idyllic and stereotypical depiction of the Bengal landscape as evidenced, for instance, in Chatterjee's *Vande Mataram*. Further, Tagore also seems to point towards the sheer idiocy of thinking about the nation as an abstract concept without thinking about the people, especially the peasantry and the laboring classes, who constitute the national-community in the first place.

Tagore (1997) tells us that hearing this story, and egged on by his other orthodox Hindu companions, Gora leaves the barber to look for a Hindu house where they can get food and water. The nearest Hindu house turns out to be that of the factory manager, Madhav Chatterjee, who had been tormenting the farmers. At this point, Gora turns back to head for the barber's house and Tagore (1997) outlines his protagonist's thoughts for his readers:

The more he thought about it the more intolerable he found the idea of having to safeguard his caste by eating food provided by the evil-hearted tyrant ... He thought "What terrible anti-religious practices we have followed in ... [India] by making purity an external matter! My caste will remain pure if I eat in the house of somebody who oppresses poor Muslims, but my caste will be violated in the house of somebody who risks oppression and is prepared to face social condemnation in order to give shelter to the son of a Muslim! (p. 175)

Gora returns to the house of the barber and though he cooks for himself, decides to stay at their house. This marks Gora’s first break with orthodoxy that will finally culminate in his knowledge of his Irish provenance. Indeed, Gora’s gradual development from being a person trapped in the received ethos of his “culture” to someone who is at home in the world approximates what Gramsci (2000) outlined as the “critical understanding of the self ... [that takes place] through a struggle of political ‘hegemonies,’ from opposing directions ... in order to arrive at ... a higher level of one’s own conception of reality” (p. 333 – 334). In the end, Gora not only transcends Hindu orthodoxy, but also, given the circumstances of his upbringing, the ideology of race.

It bears underlining that Tagore was no Marxist (though he writes approvingly about advances in education made by the Soviet Union after visiting it in 1930). However, he devises a conceptual vocabulary, and language, for critiquing of unjust and inequitable social practices, and for theorizing the nation, from the universalist logic inherent in the Hindu and Buddhist system of beliefs and practices to structure his argument (See Long, 2011).⁶⁷ Most significantly, he seems to be marshaling the vision of a global community of citizens found in the early pedagogical texts in Sanskrit such as the *Hitopodesha* and the *Pancha Tantra* that posits the idea of *vasudaiva kutumbakam*, that is, the world is one family.

Tagore can structure this vision in a narrative form by conceiving of Gora as Irish. The protagonist’s Irish origin allows him to extend the logic of community-as-family to include people who do not belong to the Indian sub-continent. If in Kipling we see elements of sympathy and affection between the Irish Kim and the “native types,” Tagore radicalizes, indeed normalizes, that intimacy by making the Irish Gora the younger son of a *bhadralok* family.

⁶⁷ This is not to argue that Hindu beliefs and practices are fundamentally universal. In fact, the entire complex set of systems and beliefs labeled “Hinduism” are fundamentally contradictory, with some stressing profound universalism while others are extremely oppressive and inegalitarian in outlook. Social reformers as well as orthodox bigots typically choose to stress some practices over others to structure their arguments.

Unlike Kim, Gora's relation to India is not one of enacting the role of a Bengali or a Hindu; neither is his life in India a game that he is playing. In fact, he provides a counter-perspective to Kipling's: Gora is critiqued for being too dogmatic a Hindu, for having too narrow a vision of who is an Indian, and what is India. For Gora there is no other reality outside of India; yet he is an outsider in that space.

For such a configuration to be viable, "India" must become a metonymy of the world. By expanding the concept of the nation well beyond considerations that are racial, ethno-linguistic, or religious, Tagore effectively turns it into a universal space. However, such a move also, simultaneously, destabilizes the nation-concept, rendering it meaningless and redundant. Unlike Kipling, who demonstrates a colonizer's anxiety of a collapse in the colonizer-colonized distinction, and therefore that of the metropole and colony, Tagore not only champions, but actually valorizes such a breakdown. Moreover, if we think back to Strachey's comments about there being no such country called India, Tagore appears to be taking that colonial logic and pushing it to its logical extreme. If it is merely a geographic expression, then anyone who resides in it is an Indian, across the axes of class, caste, religion, and ethnicity.

At the heart of this conception of the community-as-family is Gora's mother, Anandamoyi. She is depicted as someone who decides to adopt Gora after the 1857 Rebellion, and, through this act, sets up the condition to develop and sustain the argument of world-as-community-as-family that suffuses the novel. Anandamoyi's act of adopting Gora resonates in the decision of the Hindu barber's wife to adopt a Muslim son. In both instances, the women are depicted as having decided on the adoption, according them a degree of social agency that was nearly unimaginable at that time, in life or in fiction. More crucially, it depicts women as the agents of progressive social change in the Indian sub-continent. Tagore, importantly, depicts

nineteenth century women, whose domain typically was the domestic sphere, as agents of progressive change that impact the life of the nation, collapsing the distinction between the home and the nation. If the scales of the home and nation are produced by the operations of capital, Tagore's vision of a universal space, then, necessarily becomes a philosophical critique of capital.

Indeed, Tagore's *Gora* is remarkable for having several strong female characters, an unusual feature in early-twentieth century British India. Unlike Chatterjee, whose novels are replete with meek wives or rebellious women who return to the household to serve their husbands, and unlike Kipling, who has very few female characters in his narratives and almost none in *Kim*, the prominent female characters in Tagore's narratives are strong-willed, profoundly rational, more than capable of independent thought, and they express their opinion freely.⁶⁸ They are equal to the men in the narratives, and often out-reason them. For instance, when Haran, the dogmatic Bramho preacher in *Gora*, tries to convince Sucharita that she is moving away from the true path of the Bramho fold, his argument is rebutted and dismissed.

Significantly, in the middle of the narrative, Binoy critiques Gora's vision of India as not being holistic enough. He invokes the "woman question" by telling Gora that

there is a serious shortcoming in our love for the country. We see only one half of [India] ... We see Bharat [India] only as a country of men. We don't see the women at all ... for you this country is without women. Such knowledge of the country cannot be true knowledge (p. 106)

When Gora provides a predictable answer along the lines of if one knows one's mother, then one knows all women, Binoy provides what seems to be a resounding critique of the gendered social division of labor, and indeed, the women's unpaid labor in the household. Tagore (1997) has Binoy tell Gora

⁶⁸ A typical example of this is Bimala from Tagore's 1919 novel *Ghare Baire* [*The Home and the World*].

You are just making up things to say and only deceiving yourself. We are far too familiar with women of the house, engaged in household work, to really come to know them. If we could see our women away from the needs they fulfill at home, then we would know the wholeness and the beauty of our country ... you will have to admit that because women remain out of sight our country has remained only a half-truth to us (p. 107)

Tagore is here holding up the women question in colonial India in its concrete form, underlining the inherent sexism in the rhetoric of contemporaneous Hindu nationalism that repeatedly stressed the need for developing a masculinist and militant ethos (See Sinha, 1995; Basu & Banerjee, 2006). More crucially, he is demystifying the easy relationship between the nation and womanhood that Bankim Chandra Chatterjee set up in the novel *Anandamath*, (especially through its song *Vande Mataram*), that developed into a cult of worshipping the nation as a mother goddess. This is a theme to which Tagore would return again, in 1919, in writing *Ghare Baire* [*The Home and the World*].

CONCLUSION

At the midnight of 15th August, 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru, the leader of the Indian National Congress in the British Indian Parliament, moved the resolution of Indian independence with these words:

Long years ago *we* made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when *we* shall redeem our pledge ... At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when *we* step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance ... At the dawn of history India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her success and her failures ... *We* end today a period of ill fortune and India discovers herself again ... *we* have to ... work hard, to give reality to our dreams. Those dreams are for India, but they are also for the world, for all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today ... this One World that can no longer be split into isolated fragments ... *We* have to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell (Nehru, 1947b, pp. 25 – 26, my italics).¹

Further, in his message to the press the following morning, on the first day of Indian independence, Nehru would say:

The appointed day has come ... and India stands forth again after long slumber and struggle, awake, vital, free and independent ... *We* think also of our brothers and sisters who have been cut off from us by political boundaries and who unhappily cannot share at present in the freedom that has come ... And to India, *our* much-loved motherland, the ancient, the eternal and the ever-new, *we* pay our reverent homage and *we* bind ourselves afresh to her service (Nehru, 1947a, pp. 29 – 30, my italics).

These extracts, from Nehru's historic “tryst with destiny” speech, and his address to the press indicates, foremost, the naturalization of “India” among Indian nationalists at the time of

¹ Jawaharlal Nehru (1889 – 1964) emerged as the paramount leader of the Indian National Congress under the tutelage of Mohandas Gandhi, and became the country's first Prime Minister in 1947, and held the post until his death in office in 1964. Nehru is considered principal architect behind making India a secular, socialist, and democratic republic. He also advocated the mutual co-operation between countries of the Third World, and was a strong proponent of the Non-Aligned Movement.

decolonization. Besides describing India as, at once, “the ancient, the eternal and the ever-new,” the speeches use a plethora of temporal markers. This heightened reliance of temporality has very specific functions: it delineates for the Indian nation a specific historical trajectory that supposedly began “at the dawn of history” when the country “started on her unending quest;” it also underlines the country's historical lineage by positing “trackless centuries” that were “filled with [India's] striving and the grandeur of her success and ... failures.” Moreover, Nehru speaks of decolonization as a “moment” that signals the end of the old era, and heralds the beginning of the new where India “after long slumber and struggle” stands “awake, vital, free and independent.” While this underlines the singularity of the country’s decolonization, it also posits colonization as an episode in India's history.

Nehru's speeches, however, do not stress the issue of temporality alone, but are also imbued with an inherent spatial rhetoric. This is apparent in his depiction of the country as the “much-loved motherland,” as well in describing the task ahead for Indians as the building of the “noble mansion of free India.” Moreover, his articulation of “eternal” India exists in a paradoxical relationship to his keen awareness of the geographical expanse of the country brought about through the partition of British India into the independent dominions of India and Pakistan. This is evident as Nehru acknowledges the “brothers and sisters who have been cut off ... by political boundaries.” Further, the Indian leader also notes the contemporaneous global order could “no longer be split into isolated fragments” and no one could imagine living apart in this “One World.” Nehru's speeches, then, represent the culmination of the historico-geographical processes of *landscaping* that produces the India as a specific *chronotope*, and brings the Indian nation into being. Despite its inherent paradoxes, therefore, Nehru's speeches document the successful *narrativization* of India that is situated in space and time.

It is also important to recall that the Indian leader's speech – delivered to members of the Constituent Assembly of India, and broadcast over radio as well as disseminated through newsreels across the country and abroad – was in *English*. While almost two hundred years of British rule had established English firmly as the “language of command” in South Asia, it must be stressed that the language served as the *lingua franca*, and the means of co-operation, for a class of elite Indians (Ahmad, 1992; Cohn, 1996; Roy, 2004). To put this in another way, Nehru's historic “tryst with destiny” speech was simply not understood by the vast majority of Indians. His choice of the English language as the vehicle of his speech, then, leaves out the majority population of the country from comprehending his address. Yet at the same time, as an elected representative of the people, the population of India remains firmly within the scope of his speeches underlined by his overabundant use of the plural personal pronoun “we,” and the reference to India through the possessive pronoun as “*our* motherland.” In other words, Nehru's speeches points towards the hegemony of the Anglo-vernacular elite of erstwhile British India, who were catapulted to a position of dominance with the decolonization of the Indian sub-continent owing to their socio-economic status in the Indian social formation.

I draw on Nehru's speeches here because it is emblematic of the central concerns of *Landscaping India*. In this dissertation, I have outlined how the indigenous Anglo-vernacular elite contested the socio-spatial hegemony of the colonizers, and attempted to establish their own over the other social groups in the colonial (and postcolonial) Indian social formation. I have situated the emergence, and ascendancy, of the Anglo-vernacular elites in British India in relation to the introduction of property rights in various parts of the colony – the first of which was the Permanent Settlement, introduced in the Bengal Presidency in 1793 – and to the

introduction of English education that aimed to produce a class who would be “Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect” (Macaulay, 2003).

Further, this study has delineated how the nation-space of India was imagined, articulated, and landscaped into being as a specific chronotope by the indigenous elite of British India. It has also demonstrated that the hegemonic space of British India was the condition of possibility for this elite-led Indian anti-colonial nationalism that simultaneously contested the colonial space by articulating, and positing in its stead, the counter-hegemonic space of the Indian nation. Crucially, as I have demonstrated in the chapters that examine the urban landscape of colonial Calcutta, and the spectacular landscape of the Himalaya, the spatial production of the Indian nation took place at the local scale, as well as at that of the colony. Indeed, the processes undergirding the production of the nation-space strive to incorporate the local within the emergent counter-hegemonic space, and scale, of the nation. These historico-geographical processes of contestation, and the attendant attempt at constructing a socio-spatial as well as a scalar counter-hegemony, formed the central logic of, and in turn animated, anti-colonial nationalism in British India. It is this problematic that I have taken up, critically examined, and explained in *Landscaping India*.

We should also note that Nehru refers to India as “our motherland” in his address to the press. While the Indian Prime Minister’s articulated agnosticism, and avowed allegiance to Fabian socialism, makes him rely on a secular anthropomorphism to refer to the country, this was some distance removed from the imagination of the nation inspired by popular Hinduism. As I have argued in *Landscaping India*, the idea of the country as a mother, and a mother goddess had become commonsensical for a vast majority of Indians at the time of independence. I have outlined that this apotheosizing spatial imagination of the nation has its roots in Bankim

Chandra Chatterjee's *Vande Mataram*, a song that imagined the local landscape as a giver of life and nourishment, and equated it with the nation imagined as a mother, and, more significantly, a mother goddess.

In this study, I have critically examined the song, which was subsequently adopted by the postcolonial Indian nation-state as its National Song, as symptomatic of the deployment of a Hindu “common-sense” by the indigenous elite class of colonial India that formed a crucial aspect in the manner in which the Indian nation-space was imagined, rationalized, and propagated. I have demonstrated that *Vande Mataram* struck a chord with Indian nationalists, and achieved a cultic status within the anti-colonial struggle as the deified imagination of a bountiful landscape and country transcended the brutal reality of famines and deaths that marked British India. I have also argued that the equation of the local landscape with the nation, mediated through the image of the mother goddess, became an important means of hegemonizing the space, and scale, of the nation. Though the song was written with the Bengal landscape in mind, the introduction of the mediating category of the mother goddess meant that *any* local landscape from *anywhere* in British India could now be made equivalent with the nation-space. This, however, relies exclusively, and unambiguously, on Hindu imagery, myth, and ritual to structure its anti-colonialism, leaving Muslims completely out of its ambit thereby alienating a large section of them. Moreover, by evacuating the labor of cultivators from the landscape, and by championing a hetero-normative patriarchal ethos, the song also posits the working classes and women as secondary citizens of the nation.

In his “tryst with destiny” speech, Nehru speaks of the “closely knit” people and nations in this “One World” that alludes to the question of belonging in general, and especially to some of the spaces and scales Indians inhabit in their daily lives. *Landscaping India* takes up this

question in its final chapter by constellating, and analyzing, the novels *Kim*, by Rudyard Kipling, and *Gora*, by Tagore. Both novels have Irish foundling protagonists, are set within the space of India, and engage with the problematic of who can, and more importantly, what it means to, belong to India. Kipling views the colony through a prism of imperialism: as a landscape of colors, smells, and sounds that is populated by various native types, and sets up India as a belated space marked by irredeemable difference. His narrative is tinged with an anxiety about losing Kim to the Indian landscape, and is animated by a sense of the impossibility of belonging to, and within, the space of India.

Tagore's exploration of the question of belonging in *Landscaping India* provides a non-normative (and dissenting) vision of decolonization. His novel never uses the landscape form to depict India, and delineates a trajectory of self-awareness for its protagonist, Gora, who transforms from a rabid Hindu nationalist, who is also at once casteist and sexist, to someone who becomes aware of his Irish provenance, and is able to transcend difference. By foregrounding Anandamoyi's love for his adopted Irish son, Tagore contends that bonds of filiation are sufficient to settle the question of belonging, thereby refuting Kipling's imperialist imagination of India and Indians. For him, Gora continues to belong to, and within, the space of India despite being Irish, and without religious and caste identities. In addition, Tagore populates his narrative with several strong and agential women characters. Consequently, he repudiates the nativism, parochialism, and sexism evident in Chatterjee's notions of India and Indians. Indeed, by stressing bonds of filiation over all else as the arbiter of belonging, Tagore collapses the scale of the world to that of the home, while simultaneously expanding the scale of the home by equating it with the world. This renders the space, and scale, of the nation congruent with those

of the home and the world, and therefore redundant. Tagore, thus, posits an anti-colonial vision that is not nationalistic, but one where global humanity is at home in the world.

Moreover, Nehru's statement that this "One World that can no longer be split into isolated fragments" points to the reality of India as an integral part of the world, and world economy, achieved through the socio-economic processes of colonial globalization, and through the deployment of the attendant technologies of surveying and mapping. Indeed, this is best exemplified by the image with which I began this study: the map of British India made to scale, and laid in the grid of the Universal Time Coordinates, that served as the "deity" in the Mother India temple at Varanasi. Further, Nehru's invocation of "fragments" appears to recall, and reiterate, the message from one of Rabindranath Tagore's short poems structured as a prayer for India. In his poem, Tagore (1920) envisions the country as a place:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake (pp. 27 - 28)

India's independence could scarcely be called an awakening into a "heaven of freedom" in light of the partitioning of British India into the independent dominions of India and Pakistan. This final act of landscaping the colonial space heralded one of the bloodiest chapters of the subcontinent's history, marked by killings, rapes, and widespread dislocation and dispossession that Hindus and Sikhs on one hand, and Muslims on another, unleashed on each other, especially

in the provinces of Punjab and Bengal. Nehru's valorization of "One World" in light of the reality of "political boundaries," therefore, appears profoundly contradictory.

The contradiction in Nehru's statement is, however, fundamentally illuminating of the operations of global capital unleashed through the violence of colonial globalization that fashioned the world into metropolitan centers and colonial peripheries; developing national markets and enclaves of capital across the globe. *Landscaping India* relies on the theory of uneven development, especially as it has been articulated by Neil Smith (1990), to argue for understanding the emergence of the space and scale of the Indian nation – and by extension, the nation-concept as a world-wide spatial and scalar form – as a function of the global processes of capital. This theoretical stance allows me to conceptualize the postcolonial nation, a usually neglected area of Marxist theorization, in concrete political-economic terms. This emphasis also allows me to speak of the post-colonial nation as a spatial, and scalar, manifestation of the *contradictory* global processes of capitalist accumulation that is a function of *both similitude and difference*. Thinking of the nation as a specific *scale* of capital, moreover, allows for thinking about the construction and the operations of a planetary hegemony.

Such a theoretical approach, then, renews our understanding of the production of peripheral spaces and scales, and in particular that of the space and scale of the postcolonial nation. It does so without conceptualizing them in reified terms of *difference*, and difference *alone* as has been the wont of the leading lights of Subaltern Studies. For instance, in his attempt to simultaneously provincialize Europe, and delineate the myriad ways of being in the (third) world, Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) has posited two histories of capital. Chakrabarty (2000) claims that capital always puts forward two histories of itself: History 1 is capital's own logical history, while History 2 is the history of capital that pre-dates it and manifests in the

development of the commodity form and money commodity (pp. 63 – 64). According to Chakrabarty (2000), History 1 is the universal logic of capital that pushes for global dominion while History 2 points towards local moments of being that exists *outside* the logic of History 1. In this dissertation, I have documented the specific historical trajectory for the emergence and consolidation of the Indian nation-space, while situating this within the global operations of capital. In so doing, *Landscaping India* illuminates one strand of the global history of capitalist accumulation besides conceptualizing – *contra* Chakrabarty (2000) – History 1 and History 2 as dialectically intertwined: where History 1 outlines the *universal* logic of capital and History 2 its *historical*, that is, its *local and contingent* logic. To think of the nation as a space, and a scale, produced by the global processes of capitalism is, therefore, to comprehend these as products *both* the universal and historical logic of capital.

Moreover, *Landscaping India* uses a historical materialist method for the critical analysis of literature and culture. This study analyses poems, travelogues, novels, photographs, and songs along with, and in relation to, “non-literary” texts such as governmental reports, surveys, censuses, popular geography texts, newspaper reportage, and personal diaries. By analyzing the literary and cultural texts in relation to their con-texts by situating these within, and in relation to, the material conditions of their production, and the dynamic environment of literary and cultural contestation engendered by European imperialism, this dissertation expands the normative understanding of the “imperial archive.” Furthermore, it reinvigorates the analytical method practiced, and espoused, by Raymond Williams (1958, 1973, 1977), and Edward Said in *Culture and Materialism* (1994), which have been displaced by post-structuralist approaches to literary and cultural analysis that are invariably, and necessarily, marked by a linguistic reductionism. *Landscaping India*, therefore, provides a *holistic* and *dialectical* appraisal of the historico-

geographical experience of imperialism in South Asia, besides renewing our understanding of colonialism, postcolonialism, nationalism, and nativism.

Landscaping India examines texts written in English as well as in the vernaculars by Indians from British India, and situates these vis-à-vis contemporaneous British literary and cultural productions on India. In so doing, this dissertation illuminates the *global* history of English literary production. At the same time, in addition to provincializing the notion of “Anglophone literature,” a term used in literary studies to characterize English literary productions from the peripheral world, this study also offers a nuanced and differentiated understanding of that category. Also, by situating and examining literary and cultural productions from Britain’s South Asian colony produced during the imperial Victorian era against their metropolitan counterparts, this study not only valorizes and highlights the peripheral experience of Victorian imperialism, but also documents the distant, and displaced literary and cultural universe engendered by imperial Britain that is largely ignored by dominant stands of Victorian Studies.

Landscaping India also refocuses critical attention on the concept of landscape. In this study, I have analyzed how the landscape, as built form and representation, is deployed across various spaces and scales in the colonial context. By focusing on the colonial landscape, it provides a non-metropolitan focus to, and expands, the extant geographical literature on the production of space and landscape. Moreover, through an examination of the local, regional, and national landscapes in the context of British India, it sheds light on the scalar dimension of the concept. Further, by arguing that the map is a landscaped representation of the nation-space, and in turn relating these to the idea of the chronotope, this dissertation expands the understanding of

the landscape by outlining it as a spatio-temporal concept. Crucially, this also introduces a geographical dimension in the historical study of colonialism and nationalism in South Asia.

The central concerns of *Landscaping India*, that is, historico-geographical processes undergirding the socio-spatial and scalar hegemony of the Indian elites within the Indian nation-space, are also exceptionally relevant for thinking about contemporary India. The neoliberal restructuring of the India economy and the gradual dismantling of a state-led planned economy since the decade of the 1990s has translated into the disavowal of any structured attempt at social equity. Buoyed, largely, by service sector employment, the Indian elites have consolidated their hegemonic position within the contemporary Indian social formation at the expense of farmers, as well as the working class, depressed castes, tribal communities, religious and ethnic minorities, and especially women from these socio-economic groups (Fernandes, 2006; Oza, 2006; Roy, 2007; Sainath, 2007; Shah, 2010). This has, in turn, given rise to a whole new set of socio-spatial contestations organized along the lines of class, caste, gender, community, ethnicity, and religion that are contesting the socio-spatial hegemony of the Indian elites. *Landscaping India* provides a historical gloss on the struggles of these socio-economic groups over the contemporary landscape of the Indian nation that are claiming, and reclaiming, their right to dwell as equals in the “noble mansion of free India.”

APPENDIX A

Number of Houses in Calcutta in 1891

WARD No.	Area in acres	Houses			
		Masonry		Others	
		Occupied	Unoccupied	Occupied	Unoccupied
1	2	3	4	5	6
I	409	1,599	184	2,528	232
II	217	1,220	93	1,444	41
III	403	1,786	162	2,546	124
IV	320	1,255	64	2,361	92
V	243	1,375	72	1,356	62
VI	262	1,816	152	1,685	145
VII	217	1,708	384	365	175
VIII	224	1,343	107	1,721	432
IX	460	1,945	86	2,373	348
X	147	825	19	725	5
XI	166	1,175	99	1,192	217
XII	211	438	8	49	5
XIII	192	805	76	988	19
XIV	198	1,065	85	1,358	46
XV	179	372	113	898	130
XVI	153	194	2	46	1
XVII	128	89	1	310	3
XVIII	108	90	6	166	3
XIX	1,062	634	139	3,676	198
XX	800	680	42	3,386	110
XXI	2,022	591	153	3,323	326
XXII	838	1,610	134	4,408	468
XXIII	1,241	387	52	1,987	139
XXIV	921	184	17	2,296	96
XXV	729	553	81	2,602	145
Total for Town	11,850	23,739	2,331	43,789	3,562

Total number of houses (masonry and others): 73,421.

Houses made of masonry, as a percentage of all houses: 35.51.

Houses categorized as “others,” as a percentage of all houses: 64.49.

(Source: Maguire, 1891, p. ii).

APPENDIX B

English translation of *Vande Mataram*

Below is the English translation of the song *Vande Mataram* in its entirety, as it appeared in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novel *Anandamath*. The version of this song that is the National Song of the Republic of India consists of only the first two stanzas of the song. The translation below is mine.

I

I revere the mother!
The mother – richly watered, rich in fruit,
Cooled by the southern winds,
Verdant with her standing crops.

II

The moonlight glorious,
The night joyous,
The mother – radiant in blooming flowers,
And swaying trees,
Smiling with grace, speaking sweetly,
Giving joy and boons aplenty.

III

Seventy million voices raise a clamor
Twice as many hands, with swords, show their valor
Who then calls you powerless, Mother?

IV

To the Mother I bow,
Who wields such great power
Who drives away the hostile hordes, our savior!
I revere the Mother!

V

You our wisdom, you our law,
You our heart, you our core,
Within our bodies, the spirit is yours.

VI

You are our strength of arm,
The devotion in our hearts,
In every temple, we shape your form.
I revere the Mother!

VII

You are Durga, wielding the tenfold power,
The goddess of wealth, on the lotus flower,
You are Speech, giver of wisdom – you I revere!

VIII

I bow to the goddess – spotless, and beyond compare;
To the mother – richly watered, rich in fruit,
I revere the Mother!

IX

Richly green and richly dressed,
With a gentle, joyous face
This motherland – the mother
Keeper and provider,
I revere the Mother!

APPENDIX C

Vande Mataram

Below is the original version of the song *Vande Mataram* (in roman script) as it appeared in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novel *Anandamath*. The version of this song that is the National Song of the Republic of India consists of only the first two stanzas of the song. My translation of the song (Appendix B) is based on the text below.

I

Vande mataram
Sujalam suphalam
Malayajasitalam
Shasyashyamalam
Mataram

II

Subhrajyotsnapulakitayaminim
Phullakusumitadrumadolashibhinim
Suhashinim sumadhurabhashinim
Sukhadam baradam mataram
Vande mataram

III

Saptakotikanthakalakalaninadakarale
Dwisaptakotibhurjaidhritakharabale
Abala keno ma eto bale

IV

Bahubaladharinim namami tarinim
Ripudalabarinim mataram
Vande mataram

V

Tumi vidya tumi dharma
Tumi hridi tumi marma
Tvam he pranah sharire

VI

Bahute tumi ma shakti
Hridaye tumi ma bhakti
Tomaraoi pratima gori mandire mandire
Vande mataram

VII

Tvam he Durga dashapraharanadharini
Kamala kamadalaviharini
Vani vidyadayini namami tvam

VIII

Namami kamalam amalam atulam
Sujalam suphalam mataram
Vande mataram

IX

Shyamalam saralam sushmitam bhushitam
Dharanim bharanim mataram
Vande Mataram

APPENDIX D**Population of British India, excluding Burma, in 1881**

Region	Area (in square miles)	Males	Females	Total
Ajmere	2,711	248,844	211,878	460,722
Assam	46,341	2,503,703	2,377,723	4,881,426
Bengal	193,198	34,625,591	34,911,270	69,536,861
Berar	17,711	1,380,492	1,292,181	2,672,673
Bombay (BT)*	124,122	8,497,718	7,956,696	16,454,414
Bombay (FS)**	73,753	3,572,355	3,368,894	6,941,249
Central Provinces (BT)*	84,445	4,959,435	4,879,356	9,838,791
Central Provinces (FS)**	28,834	867,687	842,033	1,709,720
Coorg	1,583	100,439	77,863	178,302
Madras	141,001	15,421,043	15,749,588	31,170,631
North-Western Provinces (BT)*	106,111	22,912,556	21,195,313	44,107,869
North-Western Provinces (FS)**	5,125	384,699	357,051	741,750
Punjab (BT)*	106,632	10,210,053	8,640,384	18,850,437
Punjab (FS)**	35,817	2,112,303	1,749,380	3,861,683
Baroda	8,570	1,139,512	1,045,493	2,185,005
Central India	75,079	4,882,823	4,379,084	9,261,907
Cochin	1,361	301,815	298,463	600,278
Hyderabad	81,807	5,002,137	4,843,457	9,845,594
Mysore	24,723	2,085,842	2,100,346	4,186,188
Rajputana	129,750	5,544,665	4,723,727	10,268,392
Travancore	6,730	1,197,134	1,204,024	2,401,158
Total	1,295,404	127,950,846	122,204,204	250,155,050

*BT = British Territory

** FS = Feudatory States (Princely States)

(Source: Plowden, 1883, p. 1).

APPENDIX E**Life Expectancy in British India**

Decade	Life Expectancy	Implied Death Rate
1871 - 81	24.6	40.7 per mille
1881 - 91	25	40 per mille
1891 - 1901	23.8	42 per mille
1901 - 11	22.9	43.7 per mille
1911 - 21	20.1	49.8 per mille

(Source: Klein, 1973, p. 640).

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happened during the author's thirty years residence in those parts; But also of the most remarkable occurrences and revolutions in those vast dominions, for this century past. Comprehending also many curious and interesting particulars relating to our commerce with those countries, and the affairs of the East India Company. Illustrated with maps and sculptures. By Captain Alexander Hamilton. In two volumes. Volume II. London: Printed for C. Hitch, in Paternoster-row; and A. Millar, opposite to Katharine-Street in the Strand.

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PUBLICATIONS

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- “‘Not altogether Unpicturesque’: Samuel Bourne and the Landscaping of the Victorian Himalaya.” *Victorian Literature and Culture: Special Issue on Victorian India* – Forthcoming, Winter 2014.
- “Secularising the Sacred, Imagining the Nation-Space: The Himalaya in Bengali Travelogues, 1856 – 1901” (with Subho Basu). *Modern Asian Studies* – Forthcoming, 2014.

BOOK CHAPTERS

- “The City as Nation: Delhi as the Indian Nation in Bengali Bhadraklok Travelogues, 1866 – 1910” (with Subho Basu) in *The City in South Asia*. Eds. Crispin Bates, Minuro Mio & Akio Tanabe. Routledge. Forthcoming, 2013.
- “Raymond Williams: Materialist Approach to Culture, Literature, Media and Politics – The Critical Terrain of Marxism” in *Modern Social Thinkers*. Ed. Pradip Basu. Calcutta: Setu Publishing, 2012. pp. 319 – 336.

OTHER ARTICLES

- “A Short History of South Asia” (with Subho Basu, Stephen Christopher, and Susan Wadley) in *South Asia in the World*. Ed. Susan Wadley. ME Sharpe. Forthcoming, 2013.
- “Epiphany and Exasperation: The National Library” in *Kolkata, Book City: Readings, Fragments, Images*. Eds. Jennie Renton and Sria Chatterjee. Edinburgh: Textualities, 2009. pp. 163 – 172.

INVITED TALKS

- 2013 (Feb) “Between ‘General Magnificence’ and the ‘Clammy Odour of Blue Slime’: Inventing Colonial Calcutta.” Department of English, McGill University, Montreal, Canada.
- 2013 (Jan) “Of ‘General Magnificence’ and ‘Blue Slime’: Landscaping Colonial Calcutta.” Department of English, Colgate University, Hamilton, USA.
- 2012 (Apr) “Victoria, Divinity, and the Indian ‘mother’land: Contesting and Claiming the Space of India in the Nineteenth Century.” Department of English Colloquium Series, Syracuse University, Syracuse, USA.
- 2011 (Sep) “Landscaping the Colonial Himalaya: The Images and Texts of Samuel Bourne.” Department of English, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, India.
- 2010 (Sep) “Secularizing the Sacred: The Himalayas in the Bengali bhadrakol Imaginary.” History Faculty Workshop, Department of History, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, Syracuse, USA. (With Subho Basu).
- 2009 (Jan) “Pacifying a Hostile Land and People: The Cases of Samuel Bourne and *The People of India*.” Spring Speakers Series, South Asia Center, Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs, Syracuse University, Syracuse, USA.

SELECT CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- 2012 (Oct) “Bollywood and the Violent Critique of Corruption in Neoliberal India: The Story of *Kahaani*.” Presented at the 41st Annual Conference on South Asia at Madison, USA.
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- 2010 (Oct) “Samuel Bourne and the Spatial Production of the Victorian Himalaya.” Presented at the 39th Annual Conference on South Asia at Madison, USA.
- 2010 (Jul) “The City as Nation: Delhi as the Symbol of the Indian Nation in the Victorian Bengali bhadralok Imaginary.” Presented at the City in South Asia International Conference at the National Institute of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan.
- 2005 (Dec) “Indian Policy-Making and Corporate Lobbying: Influences on Indian Policy Making.” Presented at the Corporate Influences on Global Trade Negotiations Seminar, organized by Action Aid at New Delhi, India.

TEACHING

At Syracuse University

- ETS 182 Re-Presenting the Other: Race and Literary Texts (Spring 2011)
- ETS 181 The Worlds of Labor: Class and Literary Texts (Spring 2010)
- ETS 153 Pleasures of the Text: Interpretation of Fiction (Fall 2010)

SERVICE

- 2013 Organizer: Spring Symposium Public Lecture and Mini-Seminar, Humanities Center, Syracuse University, Syracuse, USA. (Speaker: Keya Ganguly, Professor, Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA.)
- 2012 Panel Organizer: “Corruption, Culture, and Critique in Post-independence India” at the 41st Annual Conference on South Asia at Madison, USA.
- 2011 Panel Organizer: “From Colonial Calcutta to Neoliberal Kolkata” at the 40th Annual Conference on South Asia at Madison, USA.
- 2010 – 2011 Graduate Student Representative (Elected): Graduate Committee, English Department, Syracuse University, Syracuse, USA.
- 2008 – 2009 Graduate Student Representative (Nominated): Promotions and Tenure Committee, College of Arts & Sciences, Syracuse University, Syracuse, USA.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2005 – 2007 Special Correspondent, Cable News Network-India Broadcast News (CNN-IBN), New Delhi, India.
- 2003 – 2005 Correspondent, New Delhi Television (NDTV), New Delhi, India.
- 1997 – present Contributor to *The Times of India*, New Delhi, India; *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, India; *The Times of India*, Calcutta, India; *The Economic Times*, Calcutta, India; *The Statesman*, Calcutta, India; *Daily Times*, Lahore, Pakistan; *The Friday Times*, Lahore, Pakistan; *Emirates Today*, Abu Dhabi, UAE; *Time Out*, Delhi, India; *Aaj Ekhon*, Calcutta, India (Bengali).

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- Modern Language Association (MLA)
- American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA)
- South Asian Literary Association (SALA)