

METAPHOR AND THE POSTCOLONIAL
NOVEL

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Declaration

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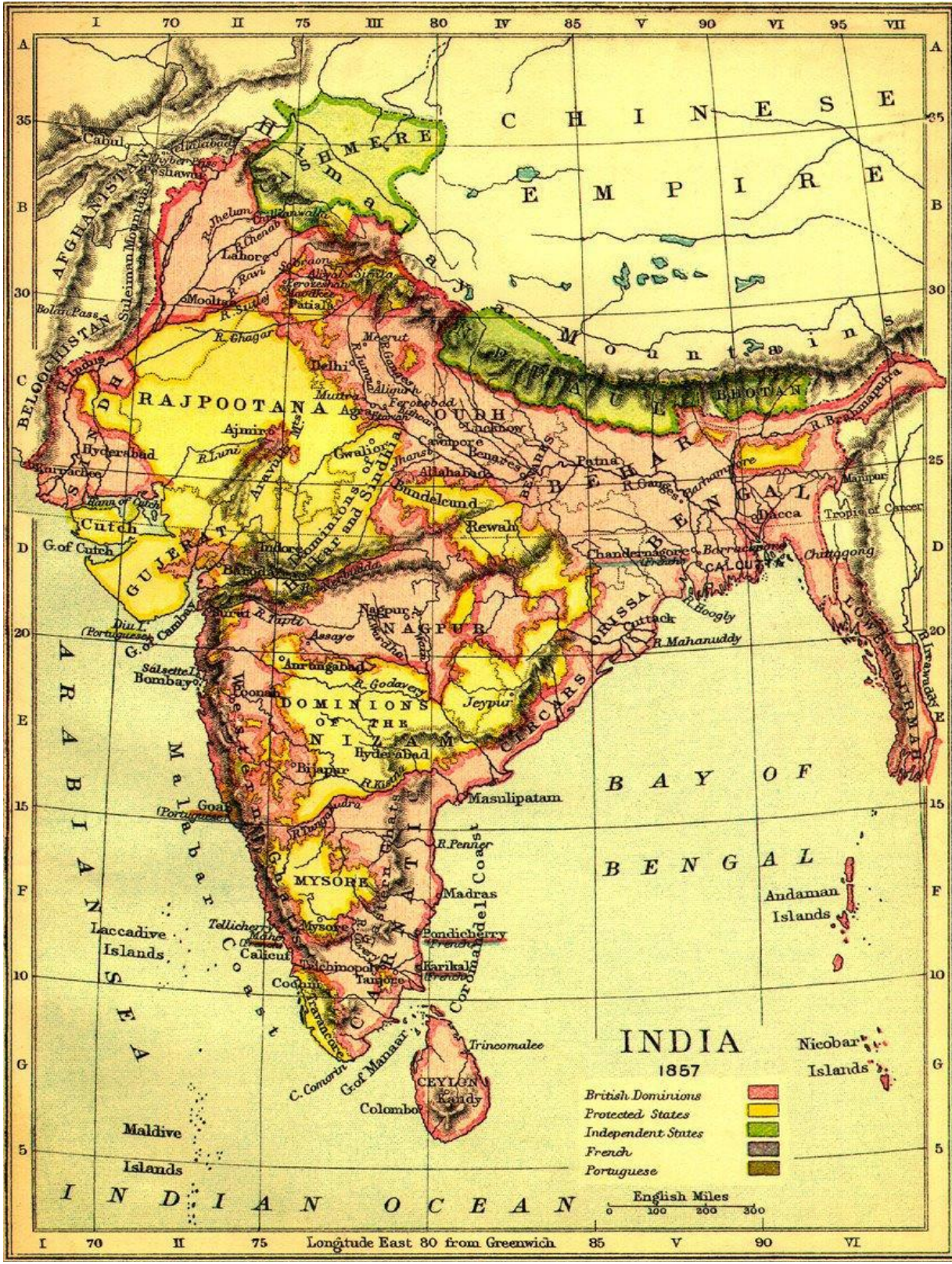
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British Dominions
 Protected States
 Independent States
 French
 Portuguese

INDIA

1857

English Miles
 0 100 200 300

I 70 II 75 Longitude East 80 from Greenwich 85 V 90 VI

Introduction

The term postcolonial is used to describe that form of social criticism that bears witness to those unequal and uneven processes of representation by which the historical experience of the once colonised Third World comes to be framed in the West.

(Homi Bhabha, New York 1991)

As a young Indian writer I have wanted for a long time to delve into the realms of my nation's history and explore the effects of colonialism and literary and social history in my work, drawing from India's violent colonial past. The history of my nation has always held intrigue for me, especially the epoch when India was colonised by Britain. 'The brightest jewel in Britain's Crown', said Benjamin Disraeli, then Prime Minister of Britain, as he displayed a map of India to Queen Victoria in 1877. India, like many other colonies of Britain, was left with the indelible fingerprint of a colonised history. The perception created in Britain was of positive imperialism. The glory of the empire and the associative pride was worked on by colonial narrators and propagandists. British writers wrote compelling tales by way of myth and metaphor, of colonial heroes taming the primitive 'barbarians' and bringing social order and 'decorum' to 'uncivilised' India. Great Britain's imperialism had reached its acme by the late nineteenth century and it had a wealth of colonial writers, either living in the metropolis, or in the colonies themselves, such as Rudyard Kipling. As Elle Boehmer asserts in her book, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*; 'at the time of high imperialism in the late nineteenth century, most British imperialists cherished an unambiguously heroic image of themselves as conquerors and civilisers of the world.' (Elle Boehmer 1995: 23)

Charles Darwin (in his 'founding' yet controversial work *Origin of Species*, 1859) changed the way Europeans viewed the rest of the world. Social Darwinist thought construed the 'Orient' to be a sad place, a 'White man's burden', as Kipling wrote in the poem of the same title in 1899.

Luminaries such as Kipling, 'always a canny interpreter of British imperial imagination' as Boehmer argues, and Darwin, among others, were particularly sensitive to the rise of colonialism as the Anglo-Saxon race began to establish its supremacy by dominating their subject peoples in the name of imperial enterprise (Ashcroft 2000: 198). This way the white coloniser controlled the lands belonging to the indigenous people and also benefitted economically by way of trade and enterprise with these lands. 'European colonists dispossessed and overwhelmed the Indigenous populations. They established a transplanted civilisation which eventually secured political independence.' (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 1989:25)

There was no stopping the rising sway of the Empire now and imperialism caught on giving the white man further impetus to invade far-off lands, such as Africa, Jamaica amongst others. This hunger for more lands and trade was substantiated by way of unconvincing 'moral' Christian duty. Serving as a double edged weapon, imperialism also provided unlimited military and mercenary wealth and political influence. This notion is celebrated in colonial texts such as Kipling's *Plain Tales from the Raj*, *Kim* and Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness*, among other such texts. These texts pandered to white colonialist sensibilities by both exoticising and problematising the indigenous peoples. Even the writings of Victorian authors such as Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, and Charlotte Bronte, whilst not openly located in colonial states reiterated the imperial centre's conquests of the colonial peripheries when they penned their stories, even though the subject themes of their writings were not directly proportional to the conquests of the British Empire. Thus the colonial vision was fuelled and the imperial sentiment amongst the readers was consolidated as they felt the pride of their Empire vicariously. For instance, in Jane Austen's acclaimed *Mansfield Park* (1814); the novel emphasizes the pretentiousness of the prevalent English society wherein social status was attributed to how much 'property' one possessed. Such a mention of 'property' in these narratives was

directly proportional to plantations, estates and venture capital, situated in the far-off colonies.

Colonial texts also borrowed heavily from eastern mythology and exoticism but put their own imperial stamp on them, consequently reinforcing a questionable and prejudiced Eurocentric vision of such literature. It could even be argued that Europe not only colonised lands which did not belong to it but also left its own imprint upon the traditional stories of such lands, juxtaposing and manipulating their essence to suit its colonialist sensibilities. Cases in point are *The Arabian Nights*, which was revised and rewritten by authors such as Sir Richard Burton who was both titillated by the narratives and determined to re-write them as met the taste of Victorian gentlemen. Despite the lack of authenticity, such literature sold widely as it offered the readers back home a world which was surreal, 'alien' and yet mesmerising in its uniqueness.

As imperialism began to wane in the early twentieth century, postcolonial literature emerged in the form of a subdued anti-imperialist nationalism in these colonies, and pertinently, India. Thus, the postcolonial novel was born which was earlier identified as being solely concerned with anti-colonial themes. Colonised writers such as Rabindranath Tagore, Raja Rao, started to come into their own and adopted the Western genres of the novel and short stories to voice their own cultural leanings and freedom of expression, which till then had been subdued by the coloniser's might. To achieve their nationalistic ambitions and to revive the notions of lost self-pride in their readers, these writers borrowed literary conventions and nuances from their colonisers to articulate their own perceptions of a free nation. The writers often took up anti-colonial themes and ideas in their writings as a form of national or indigenous self-expression.

This mode of writing in once occupied nations by native writers paved the way for how these texts could be perceived, the authors rewriting their own version of a past which had now become the domain of Europe, textually and literally. The literature of the indigenes had been relegated to the background or 'appropriated' by the coloniser. Read another way, such a literature had been 'repackaged' to suit Western taste and sensibilities, just like the above example of the *Arabian Nights*. This is not to say that the entire literature of the indigenes was overlooked or belittled. Indian sacred texts such as *The Bhagwad Gita*, *The*

Ramayana, were translated in the English language as the Empire was intrigued and influenced by the spiritual sagacity and solace that such texts provided.

This set of reading and writing practices by native writers also led to the academic discipline which is now widely articulated and identified as postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory, therefore, as a literary theory is writing that aims one way or another to resist colonially biased perspectives. Such a theory is an informed and nuanced study of literature produced in countries that were once colonies of other countries. This cultural discourse, as propounded by Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, seeks to dispel notions often associated with Eurocentric approaches to literature. The theory therefore becomes a kind of a cultural critique, an ongoing dialogue about the colony's past as regards the history of the complex hegemony between the coloniser and the colonised. One of the major proponents of this theory, Homi Bhabha, in his essay, *Location of Culture*, maintains that the postcolonial text is a 'hybrid text' as it borrows heavily from its coloniser's literature, the English language to begin with, displaying features such as mimicry, subversion by imitation, as powerful tools of resistance. The postcolonial text is therefore hybridised, polyphonic and imbued with magic realism in its form and scope, to capture a complex and perplexing response to the world.

Thus the postcolonial novel owes its identity to postcolonial theory. The reverse is also true since to interpret postcolonial literature, the highly intellectual reading practices of the postcolonial theory came into existence. The postcolonial novel was then critically analysed and re-interpreted to deconstruct the complex imperial-colonial relationship. One of the most striking outcomes in the context of literature in the postcolonial/post imperial world has been the manner in which the genre now holds its own as a thriving industry. (Huggan 2001: preface). In the last three or four decades the West, though still in the throes of 'imperialist nostalgia' (Rosaldo: 1993) has readily become an active consumer of postcolonial literature and the postcolonial novel now shares its 'cultural otherness' with the rest of the world. This success can be gauged by the saleability of authors such as Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy. Where once the culture of the Other was termed barbaric, primitive and unschooled, it is now read widely and celebrated. There is a relatively new, keen curiosity in the West about the 'mystical, exotic

and ‘Othered’ (Huggan: 2001), and as a result of such a curiosity we have seen a spurt in the growth of postcolonial literature. It certainly helps that multinational corporate enterprises such as the Booker Company have assisted in ‘mainstreaming’ the postcolonial novel by sponsoring the prestigious Man Booker prize (Huggan 2001: preface).

Starting with its ideology as dominantly anti-imperial and nationalist, often with the help of metaphor, the postcolonial novel seeks answers to often-asked questions about its ‘othered’ identity and explores the paradoxes that beset its marginalised history. As Graham Huggan points out, postcolonial critique seeks ‘to produce a blueprint for the re-exploration of political questions of authority, autonomy and agency in an era of cultural globalisation’ (Huggan 2001:240). In return, it provides a platform to raise and engage in discourse on issues about its past, its history and the way it has been manipulated and played by imperial rulers. Thus, it resists a Eurocentric insight into its identity. Elle Boehmer is of a similar view, arguing that; ‘postcolonial fiction gives structure to, as well as, being structured, by history.’ (Boehmer 1995:196)

The main discursive field under which I have identified my own work is postcolonial theory and discourse. Having chosen the genre of postcolonial historical fiction for my novel, *War Cry*, which forms part of this exegesis, I have also flirted with the notion of metaphors as a point of study in colonial and postcolonial texts, arguing that metaphors play a significant role in such literature.

The desire to have the colonisers’ misinterpretations and imperialistic notions readdressed often took shape with the usage of metaphors cloaked due to the imperial restraints, in postcolonial literature. Therefore, my main endeavour has been to contextualise my case studies in relation to metaphors, to realign and restructure biased perspectives. Reading and critically exploring select colonial literature by British and Indian authors as well as postcolonial writings, provided insights into the use of metaphors in these works. I have analysed how such a device can be a useful tool to convey profound and significant meanings, without resorting to a shrill rhetoric. To borrow a simple, concise definition from Terence Hawkes, ‘a metaphor is traditionally taken to be the most fundamental form

of figurative language.’ (Hawkes 1972:1). Another simplistic definition of metaphor, to borrow from *The Oxford English Dictionary* is;

1. figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable.
2. a thing symbolic of something else (Oxford Dictionary: 1997:324).

In short, a metaphor is a device wherein the symbolic meaning has to be derived instead of a literal one to convey the deeper implication in language and literature. It can even be argued that a metaphor does not simply offer an ornamental approach to language. Not only does it have a key linguistic purpose but also a conceptual one. It is a sort of ‘euphemism’, so to speak, to tone down the theme of a text and to voice grievances, especially in the context of postcolonial literature, against a colonial past. While metaphors in ordinary discourses are fairly transparent, in postcolonial discourse they hold a special place as they equip the postcolonial writers with the necessary tools to articulate their nation’s cultural and social identity. What is most striking about such a device of language is that once used, a metaphor has open, ambivalent connotations, letting the reader to interpret the underlying themes, by weaving the same subtly into the text. As Andrea Musolff argues in his book, *Metaphor and Discourse*:

Metaphors invite narratives and it is the construction of the (metaphorical) narratives in a discourse community that give the topic event meaning (Bruno 1991). From this perspective, there is no ‘full’ perspective of a metaphor-rather attempts at understanding are discontinued once these generate more boredom than insight. (Musolff 2009:5)

A metaphor will always have notable significance in postcolonial works as themes of such literature have understated lessons in history. These themes often propel the reader to question and be intrigued by the vagaries of the postcolonial nation’s chequered past in a neocolonial world. Such texts often cloak themselves in layers of magic realism, allegories and metaphors without resorting to overt anti-colonialist themes. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, go on to argue in their book, *The Empire Writes Back*;

Texts of this kind (postcolonial) come into being within the constraints of a discourse and the institutional practice of a patronage system which limits and undercuts their assertion of a different perspective. (Ashcroft 1989:6)

It is then that metaphors come to serve their role and take a place in postcolonial texts to veil the themes but yet to bring home the underlying meaning of these themes. The 'patronage system' referred to above is the imperial ruling class which alone was responsible for the publication and distribution of the resulting work. Thus the scope of a different perspective towards the imperial-colonial equation was largely undercut and controlled. Hence, allusions to metaphors and symbolism abounded in earlier postcolonial texts.

Having situated my own novel in postcolonial theory and using metaphor to signify my themes I have applied the theory to the primary case study of my thesis, *The Far Pavilions* (1978) by M.M Kaye. Kaye wrote the novel *The Far Pavilions* as a colonial text set in the late nineteenth century. Though, in the strictest sense, the writer cannot be labelled a postcolonial writer as she was British and not Indian, her fiction reflects an innate 'Indianness' as the story is nationalistic in tone and *bona fide* as to its rendering of India and its people. The novel touches upon issues dealing with colonialism, subalterns, the repercussions of imperialism on the colonised and other aspects of postcolonial theory and Kaye uses metaphors to highlight these subthemes in her novel. To that effect, the text mirrors the paradigm of a postcolonial text as it engages those issues which constitute and support the leanings of postcolonial and cultural discourse. In the first chapter of my exegesis I have discussed this aspect of the Kaye's novel at length.

In chapter I compare Kaye's novel with other colonial Indian literature including that written by Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) writer, poet, philosopher, as well as contemporary writer Arundhati Roy to broaden my argument of the Indian perspective and to offer a contrast to Kaye's writings. Apart from reading the works of colonial writers such as Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, E.M Forster's *A Passage to India* and George Orwell's *Shooting an Elephant*, I also examined the works of British authors who wrote during postcolonial times, such as Paul Scott's *The Jewel in the Crown*, and Alex Stuart's *Star of Oudh*,

with a view to comparing the styles of colonial versus postcolonial writing by British writers. This comparison has offered varied interpretations of the narrative tenor of literature used during the British Raj by British authors. The main focus and commonality eventually binding the above texts, I argue, are the metaphors that the writers have chosen for their themes, with the British writers holding onto the imperial idiom and the Indian nationalistic writers resisting it.

Colonial texts such as those written by Rudyard Kipling and E.M Forster, essentially take a Eurocentric approach to their writings celebrating, though discreetly, the lofty imperial vision of the historical moment. Forster called India ‘a muddle’ in *A Passage to India*. Kipling penned the catch phrase ‘East is east and West is west and never the twain shall meet’, which became a hugely popular idiom for the supporters of the exoticisation of the East. Despite creating protagonists who were Indian, for example, in *Kim* and *The Jungle Book*, Kipling’s quintessential colonial condescension continues in works about why the marginalised should be grateful to their rulers for bringing social order and culture to their lands, a ‘burden’ for whom the white man must perform his Christian duty. A reading of *Kim* continues to raise questions about the so called ‘racial supremacy’ and rationalism of imperialism and its resultant subjugation of the Other. Kipling’s *Kim* caused Edward Said to remark ‘...a master work of imperialism . . . a rich and absolutely fascinating, but nevertheless profoundly embarrassing novel.’ Said reiterates such Eurocentric views of the East in his founding text on postcolonial studies, *Orientalism* :

The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences. (Said 1978:1)

E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*, which I explore in Chapter two of my exegesis, is yet another account of the exotic Other, which can never be comprehended by the Imperial West. The novel’s metaphor of the ‘Marabar Caves’ poses questions about the nation’s diversity in religion, languages and society. India cannot be ‘labelled’ and it is beyond the scope of understanding for a Westerner, prone to thinking analytically and logically as opposed to a non-Westerner who is generally perceived to think from his heart and allows emotions to rule his better judgement. Such thinking leads to a ‘muddle’, according to

Forster. Thus, the underlying theme of the novel is the distance between East and West which can never be bridged - if it is at all bridged, catastrophe strikes. As the story draws to a close, Fielding says to Dr Aziz,

‘Why can’t we be friends now?’ said the other, holding him affectionately. ‘It’s what I want. It’s what you want? But the horses didn’t want it-they swerved apart; the earth didn’t want it, sending up rocks through which riders 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 and saw beneath: they didn’t want it, they said in their hundred voices: ‘No, not yet,’ and the sky said: ‘No, not there.’ *A Passage to India* (p. 282)

George Orwell’s essay *Shooting an Elephant* offers a different approach from Forster’s and Kipling’s works as a representative of the imperialist. The ‘Elephant’ in the essay is a metaphor for the limits to the freedom of the coloniser as he has to act in accordance with the expectations of the natives. Orwell said in his essay, ‘the experiences as a man acting for the imperial Britain reflect certain helplessness in the face of it all.’ Through his metaphor of the elephant Orwell manages to give a clear glimpse of his feelings as a mere puppet in the hands of natives as well his imperialist countrymen. He finally does manage to “shoot” the elephant after all, his conscience wrought by guilt. The action displays his anxiety to come to terms with the lofty expectations of not only the locals but also the uniform that he dons. As opposed to the gentility of Forster and Kipling, Orwell’s background’s was working class and he felt a ‘victim’ of class conflict and imperialism himself though representing the same. Through this identification and victimisation, he himself feels the ‘othered’. His colonial writings, therefore do not essentially confirm to the high imperial notion of such a stereotype.

Authors who wrote during the postcolonial era such as Paul Scott and the lesser known author, Alex Stuart, catered to the Raj nostalgia mood and ‘invented memories of imperial rule’ (Huggan 2001: 59), their themes were predominantly patriarchal in tone. Scott’s *Jewel in the Crown*, like its predecessor, Forster’s *A Passage to India*, features accusations of rape, race and class conflicts. In *Jewel in the Crown*, the rape of Daphne Manners, a young

Englishwoman, is treated as a concept metaphor for the catastrophic union of the East and West. She falls in love with Hari Kumar, an Indian, and learns to despise colonial rule in India. But her fate metes out tragedy, reiterating the impossibility of East and West ever coming to terms and reinforcing a Eurocentric vision of such a debate.

The Sepoy Mutiny: (My creative work, *War Cry*)

As well as my literary inquiry I also explore these themes creatively in my own novel *War Cry* which offers a similar style to that of colonial writers while playfully engaging with a form of contemporary Indian style of writing in the treatment of my theme. The theme of my novel is the Great Revolt of 1857, or the Sepoy Mutiny, which took place as a result of the widespread discontentment of the Indians as the colonial British disregarded their religious and cultural sensibilities under the veil of dubious policies and social reforms. Subsequently a new rifle was introduced by the East India Company and distributed to various regiments in India despite the sepoys' resentment. The colonised's antipathy towards the coloniser reached its zenith when the subalterns or native soldiers were asked to bite off the end of their greased rifle cartridges smeared with cow and pig fat, which though economically more viable, was offensive to both Hindu and Muslim religious sensibilities. When the British disregarded these cultural sensitivities, the revolt was initiated.

I also examined the theme of the Great Revolt because I have a personal connection to the factual legacy. My ancestors and family relations were Talukdars or Barons of Oudh, now Uttar Pradesh, a key state at the centre of the mutiny. They were active in this chaotic era and played conflicting leadership roles in it. Some sided with the British, thus safeguarding their personal interests, whilst others mutinied openly. I have attempted to bring about a semblance of impartial narrative by creating my protagonist as a young Scot - there is irony in the role reversal as he himself becomes the 'Othered' in his quest for love. The Scottish people after all, have held a long antipathy towards the English, who they view as colonisers of a sort. The feel of my narrative is largely Indian and nationalistic in tone and ambition.

In developing my novel I wanted to acknowledge my country's past and connect a moment in history with the present generation. I wanted to address the conflict between Indians and the British. The significance of the Great Revolt of 1857 has largely been undermined; its place having been relegated to dusty historical volumes. At the same time, my constant endeavour in treating the subject theme had been not to make the story too political, overdramatic and theoretical. Hence, it has a dual theme of love and romance with the Rebellion as a backdrop. The concept of metaphor that I have deployed in the story has played a key role in treating a strong theme in a covert and understated manner.

A significant study and interpretation of the historical documents pertaining to the Sepoy Mutiny were required to lend authenticity to my project and thus aid in its 'hegemonic historiography' (Spivak, 1996). To achieve such an end, I read extensively books such as *The Great Mutiny* by Christopher Hibbert, *Selections from the Letters, Dispatches and other State Papers preserved in the Military Department of the Government of India, 1857-1858* by G.W. Forest. Motion pictures such as *The Rising*, *The Four Feathers* and *The Far Pavilions* (adapted as a TV miniseries in 1984) helped me to visualise the era and bring to life the mutiny in its vividness and detail. I have also examined how my selected case studies have been useful to the characterisation and structuring of the plot of my fiction.

The Indian Mutiny itself is a metaphor for death and destruction, for the binary world of oppressor and the oppressed. Such a binary only heightens the impossibility of the Coloniser ever understanding the finer nuances of the relationship between the colonised and the ruler.

My particular endeavour in writing my narrative has been to invite a like-minded global readership who will actively participate in and empathise with the novel's socio-cultural echoes, and who see India as a complex and coming-of-age nation, not just another exoticised destination or a travelogue, a country whose story can only be viewed through the veil of a former, falsified British glory. Through my own writing and that of the authors of my inquiry, I pose three key questions in my exegesis:

- Based on the postcolonial theory and metaphor as a narrative tool, what methodology is available for a writer to gain insights into narrative forms of storytelling?

- What can be learned from an observation of these methods in my primary case study, *The Far Pavilions* (and comparison with other texts)?
- What role does postcolonial theory play in lieu of my own novel as either a hindrance or a propelling signifier?

By attempting to answer these questions, I will argue that the postcolonial theory succeeds by way of myth and metaphor, when a misinterpreted colonial past finds its way into imperial textual representations. By adopting this labyrinth of metaphors, a postcolonial text tackles its understated subject themes of nationalism and colonialism. Therefore, the historical reconstruction of a colony's past is rendered an authentic flavour and thus the postcolonial theory debunks the colonialists' myths first hand. In lieu of my primary case study, *The Far Pavilions*, despite it being a British novel, the postcolonial theory is at play, as I explore at depth in the first chapter of my exegesis, thus rendering the text as having a semblance of authenticity and credibility. In the third chapter of my exegesis where I evaluate my own novel *War Cry*, the epistemological connotations of the postcolonial theory grant me tools to address my theme of the Great Revolt of 1857, despite my novel not conforming wholly to such a postcolonial paradigm.

Chapter 1

The Far Pavilions- a colonial study in contrast

M.M Kaye wrote the bestselling historical fiction, *The Far Pavilions*, in 1978. Setting the narrative in late nineteenth century India, she either wittingly or unwittingly allowed her story to fall under the category of a 'colonial narrative'. Although it could be argued it is far removed from such a text, the categorisation seems inevitable. The story follows the eventful life of a small boy born to British parents in colonised India. He is raised by his Indian nursemaid, assuming himself to be an Indian. He later finds out about his true identity and thereafter the meaning of life eludes him. He suffers from an identity crisis and falling in love with an Indian princess of "mixed blood" certainly does not help matters. Life comes full circle for him in the end as he finds out who he really is. This truth sets him free from worldly burdens and he learns to accept himself in his new garb, shunning the dichotomy inside that such an upbringing has offered.

By laying the foundations of her story in such a scenario, Kaye offers yet another 'orientalist' representation of nineteenth century India, of fairytale palaces and kingdoms, of whimsical *maharajahs*, of the elaborate and esoteric caste system and complex ancient rituals such as *sati*. To this extent the narrative follows the trajectory of a paradigmatic colonial text but the similarity more or less ends there. Though exaggerating such representations of India, by *exoticising* her novel, Kaye actively participates in such a narration, even celebrating the various cultural traditions prevalent at the time; not as a touristic commentary but more as an authentic, though overstated, saga.

Kaye was not alone in her narrative approaches. Colonialist writers such as Kipling offered readers an India of strange places and stranger people with their odd behaviour in an exotic world from which the readers could return safely to their respective homes. But for

Kaye's readers, a nineteenth century India 'becomes' home. The stark fact that her work cannot be called a stereotypical colonial text is also due to the neocolonial time in which the fiction was written. This is in part due to developments in the earlier decades of the twentieth century when the concept of 'race' continued to be legitimised. But in the wake of the Second World War when millions of Jews, Slavs, Poles and gypsies were slaughtered on racial grounds, the repercussions led to new body, UNESCO with statements of the *Nature of Race and Racial Difference* (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin: 2000:204). The horrors of the Second World War also led to the emergence of Human Rights formulations and a gradual breakdown of the imperialistic occupations of other countries. These changes in the social world order led to changes in literary texts too, and texts written in the twentieth century became more humane and less jingoistic in their engagement within the idiom of imperialism.

It can also be argued that Kaye, as a product of the post-war years, does not glorify the imperial vision in her story. On the contrary, she resists such a vision, juxtaposing traditional imperialist themes with key issues of common humanity, home rule and shared identity which today form a key part of postcolonial cultural critiques and methodologies. Kaye's discursive strategies allow room for post colonialism to be dealt with, such as the effects of colonisation on the othered, the blurring and fusion of indigenous culture, nativism and so on. A nuanced reading of her fiction allows the reader to assume that there is indeed an Indian nationalistic ethos in *The Far Pavilions* which betrays the British nationality of its author. This does not ignore the fact that Kaye was British. Born in India into Anglo-Indian society she was the daughter of a British intelligence officer, raised mostly by Indian servants as was the norm at that time. On later becoming famous as an author she is known to have remarked that she learnt to speak Hindi first and then English (M.M.Kaye, *The Telegraph*). This view informs a critical reading of her work. Kaye felt a natural empathy for the country and its idiosyncrasies and this allowed a *bona fide* rendering of India.

Kaye's background also sets her work apart from innumerable British authors in the past who might have putatively captured Indian themes but only in a touristic fashion and often adulterated with colonial condescension. Cases in point are Forster's *A Passage to India*,

which I will explore in depth in my second chapter, and Kaye's good friend and contemporary, Paul Scot's works. Scot's *Raj Quartet*, of which *The Jewel in the Crown* is the first of the series, commences with a melancholy notion of a pre-independent India over which the British Empire is reluctant to loosen its hold. Since the Coloniser must leave the colony, the novel is fraught with the symbolism and imagery of social and political tensions and loss. This builds up the fiction's underlying theme of the impossibility of the marginalised ever being able to become fit rulers of their own land. The book portrays the Empire as a benign enterprise. It should also be noted that Scot's romance with India, unlike Kaye's, was never first hand, and this renders the writings of both authors distinct and almost opposite as to their content and idiom.

Scot's novel, though written during the postcolonial period (1966), continues the celebration of imperial achievements, though furtively, giving rise to a new name, *Raj nostalgia* (Rosaldo: 1993). An industry unto itself, imperialist nostalgia revives the golden memories of the rule of the mighty British Empire and its love affair with its favourite colony continues, though from afar, through geographical, political and temporal distances. The 'commodification' of such a sentiment is the sole basis for the popularity of such books. The colonial experience with the Other is revisited and repackaged for Western consumption, though its content might be as far removed from factual legacy as is conveniently possible for the author. The testimony to this is also provided by the success of the genre of Merchant Ivory productions during the seventies and eighties. Movie adaptations of books such as *Heat and Dust*, *Courtesans of Bombay* and *Raj Quartet*, became popular, critical and financial successes, with their largely European audiences relishing the nostalgic memories of an era when they ruled the colonial world. As Nandi Bhatia argues, through the revival of these memories of characters and objects, themes and situations from colonies, Raj nostalgia was fed. Bhatia reiterates the point that, "nostalgia implied a wistful longing for something lost."

Of course, Kaye's *The Far Pavilions* cashes in on this sentiment too, but her story does not offer an uncritical image of the Empire. Rather it celebrates the Other, embracing its uniqueness, its variant. Rather than offering an unquestioning nostalgia for a lost colonial past, Kaye offered an engaged revisiting through tourism to see India for what it is. *The Far*

Pavilions is said to have launched innumerable travel guides with their itineraries closely examining all the places in India which her book cleverly explores.

Another important aspect in paradigmatic colonial texts was the metropolitan author's fears of the protagonists' eventual 'creolisation' or 'sinking racially' as a result of his sexual encounter with the Other. This Other, as Homi Bhabha points out in his essay, *The Other Question*, is at once an object of desire and derision. Colonial novels were sensitive to this bitter truth about miscegenation. Such a protagonist eventually meets an unpalatable fate or simply dies. This kind of 'mongrelisation' is an unacceptable part of white colonialist Christian sensibilities and the protagonist is punished in the narrative to set an example for committing such a folly. An example of this textual anxiety is seen in Joseph Conrad's Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, in which the white protagonist, in spite of showing great promise and achievement, regresses as he comes into contact with a native woman.

Here too, Kaye's novel contradicts such stereotypes. Though the affair between Ashton and his Indian *Other*, Anjuli, starts out as ill-fated and doomed, the lovers do eventually reunite and share their matrimonial vows. As the narrative draws to a close the author hints at the lovers' 'fairytale' ending, '...And it may even be that they found their kingdom.' (*The Far Pavilions*, p. 955). Although the treatment of the star crossed theme in the story is wrought with uncertainty, Kaye lets the suspense hang as to the eventual union of lovers of interracial origins. Kaye may not have wanted to conform to a model of imperialistic writing, so she met it halfway by treating the theme of romance in a fashion which, though not strictly colonial, hints at the impossibility of such a love, at the start, lending her work and the love affair it explores the semblance of a colonial narrative. The main difference is that she offers a marriage on equal terms and through this metaphor is a call for equality in the way countries relate to one another in the world.

Another striking feature of almost all colonial texts is their ability to mask or remove any mention of the suffering of the marginalised at the hands of their colonisers. The effects of empire on colonised peoples, and colonised responses to invasion, usually appear as mere traces in imperial texts (Boehmer :1995:20). 'Colonial trauma' (Suleri :1992:5) is never recounted in colonial rhetoric. The voice of the subaltern, of the Other, of the marginalised, to critique in postcolonial terms, is conspicuously missing from such texts.

The degradation of such indigenes is an innate part of their state. They are morally deserving of the fate meted out to them according to white Christian beliefs. But in Kaye's *The Far Pavilions*, though, the Other does have a voice and speaks eloquently. Her portrayal of subaltern characters such as Zarin Khan, the protagonist's close childhood friend and confidante and his peers have been characterized in a humane light and the injustices done to them by the British are condemned in the story. Kaye even goes to the extent of citing the absurdity and high handedness of the British when it comes to all matters subaltern. Characters such as Zarin Khan and Dilasah Khan who serve the Corps de Guides in the fiction and are wrongfully accused of siding with the enemy, are stripped of their uniforms publicly until they bring back the stolen ammunition from across the Afghan border. Here the author narrates a germane account of the mistrust on the side of the British for all Indians however faithful they might have been.

Kaye's protagonist, Ashton Martyn stands up for their cause, not as a martyr but more as a member of the 'othered' himself, reiterating his oneness with his 'alter ego'. To that extent, he is the Other in the various sub-plots of the story and challenges the coloniser. To this end Kaye's historical textual representation debunks the colonialists' myth of supremacy and obscures the power question.

It is interesting at this stage to compare Kaye with India's colonised as well as postcolonial writers. Literature written by colonised writers such as Rabindranath Tagore and Raja Rao, who wrote in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, explore and interrogate nineteenth century India in all its myriad forms. Theirs is a different nation to Kaye's. Where the British writer celebrates its social complexities and contradictions, Tagore, with his reformist zeal, questions Indian society regarding its various taboos and religious rigidities. According to the Indian writer, it is these complexities that stand in the way of India becoming a modern and progressive country. In his highly acclaimed novel, *Gora*, for example, Tagore examines these complexities. Though he does not take the stand of an iconoclast disrupting societal norms, he does question the obscurities of the rigid caste system, untouchability and other questionable religious traditions. His stories border on colloquialism, opposing imperialism with a focus mainly on philosophical

contemplations. Largely nationalistic in its ethos and stance, Tagore's writings critically explore India without over-glorifying it.

It could be argued that Tagore laid the groundwork for future Indian writers. Modern day contemporary writer Arundhati Roy, for example, in her novel, *The God of Small Things*, takes Tagore's critical stance on Indian society even further. In the wake of decolonisation, almost sixty years after regaining independence from its colonisers, India is still beset with issues such as a rigid caste system, political corruption and poverty. In *The God of Small Things*, Roy highlights these through her writing and political activism, playing with metaphors as a means of drawing attention to the irony of Indian society in much the same way as Kaye used metaphors to stress her own views. Just how much do these writers owe to the complex Anglo-Indian relationship? The Indian writers certainly react against it and Kaye does too. Using as so many writers have done, metaphors, to convey a perplexing view of the situation.

In *The Far Pavilions*, for example, Kaye uses such metaphorical devices of language to convey the imperial enterprise which the author herself scorned, and sometimes to make comprehensible what was sacred to India spiritually, socially and politically. The title of the book, *The Far Pavilions* opens the metaphor, representing as it does, the Himalayan snow peaks, or the *Dur Khaima* of the novel. The Himalayas in India and other neighbouring countries connote godly stature. Literally meaning "abode of snow" in ancient Sanskrit, the Himalayan mountain system is home to the world's highest peaks. The Himalayas have a special spiritual significance in Hindu and Buddhist mythology and Eastern mysticism.

Kaye's protagonist, Ashton, born a Christian, raised as a Hindu by his nursemaid and having Muslim friends, holds these ranges in reverence as his 'personal gods' He turns to them as a child, with little Anjali the Indian princess, by his side, whenever he is joyous or melancholy. They, in return, soothe his restless spirit and calm him with their pristine presence, offering him silent hope and later, strength to overcome the duality he experiences on learning that he is not who he thinks he is. Perhaps by choosing a title such as *The Far Pavilions*, the author wanted to address the religious ambiguity of India, which is and always has been, of paramount importance to the nation. To a monotheist Westerner such a duality or ambiguity is often the source of enigma and mystery that launches over-

zealous writings. Juxtaposing her theme with such a sensitive subject, perhaps Kaye wanted to address and interrogate this duality first hand and led her protagonist to seeing a certain futility in belonging to any religion but deriving his own to provide the spiritual answers that he seeks.

In keeping with this theme Kaye gives the protagonist a name which is not only an amalgamation of nationalities but also of cultures and religions. Hillary, Ashton's father, names his son, 'Aston Hillary Akbar Pelham Martyn'. The 'Akbar' relates to his close friend and companion, a Muslim, an ex-officer from a cavalry regiment. Lending an ironical twist to a paradigmatic colonial narrative by bestowing such a name on the protagonist, Kaye mocks at a typical colonialist writing where the binaries between a coloniser and the colonised have always been impeccably defined and the polarity of race maintained. The main aspect of these writings have always been the marginalisation of the othered where the colonised character simply fades into the background as it is essentially a coloniser's story. But upon examining the seemingly harmless and even absurd metaphor of the protagonist's name, one can interpret the blurring as regards binarism and also a cultural reconciliation, and a celebration of each other's identity. It can also be argued that such a conceptual metaphor challenges and belittles Rudyard Kipling's childlike interpretation of the gulf between the East and the West, when he coined his catch phrase, "East is east, and West is west and never the twain shall meet."

Other metaphors in the story offer an exploration of how the author plays with the notion of death due to a fairly commonplace and relatively harmless disease; cholera. In the fiction, Aston's father, Hillary, dies as a result of the disease;

The cholera that had killed his friend reached out his bony hand and touched him on the shoulder, and his pen faltered and fell to the floor. (*The Far Pavilions*, p. 22)

Through the metaphor of death by a curable disease, the author suggests the inability of a coloniser to adapt wholly to a new and alien environment. His spirit disintegrates as a result. In postcolonial terms, Hillary's death is a result of his Christian duty. Ironically he believes he must face up to his race being the most superior, of 'taming' the indigenes in

their own land, however hostile that land might be, at risk to his own life and safety. But it is paradoxical that a coloniser is at once strong and weak in his constitution. It was a common occurrence amongst the British in India to die of such diseases, even though the natives survived such ailments when they fell prey to them. Here the author hints at a coloniser's ambitions taking control of him to tame, to control, to appropriate the Other, at risk to his own life, and his inability to adapt, as a result.

Kaye also makes a play at Kipling's highly acclaimed poem, *The White Man's Burden* (1899), where Kipling reiterated the preaching of Social Darwinism prevalent in eighteenth century Europe. It was at once a gift as well as a 'burden' for the entire Anglo-Saxon race to establish its supremacy in far off and hostile lands, and it believed it was carrying it out as a Christian duty. When Kaye's protagonist becomes cognisant of his true identity as his foster mother dies, the author gives away his state of mind as thus;

Ashton Hillary Akbar Pelham Martyn shouldered his bundle and his *burdens*, and turning his back on the past, set out in the cold twilight to search for his own people. (p.106)

For once this 'burden', Kaye seems to suggest, is unpalatable to the coloniser and he himself feels the 'othered', colonised by his spiritual, political and social load. His new White Christian identity is unwelcome and is a drudgery which he wants to escape. Such distinct textual representations by two prominent British authors, Kipling and Kaye, come full circle where one celebrates the imperial vision, while the other is embarrassed by it.

As Ashton is eventually shipped off to England to become a *Sahib* and acquire the appropriate gentility - that *sangfroid* his uncouth persona deserves, the author examines the superciliousness and hypocrisy of such a refinement in the name of the British Empire:

The Western veneer so painfully acquired during the cold years at school and Pelham Abbas fell away from him as easily as though it had been no more than a winter overcoat, discarded on the first warm day of spring, and slipped back effortlessly into the ways and speech of his childhood. (p. 142, *The Far Pavilions*)

To command and to be a member of British enterprise one must lose one's individuality and conform to the prevalent norms. To go against this would mean transgressing the societal norms with serious repercussions. It did not matter what an individual coloniser wished for as long as it conformed to the lofty vision of all the territories under his mighty sway.

Kaye introduces the character of Belinda Harlowe into Ashton's life as his love interest, and it is interesting to note such a simple yet important fact of the British Raj, how the arrival of white women into the colonies altered the way these colonies were governed. In such narratives, these women act as metaphors –'bringing with them a complement of snobbery, insularity and intolerance.'*(The Far Pavilions, pg 133)*. Before their advent the coloniser made efforts to know and explore the indigenous people and their habits, customs, traditions. There was a friendship and mutual respect even. This exploration is both positive and negative one –another of the complex binaries of colonialism, prostitution. Such prostitution becomes a metaphor for a corrupting relationship between the colonisers and colonised. But the coming of their own women added a major new dimension to relationships within the colony. As Richard Dyer points out, white women were seen as sexually and politically compromising the British Empire.

“[T]he coming of white women to the empire was often seen as the beginning of the end of British dominion, a notion especially inclined to be voiced in sexual imagery. Women, by their very presence, introduced the fact of sexuality; unwittingly, they enflamed the already overheated desires of native men; they sapped their own men's energies or were liable to wind up betraying them.

The coming of white women disturbed a comfortable pattern of homosociality and native prostitution; they introduced expectations of affect, obligation and mutuality in heterosexual arrangements while also tending to curtail white men's usage of native women—in short, in quite another sense than the usual misogynistic portrayal of the memsahib, they really did disturb the sexuality of the Raj.⁷” (Dyer: 1997:186)

Kaye, in keeping with this view displayed how colonial shifts such as this led to intrigue and contradictions, hypocrisies and danger. India was,

‘a land full of gods and gold and famine. Ugly as a rotting corpse and beautiful beyond belief’. (P.214)

Here, the writer could have been describing one of the sexual encounters. Colonial literature is full of vivid descriptions of a woman’s body, likened to India, mysterious, dangerous and contaminating.

India as a cherished colony of the British Empire was considered a ‘woman country’. While this feature alludes to its sexual allure to the masculine coloniser, this eroticism offered by such a colony makes it harder to resist and to loosen **its** hold over. Through the eroticism of India as a metaphor for holding such power over its coloniser, Kaye examines the vulnerability of the coloniser:

India had always respected strength, and she accepted the realities of power and was prepared to tolerate, if not enjoy, a situation that there seemed little prospect of putting an end to at present-and that on the whole happened to suit her fairly well. But she was like a bamboo thicket that sways to every breeze and bends gracefully before a gale yet never breaks, and hides amongst its canes a sleeping tiger that may awake at any moment, and kill. (pg 324)

Kaye likens India to a woman, ostensibly powerless, using feminist discourse to raise questions about power. Such garnering and safeguarding of invisible strength readies the prey, the colonised, for an optimum attack, on its predator, its coloniser, overpowering the coloniser by surprise. This allusion to a feminist allegory highlights the hidden reservoir of strength and patience which inevitably erupts in the form of the Mutiny of 1857 in the history of colonised India. When the Mutiny did break out the British Empire was hardly prepared for such an assault to their colonialists’ image of invincibility and immortality.

Throughout Kaye's narrative, the imagery of the mother-of-pearl charm is present. This metaphor becomes a character in its own right. The mother-of-pearl charm stands for the love Ashton and his Other, Anjali, feel for each other. Ashton breaks the charm into halves and gives one half back to his love. Providing a metaphor for their unsurpassable love, the charm also stands for the complicated and hegemonic love shared by the coloniser and his prized colony. The British Empire should have long abandoned India but could not bring itself to do so. As James Morris notes, the unusual hold India had on the British imperial mentality related to the Empire's prestige and a paternal justification of rule by force depended on maintaining control over India:

“Even in 1897, one suspects, the British might have abandoned most of the Empire with reasonable sang-froid. India was a separate case. It seemed to the British that their greatness, their wealth, even their very character depended upon the possession of this distant prodigy. India was the justifications of Empire by force—the imposition of standards upon a weaker people, for their own good as well as Britain's. Since the Indian Mutiny India had seemed, too, a peculiarly royal sort of dominion. Victoria once noted in her diary, before the end of the East India Company, "a universal feeling that India should belong to *me*."

(From article by Richard Rankin, “It will make us friends”, Cultural Reconciliation in Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink*)

Such varied colonial rhetoric sets M.M. Kaye's fiction apart from her British contemporaries who wrote before and during her time. Forster's *A Passage to India*, Scott's *Raj Quartet*, Kipling's *Kim*, revisit the stereotype of characters, themes and objects in their texts, pandering to a largely imperial sentiment. The underlying metaphors in these narratives have negative resonance as to their encounters with the Other and lessons to be learnt from such contact. This negative resonance is encountered in the Marabar Caves in *A Passage to India*, and the rape of Daphne Manners in *A Jewel in the Crown*. The putative Indian themes in these works do not tackle the Other question, only a negative experience

arising from such an encounter with the Other. Whereas in Kaye's novel, not only is the Other question tackled but also explored and celebrated. As Walter Shapiro notes:

Her narrative indicts hypocrisy, intolerance and the inability of many Westerners to appreciate or understand the local customs.

(Walter Shapiro, Critical Essay on M.M Kaye's works)

Critiquing Kaye's novel in postcolonial discourse offers an authentic glimpse of India, almost as fluently as a postcolonial writer who is writing in a modern setting. Kaye's rendering of nineteenth century India comes close to factual legacy without resorting to a Eurocentric stratagem. Juxtaposing her sub themes with various metaphors in the fiction, Kaye manages to highlight anti-colonialism and the impartial claims of history but without alienating the reader. The binary of the coloniser and the colonised is overcome and its theme of national allegory addresses a colonial setting but in essence the narrative is a postcolonial novel.

Chapter 2

A Passage to India- a postcolonial reading

Faith to my mind is a stiffening process, a sort of mental starch, which ought to be applied as sparingly as possible.

E.M Forster

A story of cross-cultural resonance in postcolonial discourse, *A Passage to India* (1924), plays on racial misinterpretations and misunderstandings. Throughout the novel Forster employs a kind of cynical realism to highlight the impossibilities of cross cultural male bonding, between Aziz, the protagonist, a diminutive Indian Muslim doctor and Fielding, the English professor. As his biographer P.N. Furbank notes in his biography on Forster, *E.M Forster: A Life*; using Forster's own words;

When (I) began the book (I) thought of it as a little bridge of sympathy between East and West, but this conception has had to go, my sense of truth forbids anything so comfortable.

(Furbank 1977:106)

Such a statement made by the author himself, removes any ambiguities as to the imperial engagement of the narrative which serves as a wry dismissal and futile exploration of a transcultural dialogue. As Sara Suleri notes in her book, *The Rhetoric of British India*;

Forster's discourse of friendship becomes a figure for how the imperial eye perceives race: the literal minutiae of pigmentation and physiognomy serve to rupture a more general vision of an Oriental culture. (Suleri 1992:137).

In other words, the novel serves to reiterate a patronising representation of a colony in which the imperial gaze at once takes pride in and yet refuses to offer a more forthright exchange of colonial intimacy. Cross-cultural friendships, like that between Aziz and Adela Quested, and Aziz and Fielding, can provide only misinterpreted notions and cross cultural conflicts, thus no transcultural reconciliation is ever achieved in the narrative.

Forster's experiences with India were first forged in 1912-13 and later in 1921 when he was appointed as a Private Secretary of the Maharajah of Dewas Senior. These experiences were to provide him with invaluable material as he wrote *A Passage to India*. They offered him a panoramic and analytical setting of colonial epistemology, in all its myriad contradictions and diversity. The environment and culture was totally unfamiliar to him - India was to later prove a 'muddle', a mystery. As John Colmer notes in his critique of the author's works, *E.M Forster: the Personal Voice*;

It (India) offered him new dimensions of history, religion, and philosophy, and gave fresh insights into personal relations. The latter came largely from intimate friendships with Indians but also from observation of the strain placed on personal relations by the clash between rulers and ruled, Moslem and Hindu. (Colmer 1975:137)

Interpreted in postcolonial discursive fields, the narrative offers a bleak hope for any social interaction between the two races as is obvious by the Bridge party held by the Turtons at the very outset of the story. Given ostensibly in honour of Indians, the British at this gathering do all they can to unnerve and belittle their Indian guests, with their intermittent

highbrow chatter and complete ignorance of the impact of such behaviour on their 'othered' and the 'marginalised' guests.

The narrative offers the reader a complicated hegemonised British colonialism with India as one of its most prized colonies. Exploring the fiction under the rubric of a paradigmatic colonial text, a nuanced eye discerns that the story is indeed a careful 'revisitation' of such a corpus of writing. In lieu of this feature I would argue against classifying Forster as a colonial writer, unlike consummate colonial writers such as Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad. Kipling and Conrad wrote a few decades before Forster in an era of high imperialism when the imperial sentiment had reached its zenith and colonial narratives were a staple diet for the people in the metropolis. Forster on the other hand, wrote during the twentieth century when high imperialism was on the wane and certain dissatisfaction had crept into the thinking of the colonisers about the eventual fate of their Empire with the advent of the First World War and its aftermath. A bleak overview of this war-ravaged world found its way into literary textual representations written at the time. Forster's *A Passage to India*, arguably, makes such a case offering a kind of existentialist representation about the futility of comradeship amongst races or in pursuing the exotic to monopolise other lands. As Colmer notes, the narrative is "a profoundly pessimistic novel conveying no hope to mankind" (Colmer 1975:137).

Yet the acknowledgement of such a fact offers no viable alternatives to leaving the colonies in the hands of the 'natives', who do not have the necessary acumen to rule themselves. Forster's novel, having established a relatively modernistic approach to such colonial configurations, reinforces such a theme. Analysed in postcolonial terms, it presents a retake of a darker colonial rhetoric.

Forster's story is set in the early twentieth century in the fictional town of Chandrapore, British India. The main protagonist is Dr. Aziz, a Muslim doctor who strikes up a friendship with Cyril Fielding, an English School Headmaster of an Indian College. Adela Quested and her elderly friend Mrs. Moore arrive around this time in India and befriend Aziz as well. What follows is a cultural misreading of invitations and eventually accusations of rape by a delusional Adela in the controversial 'Marabar Caves'. The comparative

religious dialogue between Hindu, Muslim and Christian, also finds its way into the narrative, under a monotheistic over-analytical, imperial eye.

It is interesting to note how Forster completely disregards the over-glorifying of the 'exotic' in his geographical and architectural representations. As the narrative opens with an account of the nondescript town, Chandrapore, the writer employs a condescending and 'anti-exotic' (Suleri 1992:144) stance as to the formlessness of the landscape and temples, rendering stereotypical colonialist features void. Forster instead resorts to quite the opposite, and draws the fictional town with a kind of horror and disgust:

Except for the Marabar Caves-and they are twenty miles off-the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary. Edged rather than washed by the river Ganges, it trails for a couple of miles along the bank, scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so freely.... The streets are mean, the temples ineffective, and though a few fine houses exist they are hidden away in gardens or down alleys whose filth deters all but the invited guest. Chandrapore was never large or beautiful, but two hundred years ago it lay on the road between Upper India, then imperial, and the sea, and the fine houses date from that period.... The very wood seems made of mud, the inhabitants of mud moving. So abased, so monotonous is everything that meets the eye, that when the Ganges comes down, it might be expected to wash the excrescence back into the soil. Houses do fall, people are drowned and left rotting, but the general outline of the town persists, swelling here, shrinking there, like some low but indestructible form of life. (p. 1, *A Passage to India*)

In evaluating such a description, the reader is deliberately shifted from exotic and colourful narratives about British India which featured picturesque and exalted discourses about the colonial exchange. But the description is still largely Eurocentric. As Sara Suleri asserts, it is a mundane geographical appropriation of the colonised land, rendered as a hollow space through which the imperial dialogue is articulated in its imperial ideologies. It is this

striking feature of the novel that locates it on the cusp between colonial and postcolonial narrative, in Suleri's words: "the touristic experience of colonialism is deglamourised into mathematical computations of how literally banal the exotic may be." (Suleri 1992:145)

But if detouring from exoticising India offers an escape route from a colonial paradigm, Forster relies on other stereotypes to reiterate his theme as essentially orientalist. The manner by which all his Indian characters are portrayed, starting with the protagonist himself, echoes an undercurrent of unauthenticity, simulating, in this regard, old colonial narratives, where the Other was hardly understood. Aziz is portrayed as a little dark man, whose attractions are never literalised. As Suleri points out, although he was modelled on Forster's Egyptian lover, Mohommod el Edl, the way Aziz behaves also shapes the way Forster perceives all Indians. He is impulsive, prone to thinking quickly and acting upon his feelings. He thinks from his heart, and thus fails. Fielding complains in the novel that Aziz's "emotions never seem in proportion to their objects", and Aziz retorts, "is emotion a sack of potatoes, so much the pound, to be measured out?"

Other Indian characters such as Godbole and Nawab Bahdur have also been caricatured to suit Eurocentric and Anglo-Indian sensibilities. While Godbole is made to stand out as odd in his excessive devotion to Hinduism and its myriad mythologies, Nawab Bahadur's persona is exaggerated as to the whimsical frailties which might accompany an Indian of good social and financial standing. Their characterisation is not 'genuine', so to speak, and mirrors Forster's predecessor, Rudyard Kipling's, classification of Indians as inscrutable, exhibiting strange behaviour in an even stranger land from which a white man must eventually return. Over such unconvincing characterisation, Suleri acutely notes: '....over Forster, the discursive ghosts of Burke and Kipling shake hands.'(Suleri 1992:132)

Other key aspects of the novel which follow a colonial paradigm are Forster's subtle but firm dismissal of India's complex cultural and religious ideologies. Here, Forster shows a pattern for making a mockery out of the cultural and social nuances of the Other. It is intriguing in its analytical approach to a White man, how a country with diverse cultures and religions functions and therefore becomes a 'muddle'. According to Eastern mysticism and mythology, the sound "om" or "aum" has a special significance as it connotes a spiritual connection amongst all living beings. It was the sound created when the universe

was created and will be made when the cosmos is annihilated. Hence it is an original sound that permeates all sounds, all words and all languages and all mantras. The sound is uttered reverently before the start and chanting of any prayer or mantra and at its close. In Hinduist theology, the sacred sound denotes as a signifier of one ultimate supreme truth that all beings are one. It connotes oneness with the Supreme Being as well.

But the writer lampoons such a sound as “boum” and this sound emanates when Adela and Mrs. Moore are at their most vulnerable inside the claustrophobic Marabar Caves. Forster uses Hindu doctrine in his corruption of “aum” and introduces this sound in the fictional caves to highlight his belief of India as a “muddle”. Adela and Mrs. Moore emerge out of the caves after going through the lowest ebbs of their lives. Forster uses this sound to reiterate his theme of the utter failure of such complex religious ideologies and beliefs. For how can all races be equal and one? He asks his readers. The Anglo-Saxon race is the master race and there can never be equality with other races except for the role of master and slave, coloniser and colonised, civiliser and primate.

In keeping with the themes of imperial narrative, Forster emphasizes the friendship between the two characters, Aziz and Fielding, as essentially nationalist in character. Fielding is patronising in his attitude as befits an Englishman in Anglo-Indian society, and Aziz is too quick to judge and easily offended by trivial slights, which Forster seems to argue, is an Indian trait. Even the character, Mr. Turton, the collector, as he testifies against Aziz in the Court, reiterates as much:

“..... I have had twenty five years’ experience of this country, and during those twenty five years I have never known anything but disaster result when English people and Indians attempt to be intimate socially. Intercourse, yes. Courtesy, by all means. Intimacy-never, never. The whole weight of my authority is against it.”
(p.141, *A Passage to India*)

The fear of sinking ‘racially’ through contact with an inferior race is paramount in *A Passage to India*. Firstly, Aziz “invites his incongruous company to visit him in the Marabar Caves; in the course of this exposure to an unknown but erotic category, he further invites

upon himself the imperial accusation of rape and a subsequent realization of how impossible it is to maintain the brotherhood of cross-colonial intimacy.”(Suleri 1992:142).

Such invitation on the part of Aziz paves the way for all his miseries and casts aspersions on his ‘good’ name. Even his friendship with Fielding is affected as a result of the incident in the Marabar Caves. What starts as a promising friendship between the two characters which had the potential of overlooking cultural and racial boundaries ultimately breaks under the strain of Aziz’s tainted reputation and his unfound distrust of Fielding later. As the story draws to a close, they part on a strained note;

‘Why can’t we be friends now?’ said the other, holding him affectionately. ‘It’s what I want. It’s what you want?’

But the horses didn’t want it—they swerved apart; the earth didn’t want it, sending up rocks through which riders pass singly 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 and saw beneath: they didn’t want it, they said in their hundred voices: ‘No, no yet,’ and the sky said: ‘No, not there.’

(Pg 282, *A Passage To India*)

There is certain finesse in Forster’s appropriation of his own story, which was characteristic of his other works, such as *Howards End* and *A Room with a View*, which owe, in part, to his genteel upbringing. This sense of English pride coupled with a patronising stance towards India is all-pervading in the narrative, though he himself takes an anti-imperialist stance in certain sections. Comparing Forster’s writing to Orwell’s, who wrote during the same time, it is interesting to compare these parallels. George Orwell’s take on imperialism was very different from that of his contemporaries. Orwell was never comfortable as a representative of imperial Britain when he was assigned a post in yet another colony of Britain, Burma. As a policeman, he had mixed experiences and rarely felt

the pride which is supposed to define a coloniser. In his essay *Shooting an Elephant*, he shares one such experience with the readers. The “Elephant” in the particular essay is a metaphor for the limits of freedom of the coloniser. He has to act in accordance with the expectations of the ‘natives’. As Orwell said in his essay, “the experiences as a man acting for the imperial Britain reflect certain helplessness in the face of it all.” Through the metaphor of the elephant Orwell manages to mirror his feelings as a mere puppet in the hands of natives as well his countrymen. He finally does manage to “shoot “the elephant after all but his conscience is wracked by guilt. His action proves his anxiety was justified and he comes to terms with the expectations of not only the natives but also the uniform he dons. Though Orwell does not concern himself particularly with the plight of the colonised, he, unlike, Forster, does not share any glory in Britain colonizing one country after another, in its bid to ‘tame’ the locals, to bring about some kind of order and to ‘cultivate’ them. He writes clearly and in no uncertain terms, that imperialism is indeed an ugly business, even for the coloniser.

Like Orwell, Forster uses metaphors to great effect in *A Passage to India*, with very different results. The most prominent metaphor is the fictional Marabar Caves, a complex of dark and mysterious spaces, which house secrets that are paradoxical to the human psyche. They stand for an India which is inscrutable to Westerners. As Adela Quested and Mrs. Moore explore the caves, their experiences are varied but for both, very negative. Mrs. Moore cannot stand the caves. She is overpowered with claustrophobia and the mysterious sound ‘*boum*’. Adela imagines she has been ‘raped’. The author conveys to the reader that an experience such as India with her varied philosophy and ancient spiritual wisdom disturbs the psyche of a Westerner. It leaves them feeling emotionally drained and shakes the foundations of their beliefs. The philosophy that all beings are connected and are one, exemplified by the sound; “*boum*” baffles the Westerner. This misunderstood appropriation of India, like the mystical cave complex, renders it a geographical, cultural and spiritual hollowness. But such a negation also brings resignation to the coloniser. Their ‘burden’ and ‘Christian duty’, has to be carried out, mirroring Kiplique’s philosophy of the *White Man’s burden*. Forster hardly envisaged independence for ‘muddled’ India, but as Colmer notes,

... in *A Passage to India*, the reader is made to feel the blindness and stupidity of imperial rule, but it is clear that the removal of that rule would not bring Utopia, only a different set of problems. History has borne this out. (Colmer 1975:169).

In Suleri's words, the Marabar Caves are allowed no containment. They connote the hollow vastness of India, its ill-perceived boundaries and thus, its lack of any identification.

Throughout the narrative, instances of India escaping definition abound and take the form of metaphors. For example, an exchange between Adela and Ronny Heaslop in the fiction goes like this, when they talk about a peculiar bird:

'Bee- eater.'

'Oh, no, Ronny, it has red bars on its wings.'

'Parrot,' he hazarded.

'Good gracious no.'

The bird in question dived into the dome of the tree. It was of no importance, yet they would have liked to identify it.

A Passage to India (p.71)

Characters such as Mrs. Turton, Mrs McBryde and Miss Derek also stand as metaphors for a 'haughty insulation' of the Anglo-Indian society towards the Indians. However 'orientalised' in his views about India and Indians, Forster could not relate to the affectations and pretentiousness of the Anglo-Indian society. In Beer's words, Forster, "avoids direct moral statements" (Beer 1962:20). Being a homosexual himself, he was prone to critical scrutiny and a certain 'disdain' by others as regards his private life. The so-called genteel English society with its morality and sobriety, could never accept homosexuality openly. It was this feature of his fellowmen that made Forster resent them

and thus through his caricatures of such characters, he gives a strong voice to his own inner conflicts and grievances.

Having invariably reconciled cultural differences between the two polarities of race, Forster manages to bring about some semblance of a hopeful compromise by accepting the spirituality of India. An example of this is the “wasp” that is present in Mrs. Moore’s room when she goes there to hang up her cloak and her loving acceptance of it. Later the “wasp” reappears as Professor Godbole invokes the memory of Mrs. Moore when she has died en route her voyage to England. The wasp symbolizes the spiritual approach to the truth that all beings are one and connected; Mrs. Moore, the wasp, Dr. Aziz et al.

But to denote the significance of the above-mentioned metaphors only applies in a quantitative analysis of an ‘orientalised’ India. Even though the putative theme of anti-imperialism resists this notion, the novel is essentially a revalidation of a colonial rhetoric. Darker and understated as to its jingoistic imperial sentiment, it does little to address the questions of cross-cultural and ethnic identities and brings to the fore, in postcolonial discourse, the impossibility of cross-cultural intimacy in imperial textual representations.

Chapter 3

War Cry

To express, how it felt to be alive at a particular time was possible only by using the imaginative tools of literary art....

(Fleishman, *The English Historical Novel*)

My novel, *War Cry*, is a historical fiction based on the actual historical events preceding the Great Indian Revolt of 1857. As I mentioned in the introduction to this exegesis, The Great Revolt, or as it is more commonly known, the Sepoy Mutiny was an event which shook the foundations of the complacent British Empire in India in the mid nineteenth century. It was a collective and desperate attempt by the Indian subalterns in the British Army to overthrow their English rulers. The Mutiny was a direct political repercussion of the policies of the British East India Company, and in particular, to Lord Dalhousie's expansionism policy of the Doctrine of Lapse and to sepoy perceptions of Evangelism, greased cartridges and reforms against prevalent social customs and traditions. As a result of such widespread discontentment over these challenges to religious and societal norms, the mutineers resorted to violence for a swift deliverance of their manifold grievances. It is even argued by present day scholars and historians that had it been a unified effort, the mutineers would have succeeded in their pursuit of freedom. Unfortunately sections of the rebels were motivated by personal greed.

My novel deals with the love between the protagonist, Charles Hamilton, a young Scot, commissioned in the British army in Lucknow, the cultural capital of the State of Oudh (now Uttar Pradesh) and Samaira, a beautiful nautch girl in the court of the Nawab Wajid

Ali Shah, the ruler of Oudh in the 1850s. Their relationship is explored during the turbulent period of the revolt. The lovers are cornered at the hastily fortified Residency compound under the leadership of Sir Henry Lawrence. Samaira, confined in the quarters of the Residency, dies due to heavy gunfire as the siege of Lucknow takes place. Charles is devastated by her death. This bereavement is examined with allusions to the metaphorical significance of such a harsh truth. The human response is idealized and acknowledged in his need for revenge. It is engrained in the subsequent violent skirmishes in which he destroys all that justifies his vengeance. The latter part of the novel deals with Charles's soul searching and his 'marginalisation' and 'othering' which mirror his plight as that of a subaltern. He seeks redemption from the gnawing guilt of his bloodied hands. The tale coerces speculative interpretations of right and wrong, of the complexities of colonisation and the so-called cultural supremacy of one race over another, raising questions about the justification of imperial ambitions.

By placing my exegesis under the rubric of colonial and postcolonial epistemology I have endeavoured to evaluate my novel under this discursive field. Locating my story in a colonial setting I have dealt with issues in the novel that examines the nuances of postcolonial discourse. As a writer belonging to a country which was once a colony of Britain, my narrative unwittingly falls under such a classification. Apart from this aspect, the theme of my novel deals directly with the paramount aspects of the corpus of such postcolonial discourse.

Postcolonial narratives have often adopted the stance of anti-colonial themes and have dealt with the negative resonance arising out of marginalisation and otherness. Where the marginalised were often not given a voice or scope in colonial literature, postcolonial literature refers to the colonised others who have been 'othered' by imperial discourse, or in other words, 'subversion by imitation'. As Bill Ashcroft argues,

... received history is tempered with, rewritten, and realigned from the point of the victims of its destructive progress... in all these (postcolonial) texts the perspective changes to that of the 'Other'.

(Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 1989:34).

This aspect of postcolonial literature lends it the fresh and authentic perspective of a familiar colonial setting where the literary text is free from bias and misinterpretation.

Analysing my narrative in the context of postcolonial theory, I would like to start with the main theme, which is the rebellion itself. More often than not, postcolonial texts offer the themes of nationalist ethos to address the sensitive issues of self-identity and the textual representations of ex colonies in a neocolonial world. As Bill Ashcroft stresses in his book;

A major feature of postcolonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special postcolonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development of recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place....Beyond their historical and cultural differences, place, displacement, and a pervasive concern with the myth of identity and authenticity are a common feature to all postcolonial literatures. (Ashcroft 1989:9)

This engagement with identity becomes ‘a process by which the language, with its power, and the writing, with its signification of authority, has been wrested from the dominant European culture.’(Ashcroft 1989:8)

The Great Revolt of 1857 has often been adjudged an important place in the history of India. It is viewed as a first struggle for gaining independence from the British rulers. Due to the revolt, the marginalised Indian subalterns, ‘othered’ their rulers, not only literally but also textually. The unexpectedness of the mutiny caught the East India Company off guard and in the initial stages of the mutiny, it was even predicted that the *sepoys* might gain control of their colonised lands, a severe blow to the mighty British pride. The available historiography, for instance accounts by Christopher Hibbert in his book, *The Great Mutiny*, reiterate the boldness of the subalterns as they dared to take on the might of the imperialist patriarch, though armed with scanty resources and numbers. By choosing such a nationalist theme my narrative tackles significant questions of cross cultural encounter

which invariably results in violence and misplaced sensibilities and the futility of reconciliation.

The characters in my narrative have been rendered a 'postcolonial' treatment, in that I have tried to tell a story from their diverse perspectives. Unlike colonial narratives, where 'stereotypes of the Other as indolent malingerers, shirkers, good for nothings, layabouts, degenerate versions of the pastoral idler, were the stock-in-trade of colonialist writing.'(Boehmer 1995:39), I have tried to lend an authentic perspective to the portrayal of the characters and lent them dignity in their compromised circumstances of being on the othered side. For instance, the narrative, in parts, is told in vignettes through the prism of Samaira's perspective, the protagonist Charles Hamilton's love interest. As a colonised woman of a society mired in tradition and various idiosyncratic rituals, and her part as a *natch* girl or courtesan, her place in the narrative is additionally marginalised. Yet the tale, told from her account, brings with it an aspect of unpalatable truth that is surreptitiously ignored in traditional societies, as to the injustices of a women's' lot and how she perceives the imperialists, and yet falls in love with one herself. There is a deliberate irony in the psyche of her character in that she resists and yet is attracted to, her imperial Other. The patriarchal strength of the coloniser is at once appealing but also fraught with peril and adventure. Just as for a coloniser 'the Other is at once, an object of desire and derision', as Homi Bhabha argues in his essay *Location of Culture*, so for the Other is the coloniser an object of desire or 'aggression'.

In my novel other Indian characters who actually existed in history, such as the nobilities Nana Saheb and the then ruler of Oudh, Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, have been characterised in a manner befitting their status. But accompanying such characterisations are also the idiosyncrasies and negativities that render such portrayals as close to available historical truth as possible. Even such nobility could not escape marginalisation at the hands of the imperialists. Their lands and kingdoms were seized from them. My novel examines how, veiled in questionable policies such as the Doctrine of Lapse, the East India Company amassed its huge wealth of properties by taking away lands and kingdoms and thus created foes out of the very royalty which had supported the imperialists when they had first set foot on the land. With all semblance of impartiality, important English figures such as Sir

Henry Lawrence and Major Bertram have been given their due as just and solemn veterans who went down in history with a dismal belief in imperialism and feelings of sympathy and understanding for the colonised. In such a characterisation of actual historical figures, I have attempted to lend reverence to a forgotten history. Within the context of a postcolonial narrative, I have tried not to take sides as to my rendering of all the events. Some of my ancestors were Barons of Oudh, with sizeable properties in the state and the English were sympathetic to their causes. Relations between the two parties were cordial, sometimes bordering on friendship and mutual trust. To colour such events solely in the name of anti-colonialism would be to distort the truth and to be guilty of the same accusations as the ones cast by postcolonial critics voicing Eurocentric concerns over these events.

Touching upon yet another aspect of a postcolonial paradigm is the language that I deployed in my narrative which is polyphonic in parts, mirroring a stereotypical postcolonial text. This serves a dual purpose as Hindi was a language that had to be learnt, both in spoken and written form - such skills being a prerequisite of an English colonial officer serving in the armies of the East India Company. Therefore, Hindi words used in my novel have not been translated as their meaning is revealed as conversations unfold between characters.

Interpreting my novel in yet another aspect of postcolonial epistemology, I have rendered the love affair between the protagonists as doomed, lending it a reverse treatment of that of a colonial (and not necessarily romantic) narrative. As is typical of colonial narratives, the white protagonist 'suffers' for his sexual encounter with the Other. For instance, in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the protagonist Kurtz 'degenerates' into a lesser human when he falls in love with the beautiful tribal woman when he is in the 'dark' continent and eventually dies. This feature of a paradigmatic colonial text was often reiterated to stress the stance of the author that such a love was doomed from the start and 'unacceptable' to white Christian sensibilities. In my fiction, Charles pines for Samaira and she returns his love, but she eventually dies, thus enhancing the metaphorical significance of my theme. As a stark contrast to a colonial paradigm, in my narrative Samaira's life is put in jeopardy as a direct result of her love for Charles. This device of 'doomed love' also adds to the

metaphorical depth of my story by reiterating the destruction of a colony by the so called civilizer. This represents a key aspect of the process of colonisation... 'a conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior or cultural model.'(Ashcroft 1989:9)

Various authors were studied. Of those who shaped my writing, I would like to start with the author of my case study, M.M Kaye, whose work, *The Far Pavilions*, inspired me to write my narrative under the corpus of postcolonial historical fiction. Her ambitious theme of colonised India and interracial love between a British protagonist and an Indian princess highlights the novelty and uniqueness of the story. By glorifying the colonised land and handling the complex subject of interracial love Kaye succeeds in lending her work a fresh perspective on imperialism, not only in the way the historical events played out but also in her depiction of royalty and their cultural idiosyncrasies. Kaye also informs her reader about nineteenth century India. Despite such historical inclusions in her fiction, particularly those about the cultural nuances of royalty in India, there are undercurrents of positive exoticisation which makes her work stand apart from other Anglo- Indian narratives such as *The Raj Quartet*. Her story lends a certain romance to the past that wills a discerning readership to visit its timelessness. This aspect of her work shaped my own rendering of characters.

Kaye succeeds overtly in such a purpose failing, perhaps, if that can be argued, by overindulging in romanticisation. Her larger than life descriptions in the novel inspire the reader to take an interactive part in history. One such description of a palace where her protagonist, Ashton Pelham Martyn, lived as a servant to the king's son illuminates her love affair with India:

It was here that the present Rajah lived...in splendour in a maze of rooms furnished with Persian carpets, dusty hangings shimmering with gold embroidery ,and ornaments of jade or beaten silver, set with rubies or raw turquoise. Here too, in the Queen's rooms of the Zenana Quarters beyond the pierced wooden screens that separated the Hall of Audience from a garden full of trees and roses, lived

Janoo-Bai the Rani.....among the crowd of attendants,
petty officials and hangers on...

(pg 88, *The Far Pavilions*)

This is a highly romanticised portrayal of the ubiquitous Indian palace and succeeds in its purpose to engage the reader by inviting them into a surrealistically exotic culture, an opulent era and a place that the reader might not belong to, but yet wants to be a part of. When I was writing my own novel, I was both drawn to, and cautious about such hyperbole. If I indulged in romanticisation what impact would it have on my work? As an Indian writer would I be falling into a trap of exoticising my own country's history? I contemplated that a novel such as *War Cry* should be written romantically and exotically as a means of an ironic statement to the category of literature that has been written in the past.

Kaye's grandiose theme of war and love compelled me to also choose a theme ambitious in scope and much more nationalistic in stature, hence the theme of the Great Revolt of 1857. Like Kaye's works, Scott's *Raj Quartet* series catered to the Raj nostalgia mood, with its touristic appeal to a Western readership. By placing my work in such a paradigm of postcolonial historical fiction, I too stood to benefit, in part, from the nostalgia industry, but not by inverting facts but by narrating an account as authentically as possible. To that end my nationality as an Indian makes this process relatively simplistic and first hand. Having read the British India narratives and comparing their similarities as to exoticisation of the East, it is to this debunking of such over-exoticisation that postcolonial texts lend their themes a fresh and 'tell like it is' appeal.

Through the colonial and postcolonial writers whose works I read during the course of my exegesis, it was Kipling's colonial narratives such as *Kim* and *The Jungle Book*, which offered the greatest parallels with and contradictions to Indian folklore, though largely by dealing with colonial perceptions and experiences. Kipling deceptively employed simplistic themes when he wrote about British India. Were it not for his overtly critical interpretations, his works might even pass off as simple, witty and delightful tales about one of Britain's most prized colonies. His Indian characters and his engagement with their compromised lives,

make for a light and breezy reading. To this effect his work can be compared with that of R.K Narayan (1906-2001), a prolific Indian writer who wrote simple witty tales of everyday life of rural India. The simplistic style of Kipling's writings appealed to me as a writer and shaped certain Indian characters in my own novel. Through them, I attempted to sketch simplistically, creating figures such as Madho Singh, who is a domestic aide assigned to Charles Hamilton, the protagonist, by the East India Company regiment stationed in Oudh. I also applied this to my characterisation of some Indian sepoys.

Forster's writings, tinged as they are with colonial condescension, possessed a certain finesse and refinement which made his narratives stand out from his other contemporaries, especially George Orwell. Forster's well crafted narratives and complex themes were one of the features why his works were widely read. To broaden my perspective about the early years of twentieth century colonised India from a British perspective, it was interesting to critically analyse how India was viewed at the time through the eyes of a representative of imperial enterprise such as Forster.

Through a reading of Indian colonial and postcolonial works, I drew upon those of Rabindranath Tagore, and to an extent, Arundhati Roy. Tagore, with his reformist and anti-imperialist zeal, often engaged me with nationalistic themes during colonised times. His books, such as *Gora*, deal with the issues that plagued Indian society such as the caste system and a fanatic adherence to religious rituals that stood in the way of true progress for India. Whilst a contemporary Indian writer, Arundhati Roy takes up the same issues in her novel, *The God of Small Things*, rendering a different, contemporary perspective by way of myth and metaphor to that of Tagore's, who had written in the early years of the twentieth century.

The work of these Indian writers shaped the way I evolved my themes and allowed me to juxtapose them with issues of nationalism and imperialism, but in doing so I have avoided taking a strong and domestic stance to issues that riddle the Indian subcontinent. My endeavour throughout the narrative has been more to evoke and glorify an era that has long gone. In that sense, my work might differ from certain other postcolonial writers whose writings have been shaped by what the Eurocentric opinions and expectations of an ex colony might be.

Having chosen my theme of a story set in a colonised, mid nineteenth-century India, the historiography available on the epoch aided immeasurably in the development process of my plot. I have referred to select but *bona fide* accounts of the events leading up to the mutiny. Christopher Hibbert's *The Great Mutiny* is a concise book about the Revolt but it encapsulates all the imperative details in its three hundred and ninety three pages. I also referred extensively to the volume; *The Indian Mutiny: Letters Despatches and Other State Papers 1857-1858* by G.W Forrest. Unfortunately, Christopher Hibbert opined while gathering the historical data for his book, '... compared to the vast amount of material composed for and by the English, the Indian documentation of the Mutiny is extremely scanty.'(Hibbert 1978:11). Hence a major setback for my references to historical accounts was that the available records of the mutiny were largely from a British perspective.

Select Papers by G.W Forrest are even more Eurocentric and jingoist as to their imperial engagements with English pride. Throughout the documentation the author makes personal inferences likening the Revolt to a true historical event and glorifying the English troops who laid down their lives so that the English flag could be hoisted on foreign shores. He remarks that:

The story of that siege, one of the most illustrious in the annals of England, is told by the letters and dispatches of the chief actors, and their plain narrative of facts, reflecting the spirit which produces great deeds, must always be read by Englishmen with interest, pride and sympathy.
(Forrest 1893: *preface*)

The author, without any trace of irony, refers to the 'chief actors' as, of course, the Englishmen whose accounts were recorded, however distorted and coloured those accounts might have been, when plainly the 'chief actors' should have been, in all fairness and honesty, the mutineers who waged the mutiny on account of their manifold grievances.

Watching movie adaptations of individual accounts of the mutiny, such as *The Rising* and *The Four Feathers*, aided in the development process of my narrative. Through them I could visualize the epoch in all its vivid colours as well as the finer nuances that accompanied it.

Aspects such as the uniforms worn by the British Regiment and all the Indian *sepoys* and the prevalent social hierarchy ranging from equations of the common man with that of Indian nobility and with his British superiors made for quite different interpretations than that offered by textual representations.

My key character is Samaira, the protagonist's Indian lover. I developed and shaped her character with the colonial era in mind. The cultural city of Lucknow in the state of Oudh was a stage for the fine arts of India in the nineteenth century, be it music and poetry or dance. The courtesans personified these arts, being adept in all of them. These beautiful women not only graced the Royal Courts and Palaces during festivities but also imparted elegance to the cultural leanings of Indian society. They enjoyed the patronage of important figures, no less than nobility itself. It can even be argued that it was these women who welcomed the imperialist into their culture and society, bridging the polarities of the coloniser and the colonised, before the advent of the British women into the colony. As Veena Talwar notes in her essay, *Lifestyle as Resistance, The Case of the Courtesans of Lucknow*, these women commanded a status as befits one of the highest earning members of society. But in due course, even their properties and wealth were confiscated by British officials as these courtesans were alleged to have played a paramount role in the mutiny, aiding the mutineers financially.

In my novel, Samaira has led a troubled past and seeks comfort in the arts which heal her grieved soul. Metaphorically speaking, I wanted to lend profundity and intensity to her character so that her deeply buried passions could come to the fore, be it her love for her profession or her love for Charles. Both invariably lead to her death. The era in which I have placed her character makes a case for a certain banality too, as courtesans were plentiful during that epoch in Lucknow and it was not uncommon for an English Officer to befriend one and keep her as a mistress or even eventually to marry her for love. These courtesans usually came from impoverished backgrounds as little girls and were then trained in the arts of pleasing men through dance and fine poetry by the older courtesans who were now running the *kothas*. As a metaphor, Samaira also stands for a colonised land which the coloniser eventually destroys in his quest to amass more lands to satiate his

imperialistic appetite. Though an irrevocable bond between him and the colonised develops as a natural course, he realizes his folly too late, when the colony has ebbed away.

The Scottish protagonist in my novel, Charles Hamilton has a background as a son of a Marquis from Scotland. With such a background I wanted to develop his character as a foil to that of Samaira. He possessed what Samaira never had, a contented life with material riches and an impeccable ancestry. His future promises even greater heights when he enlists in the Armies of the British East India Company after passing out from the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Possessing sagacity beyond his years, Charles looks forward to any adventure without being too hasty in judging its shortcomings. By giving him a Scottish lineage, I made room for a certain neutrality in his situation, despite being a representative of the British imperial enterprise. As a Scot, he is also from a country which has resisted British rule. Consequently he is more empathic to the causes of the rebels. By casting him in a not too imperialistic stance, I have taken the liberty of 'orientalising' him in the way he feels for Samaira and the way he feels for India. The metaphorical significance of his character is that he is a true patriarch towards his 'child-like' colony, in that he has its best interests at heart. He simply does not colonize a land for its economic and mercantile foundations, but he too must pay a price for what his comrades resort to, to whom such a colony is a merely a matter of 'military and political power and the extraction of profit.'(Boehmer 1995:25) Inevitably he loses his love to the imperial pursuits of others.

In the development of the characters of mutineers and actual historical figures, I have relied heavily on the historical accounts I read and in my renderings of the characterisation of the mutineers, my nationality as an Indian allowed me to empathise with what those colonised Indians felt as they rebelled against the imperialists. As an Indian writer who has tried to delve into the realms of nationalism and colonisation through my novel, a broad understanding of the cultural and religious nuances of the society of my country helped, in that I could relate to the sensitivity of such corroborations. Though the first English colonised in India in 1757 following their victory at the Battle of Plassey, the two countries initially enjoyed congenial relations of trust and mutual respect for each other. It was only in the mid-nineteenth century when the East India Company began to make societal and

cultural changes under the veil of reform and betterment, that the resentments started and the Revolt erupted. In articulating these feelings of betrayal and aggression through the characterisation of the rebels, I give voice to their marginalised and compromised status.

I conclude this exegesis noting that I have developed it within the boundaries of postcolonial discursive ideas and positing it within this context. There were a few setbacks and contradictions I faced within the rubric of such a study.

Firstly, having narrowed the scope of my research within such a context, I found it challenging to relate to the theme of nationalism, and, though I have not necessarily adopted too overt an anti-colonialist stance in my narrative, postcolonial theory became a kind of catechism. I have not deliberately attempted to legitimise my work as 'strictly' postcolonial, confirming to the varied nuances that accompany such a theory. Graham Huggan rightfully makes a case for such postcolonial textual representations:

Writers like Arundhati Roy and Vikram Seth, too, have proven adept at playing on readerly expectation, rehearsing but also transforming those literary formulae of an imagined India which capitalize on the illicit adventures and extravagant clichés of exotic romance. (Huggan 2001:80)

I chose my subject theme of the Revolt without conforming to the myths and notions surrounding the event. Reading and critically evaluating past events can, of course, reinforce the violence that tainted these events. But my theme is not gratuitously anti-colonial. Had British imperial enterprise not meddled into so many aspects of Indian society, the Revolt might never have taken place and the mutineers would not have resorted to an uprising. The main objective of my narrative therefore has been a cross-cultural understanding on a positive note and a debunking and deconstruction of 'exoticist' myths and 'orientalist' clichés.

Also, there has been a certain contradiction in my chosen rationale, towards my targeted readership. It is aimed, as Huggins has suggested at the 'booming alterity industry that the

postcolonial text at once serves and resists' (Huggan 2001: preface). To that end I argue that to cater to this 'alterity industry' my aim has been solely to market my novel to be read, in that all issues generate a discourse on an ex-colonised nation and having raised such issues, to have examined them with a new perspective.

Another hindrance that I faced in such a theory was how to interpret Anglo-Indian texts, which have resulted in a reversed colonialist bias and perspective. It is valid, to an extent, that texts ranging from colonial to Raj Nostalgia, written by British writers, have reiterated Eurocentric perceptions of India but to that end they have also celebrated, 'sublime and picturesque representations of the colonial encounter' (Suleri 1992:144). It could even be argued that such Anglo-Indian texts have in fact, paved the way for, and become precursors to, postcolonial texts by generating new interest in the ex colonies. To that end, to give such British India narratives their due, they have not acted as a cessation of cross-cultural readings but a continuation of them in the form of postcolonial texts.

Having identified these concerns I would also like to claim that my own narrative does not fall within such a stereotype entirely; it derives its own trajectory. In that sense I have attempted a leave-taking from too many culturally ideological issues such as the caste system, gender bias and an understated and wry dismissal of where India is headed, which is a constant of other postcolonial Indian texts. Graham Huggan argues that the works of other postcolonial writers such as Salman Rushdie *Midnight's Children* (1981), Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (1993) and Arundhati Roy's *The God Of Small Things* (1997), capitalise on these issues and that;

While these writers have capitalised on the 'politico-exotic' appeal of their novels they have also succeeded in sustaining a critique of exoticism in their work. This critique is located in each case in forms of cultivated exhibitionism: the deliberated hawking of Oriental (ist) wares. (Huggan 2001: preface).

I have attempted to contextualise the social factors that beset the Indian society individualistically to suit my narrative and balance these underpinnings with a view to homogenise them and not mock them.

Having developed my narrative around the binaries of nationalism and historical legacy, it still remains to be seen the validity it holds in a neocolonial world. But such works of postcolonialism will continue to be contextualised into literary categories thus strengthening the *postcolonial* novel. Filling in the gaps which were left by British India texts, the postcolonial novel tries to derive its own path, imbued with myths and metaphors. The postcolonial paradigm, despite the debates in the discursive field, continues to flourish, giving rise to a discerning readership and distilling at the same time duality as a substantial commercial text, dealing with a colonial past while raising debates and issues about it.

War Cry is not just a story about a violent historical past; it is a negation of that past, a cross cultural resonance arising out of a constant uprooting and unsettling of a people wronged, wittingly or unwittingly, and the hazardous consequences of such a negation.

Conclusion

In concluding my thesis, I have addressed a number of key questions pertinent to the historical reconstruction of India in colonial and postcolonial textual presentations, and what their textual content mean to a contemporary writer such as myself. Literature has always been a powerful tool to seek an identity in this world. How much of a hold does literary past have in representing the story of an ex colony in a neocolonial world? Should one resist, or embrace in part, this literary heritage which is a *mélange* of colonialist myths (colonial literature) and nationalistic ethos (postcolonial literature)?

My endeavour to seek an answer to the above has been that one needs to negotiate a compromise between the two, as either one is not whole in itself, but forms a part only if contemplated upon individually. By accepting this ambivalence one can truly understand the finer nuances of undertaking such a research. My exegesis has thus focused upon evaluating colonialist fiction by a range of writers such as Kipling, Forster, Scott, Stuart, Kaye, with a view to understanding their style and comparing it with the colonised and postcolonial writers such as Tagore and Arundhati Roy.

The future of postcolonial literature is constantly evolving. Where once the themes were largely nationalistic and concerned with political issues, such themes are now being largely replaced by more global concerns. To this end it could even be argued that the postcolonial literary world is now moving on from its colonised past and coming to terms with it and its effects, forging solidarity in a way, with other genres and forms of writing. Therefore the earlier objective of postcolonial writing, which was to seek a personal, racial and cultural identity, is slowly diminishing as this identity has now been well established. In the neocolonial world of mass globalisation, a postcolonial writer is as much a global/mainstream writer as any other, purely through his knowledge of such issues and the way he handles them textually. Postcolonial literature is now being viewed more and more as a highly intellectual, multicultural and polyglot literature in cosmopolitan settings. This is evident by the way established and highly successful writers such as Salman

Rushdie, Vikram Seth, and Anita Desai have taken their place in the world. The Western gaze towards postcolonial writers now is that they are well travelled or diaspora writers sharing a commonality with their nation's past yet looking forward into the global future where the subject themes of their writings, it can be argued, might not have anything to do their colonial legacy.

Thus the key arguments in my exegesis which started with the notion of India as an exoticised destination as portrayed through colonial literature, have been demystified through my own novel *War Cry*, whose theme might have been rooted in colonialism, but the voice of the marginalised can be heard as *War Cry* is essentially the story of the marginalised. In that I trust my endeavour to debunk the 'colonial fantasy' and remnants of old world colonial preconceptions, has lent an authentic and fresh appeal to the nationalistic theme of the Great Revolt of 1857.

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