

A Study on Indian Women's Colonial Travel Narratives  
from 1858 to 1936

By

Zerin Alam

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

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## DECLARATION

This dissertation – submitted in the Department of English, University of Dhaka– in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Philosophy.

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work except where otherwise stated. It has not been submitted previously anywhere for any award.

Signature:

(Zerin Alam)

Date:

## CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

In my capacity as supervisor of the candidate's dissertation, I certify that this dissertation is the student's own work and to the best of my knowledge all sources of information have been acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.

Supervisor: Professor Tahmina Ahmed

Signature:

Date:

Co – Supervisor: Professor Fakrul Alam

Signature:

Date:

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Examined and Approved by:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

## Abstract

The figure of the colonial woman is often incarcerated in images of passivity and immobility in studies of Indian colonial archives. However, travels by Indian women to England during the high colonial period unsettle such views and suggest that women's colonial experiences were complex and layered. This dissertation aims to address such gaps in current scholarship by recovering the voices of the Indian female travellers of the colonial period to form an epistemology of gendered colonial experiences. Using the lens of Judith Butler's gender theory of performativity, along with postcolonial discourse analysis, I examined the travel narratives of eleven female colonial travellers to gain insights into female colonial subject formation. A close reading of the selected texts shows that women had to negotiate with the demands of discourses of gender, colonialism and anti-colonial nationalism as they self-fashioned their identities. Consequently, they enacted multiple roles of feminine, modern, mobile, nationalist, cosmopolitan and sociable selves as part of their strategy to mitigate the transgressions inherent in travel and to conform to normative gender conventions and secure social approval. The travellers' presentations of these themes are presented in separate chapters. Additionally, the analysis of these travel narratives produces a mapping of the emotional contours and cosmopolitan dimensions of Indian female travels. By drawing on recent theoretical work on travel writing, postcolonialism and gender studies as well as analysis of recent female travel writing, my study offers an interdisciplinary perspective on Indian colonial women's travel narratives that will hopefully widen the scope of postcolonial studies and women's travel writing as well as contribute to women's writing from the colonial period.

*For my parents, who took me on my first voyages*

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## **INTRODUCTION: COLONIAL INDIAN WOMEN CROSSING THRESHOLDS**

Some of the most iconic visuals historicizing colonial India were produced by the eminent film director Satyajit Ray. In his cinematic adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's novel, *Home and the World*, he dramatized the social condition of colonial Indian women, poised between tradition and modernity, in a famous scene where Bimala, the female protagonist, walks slowly across a passage separating the inner quarter of her mansion from the drawing room. Ray deliberately uses a non-naturalistic mode to lengthen and slow down time as he focuses on her steps, the floor and the opulent surroundings. This shot foregrounds the momentous gesture of a colonial Indian woman breaking barriers by coming out of gendered spatial segregation and entering a public space. From a twenty first century perspective, a woman crossing a corridor may appear innocuous, but in the timeframe of the movie such an act was loaded with transgression and endowed with a potential for transformation and modernization. Women were secluded from a public gaze by veiling and by staying within segregated spaces inside their homes.

I use the example of Ray's cinematic visualization of female crossing of spatial thresholds to enter the complex historiography of colonial gendered mobility as the scene captures the multiple valences of women coming out of seclusion. Female social mobility signalled a breakdown of gender segregation and spatial divisions as well as a tentative movement towards modernization, education and personal freedom. Ray had evocatively distilled the symbolism of the many binaries and dichotomies of the colonial world in this corridor as a liminal space. The scene represents the divisions of inner and outer, home and world, periphery and centre, the logic of gender binary and the separations it creates, and, most interestingly, it is a

metonymy for women's travels. I find in the image of Bimala walking down the passage a symbolic reflection of women crossing thresholds and breaking barriers to claim social freedom and empowerment, even sailing across the seas to visit England.

Indian colonial women moving beyond the thresholds of their homes to sail to England was denotative of a larger social phenomenon of women's gradual emancipation and development in the colonial period. Women had travelled in the past, of course, but their journeys to paternal homes or pilgrimages or even to the West were rarely documented, least of all in their own words. A very small number of women who had travelled to England in the colonial era, however, had documented their experiences and published accounts of their travel experiences (cf. Lahiri)<sup>1</sup>. Set against the background of colonial women's immobility, the body of female authored travel narratives preserved in the colonial archive is of historic interest and merits critical attention.

### Women's Travels

Women's mobility, including opportunities to study and to visit England, had resulted from a convergence of discourses. The expansion of the British empire along with advances in technology such as the introduction of steam ships and the opening of the Suez Canal had made travel easier and safer, encouraging more women, European and Indian, to participate in the discourse of travel. The spread of female education and the flourishing of printing press in India enabled women to participate in the discourse of travel writing as well. Though Indian female travellers comprised a very small number compared to Western women, the handful of female authored

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<sup>1</sup> The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century witnessed the rise of several Indian colonial women writing about their travel experiences from Nawab Sikander Begum's narrative of her Hajj pilgrimage to Pandita Ramabai's ethnographic report of her visit to the United States (1889) to Hariprabha Takeda writing about Japan.

travel texts is of great importance since it opens up colonial archives to the neglected presence of female colonized subjects.

The corpus of travel narratives offers a rich account of the lived experiences of a group usually depicted as mute and passive in official texts. Unlike the heroine of Ray's film, the travelling women are not confined to male representations or male ventriloquism, they articulated their own stories. They inscribed themselves into the archive and entered the public discourses of travel and textuality.

Their travel narratives reveal a gendered view of cross-cultural encounters and colonial history and provide rare instances of female response to colonialism. While the 'women's question', the popular nomenclature for conversations on women's position in colonial society, was an animated topic among both British colonizers and Indian male reformers and nationalists, the women themselves did not participate directly in the debate. Consequently, women's voices and their experiences remain occluded in colonial archives and unremembered in official historiography.

In this regard, women's travel writing is important as the texts created a space for the textualization of female subjectivity and agency. The travels of colonial subjects, especially women, have been largely overlooked even though it is important to engage with the metropolitan encounters taking place in the high noon of imperialism since the travel experiences of these colonial voyageurs produce an important source of colonial epistemology. Consequently, this dissertation aims to rectify this gap in research by bringing into the spotlight colonial female travel experiences.

### Colonial Indian Travels

*Lascars and Princes: The Story of Indians in Britain 1700-1947*(1986) and *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* (1997) by Rozina Visram and *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain, 1600-1857* (2004) by Michael

Fisher have shown that Indian voyages dated back to pre-colonial times and Indians visitors were not uncommon in Britain. The colonial system had engendered various forms of mobility from the voyages of indentured labourers to ayahs accompanying English families on their journey back to England and royalty sent to England on exile. The study of Indian colonial travels is a growing field with several notable contributions from Shompa Lahiri, Somdatta Mandal and Pramod Nayar. Despite a burgeoning interest in such travels, there has been little engagement with women's travels or their travel writings, indicating a lacuna in existing scholarship.

Arriving in England, Indian female voyageurs were able to reverse the colonial gaze and embark on a scrutiny of imperial culture that positioned them as spectators who could construct a new discourse. Women travellers shared with their male counterparts a colonial impulse to record both appreciation and criticism. In the case of the women, however, travel differed in terms of an added dimension of gendered scrutiny that covered both India and England. The female travel writers complicate the impressions of England by twinning their travel observations with a self-reflexive commentary on women's condition in Indian society. Since these female travel writers were pioneers in women's writing and in female travel discourse, they were consciously involved in a deliberated crafting of a persona of genteel and refined femininity, tailored for contemporary audience.

Contemporary scholarship on women's travel writing has been very useful in guiding the framework of this thesis. The combination of gender, postcolonial theory and discourse analysis in the theoretical scaffolding of this study has been inspired by Sara Mills' approach in *Discourses of Difference* (1991). Mills' insights into discursive constraints on women travellers frame the analysis of Indian female travellers grappling with competing hegemonies of patriarchy and imperialism.



However, the unique contextual factors of Indian women's double colonization make it difficult to transpose Western paradigms of gendered travel on Indian travelogues. In her introductory comments on Bengali women's travel culture in *Travel Culture, Travel Writing and Bengali Women, 1870-1940* (2020), Jayati Gupta argues that:

While Sara Mills tries to develop different theoretical tools to analyse European women's travel writing produced within the colonial context, it is imperative to focus on the entirely different educative and cultural formations in indigenous cultures that gave travel writing by Indian women a different thrust altogether. (*Travel Culture* 11)

Gupta proposes that Indian colonial female journeys need to be viewed from a different angle because of particular contextual factors. She explains that Indian women venturing out of their homes in the late nineteenth century did not seek out adventure or attempt to defy social strictures rather they were committed to acquiring knowledge that could improve themselves, other women and their nation.

Jayati Gupta's call for a need to analyse Indian women's travels in a separate model draws attention to a gap in travel studies. While travel writing has been a popular area of research with the rise of postcolonial studies and critical geography, the voyages of colonized subjects, particularly women, have remained neglected. The aim of this dissertation is to address this lacuna and explore transnational processes and cultural impact produced by colonialism on colonized subjects through a reading of travel writing. Inspired by recent works on imperial history and transnational culture, this study carries on the trajectory of exhuming the colonial archive to retrieve forgotten voices in order to shift critical attention to colonized people.

The examination of Indian female voyages that follows owes much to the research work of Catherine Hall, Antoinette Burton, Mrinalini Sinha and Elleke

Boehmer who have highlighted the circulation of bodies and ideas within the empire and imperial social formations. Tony Ballantyne's and Antoinette Burton's idea of webs of empire (*Bodies in Contact* 3) provides a felicitous starting point for the analysis of travels by colonized subjects<sup>2</sup>. The analogy of a "web" is used by them to convey the interconnectedness of colonial cultural exchanges between the imperial centre and peripheries without disregarding the unequal power and discriminatory practices. This idea complicates earlier framings of the colonial past as a simple dichotomy and clears space for a more nuanced understanding of connections and cultural processes that have moulded colonial experiences.

Antoinette Burton in *At the Heart of the Empire* (1998) and in *Dwelling in the Archive* (2003) and Elleke Boehmer in *Indian Arrivals, 1870-1915: Networks of British Empire* (2015) have shown that London could be perceived by Indian travellers as a "contact zone", Mary Louise Pratt's term for the space of colonial encounters (*Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*). The imperial centre provided Indian travellers a space to be part of social formations and to fashion subjectivities. The self-positioning of colonial women in the imperial centre attests to a gendered imperial social formation as perceived in Mrinalini Sinha's heuristic model of imperial social formation, a term she used in *Colonial Masculinity* (1995) to capture the practice and process of forming colonial constructions of masculine and feminine models. She demonstrates how gender ideologies were formed by both colonial and metropolitan social contexts, and she situates the construction of gender roles in the intersection of economic, political and cultural frames.

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of web has been instrumental in extending critical attention to the experiences of colonized subjects (*Ballantyne Webs of Empire*).

My analysis of Indian female travellers' development of subject position aligns with Mrinalini Sinha's argument that "the social dimension of the imperial social formation model makes visible the specific historical conditions for organized women's rhetorical invention of new subject positions within the discourse of early Indian feminism" ("Mapping the Imperial Social Formation" 1080). Guided by Sinha's insights into the process of the discursive formation of Indian woman, I relocate the analysis to a new set of texts, colonial Indian women's travel narratives, and, thereby, aim to invigorate and re-energize scholarly discussions of colonial gender formations

Women's travel narratives constitute sites of cultural and personal development. After all, travel writings are depictions of encounters with the Other that lead to negotiations between alterity and self-identity resulting in self-projections and representations of new places and people. Casey Blanton's observation that travel texts function as "vehicles whose main purpose is to introduce us to the other and that typically they dramatize an engagement between self and world" highlights the role of the traveller's self in such discourses (xi). The embedded duality of self and other that theorists of travel writing, including Carl Thompson in *Travel Writing* (2011) and Tim Youngs in *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (2013), note in travel texts allows readers to learn as the much about the land and the people the traveller is visiting as about the traveller and his or her own culture. Thompson provides a useful explanation of this process of incorporating the self in travel writing when he writes elaborates on the dual role of travel in the following:

Consequently, all travel writing has a two-fold aspect. It is most obviously, of course, a report on the wider world, an account of unfamiliar people or place.

Yet it is also revelatory to a greater or lesser degree of the traveller who

produced that report and his or her values, preoccupations. And, by extension, it also reveals something of the culture from which the writer emerged and the culture for which their text is intended. (Thompson *Travel Writing* 10).

Carl Thompson's definition of travel writing gives emphasis on the construction of self-identity along with the account of new lands. Following Thompson's direction in the excerpt quoted earlier, it can be argued that Indian colonial women's travel narratives are useful documents for understanding Indian colonial culture and in tracing colonial women's social development over the decades. Travel writing in general, hence, serves as a space for self-inscription and articulation of subjectivity. Since England and, in particular, London, were already over-determined by the 1880s, as Indians had become textually familiar with the imperial centre through their colonial education and readings of popular literature, the travel depictions were geared mainly to showcase Indian selves rather than to present heroic or exploratory journeys prevalent in most European travel writing.

My research project is focused on a specific form of travel to the West, a modern discourse of travel that is secular and not motivated by spirituality, voluntary rather than coerced and aspirational for the travels were often motivated by desires for professional and educational development. Colonial travellers undertook such voyages for both education and pleasure. Moreover, the travellers, selected for this study, are elite women who were literate in an age of low female literacy and education, and were privileged in terms of wealth to afford such journeys and having the support of liberal and progressive families who did not hinder or obstruct their travels.

This study of Indian women's colonial travels is grounded in the terrain created by recent valuable works on colonial travels. The archival contribution cannot

be disregarded and these critics have also been successful in setting up the academic recognition of colonial travels. Categorizing Indian women's colonial travels as only counter-travels limit the scope for alternative readings because travel texts remain complex and multidimensional even when they are written from the perspectives of non-dominant groups.

### Methodological Framework

The following analysis of colonial Indian women's voyages to England is an attempt at feminist historiography since the focus is to move from recuperating female narratives to forming an epistemology of gendered colonial experience. There is also the additional aim of going beyond historical survey by using insights from postcolonial discourse analysis to undertake a close reading of texts which will enable a deeper understanding of women's textualization of agency and mobility. With these aims in mind, the present research study will analyse the inscription of women's self-identity and their experiences of visiting England.

Women's travel writing will be interpreted as an act of performativity, whereby travellers can self-fashion particular identities. Using the lens of Judith Butler's performativity theory of gender, along with postcolonial discourse analysis, the reading of colonial women's travel narratives that follow shows a process of identity construction and provides insights into the textualization of Indian nationalist and feminine selves that are also modern and cosmopolitan. Female travellers reveal a compulsion to enact femininity in adherence normative gender conventions and to secure social approval. In addition, the dissertation will seek to map the pattern of repetition and variations in the discourse of colonial women's travel writing. It will identify the recurring themes in the narratives. By drawing on theories from travel

writing, postcolonialism and gender studies, the research project will offer an interdisciplinary perspective on Indian colonial women's travel narratives.

The travel texts will be read in a postcolonial framework because as the scholar Claire Lindsay remarks postcolonial studies and travel writing share mutual preoccupations of resistance and hybridity. She traces the moment of coalescence to Edward Said's *Orientalism*, the foundational text of postcolonial studies ("Travel Writing and Postcolonial Studies" 26). The overlapping concerns of travel writing and postcolonial theory provide a rich and strong theoretical underpinning for the analysis of colonial voyages. A postcolonial perspective assumes an attempt to dismantle Eurocentric ideology as well as a focus on cultural identity. Furthermore, the choice of postcolonial rather than post-colonial in my methodological framework signals that the examination of colonial hegemony and discourse is not temporal, meaning after colonialism, but stems from the beginning of colonial establishments.

My research project hopes to expand the field of postcolonial studies in several ways. First, by bringing under purview a set of texts that have been neglected. Secondly, in terms of reading strategies or methodology I look into webs of connections, in studying the complicity of the elite class in colonial structures to benefit from and exploit transnational culture. By moving away from domination and indeterminacy, I hope to avoid endless repetitions that Neil Lazarus holds against much of postcolonial studies in his discussion of the field in "The Politics of Postcolonial Modernism" when he states:

To read across postcolonial literary studies is to find the same methods, techniques and conventions being used, the same concepts mobilized, the same conclusions drawn about a remarkably small number of literary works (Lazarus 22).

I, therefore, try to compensate for such limitations by searching for enabling exchanges between the colonized subject and the imperial centre, instead of only looking for binary oppositions. This is not to deny power differences and asymmetries; the potential for a less antagonistic and simplistic framework animates my project, and reduces to an extent the monotony of postcolonial iterations of hegemony and subversion.

### *Travel Narratives*

Travel narratives have been foregrounded in the title to include a wide spectrum of travel texts, ranging from travelogue to letters to memoirs, all of which are accepted in standard definitions of travel genre. The genre also accommodates the textualization of mobile identities. As Edward Said remarks, “stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists, say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonised people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history” (*Culture and Imperialism*, xiii). In his book *The Rhetoric of Empire*, David Spurr suggests that texts “unmediated by the consciously aesthetic requirements of imaginative literature” and rooted in “an historical actuality” are more revealing of ruptures and shifts in colonial discourse. As a result, this study is intentionally circumscribed to non-fictional travel writing to measure the impact of travel on narratives based on real lived experiences rather than imaginary or fictionalized accounts.

### *Time Frame of the Study*

The analysis of Indian women’s colonial travel narrative takes as its starting point the year 1858 to mark the beginning of Crown Rule in India. This was a watershed moment signalling the establishment of an imperial reign and also raising

Indian expectations of full participation in the British Empire. The Queen's Proclamation of 1858 is considered by Sukanya Banerjee as a Magna Carta for Indians (*Becoming Imperial Citizens*). It offered a notion of a common and equal status with its liberal declaration that:

all shall alike enjoy equal and impartial protection of the Law...and it is our further Will that, so far as may be Our Subjects, of whatever Race or Creed; be freely and impartially admitted to Offices in Our Service, the Duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability, and integrity duly to observe (qtd. in Banerjee 22)

Although such lofty idealized aims were not realized, the proclamation had a primacy in Indian conceptualization of rights and belongingness which served as “a node for self-fashioning, and a way of gaining cultural and social access” (Banerjee 10). There was an intimation of collaboration, mutual support and respect that was reflected in schemes such as creating the Indian Civil Service where Indians could apply, and installing honours and titles for Indian Princes. 1858 was a pivotal year for the formal declaration of incorporating India into Britannia or the British Empire with the promise of equal treatment of all Queen Victoria's subjects. Thus, even though most women began travelling to England from 1870 onwards, the year 1858 has been chosen to signify the “high colonial” period and to contextualize Indian collusion and complicity with the imperial structure. To maintain a focus on the colonial apparatus that underpinned the visits to England, the timeframe of the narratives end at 1936, that is to say, before the strong nationalist onslaught of decolonization came into full force. Durgabati Ghose and Kuttan Nair, two writers discussed later, published their travelogues in 1936, one year before the India Act of 1935 came into effect in 1937 when a federal form of government was laid down.



## The Female Travellers

The female travellers selected for this study, who had embarked on colonial journeys, comprise a varied group of individuals, as diverse as their travel purposes and travel texts. The diversity and range of travelling women can be ascertained from even brief sketches of the travellers. It is worth detailing their history at this stage since the dissertation chapters will be organized thematically rather than through case studies.

A glance at the background of these voyagers will also establish the significance of urban colonial centres in inspiring women's development and even mobility. It follows, therefore, that colonial travellers were based in the colonial cities of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, indicating that women's development was linked to colonial modernity. The languages of the texts chosen are also representative of the spectrum of women, among whom some wrote in English, while others wrote in Bangla, Urdu, Telegu and Malayalam. There is, however, a predominance of Bengali texts since most travellers, men and women, were from Bengal (Fisher *Counterflows*). Another reason for the proliferation of Bengali travel texts could be found in Tapan Ray Chaudhuri's observation that of all the provinces, Bengal had been most transformed by cultural contact with the West. Despite the access to imperial culture in terms of education and employment in Bengal, not all Bengalis enjoyed this advantage as there is no written document of travel from Bengali Muslim women<sup>3</sup>.

The travel narratives are heterogenous also in terms of type or subgenre.

Pothum Janakumamah Ragaviah, Krishnabhabini Das, Atiya Fyzee, Maimoona Sultan,

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<sup>3</sup> Syed Ameer Ali from Hooghly in Bengal, though not necessarily a Bengali-speaking person, had travelled to England and wrote a memoir which is included in *Memoirs and Other Writings by Syed Ameer Ali* edited by Syed Razi Wasti.

Durgabati Ghose and Kuttan Nair produced conventional travelogues, while Sunity Devi, Cornelia Sorabji and Janaki Majumdar recorded their travel experience in their memoirs. Toru Dutt's travel narrative is distinct from the others as it is based on her correspondences, developed mainly through a retrospective recreation of her experience of England in letters to her friend.

Among these travellers, the absences of Pandita Ramabai and Sarojini Naidu may appear questionable. They have been left out of the corpus mainly because they did not write extensively on their England trips. Ramabai wrote a very brief account of her voyage to England rather than the imperial centre in Marathi, *Englandcha Pravas* (1883), but presented a more detailed narrative of her American visit in *The Peoples of the United States* (1899). Meanwhile, Sarojini Naidu in spite of having studied in England, and being a frequent visitor, did not author any travel text on England.

Toru Dutt (1856-1877)

Among the female travellers, Toru Dutt has the distinction of being among the first Bengali women to travel to England in the colonial period. In many ways, she encapsulates the impact of cross-cultural dynamism triggered by colonial contact. Her family's conversion to Christianity from Hinduism and the Dutt's adoption of Anglophilic culture attest to the cultural transformations taking place in nineteenth century colonial India. As Christians, Dutt and her family did not have to encounter religious taboo on sea voyages. Consequently, Govind Chunder Dutt could easily take his wife and two daughters to Europe in 1869. They lived in France and England for four years. Toru Dutt and her sister, Aru Dutt, studied at a French Pension in Nice, and later when they moved to England the sisters attended classes at Cambridge University.

Dutt was an exceptional young woman who despite her tragically short life was a prolific writer of prose and poetry. Fluent in French, English, and Sanskrit, she produced literary works in all three languages. In her letters which have survived, there are five written from England, one of which is in Bangla. The greater part of her travel narrative, however, emerges from the letters she wrote in English from Calcutta to her friend Mary Martin once the Dutts returned to India. Dutt wrote in English at a time when female literacy was very low and few Indians, including men, published in English.

Pothum Janakumamah Ragaviah (dates unknown)

One of the earliest female travellers to record her impressions of England is Pothum Janakumamah Ragaviah. In her travelogue, she states that she is a Hindu lady from Madras, who by her own admission, defied caste conventions to cross *kala pani*, the sea, to travel to the imperial centre, England in 1874. Upon returning to India after a successful trip, she published her experiences in a letter to a Telegu newspaper. This was then translated into English as *Pictures of England* and published in Madras by Gantz Brothers in 1876.

Details of Janakumamah's identity seems to have been lost as there is no mention of biographical details about her. From the English translational of her travelogue, we learn that she was a wealthy married woman who had travelled to England with her husband and a retinue of servants.

Krishnabhabini Das (1864-1919)

Another trailblazing Bengali traveller was Krishnabhabini Das. She went to England with her husband in 1882 and lived there for nearly eight years. More importantly, she was the first Bengali woman to publish a travelogue on England,

*Englandey Bangamahila* in 1885. The Bangla text has now been translated into English, and the dissertation will be using Somdatta Mandal's translation *A Bengali Lady in England* (2020), though the original publication year will be adopted to give a sense of the historic time. It is a comprehensive ethnography of England written from a gendered colonial perspective. In contrast to Toru Dutt, Das had to pay a heavy price for the privilege of travelling to the West. As Bengali Hindus, she and her husband faced social ostracism for their voyage to England. Though Debendranath Das had not taken his wife along in his first trip to England, he decided to take her with him on his second trip. However, his father opposed this move for fear of social disapproval and insisted that the couple leave behind their six-year-old daughter. The separation between mother and daughter created a life-long rift between them that was never healed.

Das's journey was, therefore, marked with many hurdles posed by emotional to social impediments. She had no formal education; nonetheless, she was successful in writing a lucid and critical account of England. She went to become a writer of some note as she wrote several essays on the position of women. In *Rassasundari to Rokeya*, Ghulam Murshid mentions that Krishnabhabini was eventually appointed as an examiner to the University of Calcutta (98).

Sunity Devi (1864-1932)

While Hindu travellers were often harshly treated by society, travel for Brahmans and Christians were easier. As a result, Sunity Devi, daughter of the Brahmo leader Keshub Chandra Sen, and wife of the Maharajah of Cooch Behar, would travel to England several times without any social ostracism. She had the privilege of being the first Indian rani or princess, albeit of a princely state, to attend a British court

event. She visited England for the first time in 1887 to join the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign. Devi's depiction of England centres around the life of a minor celebrity from India, mixing freely with British royalty and offering glimpses through her writing into the pageantry and pomp of British high society. These experiences are included in her memoir, *An Autobiography of an Indian Princess*, written in English and published in 1921 in London by the publishing house John Murray. Devi's account helps in bringing diversity to women's travel history as it provides the rare perspective of a royal Indian woman on English society.

Cornelia Sorabji (1866-1954)

Like the other female journeys discussed so far, Cornelia Sorabji's travel to England was also ground-breaking. She was originally from Puna and born to a Parsi family that had converted to Christianity. Sorabji was a figure of cultural hybridity, constantly crossing different borders. After becoming the first woman to graduate from Deccan College, she travelled to England to study at Sommerville Hall (College from 1894) in Oxford. Her voyage in 1889 signals a new turn in Indian female travel history, revealing women going to England for educational and professional purposes from now on. Although Pandita Ramabai had travelled to England on her own for study purposes in 1883 to train as a doctor, the Maharashtrian traveller did not write a travel memoir per se. Sorabji, on the other hand, wrote a memoir detailing her experience of studying in Oxford and of later visits to England in her book *India Calling*, written in English and published in 1934. The Parsi student was a pioneer in being the first Indian and first woman of any race to study law at Oxford. In order for a woman to appear in the Bachelor of Civil Law (BCL) examination, Sorabji had to obtain a special dispensation. Although she passed her exams in 1892, she was not

awarded a degree until 1923 after Oxford University finally began granting women degrees.

Sorabji embarked on a legal career after she returned to India in 1893. She started as a pleader of the court and later became a barrister. She devoted her life to working for the purdahnashin, women who for reasons of gender segregation could not consult male lawyers or appear in court. Besides her memoir, she wrote several other books including fictional ones.

Mary Bhore (1865? -1913)

Another Indian female student to come to Oxford was Mary Bhore. As the daughter of Rao Saheb Ramji Gangaji Bhor of Maharashtra, she belonged to a Christian family. Like Toru Dutt and Cornelia Sorabji, she was another woman who enjoyed the benefits of English education and encouragement for further education from her relatives. For a short while, she served as a governess to the Baroda princesses. Then in 1898, she went to Sommerville College, Oxford, to study English Literature. After her term at Oxford, she enrolled at Froebel Training College in London to learn how children are taught through the kindergarten method. After returning to India, she became the First Assistant of Poona High School for Native Girls and then the Directress of Female Education in Baroda and head of the Female Training College at Poona.

Bhore's travel narrative was originally presented as a lecture in English to the Friends' Liberal Association of Poona in 1900. Subsequently, it was serialized and printed in the *Indian Ladies' Magazine*, edited by Kamala Sathianadha, from January 1902. This monograph presents the author's views of English society and women's lives.

Janaki Majumdar (1886-1963)

Janaki Agnes Penelope Majumdar spent a major part of her childhood in England as her family moved between England and India. Her father W.C. Bonnerjee, an England trained barrister and the first president of the Indian National Congress, wanted his family to be brought in England. Hence, in 1874 he sent his wife, Hemangini Bonnerjee, to live in London with the children. Majumdar, born in Calcutta in 1886, went to England in 1888 and studied in Croydon High School for Girls. In 1904, she enrolled in Newham College, Cambridge, and was the first Indian woman to obtain a degree in Natural Sciences. She was active in voluntary work through the Charity Organization Society and trained to be a teacher at London Day Training College. After getting married to P.K. Majumdar, a barrister, she settled in Calcutta.

Majumdar's memoir *A Family History*, originally a manuscript written in 1935, is an important record of the nineteenth travels of Indian women, including the travels of her mother Hemangini Bonnerjee and her own experience of life overseas. The manuscript was posthumously edited and published by Antoinette Burton in 2003.

Atiya Fyzee (1877-1967)

With Atiya Fyzee, we have the first Muslim female student's entry into the discourse of travel writing. Born in Turkey, Fyzee belonged to the Tyabji clan, a prominent Muslim family of Bombay. Her family background of social progressiveness and cultural liberalism facilitated her educational career and her social mobility. She was well-supported by her family in her decision to go to England in 1906 to train as a teacher at Maria Grey College on a government scholarship. Fyzee, however, returned to India without completing her degree. Though she never took up any career in education, she was actively involved in

cultural activities and collaborated with her husband Samuel Rahemin on writing books and staging plays.

She wrote a lively account of her stay in England, 1906-1907, that was first serialized in *Tehzib-e-Niswan*, an Urdu journal for women. The entries were later compiled and published as the book *Zamana-i-Tahsil* in 1921. This has now been translated as a *Time of Education* by Sunil Sharma and published in a critical edition *Atiya's Journeys: A Muslim Woman from Colonial Bombay to Edwardian Britain* (2011).

Maimoona Sultan (1900-1982)

Maimoona Sultan is the second Muslim female traveller and royal personage treated in this dissertation. Her travel experience, however, differs greatly from either from that of Atiya Fyzee or Sunity Devi. She was betrothed at the age of five to Hamidullah Khan, the son of the Nawab of Bhopal, Begum Sultan Jahan. When her mother-in-law was invited to attend the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary in 1911, Maimoona Sultan was selected to accompany the Nawab in her retinue. Despite the privileges of royal travel, the young princess remained mostly cloistered indoors for reasons of purdah. However, she was encouraged to write about her travels. She published *Siyasat-i-Sultan* in 1913, which was translated by G.B. into English as *A Trip to Europe* in 1914. The travelogue is the work of a very young individual and the account, especially of England is a retelling of what was relayed to the travel writer by her mother-in-law.

Durgabati Ghose (1905-1992)

Like Maimoona Sultan, Durgabati Ghose also visited England as a tourist. In 1932 she embarked with her husband on tour of Europe. She later published a record



of her travels in a book entitled *Paschimi Jatriki* in Bangla, which Somdatta Mandal has now translated into English as *The Westward Traveller*.

Ghose may have travelled as a spouse on a holiday trip, but was a critical observer and always active in writing and travelling. As the daughter of Girinder Sekhar, the founder of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society, and later wife of Rabindra Chandra Ghose, a bar-at-law and scion of an enlightened and Westernized Calcutta family, Durgabati Ghose had ample access to education and social mobility, which is reflected in her travels. She had graduated from Brahma Balika Sikhalaya in 1921. As a result, she travelled to Europe with a confidence and familiarity of Western culture that makes her travelogue an interesting contrast to the nineteenth century Janakumamah Ragaviah and Krishnabhabini Das who had also travelled as spouses. Kuttan Nair (1908-1997)

Mrs. C. Kuttan Nair or Kochatil Kalyanikutty Amma, commonly referred to as Kuttan Nair, had travelled to Europe in 1934, and her travel account rounds off the female travel narratives chosen for this research. As someone who wrote at the end of the colonial period, it is not surprising that she would be renowned for her nationalist sentiments and feminist concerns. She was born in Thrissur, Kerala, and graduated in science from Queen Mary's College, Madras. She was popularly known as Mrs. C Kuttan after her marriage to a freedom fighter, C. Kuttan Nair. She was a teacher by profession and taught at the V.G. High School for girls in Thrissur for more than 30 years.

In 1934 she visited Europe as a member of the all-women's tour organized by Akhila Vidyarthi Sangham (International Student Services). She then published a description of her visit to different European nations including England in *Ninda*

*Kanda Europe* in 1936 written in Malayalam. This was later translated into English as *A Peep into Europe* in 1937.

*Women as a Category of Travellers*

Although the travellers chosen will be viewed as a composite group comprising Indian colonial women, they actually belonged to different ethnic and linguistic communities spanning all of pre-partition British India. Yet these travellers who are South Asian women have been labelled “Indian” to reflect their contemporary usage of the term to denoting the whole of the Indian subcontinent, (comprising present- day Bangladesh, India and Pakistan) for the colonial travellers had identified themselves as “Indian.” Indian colonial voyagers, male and female, were conscious of their ethnic identities in terms of region or religion, but once they were in England they were regarded as Indian with their separate identities elided by metropolitan generalizations, and so, they developed an “understanding of what it means to be ‘native’” (Grewal 134). Consequently, a growing sense of identification as Indians emerged among travellers which Inderpal Grewal terms a notion of “fuzzy community” (*Home and the Harem* 133), a collective identity that is a precursor to nationalist identity or belonging to a modern nation state. The sense of being Indian was also fostered by the binary of home and abroad, spatial demarcations under colonial structure that influenced the creation of “new forms of the Self” among Indian travellers (Grewal 135). Also the travellers refer to the imperial centre as “England” and the people as “English”; this use has been retained in the dissertation.

In spite of the dangers of homogenizing all travellers under the rubric of gender, the focus on women travellers in this work has been retained throughout. Given the impact of context and social convention on travel and travel writing, many critics acknowledge the role of gender difference. The editors of a recent volume on

women's travel and tourism insist that gender continues to be relevant and significant because "Women's travel does not take place in a social, cultural, or political vacuum; it is always has and will always remain very much a gendered phenomenon" (Khoo-Lattimore and Erica Wilson 4). Similarly, Karen Lawrence, a pioneering scholar of women's travels, explains her position on emphasizing gender in the following extract from her work:

Although I resist sweeping statements about generic differences between travel literature by men and that by women, in general, women writers of travel have tended to mistrust the rhetoric of mastery, conquest and quest that has funded a good deal of male fictional and nonfictional travel (Lawrence 20).

Gender variation in travel writing has also been recognized by travel theorists Sara Mills and Marie Louise Pratt. They have remarked on differences in topic and style that result from discursive pressures on women travelling and writing. However, these scholars have not addressed the case of Indian colonial female travellers who faced greater pressure and internal contradictions due to race and gender. This dissertation, therefore, attempts to widen the field of women's travel writing by focusing on Indian colonial female travellers, which will also contribute to enriching research on colonial history.

### Plan of the Dissertation

This dissertation aims to situate the cultural practice of female travel writing within the framework of colonialism. Women's travel narratives intersect with various feminist themes and the social context of the time. Consequently, the texts refract contemporary concerns such as women's education, nationalism, gender

relations and more. The linkages with these themes and notions of identity construction will be addressed in the various chapters.

Given the importance of context on travel narratives and women's travel, the first chapter, "Charting the Terrain" will present an overview of the history of colonial travel including the reform movement which had influenced Indian travel culture. The chapter will also present a literature review on travel writing and a discussion of the theoretical framework of postcolonial studies, gender performativity theory, cosmopolitanism, and affect.

Chapter Two "Viewing the English Woman: Being Feminine", will demonstrate that Indian women's identity construction was based on a relational framework. The travel narratives of Das, Bhore, Fyzee, Ghose and Nair will be analysed to show that most female travellers defined their Indian feminine self by setting up the English woman as a foil. The chapter will show the complex manoeuvring of identification and disidentification in Indian women's performativity of gender identity.

While women's gender identity is a hallmark of female travel writing, another difference they reveal from male travel writers is the female travellers' gendered perspective on colonial modernity. This is why the third chapter "Finding Modernity in England" will engage with women's presentation of modernity and projections of modern selves in the travel texts of Ragaviah, Das, Fyzee, Ghose and Nair.

Chapter Four, "Bodies in Movement" will continue the theme of gendered self-representation and feminine identity by analysing how women's bodies are encoded. Women travellers tend to be self-conscious and acutely aware of the gaze of onlookers. Thus, this chapter will show the ways colonial Indian women dealt with being spectacles and how travel was an embodied experience for them. The travel

writings of Dutt, Das, Sorabji, Fyzee and Nair will be used to develop the theme of corporeality in Indian female travel writing.

Chapter Five “Performing Cosmopolitanism” will introduce a new dimension in the reading of Indian women’s travel writing to showcase potential for cosmopolitan performativity revealed in colonial women’s travel texts. Apart from the cosmopolitanism of cultural engagement and political aspirations in Fyzee and Sorabji, the chapter will open up the field to Indian female royal cosmopolitanism in the discussion of Sunity Devi and Maimoona Sultan.

Chapter Six “Indian Women’s Sociability in England” will further develop the theme of identity performativity to analyse women’s enactment of social selves. Here the texts of Dutt, Majumdar, Fyzee, Ghose and Nair will be read to understand the impact of affect and the development of transnational ties by Indian female travellers.

Chapter Seven will attempt to bring together by way of conclusion the diverse strands of the research and will try to argue that a study of Indian women’s colonial travels can enrich our understanding of empire, gender and travel studies.

As a result, the dissertation will be culturalist, which Elleke Boehmer and Rosinka Chaudhuri believe characterize most postcolonial research, but it also stems from my personal trajectory as someone who had a global cultural orientation while travelling and residing in different countries as the child of a diplomat. I am, hence, conscious and empathetic to the contradictory pulls of transnationalism and nationalism. My own experience makes me particularly sensitive to the anxieties of homogenization and hybridity produced by imperial metropolitan culture on the colonial women travellers. I, too, share with them the desire to retain and assert ethnic national identity when faced with the culture of a more powerful other and the fear of being denationalized and hybridized by cross-cultural contact. A gendered

consciousness to trace a female genealogy of colonial modernity and to discover female forerunners and precursors also motivated my search to locate women among colonial travellers. In my attempt to trace a genealogy of women's travel, it is with some regret that I note the absence of Bengali Muslim women's narratives in my corpus. Nevertheless, I am hopeful the travel texts of colonial women from different parts of South Asia will give me valuable insights into the trials and achievements that have paved the way for our contemporary South Asian women's mobility, education and cultural rights. In this way, my research will contribute to South Asian women's cultural history and enrich the archive of women's colonial writing.

## CHAPTER ONE CHARTING THE TERRAIN

The pathbreaking action of Indian colonial women crossing *kalapani*<sup>4</sup> or the seven seas and thirteen rivers of Bengali cultural imagination cannot be fully appreciated without taking into account insights from colonial discourse, travel writing and gender studies. Taking gendered spatial practices as a platform to examine travel narratives, this dissertation aims to deconstruct colonial women's journeys to England to locate and highlight women's development of the kind of self-consciousness that is gendered and racialized. It shall, therefore, adopt an interdisciplinary framework to interrogate female colonial experience of the metropolitan centre as a "contact zone"<sup>5</sup>. Women's journeys will be interpreted as conduits for building female subjectivity and limited agency.

Travel contributed to Indian colonial women's self-reflection and understanding of colonial and gender relations and, thus, the travel narratives bear the imprints of feminine negotiations and self-discoveries. My research will demonstrate that women were unable to openly assert female selfhoods; Indian female travellers do not emerge as transgressive or rebellious travellers intent on defying social norms. The travellers selected for the research corpus were committed to social ideals and used the journeys to realize social aspirations. Bound by the discourses of their time, they tried to conform to social expectations of femininity and nationalism; nevertheless, they also took advantage of metropolitan culture to push for modernity and women-centred rights. Given the complicated matrix of discursive pressures,

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<sup>4</sup> The word *kalapani* means black seawater and denotes sea voyage.

<sup>5</sup> In *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt has used this notion to refer to "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination-such as colonialism and slavery..." (7).

Indian women projected themselves as feminine and Indian, even while they were drawn to, and registered an appreciation of imperial metropolitan culture.

This chapter, intent at mapping the theoretical terrain of the study, will begin by rehearsing salient points of women's social history. Since the research focus is on women's colonial travels, at the outset an overview of colonial travels and travel writing will be presented. This will be followed by a brief discussion of postcolonial studies, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and a review of other salient theories used in the close reading of the texts.

### History of Social Reform

Women's travels from India to England are complicated by imbrications in the reform movement of nineteenth century colonial India and the "women's question", the term of the debate on gender relations and women's condition. Colonial reforming zeal was carried out in two parts; in the first half of the century, reforms took the shape of legislative measures to eradicate social evils, while in the later part efforts were made to change society, including recasting women's character through education. In his examination of the emergence of modernization of Bengali upper and middle-class women, the bhadramahila, cultural historian Ghulam Murshid locates a strong link between contact with Western culture and the impulse to improve women's situation (*Reluctant Debutante*).

Cross-cultural exchanges with the West through education and travel had a major impact on social transformation. Several leading social reformers of nineteenth century travelled to England and gained first-hand knowledge of alternative social systems thereby. The combination of contact with imperial culture and a sense of resentment against colonial criticism of Indian society engendered a deep desire among colonial subjects to change society. Consequently, the nineteenth century



witnessed several reform movements all over India, including ones aimed at uplifting the condition of women. In response to British criticism of the deplorable condition of Indian women, colonizers and liberal Indians embarked on a programme of social reconstruction which centred on female oppression. Thus, liberal segments of Indian society and colonial officials concentrated their efforts to eradicate *sati* (widow immolation), the sufferings and deprivations imposed on high caste widows, child marriage, polygamy and purdah/female seclusion. While some Indian subjects were keen to adopt the changes, responses varied, and so Gail Minault states that “most responses” were between “outright rejection” and “conscious collaboration” (*Secluded Scholars* 3).

A contradictory alignment of male interests developed between colonizers and progressive Indian male reformers, leading Sumanta Banerjee to comment that women’s reform was a burden to be shared by Indian men educated by colonial missionaries and British colonizers, whether men or women, who wished to make use of Indian women’s perceived backwardness for their own advancement. In order to develop India, both groups advocated for female literacy and female social mobility as paths to modernization. The measures for reform, however, were not just altruistic acts but constitutive of British colonial hegemony to dominant Indian society under the guise of a civilizing mission. Indian male-led reforms were also bound to the self-serving interests, in this case those of native patriarchy, to develop women so that they became better wives and mothers<sup>6</sup>. Curiously, there is no mention of Indian women’s views with regard to the reforms introduced, provoking Lata Mani to

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<sup>6</sup> In *Reluctant Debutante*, Murshid argues that progressive male reformers were keen to “educate their women and thereby turn them into better wives and better mothers” (199). He adds “men’s attempts to uplift women were not meant for women’s welfare alone, they were, at the same time, motivated by men’s aspirations for the fulfilment of their own lives” (ibid).

famously declare in an oft-quoted essay, “Contentious Traditions: The Debate on *Sati* in Colonial India”, that women “are not the subjects of this discourse” of reform. She adds, “I would argue that women are neither subjects nor objects, but rather the ground of the discourse on sati” (152). Women, thus, functioned as an aporia, triggering debates and conversations but remaining outside of it.

The nineteenth century, nevertheless, witnessed a major transformation of women’s condition. In *Reluctant Debutante* (1983) and *From Rassasundari to Rokeya*, Murshid has presented a detailed social history of the rigid social constraints that limited women’s opportunities before the intervention of social reforms. Meredith Borthwick also supports Murshid’s view that social changes significantly altered women’s lives in her analysis of domestic reform on women’s lives, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1849-1905* (1984). Due to the vision and efforts of some liberal progressive individuals, a small number of females were able to come out of seclusion, veiled or unveiled, to go schools, or embark on journeys. Travel to England was a constitutive part of this enthusiasm for modernization and gendered reform. The journeys of Toru Dutt, Jnanadanandini Devi and Hemangini Bonnerjee were propelled by a few progressive reformers’ social experiments to immerse their families in English culture.

#### *The Brahmo Samaj*

Many of the new opportunities for women’s social development and educational progress owed much to the efforts of the Brahmo Samaj, a monotheistic sect of Hinduism that moved away from rituals and tried to embrace a rational and progressive outlook. Founded by Ram Mohun Roy in 1828, the organization was a catalyst in pioneering social reforms in Bengal, but its influence extended beyond the region. Clare Midgley concludes that the society displayed a sincere commitment for

women's self-empowerment. She notes that Brahma Samaj was "emancipationist" in its efforts to develop education, publication and even social mobility which, in turn, encouraged women to adopt "wider social roles...and potentially become regenerators of society themselves" (373). While Midgley's view may be idealistic, the society's success in transforming women's condition and reconfiguring female social roles along a transculturated English influenced model led to women's travels to England and the eventual publication of their travel experiences. Brahma Samaj's impact on changing women's condition was not limited to Bengal only; the Brahma movement had inspired a trans-Indian network dedicated to social and religious reforms. When Pandita Ramabai<sup>7</sup> embraced Brahma ideology and promoted its goals, the movement extended to other parts of India through organizations such as the Prathana Samaj and the Arya Mahila Samaj in West India and Veda Samaj in Madras<sup>8</sup>. According to Midgley members of this society were forerunners in adopting new and, at times, Westernized customs, which often led to harsh ostracism and alienation.

At the same time, as Brahmists they were also beyond traditional repercussions (Borthwick 51). By cutting off ties with traditional Hindu community, they became free to adopt new manners and bring about radical changes. Meredith Borthwick comments that the influence of Brahmism extended beyond the Brahmists (54), "[m]any of the reforms initiated originally by Brahmists had become widely accepted among the English-educated class (54). Besides the influence of Western education, the emergence of a new professional class consisting of bureaucrats and barristers

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<sup>7</sup> Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati (1858-1922) was an Indian social reformer dedicated to women's development. She was the first Indian woman to be given the title of Pandita (the feminine of pundit or Sanskrit scholar). She had travelled to England in 1866 to study medicine. On her return to India, she established schools and homes for girls and destitute widows.

<sup>8</sup> Clare Midgley writes that "It was Ramabai's encounter with the Brahma Samaj in Calcutta that propelled her into public prominence" ("Indian Feminist Pandita Ramabai" 16)

among others, urban development and modern transport systems reconfigured domestic life, weakening the joint family system and altering family life. Kumari Jayawardena, therefore, considers the Brahma Samaj's reform activities as part of a national awakening to modernise local society (qtd. in Midgley "Mary Carpenter" 365)<sup>9</sup>.

### *The Development of the Bhadramahila*

In the 1860s the few women who defied traditional customs and came out of purdah were either Christians or Brahmos. In her research on the Brahma Samaj, Midgley notes that women from this sect were among the first ones to move into the public world through higher education, serving as doctors and participating actively in the Indian National Congress meetings ("Pandita Ramabai" 15). In terms of travel, too, Brahma women were pioneers in undertaking sea voyages and also pursuing foreign education. At her husband's insistence, Jnanadanandini Tagore (1850-1941), the wife of Satyendranath Tagore<sup>10</sup>, broke social customs of seclusion by attending official dinners she interacted with men outside of her family, including British gentlemen. Then she also travelled within India, and later even sailed to England with her small children unaccompanied by any male family members.

Jnanada Tagore exemplifies the new female prototype envisioned by social reformers. She had some social freedom to come out of the zenana/antapur and interact with people outside her family, but she was also competent in running her

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<sup>9</sup> Cultural historian Bharati Ray explains the significance of the Brahma Samaj thus: The historical importance of the Brahma movement was that in a basically traditional society, where there had been little structural change, Brahmoism represented essentially the force of ideas—ideas born largely of the new urbanism that was influencing social and cultural practices" (33).

<sup>10</sup> Satyendranath Tagore, son of Brahma leader Debendranath Tagore, was the first Indian to qualify for the Indian Civil Service after appearing in the exam in England.

household and supporting her husband in his career. The new female exemplar of the *bhadramahila* was based on Victorian ideals of domesticity and femininity to mould women so that they could become better wives and mothers (Borthwick; Grewal). There was an attempt to integrate the gentility and refinement of Victorian ladies with the traditional “virtues of a Hindu wife, combining moral goodness with a basic education and social presence” (Borthwick 56). Along with the reconfiguration of women’s character, Inderpal Grewal points out that both reformists and colonialists used science, education and progress to alter the inner space of homes, the *antarpur* or *zenana*. To attain their goals, they often encouraged limited education, coming out of *purdah* and even the incorporation of Western dresses in order to make Indian females genteel, moral and respectable.

The newly reconstructed *bhadramahila* reflected the strong influence of Brahma customs and social behaviour and was based on upper caste Hindu social mores. This model, however, soon prevailed in other communities as well and became representative of gendered ideals for a westernized and elite class of colonial Indians. In the aim to modernize and improve domestic life, there was a sudden need to alter the Indian woman, who the reformers believed “must be refined, reorganized, recast regenerated” (Koilashchandra Bose “On the Education of Hindu Females” qtd. in “Marginalization of Women’s Popular Culture” 162).

The spirit of reform extended beyond Bengal and the impetus to restructure women’s social condition could be found in different parts of India. Gail Minault in *Secluded Scholars* (1998) and Margrit Pernau in *Emotions and Modernity in Colonial India: From Balance to Fervor* (2019) have shown that Muslim societies, mainly in North India, were also engaged in social reconstruction, including developing female literacy and modernization. In her book *The Emergence of Feminism in India: 1850-*

1920 (2006), Padma Anagol has presented the scenario of female development in Maharashtra. Her observation that “Indian women’s quest for civil, political and religious rights arose straight from the belly of the great religious and social reform movements of the nineteenth century” (9) is relevant for us in contextualizing the travel narratives of colonial Indian women.

Indian travels to England were inspired and facilitated by these social changes. As mentioned earlier, an impetus for social change motivated many of the journeys. Apart from the Brahmo Samaj members such as Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884)<sup>11</sup> and Shibnath Shastri (1847-1919)<sup>12</sup>, England continued to attract colonial subjects dedicated to social reform. Thus, male reformers such as Behramji Malabari (1853-1912),<sup>13</sup> a Parsi journalist based in Bombay, visited England to garner support from the British public for legislative reforms for Indian women’s condition. Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1918)<sup>14</sup>, one of the driving forces behind the regeneration of Muslim society through Western styled scientific education, had travelled to England in 1869 and wrote about his visit in letters that were published in the Aligarh Institute Gazette (Hasan and Zaidi ix). Although he was keen to modernize Muslim society, he was reluctant to support women’s reforms. In their introduction to the English translation of Khan’s travelogue, Mushirul Hasan and Nishat Zaidi state that the reformer believed women should remain at home to protect their modesty (26), a view endorsed by Gail Minault in her remark that he opposed schools for girls as he felt

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<sup>11</sup> Keshab Chandra Sen was a leading member of the Brahmo Samaj and committed to reforming society and improving women’s condition. He even travelled to England in 1870 to promote Brahmo ideals.

<sup>12</sup> Shibnath Shastri was a writer, social reformer and leader of the Brahmo Samaj who campaigned for women’s freedom and promoted education.

<sup>13</sup> Behramji Malabari (1853-1912) was involved in working against child marriages and had initiated the popular demand for the Age of Consent Bill (1891) to raise the age of consent for sexual intercourse for married and unmarried girls from the age of ten to twelve.

<sup>14</sup> Syed Ahmed Khan was a founder of the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College and associated with the Aligarh Movement.

home learning was sufficient (18). This hesitation is indicative of the ambivalence among some social reformers over female-centred issues.<sup>15</sup>

### *Limitations of the Reform Movement*

In spite of a general recognition of the need to ameliorate women's conditions, the manifestations and extent of women's emancipation remained contentious (Murshid; Borthwick). Murshid argues that "the so-called reformers were prepared to allow women only 'limited' freedom" (*Reluctant Debutante* 109) and a circumscribed curriculum and some social mobility to create a new female social character, commensurate with the new liberal and Western educated native men. Even within the Brahma Samaj there was division about the extent of women's reform<sup>16</sup>. Midgely notes that Brahma members were not united and held diverse perspectives on women's emancipation. Their views ranged from "expressions of paternalist concern to elevate wives and daughters so that they would not hold back their own project of regenerating Indian society to an emancipationist vision of empowering women to gain more equality within marriage and to take on wider social roles" ("Mary Carpenter" 380).

Male reservation despite a vocal endorsement for women's right to education and social liberty is apparent in several reformers and travellers. For instance, during his tour of England in 1870, Keshab Chandra Sen advocated for the development of

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<sup>15</sup> Fortunately, schools for Muslim girls were eventually opened by progressive male reformers (Minault). Begum Rokeya Shakawat's pioneering zeal and success in establishing a school for Muslim girls in Calcutta is a notable achievement for the scope of her work and the fact that she was Muslim female educationist and social reformer.

<sup>16</sup> The Brahma Samaj finally split into two in 1878 following disagreements over the women's question. Keshab Chandra Sen was regarded as having backtracked from condemning child marriage when he agreed to his thirteen-year-old daughter's betrothal with the Maharajah of Cooch Behar

consciousness of Indian Hindu women and urged English women to spread their ideas in India in statements such as:

If Englishwomen are ready to vindicate what are called women's rights in England...let them show that their views and sympathies are not confined within the limits of this small island. (*Keshab Chunder 's Sen's Visit* 465)

He was successful in promoting the need for female literacy and his visit was pivotal in bringing Annette Akroyd to Calcutta to establish the Hindu Mahila Bidyaloy (Hindu Ladies School) in 1873. Yet, Sen was wary of Indian women adopting English ways. He did not want an Anglicized curriculum for his school and believed that emancipation for women should be limited. His own conflicted views surfaced very clearly in his consent for his daughter's marriage at the age of thirteen, which went against the Brahmo Marriage Act of 1872 that set the age for females at 14 and for males at 18. His daughter Sunity Devi's betrothal to the young Maharajah of Cooch Behar, Nripendra Narayan, created much controversy for Sen's change in attitude towards marriageable age and rituals.

Sen's decision over his daughter's marriage shows that male reformers continued to adhere to normative gender ideologies and that women's reformers like women's travels, was initially enveloped within a patriarchal paternalism. The male influence over women's condition problematize women's travels and female development. Ghulam Murshid has argued that women's modernization in the nineteenth century was initially confined to introducing female literacy and social mobility so that women could come out of the zenana or purdah and take up a more prominent social role. Women were thus encouraged to acquire some learning and accomplishments that would mould them into suitable wives for the new urbanized and professional men, who had been schooled in Western/English education.



Unfortunately, the cross-cultural dimension of women's modernization implied a close connection to colonizing forces and foreign cultural influences. Consequently, apprehensions over female emancipation or women's modernization produced gendered anxiety and fears over transnational threats. Murshid and Partha Chatterjee both agree that the reformist drive underwent a change with the rise of nationalist discourse which conflicted with English inspired social reforms. Fears of the onslaught of Western inspired manners and behaviours even led to backtracking and retreat into eulogizing a glorious ancient Indian past history instead of embracing modernization. Both Murshid and Chatterjee note that there was a pause in male-initiated reforms, but they offer different explanations for it. Murshid argues that the reformers had limited their agenda to social developments that would prepare women to be companionate wives for the bhadralok class, that is the newly educated and modern middle-class Bengali (and mostly Hindu) men. Female demands for education and economic opportunities threatened them and consequently "Brahmos who had for so long advocated women's 'emancipation' suddenly expressed their disapproval of unorthodoxy in women" (Murshid *Debutante* 200).

While Murshid states that the reform agenda was side-lined by the growing nationalist movement and patriarchal anxiety, Chatterjee proposes that the debate over women's issues was ultimately resolved ("Resolution of the Women's Question"). Chatterjee contends that the reform to modernize women changed tracks when the separation of gender spheres was adopted. According to this model, men inhabited the outer sphere of the public world while women occupied the inner realm of domesticity and private life. Chatterjee further adds that to reconcile the nationalist opposition to the imitation of Western mores and manners in female social emancipation, women were relegated to be bearers of tradition and Indian-ness, that

for the most part meant the culture of upper caste Hindus. The nationalist discourse constructed women as the emblem of spirituality and the nation, a view that most men and women acquiesced to. In several essays including “Nation and Its Women,” the scholar remarks that the polarity of spirituality and materialism was also embedded in this model with India becoming the repository of spirituality and the West with the materialism of science, commerce and administrative power--- the public world.

Female travellers’ attempts to downplay their transgressions and to project social adherence are a strong validation for Chatterjee’s model and Murshid’s argument that the reform movement did not lead to feminism. The women voyagers were, therefore, caught in “a violent shuttling” between “patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation”, as Gayatri Spivak describes the condition of colonial Indian women (“Can the Subaltern Speak”102). Although the broad contours of the reform movement are reflected in female travel texts, the presence of women travellers and their travel narratives in the colonial archive problematize the explanations offered by Murshid and Chatterjee. Reading women’s travel writing, it appears that most women had neither been side-lined nor relegated to spirituality and domesticity as they crossed seas and self-fashioned their identities.

### *Colonial Female Subjectivity*

Women travel writers’ entry into the public discourses of travel and writing is an attempt to come into being as subjects and not remain passive objects, silenced by dominant historiography in the debates of the woman question over social reform (1850-1890) and cultural nationalism (1890-1930). In encoding their own travel experiences and perspectives, nineteenth century Indian women asserted agency and resisted patriarchal and colonial domination spatially and textually. An analysis of colonial female travel narratives will uncover the processes involved in creating

subject position and historicizing subjectivity. A useful definition of subjectivity is provided by Amina Mama when she explains that it is “individuality and self-awareness-the condition of being a subject” (Henrique et al, qtd. in Mama 2). Such consciousness and understanding of the self’s relation to the world is also reflected in colonial Indian women’s emerging selfhoods. Furthermore, Mama’s views on the process of developing subjectivity throws light on the complex process of social formation when she writes that subjectivity is “the process of movement through various discursive positions, [and] as something which is constantly being produced out of social and historical knowledge and experience” (Mama 99).

By attending to colonial Indian women’s self-expressions in travel narratives, one can trace the development of female consciousness. Gender researcher Kochurani Abraham argues that it is necessary to locate and give value to such documents of female expressions. As she explains:

Making women’s voice heard is important because when women have ‘a voice of their own’, they exercise agency. The category of ‘women’s voice’ denotes the experiential viewpoint of women, and in making women’s voices heard, life stories transmit individual and cultural meanings. Narrative knowledge -- created and constructed through stories of lived experiences, and the meanings create-- helps make sense of the ambiguity and complexity of human lives.

(Abraham 14-15)

Women, however, were not free from the pressures of patriarchal hegemony, and their texts reflect the complex process of negotiating with discursive pressures in their performativity of feminine and nationalist selves. Based on Seemanthini Niranjana’s view that the female is constituted through spatially determined bodily practices and the modes by which spaces are inhabited, Abraham proposes that the demarcation of

domestic sphere as feminine and public world as masculine in colonial Indian society was a vivid example of gendered spatiality (Abraham 11). Hence, women's journeys constituted a fracturing of socially constructed spatial boundaries. Consequently, their travels and writing are invested with power and potential to negotiate with patriarchy.

The importance of fracturing gendered power is also noted by Anindita Ghosh in her study of women's resistances in *Behind the Veil: Resistance, Women and the Everyday in Colonial South Asia* (2007). Ghosh argues that dramatic confrontations and complete escape from dominant structures were rare (8), but within current scholarship on gender "[t]here seems to be little recognition of the multiplicity of strategies for constructing selfhood that women have been adept at in South Asian contexts" (11). She, therefore, recommends that it would be more fruitful to focus on the subversive and creative tactics of negotiating with hegemonic practices of gender discourse. In her book *The Emergence of Feminism in India, 1850-1920* (2005), Padma Anagol also suggests that the agency of colonial Indian women need to be re-examined to locate moments of "feminist consciousness" in women's colonial history (*Emergence* 13).

Inspired by contemporary feminist contribution to the shifting of critical attention to everyday resistances of ordinary women, this dissertation aims to locate moments of subversion in "the face of seemingly stable gender regimes" (Ghosh 19) and also trace the intricate pattern of a complicity with and defiance of dominant ideologies. The examination of colonial Indian women's travel experiences that follows will take heed of Anagol's and Ghosh's suggestions to move beyond transgression and victimhood, and search instead for complex articulations in women's relation with colonial culture and indigenous patriarchy. My work will attempt to show that colonial women's entry into the public discourses of travel and

of writing constitute attempts to become subjects and not remain passive objects, silenced till now by dominant historiography in the debates over the women's question in nineteenth century colonial Indian society.

## Travel and Female Identity

Travel was an integral component of this reformist zeal as several of the early travellers were inspired by the picture of domesticity they witnessed during their stay in England. Satyendranath Tagore, the first Indian to qualify for the Indian Civil Service, felt compelled to bring his wife over to England so that she and their children could benefit from imperial culture. An Anglophilic fascination for Western lifestyle also inspired Womesh Chandra Bonnerjee (1844-1906), a barrister and a co-founder and the first president of Indian National Congress, to insist that his wife reside in London and educate their children in British schools while he practiced law in India. The journeys of the early female travellers selected for this study were initiated by male desires to educate and modernize their spouses and daughters, and several of the women travelled to England as companions. With time, however, a few women from the dissertation's corpus did travel on their own to pursue educational goals and even for pleasure.

### *Indian Travels*

The engagement with colonial travels by Indians in the colonial period remains under- studied in spite of the valuable archival work undertaken by Michael Fisher, Rozina Visram and Shompa Lahiri. *Lascars and Princes: The Story of Indians in Britain 1700-1947* (1986) is one of the earliest scholarly treatises of Indian arrivals in Britain, which the author Rozina Visram followed up with another seminal work *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* (1997/2002). Fisher's *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain, 1600-1857* (2004) has been

another landmark work in furnishing scholars with the range of travellers and long-time span of Indian travels to Britain. Writing from a South Asian perspective on colonial travels, Fakrul Alam categorically states that:

It was Fisher's 2004 book that *Counterflows to Colonialism* that first alerted its readers to the history of people from the Indian subcontinent visiting or settling down in England as early as the seventeenth century. (71)

As Alam points out, Fisher's study offers a detailed picture of the various individuals who went to Great Britain, whether for trade or official work or even "merely...to taste life" in the imperial centre (Alam 71). Fisher brings to light the subversive quality of colonial travels in unsettling imperial boundaries, and uncovers the early roots of cross-cultural encounters in the imperial centre. He has also shown how travel played a role in the identity construction of Indian visitors who received both admiration and approbation. The efforts of Visram and Fisher have been pivotal in retrieving valuable data and information about the presence of Indians and laying the ground for scholarly works such as this dissertation. They have succeeded in producing a genealogy of Indian travels. However, the historicist accounts do not examine travel texts written by the travel writers. A similar problem arises in Shompa Lahiri's book *Indians in Britain: Anglo-Indian Encounters, Race and Identity 1880-1930* (2000) which focuses on those who came to study in England. She adopts a postcolonial lens by bringing in Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha to the analysis and tries to dissect the motivations and responses that travel prompted among Indians. The interest in students, who formed the majority of the educated and mostly elite travelling group of Indians, also forms the core of *Nationalism, Education and Migrant Identities: The England-Returned* (2010) by Sumita Mukherjee and of *Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity* (2007) by Javed Majeed.

*Rise of Indian Colonial Travels*

During the selected timeframe of this dissertation, 1858 to 1935, different groups of Indian travellers including students, businessmen, reformers, government officials and princes visited England. The travellers varied in race, class and gender and so did their purposes and their responses. They differed from the those, who undertook journeys before the 1858 Proclamation, the group of pre-colonial travellers; among them were Mirza Sheikh I'tesamuddin (1730-1800), Mirza Abu Taleb (1752-1806), Ram Mohun Roy (1772-1833),<sup>17</sup> Ardarseer Cursetjee (1808-77), Hirjeebhoy Merwarnjee (1817-83) and Jehangeer Nowrojee (1821-66). Several of these pre-1858 travellers recorded their experiences in manuscripts which were circulated among their friends and British patrons. They were followed by a greater influx of travellers from 1858 onwards, especially after the removal of social sanctions against travels in the Hindu community (*Lahiri Indians in Britain*). In addition to wider social acceptance of sea voyages, developments in technology such as steam ships and railways made travelling easier, while increase in literacy and the establishment of cheap printing presses encouraged the publication of travel texts.

Indian royalty also commanded fame and acclaim when they came to England, and that is why we find the presence of female royal personages among the pioneering female travellers. The exiled young raja of Punjab, Duleep Singh (1838-1893), was brought to England in 1854 and presented to the court of Queen Victoria. Through him, his mother Rani Jindan came to England in 1860. Another exilic figure is Princess Gouramma of Coorg (1841-1864), who was sent to England in 1852 where she remained till her death. Perhaps the most interesting of the pre- 1858 visits was

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<sup>17</sup> Ram Mohun Roy, also known as Raja Rammohun, was the founder of the Brahmo Samaj and a driving force behind the Indian social reform movement. He is also considered to be pivotal in ushering modernity to India.

that of Malika Kishwar, mother of the deposed Nawab of Awadh. She was dubbed the Queen Mother of Awadh when she came to England in 1856 (Fisher; Taylor). She had travelled to England to appeal to Queen Victoria to overturn the annexation of her son's kingdom by Lord Dalhousie. Malika Kishwar's decision to lead an entourage since her son could not travel and to meet the British ruler, is a unique example of female agency and female participation in nineteenth century travel.

Social reformers were some of the most famous and well-received Indians in England. Ram Mohun Roy the charismatic speaker and founder of the Brahmo Samaj became a celebrity during his tours of England. Later, his fame paved the way for the warm welcome of the Brahmo Samaj leader Keshab Chandra Sen when he visited England.

#### *Colonial Travels of Indians 1858 Onwards*

The number of Indian travellers going west continued to grow in the high colonial period. From 1858 onwards, when India was officially under the British Crown, travel took on new dimensions. Voyagers now arrived in England endowed with a sense of being colonial subjects which inflected their travel narratives. Some wrote with enthusiasm for imperial culture, while others interrogated the imperial system and penned critiques. Hence both travels and travel texts by Indian subjects during the British Raj differ from earlier Indian voyages partly because of the kind of imperial ideology which nuanced their experiences.

These new travels were framed within the parameters of the colonial structure, which simultaneously facilitated and constrained the journeys. While colonialism opened up opportunities for travel to Britain, colonial hierarchy also positioned them as subordinate and subjugated others. New employment scope, access to higher education, official tours and even tourism engendered a culture of travel among



Indians. In her seminal book *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire and Cultures of Travel* (1996), Inderpal Grewal traces the influences of Romantic notions of travel and European travel culture on elite Indians who looked for freedom, education and agency through journeys. She, however, reminds us that even though the colonial Indian travellers “incorporated Western structures of travel” (117), they were not able to “deploy them in similar ways” (117). Being colonial subjects, their travel discourse was so complicated by colonialism and nationalism that they had to reconstitute their sense of self and the discourses of gender, class and race. One major revision of cultural ideas related to the notion of travel. Restrictions on mobility were eased for women and Indians who were Hindu. While travel for women remained limited, the lifting of the proscription for Hindus to travel overseas led to immense increase in Indian colonial travels<sup>18</sup>.

For the Indian colonial travellers of the late nineteenth century, England was not an unknown territory replete with wonder and the unknown, leading to a sense of déjà vu in their encounters. Their perspective was coloured by traces of previous texts from their colonial education and from travelogues of earlier visitors. Bhaskar Mukhopadhyay, thus, argues that travel for Bengalis of the colonial period was a means of testing colonial claims of superiority, with travellers intent in examining “whether the real England measured up to their hyperreal image of England” (293). This gave rise to a “a specific *kind* of travel” (Mukhopadhyay 295) that was secular and aspirational rather than spiritual or related to purposes of commerce. Simonti Sen, who has also worked on Bengali travelogues, makes a connection between travel and identity construction. She argues that travel had a formative role in shaping both

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<sup>18</sup> Cultural historians have pointed out that despite the ban on sea voyages for Hindus, lower caste Hindus did travel as servants and sailors. There is also evidence of merchants participating in a thriving trade route across the land and sea to West Asia.

modern and nationalist selves in Bengali culture. Although Mukhopadhyay and Sen have confined their studies to Bengali texts, their observations are supported by travel texts in other languages. The importance of travel in forming modernity and gender constructions is a central argument of Inderpal Grewal's book on Indian travels. Through her analysis of Toru Dutt, Pandita Ramabai, Parvati Athavale and Behramji Malabari, travellers from different regions of British India, she has persuasively shown that European travel discourse influenced Indian conceptualizations of self and community, which in turn, contributed to a sense of national belonging.

### *Counter Travels*

Travels by Indians to the West in the colonial era are regarded by scholars working in this area as going against the flow or reversing the trajectory of imperial and male travels (Fisher; Korte). Such journeys include the movement and voyages of any marginalized or non-dominant group, which during the colonial period implied non-white and non-male traveller, leading to a proliferation of travel by marginalized classes including Western women and colonized subjects. Improvements in technology and the expansion and consolidation of the British Empire ushered in an upsurge in travels by new groups of travellers for different purposes. Thus, the increase in the number of women and non-white travellers has been foregrounded in recent critical examinations of travel narratives.

Indian colonial women's travels, however, demand special attention as they were doubly marginalized by gender and race; as a result, it is necessary to contextualize the voyages in order to appreciate the nuances of female colonial travels. According to Justin D. Edwards travellers can "defy colonial discourses and challenge the politics of empire" by presenting new perspectives and ways of writing that revise, criticize or subvert hegemonic discourses ("Postcolonial Travel Writing"

19). In this way, colonial travellers, like later postcolonial travellers, articulate counter-hegemonic views, and Indian women's colonial travels can be considered a form of counter travelling and journeys of those writing back to the empire and often appropriating the rhetoric of colonial discourse to express post-imperial perspectives (Holland and Huggan; Youngs *Cambridge Introduction*).

With the reversal of the trajectory of travel, many Indian travellers also redirected the colonial gaze by which European travellers tended to immobilize and frame the Orient and Orientals as different since colonizers tended to see “the colonies through eyes that were blurred by misinformation, misconceptions, and stereotypes” (Hunt 1). The act of viewing to establish a dominant perspective is central to travel writing. Mary Louise Pratt has evocatively captured the power of seeing in European travel discourse in her title *Imperial Eyes*. She highlights visual authority because the privilege of mobility is encoded in visibility and in degrees to which the traveller can peer into landscapes and people. Colonial gazes assert hegemony through economic and sometimes military power of colonizers. In her contribution to the critical lexicon of travel theory, Pratt has proposed the trope of “monarch of all I survey” as a rhetorical strategy to convey colonial self-positionings as stance of conquerors who are superior and elevated in rank and positioned above the natives (*Imperial Eyes* 197;201)<sup>19</sup>. This term brings to the foreground the importance of viewing as well as the agency of being a viewer/subject rather than the object of viewing.

Indian colonial travellers were able to assume such scopic mastery when they began to survey the metropolitan centre and its people and report back to their readers

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<sup>19</sup> Pratt explains the colonialist underpinnings in such a perspective thus “the viewer-painting relation[in monarch-of-all-I-survey] also implies that Burton[colonizer] has the power if not to possess, at least to evaluate” (*Imperial Eyes* 201).

at home. Attempts to assert Indian perspectives are reflected in the choice of titles such as: *Indian Eye on England* (1897) by T.B. Pandian, or, *London and Paris Through Indian Spectacles* (1897) by G.P. Pillai and *Pictures of England* (1876) by Janakumamah Ragaviah. Although as colonial subjects they could not impose their dominance over what was an unexplored territory, they could still deploy the textual strategies of European travel discourse, “applying them to the over-explored, over-discovered Western metropole, reversing the hierarchy of periphery and centre” in Julie Codell’s view (“Reversing the Grand Tour”174). These journeys are counter-colonial as they contain a potential to defy, resist or subvert the hegemony of empire. Colonial power relations are further subverted by the act of writing for as Paul Smethurst, an authority on travel studies, remarks:

Mobility is the sine qua non of travel writing, and travel writers, having been granted mobility as imperial subjects, then assume the authority to narrate.  
(*Travel Writing, Form and Empire* 7)

Although Smethurst is referring to imperial or European travellers, his comment underscoring the power embedded in mobility can be extended to colonial subjects who become mobile and begin to write. The authority to narrate emerges from experience of travelling.

By contributing to an epistemology outside European frames of reference, the travel narratives of counter –colonial travellers de-centre the Western gaze and decolonize knowledge. Hence, the burgeoning of travel texts in vernacular Indian languages as well as in English written by Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1918), Trailokyanath Mukharji (1847-1919)<sup>20</sup>, Shibnath Shastri (1847-1919), Romesh

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<sup>20</sup> T.N. Mukharji was a prolific Bengali writer and a government employee. As an assistant curator of the Calcutta Museum he had travelled to London in 1886 to attend the Colonial Exhibition. His travels to Europe inspired him to write the travelogue *A Visit to Europe* (1889).

Chunder Dutt (1848-1909)<sup>21</sup>, Mahdi Hassan Fath Nawaz Jung (1852-1904)<sup>22</sup>, Behramji Malabari (1853-1912) and Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)<sup>23</sup> are significant attempts in cultural assertions that re-indigenize European cultural forms in the production of autoethnographic expressions.

### *Autoethnography*

In Pratt's view, the articulations of marginalized groups to secure their own cultural assertion can be considered as autoethnography. She, thus, defines such articulations as "instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's terms" (9). Unlike European ethnographic texts which aim to represent "to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, these texts are composed "in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations" (Pratt 9). These autoethnographic texts create an avenue for subordinate groups with which they can enter the dominant discourse and inscribe themselves into the culture of the powerful imperial centre. Autoethnography is often adopted as a textual strategy by colonized subjects to regain and assert cultural identity. This is a process in which Justin Edwards locates the "power of transformative cultural agency" since colonized writers can transform, appropriate, adapt and rewrite "modes and genres of the North Atlantic" (25). Hence, the travel

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<sup>21</sup> R.C. Dutt was a writer and a civil servant. He had travelled to England in 1868 to appear for the Indian Civil Service Exam. He became the first Indian to be appointed as district magistrate in 1883. He wrote about his travels to Europe in the travelogue *Three Years in Europe, Being Extracts from letters Sent from Europe by a Hindu* (1873).

<sup>22</sup> Mahdi Hasan Khan was a civil servant of Hyderabad and was given the title Fath Nawaz Jung by the Nizam. He was sent to London in 1888 to pursue a case for the Nizam's government. He wrote about his travel experiences in a diary which was partially published in the Indian Magazine in 1890 and later published for private circulation. Omar Khalidi has edited and republished this diary as *An Indian Passage to Europe: The Travels of Fath Nawaz Jung* (2006).

<sup>23</sup> The Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore had written a lively and impressionist account of his first voyage to England as a young man sent there for higher studies in *Europe Prabashir Patra* (1881). For the English translation see *Letters from a Sojourner in Europe* (2008).

texts of colonial Indian subjects are significant archival sources of colonial counter discourse where colonial subjects could recast themselves to some extent from being spectacles to exhibitors of Western mores (Burton *at the Heart of the Empire* 3).

Indian colonial travels form a complex intersection of empire, race, modernity and travel. Thus, neither the travels nor the travellers can be confined to merely the anti-colonial category. Anna Snaith in *Modernist Voyages: Colonial Women Writers in London, 1890–1945* (2014) and Burton in *At the Heart of the Empire* have employed Edward Said's term of "voyage in" to suggest the participation in and complicity with an imperial framework.

#### *Indian Women's Colonial Travels*

Drawing on the archival research of Visram and Fisher on Indians going to Britain, Siobhan Lambert-Hurley stresses that Indian women had also participated in these journeys from "the earliest years of contact between Britain and the subcontinent" ("A Princess's Pilgrimage" 108). Apart from royal female travellers, women from ordinary backgrounds can also be found in the archives of Indian travel writings. Rajkumari, wife of Sasipada Banerjee, is considered to be the first Bengali woman to have travelled to England in 1871. Her pioneering voyage soon led to Jnanandini Devi's voyage to England in 1877 to comply with her husband's wish for the family to be immersed in English culture. A similar intent also motivated W.C. Bonnerjee to send his wife Hemangini Bonnerjee to the imperial centre. Manmohon Ghose who earlier trained as a barrister in England also took his wife to England on at least two trips (Murshid 84). While most histories of travel highlight the presence of Bengali travellers, women from other regions especially Bombay had also made sea voyages to the West since we find mention of Fyzee's female relatives in London in her travelogue.

If Western women unsettle the discourse of travel by challenging gendered spatiality, colonized subjects produced even deeper fissures in hegemonic discourses voyaging to the imperial centre. Indian travels to the West, especially by women, further fracture and complicate the framework of imperialist and Orientalist travels because of the added dimension of race. Like their imperial counterparts, Indian female voyagers had to contend with cross-currents of gendered travel. Inner journeys or self-quests have often been major goals of travels (Thompson; Youngs; Korte) and women, too, often endeavoured to exploit movement or travel to expand their cultural identity and construct a social role.

#### *London in Counter Colonial Travel Writing*

Scholars working on colonial voyages from the Caribbean Islands, Canada, South Asia and Australia, have remarked on the lure of the imperial centre, “the particular resonance” that England held for its subjects (Snaith 1). England attracted travellers not only for the excitement and marvels that the metropolitan imperial centre could offer, but also for the cultural capital the travellers could acquire and take back. In her book on Indian students, *Nationalism, Education and Migrant Identities: The England-Returned* (2010), Sumita Mukherjee highlights the effect of studying in Britain as a route to “greater opportunities upon [students’] their return to India”, adding that the “England-returned were able to make an impact upon their local communities, and forge interesting career paths” (3).

London, however, occupied a special place in the colonial imaginary. Indian women travellers, like their male counterparts, privileged their visits to London in their travelogues even if their journeys extended beyond Britain. London, during the peak of British imperialism, was the centre of the world in political and imaginative terms. It was, after all, the cultural and commercial power hub of the British empire,

the heart of the empire, and thus, “the zero point of global time and place” (Ball qtd. in Snaith 18), and indeed, a dream destination for the subjects of Britannia. Writing about London made it possible for colonial subjects to assert their claim on the metropole, and their act of writing reconceptualised power dynamics. Indians appropriated London as a contact zone, Mary Louise Pratt’s term for a “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination- such as colonialism and slavery” (*Imperial Eyes* 7). Moreover, contact zones as Pratt stresses invoke the possibilities of “interactive, improvisational dimensions” of colonial experiences that have been “ignored or suppressed by accounts of conquest and domination told from the invader’s perspective” (8).

The transformation of London into a contact zone implies that colonial subjects could reproduce the imperial centre for nationalist and even anti-colonial purposes. The colonial appropriation of contact zone in the transculturation of imperial travel discourse also indicates a shift in “the center of gravity and the point of view” (Pratt *Imperial Eyes* 8). By selectively choosing what to represent, Indian travellers could re-invent Europe, and more specifically, England. Colonial travellers, such as R. C. Dutt, T.N. Mukharji, Krishnabhabini Das or Kuttan Nair, often focused on the social ills and poverty of England to reframe hegemonic views of the imperial centre. In this way, Pratt’s observation that South American transculturation and reimagining of Europe for South American readers was a central node in Creole self-fashioning and aesthetics is applicable to Indian colonial travellers. Indian travellers’ deployment of representations of London show a similar tactic of unsettling the



relationship between the centre and the periphery<sup>24</sup>. The colonial Indian renderings of English sites and attractions into portable images hold the potential to counter the hegemony of imperial culture and open a pathway for an empowered and liberated reading of the colonial archive.

### *Current Scholarship on Indian Travels*

Historicist surveys of colonial travels by Fisher and Visram have led to further work on early Indian settlers in Britain such as the anthology *South Asian Resistances in Britain, 1858-1947* (2011) edited by Rehana Ahmed and Sumita Mukherjee. The cultural readings focusing on Indian travels by Burton, Grewal and Lahiri have made good use of the cultural and imperial turn in postcolonial studies to look at the experience of cross-cultural interactions and transnational flows of ideas. Grewal and Burton have carried forward critical interest in the domestic dimension of empire initiated by seminal research from Nupur Chaudhuri, Margaret Strobel, Phillipa Levine and Catherine Hall among others<sup>25</sup>. Although they brought gender into studies of imperial culture, Indian women's experience had remained outside the research ambit until Grewal and Burton highlighted the perspective of colonial subjects, especially Indian women.

Burton's analysis of the travels of Cornelia Sorabji, Pandita Ramabai and Behramji Malabari in *At the Heart of the Empire* (1998) and Grewal's analysis of Toru Dutt, Pandita Ramabai and Behramji Malabari in *Home and Harem* (1996) have guided this dissertation in scrutinizing travel narratives as ethnographic texts. These two scholars present nuanced interpretations of the challenges of being Indian in the

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<sup>24</sup> Indian representations of London can also be considered as a form of provincializing England, following Dipesh Chakrabarty's trope for colonial perspective on modernity and history.

<sup>25</sup> See Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, editors *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (1992); Phillipa Levine *Gender and Empire* (2004); and Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, editors. *At Home with the Empire* (2006).

imperial centre, and their insights have facilitated my understanding of travel texts in my corpus. Indeed, *Home and Harem* is a landmark research for contextualizing colonized travels in contemporary discourses of gender, nationalism and modernity. Burton's work on women and homes in the empire is a continuation of Grewal's seminal work in emphasizing travel writing and its linkages with colonial ideas of modernity and domesticity. Her examination of the memoirs of Cornelia Sorabji and Janaki Majumdar in *Dwelling in the Archives* (2003) has broadened the parameters of travel and postcolonial research, by establishing the relevance of gendered domestic space as an important archival repository. Burton has also elaborated on the importance of homes in diasporic women's writing as she focuses on three Indian women who had lived in England on the role of travel in reconfiguring women's identity and domestic sphere.

Susheila Nasta in *India in Britain: South Asian Networks and Connections, 1858-1950* (2013) and Elleke Boehmer in *Indian Arrivals, 1870-1950: Networks of British Empire* (2015) deal with the effects of Indian travellers on imperial culture. Nasta's book examines ways Indian residents changed the racial composition of British society by transforming it into a multiracial one. Boehmer, on the other hand, reframes the discussion by focusing on literary encounters of the travellers and, thereby, introduces a new perspective on travel studies in her analysis of Indian literary writers who had travelled to Britain. Although these scholars have influenced my research, their books leave unexplored many aspects of the impact of travels on colonial Indian subjects.

The study of Indian travels has become more and more nuanced as it has traversed from a historical survey to readings informed by theoretically nuanced perspectives. However, historical concerns and methods remain integral to all the

studies because colonial travel narratives are part of the colonial archive. *Indian Travel Narratives* (2010) *Journeys: Indian Travel Writings* (2015) and *Indian Travel Narratives: New Perspectives* (2021) edited by Somdatta Mandal, have been impactful on the field since the essays in these collections offer several interesting key points about the scope and style of Indian colonial travels. Through these valuable publications, the scholar has been influential in widening the field of Indian travel writing by bringing under a critical gaze the journeys within India and journeys beyond the West. In *Indian Travel Narratives*, the scholar extends the range of Indian travel experiences by including essays on Indian experiences of the Himalayas and Japan. Travels to the East including Tibet, China and Japan again form a part of the research interest of *Journeys: Indian Travel Writing*. Meanwhile, she herself has translated Hariprabha Takeda's travelogue to Japan in *The Journey of a Bengali Woman to Japan* (2019). Mandal's overall contribution, thus, is noteworthy for the overview of tropes and themes in Indian travel texts<sup>26</sup>.

Students who formed the major group of travellers to imperial England has been the object of careful investigation by Shompa Lahiri in *Indians in Britain: Anglo-Indian Encounters, Race and Identity, 1880-1930* (2000) where the author provides empirical data on Indian presences and offer a helpful analysis of the intersections of gender and class in Indian experiences of Britain. The impact of studying in England on the Indian national movement and its leaders is addressed by Sumita Mukherjee in *Nationalism, Education and Migrant Identities: The England-*

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<sup>26</sup> In addition, Mandal's English translations of Bengali women's travel narratives have contributed to the expansion and development of Indian colonial women's travels. See her translations of Krishnabhabini Das, Durgabati Ghose, Hariprabha Takeda and Chitrita Devi,

*Returned* (2010). Similar interest in the role of travel on nationalist leaders emerges in Javed Majeed's *Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity* (2014).

Diverging from these studies, my dissertation will concentrate on a different group of travellers; they are all women and those who were not political and who travelled not just for educational purposes but also for pleasure. Like Pramod K. Nayar in *Indian Travel Writing in the Age of Empire 1870-1940* (2020), I will take into account a diverse range of travellers who fall under the label of "Indian" or "South Asian". As Nayar demonstrates travel was not limited to professional classes but included princes and non-royal tourists. In addition, he has also remarked that "travels deterritorialized them as Indian or British, or Anglophile Indian or Indian Briton" "(Introduction") making it possible to embrace hybrid identities. In the same way, travel led to a fuzzy sense of community in Grewal's view. The contours of Indian identity were further strengthened by British perceptions of these visitors as Indian rather than Bengali or North Indian or South Indian. Consequently, the travel narratives of this study have been framed under a broad South Asian or pan- Indian rubric, rather than regional identity. Nayar's book has also been useful for its fresh perspective on Indian journeys. The author shifts critical attention to Indian "travellers' aesthetic engagement with Europe and the world", and analyses themes of picturesque, occidental exoticism and vernacular cosmopolitanism in travel texts (*Indian Travel Writing in the Age of Empire*). However, the figure of the Indian female traveller remains on the fringes of discussion, with only cursory references to a few women.

The paucity of materials focusing only on women suggests that there is a lacuna in contemporary research. While most of the texts mentioned reference women travellers, scant work has been undertaken on the few women who travelled to

England from India. Most discussions of Indian travel writing acknowledge the historical fact of female voyagers, as in Supriya Chaudhuri's insertion of a section on "Travelling Women" (169) in her chapter "Indian Travel Writing" included in *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing*. Gaps, nevertheless, exist in research since sustained or in-depth analysis remain scarce. Mandal's delineation of the similarities and dissimilarities between male and female travelogues in "Mapping the Female Gaze<sup>27</sup>" is a valuable intervention to address this shortcoming. Though she focuses on Bengali female travellers, the essay provides critical insights into gendered travel writing and functions as a useful introduction to genre. Women travellers, Mandal informs her readers, viewed England differently from male travellers because they were self-conscious about being objects of metropolitan gaze as well as being observers. Such doublings produced several noteworthy binaries in female travel narratives, including crossovers into other genres, setting up an opposition between self and other, juxtaposing home and England and moving between subjective experience and objectivity (Mandal "Mapping" 140).

Two other scholars who have foregrounded gendered identity in Indian travels are Sukla Chatterjee in *Women and Literary Narratives in Colonial India: Her Myriad Gaze on the Other* (2019) and Jayati Gupta in *Travel Culture, Travel Writing and Bengali Women, 1870-1940* (2021). The latter, an anthology of excerpts from travel texts, gives a succinct outline of the development of Bengali women's travels. Sukla Chatterjee, meanwhile, presents a critical analysis of Bengali women's gaze. However, these studies are restricted in scope to Bengali travels, and Chatterjee's

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<sup>27</sup> "Mapping the Female Gaze: Women's Travel Writing from Colonial Bengal" in *Indian Travel Narratives*, edited by Somdatta Mandal, Rawat, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 126-151

book does not even maintain a focus on travel writing because the author takes the broad area of “Literary Narratives”, and includes novels and periodicals.

Since travel was an expensive endeavour, especially for colonized subjects, travellers were further circumscribed to an affluent class of Indian subjects, and to the even smaller number of elite women who were literate and would write about their visit. Given the fact that undertaking a journey to England was a tremendous feat for the doubly marginalized figure of colonial Indian women, these extraordinary achievements must be recognized and analysed. Although the act of travel by a woman constitutes affirmative action, it is important to ascertain the impact of a journey and to assess if it had any transformative power on her own consciousness and self-realization. Simply having travelled is not enough to merit critical engagement; women’s textualization and eventual publication of their experiences need to be examined. Writing is an act of autonomy and mastery/power, Thus, by producing travel narratives these writers have exerted a limited form of authority and demonstrated agency. My research attempts to address this area of women’s articulation and entry into public discourse of travel writing, rather than provide only a historical account of women’s travel.

## Overview of Travel Writing

Travel writing in its simplest form is a description of an alternate geographical space from an angle that is acute. It is the textual representation of a foreign land and its people; such accounts can be fictional and involve depictions of imaginary places (Thompson; Youngs). In *Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (2013), Tim Youngs gives a clear demarcation of this genre:

The guiding principle of this book is that travel writing consists of predominantly factual, first-person prose accounts of travels that have been

undertaken by the author-narrator. It includes discussions of works that some may regard as genres in their own rights, such as ethnographies. (3)

Travel writing in Youngs' view is generally held to be factual and the report of authentic experiences. Peter Hulme likewise emphasizes the actuality of travel to distinguish travel writing from travel fiction. Therefore, one must accept the facticity of travel texts and concomitant authority of the narrator as well as the realism of the depictions. As a result, my research project adopts this dominant view of travel narrative as being a non-fictional text of a real journey (Hooper and Youngs; Borm and others).

At the same time, travel texts aim to convey the marvel and wonder of new people and places for it caters to a human longing for knowledge and pleasure in readers. Paul Fussel encapsulates the enduring appeal of travel writing in his description:

A travel book, at its purest, is addressed to those who do not plan to follow the traveller at all, but who require the exotic or comic anomalies, wonders and scandals of the literary form *romance* which their own place or time cannot entirely supply. (Fussel 203)

These accounts of far- away foreign places can be expressed through a variety of forms and are not limited to travelogues. Most studies of travel writing start their discussions with an acknowledgement of the fluidity of genre lines. Barbara Korte in *English Travel Writing: From Pilgrimage to Postcolonial Explorations* (2000), Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan in *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (2000), Carl Thompson in *Travel Writing* (2011) and Youngs in *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (2013) all concede to the variegated genre forms that can be found in travel writing. Youngs

explains that it is a hybrid form “that feeds off other genres” (*Cambridge Introduction* 6). Critics submit that the genre encompasses reports, diaries, letters, memoirs and even literary texts (Youngs; Borm; Korte). The mixing of genres has led Jonathan Raban to state that it is a “notoriously raffish open house where different genres are likely to end up in the same bed” (qtd. in Borm 16). Korte finds in this hybridity, flexibility and openness. Jan Borm, in fact, asks readers not to take a narrow view and to accept the multiplicity of forms as a feature of travel writing and to be “in favour of travel writing’s ‘loose and shifting borders’” (Borm 26). This pliant and heterogenous genre contains crossovers from guidebooks, memoirs, letters, personal essays and ethnographic reports and accommodates the mixture of text types including memoir, letters and travelogues in the corpus of this research study.

### *Self in Travel Writing*

While travel narratives of Indian colonial women offer cultural impressions of England, the texts are also self-revelatory of Indian female identities and perceptions. Self-revelations emerge in travel texts because of cross-cultural encounters triggered by movement and dislocations. Travel becomes a meeting of the self and the other; accordingly, travel writings thematise interaction and self-reflections. Thompson, a leading scholar of travel writing, underscores this point in his statement: “One definition we can give to travel, accordingly, is that it is the negotiation between self and other” (*Travel Writing* 9).

The autobiographical dimension is now widely accepted as in Korte’s summation that in travel texts “the travelling subject is also laid bare” (6), making the texts self-revealing narrations of personal experiences. She remarks further that even constructions of the other contain “projections of the self” (Korte 20). However, self-depictions are not spontaneous free-flowing expressions; instead they are carefully



crafted presentations for an audience. Travel narratives move away and diverge from confessional narratives because travel produces transformations and developments in the narratorial-self (Cabanas et al). In *Politics of Identity and Mobility in Travel Writing* (2016), Miguel A. Cabanas et al. state that “travel demands a politically aware, self-critical exploration” which lead to a ‘reshaped sense of self’ (2). This potential for destabilizing and transforming selfhoods make travel narratives an important source of development and change in colonial Indian women.

Travel writing is ultimately the reconstruction of an experience of one individual and is often termed ‘travel narrative’ to emphasize that these are accounts of the writer’s subjective experiences. The narrative element also connects these texts to travel stories as Stacy Burton explains in the following way:

It signals the enduring conventions of the journey and adventure tale, default paradigms with which writers continue to contend in seeking narrative strategies for representing cultural exchange in globalized contact zones. (S. Burton 8)

Travel as a site of encounter between the self and the other also produces liminal spaces that shake and unsettle personal and cultural realities. Travel texts generates “imaginative geographies,” while also revealing the “mental maps” and “cultural baggages” carried by travellers (Thompson *Routledge Companion* xviii-xix). The exposition of the voyager’s self is revelatory, and simultaneously, empowering since narrating or writing gives the travel writer an opportunity to sculpt and present a new identity.

#### *Overlaps with Life-writings*

The textualization of ‘the narrative self’ links travel writing with self-referential writing, leading several scholars to remark on the braiding of travel writing

with life writing, the general acceptance of the autobiographical nature of travel writing prompts Paul Fussel to declare that travel narratives are a “sub-species of memoir” (203). They often depict the narrator’s experience of something unfamiliar, and yet not fictional, albeit sometimes presented as authentic experience.

Furthermore, the inclusion of personal and lived experience differentiates travel books from guide books which do not contain autobiographical elements or narrative devices (Fussel 203).

Thus, autobiographical writings, including travel texts and life-narratives, have been explored in connection to women’s sense of self by Ghulam Murshid (1983;1994), Tanika Sarkar in *Words to Win* (1999) and Anshu Malhotra and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley in *Speaking of the Self: Gender, Performance and Autobiography in South Asia* (2015); however, the display or staging of a self in travel writings have not been examined in great depth in their works. This dissertation is an attempt to bring to light the neglected texts and gendered subjectivity of travelling women.

Anshu Malhotra and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley (2015) and Sidonie Smith and Watson (2010) foreground autobiography in their analyses of identity performances; I, however, choose to look at travel, a sub-species of the memoir (Fussel), as a form of life-narrative or life writing since it is more fragmented. Life writing is more inclusive of different kinds of self-referential writing that embraces texts by “subordinated subjects”, making possible “a new globalized history of the field” (Smith and Watson *Reading Autobiography* 3), whereas autobiographies are more definitive and strongly associated with Western male heroes and individualism (Malhotra and Lambert-Hurley; Smith and Watson; Moore-Gilbert). In Indian travel writing, women present fragmentary glimpses of their lives in letters, memoirs and travelogues, all keeping with the boundaries of this genre.

Bart Moore-Gilbert, author of *Postcolonial Life-Writing: Culture, Politics, and Self-Representation* (2009), similarly highlights postcolonial life writing's affinities with travel writing that he locates in the common preoccupation with the effect of travel on forming subjectivity. He argues that there is a corresponding desire for self-understanding and personal quests through movement (83).

In addition, he remarks that some writers such as Mary Seacole (1805-1881)<sup>28</sup>, V.S. Naipaul (1932-2018) and Nirad Chaudhuri (1897-1999) manipulate conventions of both travel writing and autobiography. In the case of Seacole's *Wonderful Adventures* (1857), the critic concludes that the Creole traveller functions from a matrix of self-identifications to offer "a mobile and plural model of personhood which varies with location and situational requirements" (88). Moore-Gilbert opines that Seacole, like Chaudhuri in *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951) and Naipaul in *A Way in the World* (1994), combines "a travelling subjectivity" (ibid) with ethnography to create a hybrid text that can be read as either autobiography or travel writing. He uses these examples of postcolonial texts to highlight the inter-generic conjunction between autobiography and travel writing in his book *Postcolonial Life-Writing*.

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson also establish a nexus between travel and life writing in their claim that the transformative power of mobility allows travel writing to "be read as a major mode of life narrative, in this case the reconstitution of the autobiographical subject [as a result of being] in transit and encounter" (*Reading Autobiography* 150). Furthermore, they add that encounters in the contact zone facilitate the re-imagination of subjectivity in alien settings. In this way travel writing is a valuable cultural location for self-narrativizing and self-exploration.

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<sup>28</sup> Mary Seacole born in Jamaica had travelled to England and later went to Crimea to nurse British soldiers during the Crimean

Examining subjectivity through colonial travel writing brings about an understanding of wider social formations. Narratives of the self, in the opinion of Smith and Watson, help us appreciate new cultural formations because “individual representations of subjectivity are ‘disciplined’” and “in dialogue” with social class, religion, nationality and other markers of identity (*Reading* 83). The shaping influences on subjectivity are divulged in travel narratives which are palimpsests of various discourses. In the case of Indian colonial travellers, the texts encode nationalist, colonialist, religious and gender ideologies and perspectives, thereby, providing valuable insights into social formations produced in colonial settings.

Furthermore, travel writing is a hybrid genre that crosses over to other genres such as ethnography and life-writings and, thus, allows for an understanding of both the travellers and their destination that is open to interdisciplinary approaches. The following discussion of the features of travel writing demonstrates the ways travel texts are situated at the interstices of gender studies, postcolonialism and nationalism.

#### *Ideological Underpinnings/Colonial Inflections*

The element of subjective impression is manifested in travel writing through inflections of individual personality and cultural ideology. In *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing* (1999), James Duncan and Derek Gregory observe that the confrontation with other cultures involve a mapping of cultural knowledge which place travel and travel writing “within larger formations in which the inscription of power and privilege” are made clearly visible (2). This holds particularly true for colonial travel, the dominant Anglophone travel genre in the last two hundred years. Both Edward Said and Mary Louise Pratt have been influential in showing how the discursive power of travel have shaped cultural mappings and have operated as ideological interventions in colonial and postcolonial societies.

The mediated impressions in travel writings imply that the texts are not straightforward accounts of the author/narrator's role, and the objectivity of the depictions and representations are complicated by ideology and subjective impressions. In Youngs' view, it is not possible to have unmediated and unbiased experiences (*The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* 10). The intrusions of the self and the crafting of a narrative persona embed multiple contesting dimensions into a travel text. Though the descriptions of journeys are ostensibly about the other, they also constitute the movement of a corporeal body through material space (Duncan and Gregory 5). Consequently, the traveller's personality is forever intruding upon the text, and there is an exposition of private thoughts and feelings triggered by the physical act and material practice of travel. Travel texts are, after all, narratives of personal experiences, and hence, even the constructions of the other contain "projections of the self" (Korte 9). As Said had pointed out in his analysis of Orientalism, the discourse did not just produce Europe's other but also Europe's own identity.

The two-fold effect of travel writing's ideological power lies in constructing the discourse of Europe's supremacy or Eurocentrism and the discourse of the inferiority or weakness of the other. Globalization is a new form or neo-colonial manifestation of Western hegemony which continues to impact on contemporary life, showing the far-reaching consequences of Orientalism and travel writing's collusion with a Eurocentric world view, making colonial travels a significant part in Pratt's concept of "planetary consciousness" (11;15), that is the process of mapping or producing knowledge of the world for European imperial consumption<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> According to Pratt, planetary consciousness was facilitated by scientific exploration and the development of natural history which contributed to European dominance (*Imperial Eyes* 15).

Travel writing's focus on novelty is often concentrated on the figure of the other, and travel texts are concerned with "finding the terms for – or coming to terms with- other cultures and other natures" (Duncan and Gregory 1). In Casey Blanton's opinion, an impulse for negotiation with difference and alterity leads travel writers to search for "the various ways the observing self and the foreign world reverberate" (xi). Such an emphasis on the other signals travel writing's affinity with colonial discourse and its attachment to ideological and discursive formations.

### *Women's Travel Writing*

The nineteenth century marks a special point in the history of travel writing because of the entry of travellers from different groups which included women. Women have been traditionally associated with stasis and the home, and depicted as playing the role of Penelope to Odysseus' adventures; this is a point made by many including Karen Lawrence who highlights this fixed image of women vis-à-vis men's travels in her title *Penelope's Voyages* (1994). In the nineteenth century, in fact, more and more women began to travel, revealing an upsurge in female voyages. With the expansion of the British empire and improvements in technology, it became safer and easier for women to travel between the imperial centre and the colonies<sup>30</sup> Travel and writing about their experiences provided women with an entry into a male-dominated discourse, though with restrictions and constraints that in Kiersti Siegel's view problematize women's travel writing and produce "textual turbulences" ("Intersections"5). Discrepancies and internal conflicts in women's travel writing have been noted by other critics including Mills, Lawrence, Youngs and Thompson. On the one hand, travel allowed women to be liberated from the bonds of social

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<sup>30</sup> Sidonie Smith lists the following factors for an increase in female mobility in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: "democratization, literacy, education, increasing wealth, urbanization and industrialization" as well developments in technology (*Moving Lives* xi).

conventions, and on the other, the experience of mobility and spatial movement could be used for self-development. Women, like men, could exploit travel for inner journeys or self-quests. They could expand their cultural identity and assume new social roles. However, the roles of heroic adventurer, scientific explorer or colonial officers with administrative power were denied to women, and concomitantly they could not access the rhetorical conventions associated with exploration and conquest<sup>31</sup>.

Travel could constrain as well as liberate women from social barriers and imaginative restrictions because:

...travel literature explores a tension between the thrilling possibilities of the unknown and the weight of the familiar, between a desire for escape and a sense that one can never be outside a binding cultural network...between home and the foreign, domestic confinement and freedom on the road. (Lawrence 19)

The tension described by Lawrence conveys the underlying anxiety of women's travels due to the fact that women's mobility has been strictly regulated "since time immemorial" a point stressed by Floris Meens and Tom Sintobin in their study of travel (5). The pull between opposite attractions produces ambiguity and self-contradiction, which in turn, lead to tentative and diffident narratives. Despite risks of invoking essentialism, most scholars acknowledge the role of gender in creating a difference. In *Excursions into Modernism: Women, Writers, Travel and the Body* (2015), Joyce Kelly remarks that it is useful to "think along gender lines" because women travellers draw attention to their gender (19). The pressures of social

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<sup>31</sup> Both Pratt (158) and Thompson (*Travel Writing 175-176*) observe that most women travellers did not deploy the authoritative narrative voice or factual objective style of male travel writers.

convention are greater on women than men, and thus, Lawrence explains that gender has to be taken into account because:

Although throughout I resist sweeping statements about generic differences between travel literature by men and that by women, in general, women writers of travel have tended to mistrust the rhetoric of mastery, conquest and quest that has funded a good deal of male fictional and nonfictional travel.

(20)

Women's tendency to eschew authoritative and assertive narrative positions is also noted by Pratt when she notes that, "[t]he masculine heroic discourse of discovery is not readily available to women" (209).

Consequently, women do not deploy the rhetoric of discovery, so common to male travel narratives, and therefore, confine themselves to sentimental writing<sup>32</sup>.

Mills points out that female traveller often resorted to irony and comic playfulness to mitigate the transgressions of assuming authoritative voices (*Discourses of Difference* 153,159, 196). Another divergence is that women's accounts are "emplotted in a centripetal fashion around places of residence" instead of the "goal-directed, linear emplotment of conquest narrative" (Pratt 156).

The focus on domestic spaces ties in with a greater interest in social ethnography that women show. Pratt argues that domesticity was central in female accounts because these travellers depended on "personal independence, property, and social authority, rather than in scientific erudition, survival, or adventurism" (156).

However, the critic reminds us that female travellers such as Maria Graham (1785-

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<sup>32</sup> Pratt, however, notes that some female travel writers such as Maria Graham and Flora Tristan did not adopt a sentimental style (156).



1842)<sup>33</sup> and Flora Tristan (1803-1844)<sup>34</sup> were not devoid of political understanding and combine politics and the personal when writing about their travels to South America as personal quests. (165)

Apart from the inherent challenges of travel in patriarchal societies, women's travel narratives have not been treated in the same way as male-authored travelogues in academia. Mills, Korte as well as Holland and Huggan among others remark that critical studies either focus on women who were exceptional or who defied social conventions; in such readings, the biography of the traveller is foregrounded at the expense of the travels and the narrative. Titles such as *Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Travellers* (1989) by Dea Birkett gives an indication of a trend to search for the piquant and the comic in women's social defiance as they travel. The other approach relegates women to the domestic sphere and evaluates their travelogues for contributions to the minutiae of empire and its sentimental side as in books such as *Women of the Raj: The Mothers, Wives and Daughters of the British Empire in India* (1988) by Margaret MacMillan and *Memsahibs: The Women of Victorian India* (1976) by Pat Barr. In books such as these, female travellers are viewed through the narrow lens of domesticity and their efforts in spreading imperial culture. In both cases, women's travel is devalued and their travels are judged as either attempts to replicate male heroic adventures or bids to comply with patriarchal dictates despite being outside the domestic centre.

My research, too, attempts to highlight women's agency by identifying strategies they use to work within the discourses of domesticity and femininity. Hence, my study represents a shift from reading women as unusual or merely

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<sup>33</sup> Graham was a painter, writer and explorer. She wrote about her extensive travels in Chile and India.

<sup>34</sup> Tristan was a socialist and an early feminist had travelled to Peru which forms the account a her two-volume book *Peregrinations of a Pariah* (1838).

traditional and turn a critical gaze on women's successful efforts in combining multiple identities in the liminal space of the contact zone. This dissertation will show that female students who travelled to England such as Sorabji and Bhore project their femininity rather than their unfeminine conduct, while women occupying the traditional role of a housewife such as Das and Ragaviah veer away from domestic topics and articulate strong feminist views.

In this regard it will be productive to examine the strategies women adopted to assert their subjectivity. In order to retain social acceptance, women opted for a gender identity that would be socially acceptable, leading them to often highlight feminine ideals. Most of the women in this study drew attention to their gender rather than eliding or ignoring it. Consequently, female travellers project certain features associated with a feminine style. For example, avowals of modesty and humility are common in many of the writers. Das, whom critics consider to be objective and even feminist at times, also resorts to apologizing for her deficits and poor writing. In her opening chapter, she informs readers that she is merely a woman and took the help of her husband and some published materials to write the travelogue (*A Bengali Lady 2*). The declaration of modesty is also present in Bhore's monograph *Some Impressions of England*. The need to preface their travelogues with humility betrays an unease about encroaching on male discourses of information, authority and travel. It also implies that women are crafting a public image for their readers. Another way they secure gender conformity is through carefully curated topics. Women refrain from dealing with politics or scientific knowledge and circumscribe their interests to more mundane and casual topics. Here the focus on domesticity and the British woman in female travel narratives becomes a central node of gender performativity.

Feminist scholars such as Mills, Grewal and Siegel have been trying to move away from the binary of exceptional or domestic and instead investigate female travellers' negotiations with the discourses of patriarchy and travel. As Mills suggests it is necessary to look at the discursive pressures on women which lead to textual differences that distinguish female texts from male ones. Like Mills, Holland and Huggan argue for the need to examine contextual factors. They remind readers that gender does not automatically erase imperial or racist ideologies, and that the "travelling subject" should be "recognized as being constituted by the complex interactions of gender, race and class" (Holland and Huggan 20).

The turbulence that Siegel locates in women's travel writing becomes very pronounced in imperial travels where the dynamics of colonial experience render many texts fraught with ambiguity and conflicts because fears of racial transgression and crossing gender boundaries accompanied the thrill and power of visiting a new land. When women adopted a subject position to write about their travel experiences of far off places, they challenged social conventions. In her article on Victorian women travellers, Janice Schroeder notes that British female travellers are often categorized into two stereotypes; this tendency to fix women into types suggests that travel was not as liberating as envisioned. Women could represent themselves as either eccentric females or conservative and conventional domestic females accompanying husbands and male family members on voyages.

Schroeder's insight into social perceptions of women travellers implies that women perpetuated conventional gender roles by clinging to traditions. While voyages may have given women some physical mobility and spatial freedom, they were situated within a patriarchal structure and were subject to gender discourse. Due to potential risks of transgression and notoriety, that they had to resort to certain

specific textual moves. Pressures of social conventions also influenced women's self-presentation. Writers such as Emily Eden (1797-1869) downplayed freedom and social license offered by travel in contact zones with iterations of homesickness and noblesse oblige in having to suffer journeys, foreign lands and racial others<sup>35</sup>. Many female travellers had to face negative reviews and mockery from readers when they ridiculed in cartoons for being explorers or patronized as "new women" sympathetic to the suffragette movement (Blanton).<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, those who travelled as companions and remained within socially circumscribed paths were deemed as more feminine for their adherence to conventions such as the memsahibs or British women in India. Yet, these travellers, too, were restricted within the boundaries of gender decorum and domestic spheres.

These conflicted responses to colonial space have been examined by Mills in *Discourses of Difference* (1991) and *Gender and Colonial Space* (2005). Her insights into the complex subject positions of British imperial female travellers have produced a very influential model for gendered travel writing. She has revealed the challenges of inscribing a female perspective in colonial discourse dominated by patriarchal ideology. As British women, the female travel writers belonged to the dominant group of colonizers, but they lacked the power of male imperialists and were marginalized. The ambivalence of their position restricted their scope of power and left textual traces of diffidence and hesitation in their travelogues. Mills notes that there is no one central or unified perspective for female imperial travellers because they were conflicted and expressed a range of attitudes from racism to sympathy and female

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<sup>35</sup> Emily Eden accompanied her brother Lord Auckland to India when he was appointed Governor-General from 1836-1841. She published several books based on her visit to India including *Up the Country* (1866) and *Portraits of the Princes and People of India* (1844), and two volumes of *Letters from India*.

<sup>36</sup> Casey Blanton writes that intrepid travellers like Mary Kingsley and Isabella Bird, were satirized in cartoons (46). She also adds that Kingsley was not pleased to be perceived as a suffragette.

sympathy for native society. The dualities and contradictions in women's responses identified by Mills complicate the simplistic binary of dominated/subjugated that prevails in interpretations of Orientalist and colonial discourses. Debbie Lisle, another influential travel studies scholar, has succinctly pinpointed the problem in her observation that female travellers are an "anomaly" and can "not fit within a strictly coloniser/colonised or Orient/Occident framework" (74).

Sutapa Dutta states that while most White women in the colonies were victims of a male imperial project, at the same time they would appropriate the power and rank of colonial power, enjoying "borrowed power" (Dutta 5). As a result, they could not channel imperial discourse easily. Inevitably, they articulated tentative and ambivalent views (Mills *Discourses* 3). The liminal position restricted their scope for power and authority even though they were imperialists and complicates the simplistic binary of dominated/subjugated prevailing in Orientalist and colonialist discourses.

In Mills' analysis of discursive pressures on imperial women writing about the colonies, she adds the discourse of femininity as a further constraining factor:

Firstly, women travellers are aware when they are entering discourse in a different way to men: whereas men could describe their travel as individuals and as representatives of the colonial power, women could only travel and write as gendered individuals with clearly delineated roles. The effect in the travel texts themselves is that women travel writers constantly allude to femininity, by producing statements which accord with the discursive rules, by negotiating those rules or sometimes by openly rejecting them. (73)

Women were circumscribed by gender conventions which dictated choice of topics, mainly ethnographic as in domesticity and customs and manners, and appropriate

style, confessional modes such as diaries, letters and autobiographical texts. Mills also mentions hazards of travel as features of discourses of femininity. Some women highlight the difficulties to either set themselves apart, and these women are then perceived as intrepid and exceptional, whereas others stress on the dangers to conform to gender conventions. Schroeder's observes that women travellers who travelled to out of the way places were often stereotyped as the "Spinster Abroad", while those who followed a more socially circumscribed path of travelling to the colonies and remained bound to domestic sphere were categorized as the more conventional, conservative and feminine like memsahibs or the British women of the Raj.

My research project follows on the valuable work undertaken in the area of women's travel writing. Building on the insights gained from European women's travel writing and colonial discourse, I hope to expand the field of female travel writing by focusing on Indian colonial women's travel writing. As Jayati Gupta remarks the unique contextual factors of Indian women's double colonization make it difficult to transpose Western paradigms of gendered travel on Indian travelogues. Therefore, it is necessary to base the critical examination of Indian female colonial travels from the perspectives of colonialism, gender and travel discourses.

## Methodology

This dissertation aims to link women's travel writing to the larger discursive frames of colonialism and gender discourse. Using postcolonialism as a springboard for the broader examination of theoretical underpinnings and key themes in Indian women's travel texts, this work will approach colonial travel writing through the lens of postcolonial theory to expose the misrepresentations occasioned by Eurocentrism and explore cultural differences and alternate experiences that the Indian women colonial travellers depicted.

Postcolonial deployment of Edward Said's view of colonialism as a discursive formation in deconstructing colonial power directs the interrogation of racial and gender discriminatory practices in cultural encounters in the travel narratives of colonial Indian women. Additionally, postcolonially inflected discourse analysis can facilitate the examination of the hegemonic discourses of gender, nationalism and colonialism that have impacted upon the women who travelled to the west. Travel writing has been implicated in the promotion and construction of these discourses by Said, and also by Pratt who has studied the discursive formation of subjectivity among European travellers and the planetary consciousness that forms the core of Eurocentric imperial discourse.

Writing about travel is a material practice, which in reflecting and producing social reality, constitutes a discourse. Travel narratives order the world in certain patterns and images, and the reiteration of these solidify them into accepted truths. Such processes are of interest and worth closer examination because as Lisle explains in her study of contemporary travelogues, travel texts mask the discursive formations under the guise of a neutral objective documentation (Lisle 12). In my study, I replicate Lisle's Foucauldian analysis in the critical design to identify prevailing discourses in Indian women's colonial travel texts and to demonstrate the process by which women acquired some power as writers of travel texts. This type of critical analysis entails a process of close reading and unravelling "ambiguities, ruptures and repetitions" (Lisle 14). The repetition of themes in travel narratives produces a specific discourse of Indian women's travel that intersects with social discourses circulating in the imperial centre, London, and in the periphery of colonial India. The discourses that are inscribed in the travelogues are signs of connections between spaces and between individuals and space(s). Thus, the recurring tropes will be linked

with identity performativity and the different themes detected will be dealt with in separate chapters.

As part of the discourse analysis framework, this chapter has emphasized context, and, so, the long history of colonial social reform and women's travel have been outlined. Lisle's insight that cultural products are connected to the world in which they have occur, "both reflect and produce their social contexts; that is, a cultural product cannot be understood in isolation from its social and political environment" (17) has guided the organization of this chapter.

Given this research project's aim to study colonial travels and subject formation of colonial women, a composite of postcolonial and gender theories will be adopted. This is needed because postcolonialism and feminism are both invested in interrogating the subjugation of marginalized and dominated figures in hegemonic discourses. Thus, there is a common emphasis on representations and identity politics that also forms a large part of travel writing, and the twinning of these two strands demands the adoption of a postcolonial feminist approach.

### *Postcolonial Feminism*

At the centre of postcolonial feminism is the dismantling of multiple hegemonies which include imperial and native patriarchies as well as Western feminism. In *Companion to Feminist Studies* (2021), Umme Al-Wazedi suggests that an intersectional approach will enable a fine-tuned analysis of the different systems of oppression that impact upon on colonial women. She foregrounds the multiple forms of oppression women face in her observation that:

Postcolonial feminism not only focuses on patriarchy as a source of oppression, but also examines how social inequalities are located in and



constructed by a political, historical, cultural, and economic context (Mohanty et al. 1991, Quayson 2000). (Al-Wazedi, 155)

Wazedi's contention that male dominance is not the sole source of hegemony impels the study of colonial travels to include racial dominance which can be as constricting as gendered oppression.

Chandra Talpande Mohanty (1991) and Sara Suleri (1992) have been vocal in their critique of Western feminist scholarship's tendency to homogenize the Third World Woman into a passive figure who is forever oppressed and victimized. This has led to an interest in the recovery of colonial and postcolonial Indian women's agency and voice, something neglected in early discussions of postcolonial studies which were almost entirely focused on nation building. In this regard, Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (2003) propose that the aim of postcolonial feminism should be to examine the construction of femininity and female stereotypes in anti-colonial nationalist movements (3). In line with these scholars, my dissertation will be also attentive to processes by which femininity is deployed and interconnected to nationalist and reformist movements.

Such a framework draws attention to the nexus between colonialism and patriarchy in silencing and doubly colonizing the Indian colonial female subject, and furthermore asserts a difference and a separation from Western feminists in its aim to recuperate and free representations of Indian women as passive and victimized in colonial discourses produced by both imperial men and women. One of the reasons for the development of this separate form of feminism is the homogenization of women by Western white women. A postcolonial feminist perspective underscores the specificity and localization of female experiences. In this way, the added analytical category of gender will situate this research work in the expanding area of

reframing colonial discourse to accommodate alternate histories and perspectives. The postcolonial feminism lenses reveal the intersection of gender, race and colonialism. My aim is to retrieve the figure of the Indian woman from the forgotten archive and is a project grounded in a postcolonial feminist agenda.

### *Gender Performativity*

Post-structural theorist Judith Butler's concept of gender as a performativity based on repetitions is a powerful concept that can be used to frame travelling women's attempts at projecting socially sanctioned identities. Butler's performative views of gender identity developed over a number of essays and books postulates that gender can be performed through repetitions. She introduced the idea that the "feminist subject is discursively constituted" (2) in her ground-breaking book *Gender Trouble* (1990) where she argues that gender is manufactured through a repertoire of acts and stylization of the body (Preface to Second Edition) rather than being determined by biological essence. Gender performance rests on repetition of gesture, act, labour, body, interaction with objects and manipulation of spaces. It is both intentional and performative. As she notes:

Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed. It seems fair to say that certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity, and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in some way. ("Performative Acts" 527)

Besides giving emphasis to the constructed nature of identity, Butler's view directs the spotlight on regulatory practices that determine, limit and constrain gender identity. A performative view of gender will, thus, facilitate the inclusion of

discursive pressures of colonialism, patriarchy and nationalism on Indian colonial women's travels to England.

At the same time, Butler's theory opens up the possibility of excavating agency in women's colonial travel narratives since she considers gender practices "as sites of critical agency" (*Bodies that Matter* ix) where the body and its movement, in spite of remaining under hegemonic discourses, can still produce agency, either by resisting or by manipulating gender norms and scripts. Butler is suggesting that the complex interplay between individual action and social discourses is worth pursuing. Gender identity in her view is a "constructed identity, a performative accomplishment" ("Performative Acts" 520) that depends on an audience accepting and giving it validity<sup>37</sup>. In other words, gender is a performance that is culturally legible and socially accepted by the society in which it is enacted.

In travel writing, women demonstrate an urgency to secure social acceptance or cultural intelligibility in their repeated attempts to secure the normative gender role of femininity in adhering to particular scripts. One can see the emergence of such a possibility in travel writing. Travel contains transgressions of gender boundaries as women leave the gender demarcated space of home and take on what are perceived to be masculine roles of explorer or discoverer when they encounter new cultures and lands. In order to limit the threat and punitive consequences of contravening gender rules, women are often keen to enact normative gender roles by highlighting their adherence to scripts of gender decorum, namely femininity. Consequently, one finds that travellers accommodate and reiterate what Butler describes as an "ideality, if not

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<sup>37</sup> Butler states, "As a public action and performative act, gender is not a radical choice or project that reflects a merely individual choice, but neither is it imposed or inscribed upon the individual, as some post-structuralist displacements of the subject would contend. The body is not passively scripted with cultural codes, as if it were a lifeless recipient of wholly pre-pen cultural relations. But neither do embodied selves pre-exist the cultural conventions which essentially signify bodies." ("Performative Acts" 526)

a phantasmic dimension of cultural norms of gender” (*Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly* 31).

In *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015), Butler writes that gender identity is imposed through inscription and interpellations of “the expectations and fantasies of others” (29), suggesting that codes of gender behaviour are set by cultural scripts and disciplinary regimes. Butler’s emphasis on a matrix of normative ideals and regulating practices governing cultural constructs of identity resonates with my interest in investigating the way patriarchy and colonial hegemonies constrained Indian women’s gender roles in the colonial era. It is possible to connect Butler’s “expectations and fantasies of others” (29) to patriarchal and national discourses that were binding on colonial Indian women travellers. In the essay “Performative Acts”, she explains that there is a window for individual choice, which she explains in the following way:

Surely, there are nuanced and individual ways of doing one's gender, but that one does it, and that one does it in accord with certain sanctions and proscriptions, is clearly not a fully individual matter. (525)

Projections of feminine selves in travel writing can be interpreted as compliance with hegemonic normative cultural norms; Butler’s “certain sanctions and proscriptions”, are also reflected in the sexualized and racial rules imposed to privilege heterosexual male and white cultures in colonial contexts.

While Butler acknowledges the social mechanism enforcing gender roles, she also provides a window for self-fashioning for “we do not become what others want” (*Notes* 31). According to this critic, individuals are not “passive recipients of the culture machine” since it is possible to contest and break norms. Over the years, Butler has expanded her theory of performativity, and now claims that though we are

interpellated by gender norms there is potential for fracturing and subverting this norm (*Notes* 31). In *Gender Trouble*, she proposes that we can disidentify with gender norms and resist interpellation through subversion and destabilizing normative roles. She develops this idea further in *Bodies that Matter* where she focuses on the body as a site for acts of gender formation and notes that the body and its movement constitute materialist practices and reflections of power.

Butler advocates for an active exploration of strategies of subversion in order to free gender identity from foundational constructions. She also points out that it is possible to counter dominance of hegemony with the observation that “norms are not simply imprinted on us” and, consequently, we are not “passive recipients of a culture machine”, as we can contextualize and even break the norms (*Notes* 30). Butler’s repeated calls for the inherent ability to unsettle dominant ideologies open up the possibility for further and more nuanced examinations of gender constructions.

Butler’s foregrounding of discursive pressures and of individual agency renders her theory of gender performativity appropriate for an analysis of gendered identity construction in travel writing, where women are constrained by gender roles. Butler’s deconstruction of gender enactment corresponds with travellers’ textualization of identity. This connection has been picked up by the feminist critic Sidonie Smith in her book *Moving Lives: Twentieth-Century Women’s Travel Writing* (2001) as well as her articles on autobiographical writing. In “Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance” (1995), Smith argues that Butler’s concept of performativity can be found in autobiographical texts; she explains that autobiographical narratives are performances and the ensuing performativity produces interiority or the sense of self(np). Smith also states that the narratorial self that emerges is “an effect of autobiographical storytelling” (qtd. in Smith and Watson

143). Thus, identity is cultural and linguistic fiction, self-constructed, and as Butler posited, located in a matrix of relations.

Performativity also offers a useful vocabulary to capture the complexity of regulatory discourses impacting upon identity and material bodies (Smith and Watson 14). Dunlaith Bird and Hannah Jane Sikstrom have applied Judith Butler's insights in their examinations of European women's travels. The prospect of contravening gender norms through the lens of gender performativity directs the research interests of Sikstrom's doctoral thesis (2015) on nineteenth century British women travellers' in Italy. She focuses on the agency for subversion in carefully managed repetitions of gender scripts. Sikstrom cites the cases of Marianna Starke (1762-1838)<sup>38</sup> in *Letters from Italy* (1800) and Charlotte Eaton (1788-1859)<sup>39</sup> in *Rome in the Nineteenth Century* (1820) who enact roles of caregivers and timid females in their travelogues, despite their knowledgeable and informed opinions about Italy and Italian politics.

Sikstrom notes that unstable boundaries of location allow women travellers to subvert norms and reconfigure gender identities in order to project transgressive, and at times undesirable contentious identities. Susan Horner (1816-1900)<sup>40</sup>, for instance, veers away from the role of modest ignorant female to present herself as a studious traveller passionate about science and arts. Likewise, Emily Lowe (?- 1882)<sup>41</sup> exploited social transgressions in her travels recorded in books such as *Unprotected Females in Norway; or, the Pleasantest Way of Travelling there, Passing through Denmark and Sweden* (1857) and *Unprotected Females in Sicily, Calabria, and on the*

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<sup>38</sup> Stark was an English travel writer who produced travel guides on France and Italy.

<sup>39</sup> Eaton another British traveller who visited France, Italy and Belgium.

<sup>40</sup> Horner was a prolific travel writer who published her travel experiences, but also maintained detailed journals.

<sup>41</sup> Lowe travelled extensively in Scandinavia and Southern Europe which she has chronicled in her published travelogues.

*Top of Mount Etna* (1859). Lowe appears to draw attention to her subversion of gendered roles in appropriating the masculine role of brazen adventurer. Although her travelogues were seen to be lively and interesting, some critics objected to her “unfeminine attire” and “unladylike use of slang” (Sikstrom 176), indicating the punitive consequences of defying conventions.

In her analysis of British women travellers to Italy, Sikstrom exposes the deliberate crafting of persona by the writers and observes that travel writers create fictional narrators. She comments that travellers aimed their texts, at readers and, therefore, worked at enticing readers into emotional dramas or authoritative discussions. Women exploited both their conformity and their transgressions selectively to increase sales and carve a space for their work in the discourse of travel writing.

An impulse to transgress and to flaunt infringements is also examined by Dunlaith Bird in her fascinating account of female traveller’s gender performativity. In her book on European female travellers and identity construction, *Travelling in Different Skins: Gender Identity in European Women’s Oriental Travelogues, 1850-1950* (2012), Bird combines performativity with performance, a possibility she believes is compliant with Butler’s theory since as she explains:

Particularly in *Undoing Gender*, where lived experience is increasingly privileged over the strict application of the theory, Butler, acknowledges the needs of marginalized social groups for a sense of (p.69) theatrical agency.

(Bird 4)

Bird suggests that linking performativity with performance can lead to a fruitful expansion of the theory. Bird also links Pratt’s view of performance in contact zones with Butler’s performativity to argue that women travellers improvise and adapt

gendered normative scripts to enact and stage performances in contact zones reached through travel. According to Bird, the idea of a performance of gender, rather than performativity of gender, creates room for agency in gender construction. Her focus in *Travelling in Different Skins* is on female travellers' destabilization of gender roles through unrestricted mobility. She uses the term "vagabondage" to convey the freedom of mobility or wandering that men often acquired from travel to offer an alternate paradigm for women travellers, and she supports her interpretation with case studies of nineteenth century women who travelled to the Orient. Bird reorients reader response to female travellers by showing connections between Colette (1873-1954)<sup>42</sup> and Isabelle Eberhardt (1877-1904)<sup>43</sup> and the vagabond heroes of literature from Elizabethan rogues to anti-heroes in Victor Hugo's fiction.

According to Bird, vagabondage produces textual gender identities which challenge and subvert feminine identities of female travellers. Bird has skilfully demonstrated that contact zones offer a flexibility and a disorientation that facilitate crossovers and negotiations with fixed binaries of gender. The author of *Travelling in Different Skins* observes that several European female travellers took on masculine roles. She notes that Isabella Bird adopted a masculine narrative mode in her travelogue when she presents the Otherness of Korea in her "masculine, 'monarch-of-all-I-survey' stance" (195). Similarly, Gertrude Bell (1868-1926)<sup>44</sup> exploits the "masculine persona of a Rider Haggard or *Boy's Own* character" (193). Bird argues that the defiance of gender norms was part of a marketing plan to increase the

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<sup>42</sup> Sidonie Gabrielle-Colette, better known as Colette, was an early twentieth French writer. In her autobiographical novel *La Vagabonde* (1910), she has developed the theme of vagabondage by exploring transgressive identities.

<sup>43</sup> Isabelle Eberhardt was a Swiss explorer and writer who travelled as a Muslim man through Africa.

<sup>44</sup> Gertrude Bell, a British writer, travelled extensively through the Middle East and wrote about her experiences. Due to her vast knowledge of the region, she was known as the female "Lawrence of Arabia" and even became the Oriental Secretary, a civil officer for Mesopotamia.



commercial value of the books, and so the women writers consciously and deliberately capitalized on gender ambiguity.

In contrast to the European vagabond travellers of Bird's study, Indian colonial women were more restrained and committed to adhering to their normative gender roles. Yet, Bird's insights into the complex process of female travellers testing the limits of social recognition are relevant for my reading of female-authored Indian colonial travel texts. After all, there are mutual risks in all female travels as Bird points out:

By travelling and writing outside the recognized boundaries of their gender they render themselves exceptional, and risk becoming both illegitimate and illegible. (Bird 180)

Bird's comment that female travellers must "learn the art of saying unspeakable things in socially acceptable ways" (180) can be extended to colonial Indian women's need to constantly reassure readers that they have not been contaminated by foreign culture.

More importantly, Bird's assertion that "vagabondage is not an account of women's resistance against a monolithic official repression, but a deliberate negotiation within changing scenes of constraint" (241) directs attention to a central issue common to Indian women's travels. which is the necessity of mediating with discursive pressures.

The burden of social acceptance and regulation was greater in Indian colonial women as they had to travel under triple pressures of patriarchy, colonialism and nationalism. Indian women's journeys have to be situated within a history of counter-colonial travel to appreciate the complexity and precarity of such voyages. Using the insights from current scholarship on the history of Indian colonial travels, my

dissertation will be concerned with women utilizing performativity to secure normative gender identities attempting to mitigate undesirable risks and threats associated with crossing boundaries. Most colonial Indian women downplayed their subversion of normative social rules, and highlighted instead their conformity to feminine interests. Sunity Devi, for example, was one of the few women who enjoyed the privilege of coming out of purdah, interacting with men outside her family and even dressing in Western clothes when she went to England. Yet in her memoir, she underscores the fact that she was unchanged<sup>45</sup>.

Such anxiety to remain untouched by foreign influences and to resist transformation, depicted in the travel accounts of Indian women travellers, is different from the more liberated and confident travels of European women's travels examined by Sikstrom in her dissertation or Bird in *Travelling in Different Skins*. Yet, the analysis of Indian colonial women's travelogues can benefit from the insights of Sikstrom and Bird. Sikstrom's argument that "gender is both a mechanism of control and subjection, and simultaneously, a productive power of resistance" (Sikstrom 17) directs attention to the textual construction of gender identity. Using Butler's theory of performativity, we can identify the impact of everyday practices and inflections of cultural ideologies on the narrative performativity of gender.

### *Subjectivity and Life-Writing*

The potential of a theatrical "staging" of identity within the discursive space of a text is of relevance for any study on Indian colonial women's subjectivity since it is a useful strategy of self-fashioning. A number of recent works on life-writing have focused on performativity and performance of gender identity based on Judith

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<sup>45</sup> Devi comments that travel to England had not affected her "devotion to Indian home-life", and she adds, "[w]hen I visited my relations, I sat on the floor as of old, and was one of them just as if I had not left the *zenana*" (*Autobiography* 129).

Butler's theory (Moore-Gilbert 2009; Smith and Watson 2010; Malhotra and Lambert-Hurley 2015). Insights from these research help to scaffold the reading of female subjectivity in Indian women's colonial travels.

A staged performativity of self can be located in the narratives of at least a few colonial Indian women. The memoirs of Sunity Devi, Cornelia Sorabji and Agnes Majumdar all centre around their voyages to England. Following Smith and Watson as well as Moore-Gilbert, I will treat the texts as travel narratives. Moreover, these are texts in which I can discern clear articulations of subjectivity in the performativity of feminine and /or Indian identities.

Although I wish to retrieve and analyse an emergent subjectivity, it must be mentioned that there is a complex relationship between colonial female writing and subjectivity. First of all, there is no single or unified Indian subjectivity, rather, one must consider all types of women and a range of female experiences. Secondly, scholars of life-writing have repeatedly remarked that the autobiographies or life-writing of colonial subjects present fragile and tentative selves. Hence, the articulations of "loose" fluid subjectivity is not unique to colonial women since male writers also project partial selves (Moore-Gilbert xvii). Bart Moore-Gilbert suggests that the notion of a coherent unitary self is probably a European construction and proposes that a fluid identity is prevalent among both sexes of postcolonial writers. He contends that in postcolonial life-writing, a decentred subjectivity emerges as a result of the material and cultural conditions of colonialism, rather than gender (xxi) <sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Gilbert-Moore quotes from Edward Said in "I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self, the identity to which so many attach so much significance" to support his idea of decentred postcolonial selves (Said in *Out of Place* qt in Gilbert-Moore 14).

In *Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity: Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal*, Javed Majeed comes to the same conclusion in his analysis of the autobiographies of three South Asian nationalist leaders when he notes that postcolonial writers do not present “unified and coherent figures” (3)<sup>47</sup>. The unstable space of postcolonial autobiography clears the path for explorations and possibilities of enacting new selves.

While postcolonial male writers share with their female counterparts something of the vulnerability of being marginalized and disempowered figures, women’s precarity remains more pronounced. In her analytical study of colonial modern women in London, Anna Snaith reminds us of the need to continue to engage with feminism and gender in empire. She remarks that women “were at the heart of expressions of anti-colonialism, as well as central to anxiety about the maintenance of the health of the British Empire” (12), indicating that both colonial and British women functioned as important signs in imperialism and nationalism. In this context, the colonial woman was prominently viewed as a signifier of racial difference. Consequently, Snaith argues “the colonial woman traveller experienced the ‘voyage in’ differently from her male compatriot” (12).

Female travellers faced multiple challenges as they had to negotiate with racial, patriarchal and even white feminist demands. Colonial women’s bodies were viewed with apprehension surrounding sexual stereotypes<sup>48</sup>. These women had to cleave a space between different paradigms of nationalist allegories to which colonial male travellers would subscribe, and of feminist collaborations or female issues,

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<sup>47</sup> Javed Majeed states that in postcolonial life-writing one finds the disappearance of the self rather than a performance of singularity (3-4).

<sup>48</sup> Anna Snaith cites Virginia Woolf’s ambivalent response to Katherine Mansfield as an example of metropolitan prejudice about colonial subjects. Mansfield’s case shows that even white women, arriving from the peripheries of the empire, were tainted for their colonial connection and considered to be “déclassé” by British society (Snaith 20).

which appealed to many female travellers. They had to strike the right balance between individual female desires and nationalist community goals. Although London was a centre of suffrage movement, not all colonial female voyages were based in feminist organizations or activities. Yet there is a conflict which is evident in the greater degree of rupture in women's self-representations. With regard to women's life writing, Anshu Malhotra and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley declare:

...women's voices and thus their self-representation maybe convoluted, elusive, paradoxical and metaphorical or to borrow the lovely word applied by Booth to Egyptian women's autobiographical writing "diaphanous" (12)

Indeed, the word "diaphanous" captures the fragile tentative selves of travelling women. Women's subjectivity, as manifested in both travel writing and memoirs, is more often quite unstable and brittle, compared to the unified European male self in life-writing produced in the West.

In terms of subjectivity, female travel writing adopts features of unfinished identity formation, emphasising relational and social selves, often in dialogic interaction with the world around the narrator (Moore-Gilbert xviii). Female travel writers including the Indian colonial women discussed in this study lay stress on their identities as travelling companions to husbands, father or even brother. Ragaviah, Devi, Das and Ghose reveal that they travelled with their husbands. Though Fyzee went to England on a scholarship to train as a teacher, she also announces that she was accompanied by her brother on the journey to England.

Insights from research into life-writing can help to understand travelling female selfhoods. The emphasis on fragmentation in colonial and female autobiographical narratives has guided my research project towards investigating multiple strands in female subjectivity. Women travellers did not limit their identity

construction to performativity of feminine selves, they showcased themselves as nationalist, modern, cosmopolitan and sociable. In their endeavours to balance the demands of patriarchy, colonialism and nationalism, the female travellers of this study capture a range of identities that involve issues of corporeality, cosmopolitanism and affect. The following section will address some of the pertinent themes and theories for reading the female travel narratives.

### Recurring Themes

Colonial Indian women travellers endeavoured to gain recognition and establish selfhoods through subtle manipulation of available discourses. They draw on multiple and disparate experiences to develop complex and discrepant identities. As a result, the performativity of identity touch upon modernity, cosmopolitanism and sociability. This section of the chapter will now present the thematic considerations that influenced the analytical framework of this research.

#### *Corporeality*

Since projections of the self often spill onto the body, the presentation of the body in travel narratives become important. Women travellers disclose their self-consciousness by drawing attention to an anxiety over their bodies. Bart Gilbert-Moore states that women writers give more attention to the body than male writers (xviii). In her analysis of women's autobiographical practices, Sidonie Smith has repeatedly remarked on the centrality of body since women's subjectivity is embodied through a focus on the physical and the emotional, unlike male subjectivity, which is associated with logic, rationality and unity. Smith writes that theorists of autobiography need to analyse the body in narrative practices since material reality is played out on women's bodies (*Situating Subjectivity* 36). Furthermore, she writes

that the body is important because: “Identity’s Body”, she explains the significance of the body in:

Subjectivity is the elaborate residue of the border politics of the body since bodies locate us topographically, temporally, socio-culturally as well as linguistically in a series of transcoding along multiple axes of meaning. (“Identity’s Body”267)

In this excerpt, Smith is underscoring the discursive role of the body in subjectivity, which is at times phenomenologically experienced or materially embodied- subjectivity is experience lived on the border of the body and culture. Along with manners and codes of behaviour, she has stressed spatial assignments and clothes as important in the regulation of the body and in formation of the gendered subject (“Identity Body”). Butler, too, has given importance to the body on which gender is inscribed. Taking a cue from her observation, this study of women’s travel experiences of England will address the issues of clothes and motility or movement of the body in understanding Indian colonial female subjectivity, an area that has not received much attention so far.

### *Affect*

I also wish to add the category of affect to my analysis as bodily sensations are connected to feelings. This is a fairly new area in humanities and cultural studies that tries to bridge the gap between the entangled material or bodily effects with historical phenomenon. Many theorists regard “affect” as bodily responses (Silvan Tomkins; Brian Massumi<sup>49</sup>); it is an “experience of the body in relation to physical or social or ethical contexts that makes it so keenly felt” (Su184). However, if we read affect as a

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<sup>49</sup> In his “Introduction” in *Affect and Literature* (2020), Alex Houen cites Silvan Tomkins and Brian Massumi as theorists who have established “a concept of affect as a form of *bodily* feeling that is distinct from emotion, cognition and language” (3).

production of ideology or discourse on an individual, or as part of subjectivity, then one can argue that the “constellation of various social, political and economic systems are likely to produce particular kinds of affects among the people who live within them” (ibid. 185).

Attention to affect can provide an index to attitudes to colonialism and modernism, and also offer added or deeper insight into women travellers’ encounter with England. Pernau, for instance, has examined the emotional response of Indian Muslims in *Emotions and Modernity* (2019). Like Judith Walsh who has examined the effect of colonial modernity on Indian domesticity (*Domesticity in Colonial India*), Pernau dissects the traces of global discourses in the practices of ever day life and connects micro -level happenings of society with its macro- politics (6). My reading of affect and cosmopolitanism in Indian colonial women’s travel texts reflects such recent developments in postcolonial studies.

Leela Gandhi (2005) argues that postcolonial analyses will be limited to a choice between oppositional cultural nationalism and a discourse of hybridity, unless scholars re-examine colonial archives more creatively. In *Affective Communities* (2005) she, for instance, focuses on anticolonial South Asians and anti-imperial westerners collaborating and forging friendships.

While modernity has often been regarded as the disciplining of feelings, in colonial India it was embraced with enthusiasm and fervour; often contradicting the main impulse of modern subjectivity, which is to interiorise control. Pernau explains rationality and discipline were encouraged along with the concomitant reduction of excessive emotions and strong passions in the creation of modern subjects (7). She concludes that colonial modernity was complicated by imbrications of emotional intensity producing a movement she terms “from balance to fervor” (246).



Similarly, the voyages and England triggered in the women travellers – excitement, wonder and admiration, feelings analysed in this research project. My analysis of the projections of these feelings creates a map of the emotional contours of colonial modernity. However, this analysis is grounded in discourse analysis and social construction approaches because I argue that emotions are responses to the material world and prompted by experiences of the material. My reading is supported by critical literature in this field shows that the emotions provoked by England and travel are related to wider social and political contexts. As Bede Scott states that:

emotion (thus understood) is what ultimately unites the categories of the literary-aesthetic and the sociopolitical- not only in a straightforward mimetic sense, but also at a deeper, discursive level, as the literary artefact itself internalizes the dominant structures of feeling circulating within society at large (7).

Scott's view, that feelings manifested in texts reflect social mood, facilitates the study of affect within the framework of discourse analysis. Affect can therefore be linked with contexts and the reflection of social and historical processes. "Structure of feeling" is a reference to Raymond Williams' theory that historical periods are marked by particular affective dimensions or feelings; this is not the same as ideology or doctrine but rather "the way in which these more 'concrete' and easily delineated forces are registered at intuitive, emotional levels" (Scott 8).

While individuals may experience unique feelings, when a particular feeling recurs across people and texts, then the feeling takes on a social significance. In *Affect and Literature* (2020), Alex Houen comments that feelings are shaped by historical contexts as his exploration of dominant feelings in literary works of different ages show. In the case of travel to England, the wonder evoked by the

marvels of London is one such recurring trope that can be seen as a colonial effect of modernity. This is in contrast to the trauma and loss that characterize postcolonial literature centring around the violence of colonialism and diasporic experiences of globalization.

My study of affect is not just the identification of the tone or mood of a travel narrative; following Scott I view emotion as “essentially sociogenic, as a response to specific historical processes” (9). By placing affect in the analytical framework of this dissertation, I add this extra dimension to the exploration of women’s experience of travel and the imperial centre. Emotional tone and atmosphere are important in colonial texts because they deal with times of rapid change and transformations. Social ruptures, too, are often reflected in discursive formations and styles. Scott explains this in the following manner:

Once the literary artefact has internalized the affective energies that are circulating within a particular society at a given time, it processes or ‘materializes’ these energies at the subliminal level of form, structure and style- before integrating them into the affective economy of the narrative itself in the guise of a ‘world atmosphere’ or governing structure of feeling. (15).

Thus, the wonder and joy expressed in the travel narratives can be indices of colonial attitudes to the metropolitan centre, especially women’s feelings towards London and travel to England. My interpretation of Indian travellers’ Europhilic and Europhobic discourses regarding modernism and English women is grounded in a recognition of the centrality of emotions and shows the link between individual response and larger groups, which endows the narratives with broader social import. Like Pernau, Scott acknowledges that emotions sometimes “merges with the general atmosphere of a particular place or time” (6). The embeddings of affect are also found in traces of

social encounters, particularly in the forging of friendships and networks between Indian and English women. Consequently, the chapter on sociability emerges from an interest in the discursive legibility of affect in travel narratives.

### *Cosmopolitanism*

Another key theme in female colonial travel narratives is the development of a cosmopolitan performativity. In attempting to distance women's travel experiences away from rigid binaries of the dominant and the dominated, I will read the female travellers' appreciation and admiration of England not as slavish mimicry but as aesthetic and cognitive acts of evaluation and articulations of worldly views encapsulated by the term cosmopolitanism. Postcolonial analyses of cosmopolitanism often develop from extensions of Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity (*The Location of Culture*). While hybridity pertains to the mixture of two cultures, cosmopolitanism encompasses a more empowered acceptance of difference.

Originating from the Enlightenment view of universalism, the idea of cosmopolitanism has been associated with diversity and the embrace of contrasts and overlapping allegiances. In the *Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism* (2011), Zlato Skrbis and Ian Woodward state that cosmopolitanism is not confined to adopting foreign culture, rather it facilitates an enabling position within foreign cultures (53). Their insight will allow me to explain the nuances of attitudes and responses in ways other than the much-used postcolonial route of studying colonial ambivalence. Secondly, Indian travellers' cosmopolitan viewpoints are grounded in awareness of colonial power and subjection, but rather than being interstitial and confused there is a deliberate and conscious upholding of multiple perspectives and syncretism in such viewpoints.

Global flows of people and goods leads to cosmopolitan exchange; hence travel has always been part of the conversation about cosmopolitanism. Colonialism, prior to contemporary, had opened up multiple opportunities of cross-cultural contact and consumption of multicultural goods for both colonizers and colonial subjects (Go 210). However, cosmopolitanism is not just the free flow of globalisation. As Pnina Werbner remarks there must be an element of empathy and respect as well (“Anthropology and the New Ethical Cosmopolitanism” 143) which distinguishes it from mere consumption. She notes that “cosmopolitanism is about reaching out across cultural differences through dialogue, aesthetic enjoyment, and respect” (“Anthropology and the New Ethical Cosmopolitanism” 143). Ulrich Beck, a leading theorist of this field, also emphasizes that cosmopolitanism is “an emerging ethical response” to global culture (qtd. in Werbner *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism* 5). Critics, however, warn that neither mobility nor globalization is synonymous with cosmopolitanism. Hannerz insists on differentiating between the cosmopolitan traveller who consciously engages with the other and frequent travellers who persist in staying culturally insulated (“Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture”). According to Bruce Robbins and Paulo Lemos Horta cosmopolitanism requires a degree of ethical engagement, a commitment to “the good of humans as a whole” (“Introduction” 1).

Cosmopolitanism with its ethical response and orientation towards cultural outreach is a complex multi-layered phenomenon. Consequently, it emerges in different registers and range across three main areas – political, moral and cultural (Levy et al. 423). The cultural and political aspects are also underscored by Hannerz in his theory of the two faces of cosmopolitanism, which are cultural and political (*Two Faces of Cosmopolitanism*). The combination of a political dimension with a

cultural one makes cosmopolitanism a material practice of everyday life, rather than an abstract philosophical concept in Jennie Germann Molz's opinion.

Cosmopolitanism's cultural focus can be found in "cultural openness (Delanty, 2006; Hannerz, 1990), cultural consumption (Szerszynski & Urry, 2002), and enjoying and learning from different cultures (Hannerz, 1990; J. Ong, 2009)" (Levy et al., 421). Meanwhile, Gerard Delanty and Neal Harris foreground reflective elements in their proposition of critical cosmopolitanism. They submit a four-part framework which gives emphasis to a relational dimension; they state that cosmopolitanism fosters cultural assessments and the development of a world consciousness through "a shared normative culture" ("The Idea of Critical Cosmopolitanism" 97).

Although cosmopolitanism has been traditionally grounded in Western episteme and associated with elite powerful groups, recent scholarship seeks to expand the parameters of cosmopolitanism to accommodate multiple perspectives and subjects. As Maria Rovisco and Magdalen Nowicka remark in the introduction to *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism* (2011) there has been a shift towards "lived cosmopolitans" (2) that focuses on cross-cultural engagements of migrants and other marginalized groups. One such development is the notion of rooted cosmopolitanism by Kwame Anthony Appiah, where a cosmopolitan can remain "attached to a home of one's own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people" (qtd. in Levy et al. 421). Such a view encourages the retention of national identity and primary loyalty to one's nation, while also being respectful of cultural diversity (Delanty and Harris 97).

The shift away from rootlessness in cosmopolitanism is also underscored by Thomas Bender, who emphasizes the need to reposition cosmopolitan figures in more specific contexts. He writes:

A cosmopolitan must cultivate a doubleness that allows both commitment and distance, an awareness at once of the possible distance of the self and of the possibility of dialogical knowledge of the other person or group (“Cosmopolitan Experience and Its Use” 116).

Bender’s suggestion that the cosmopolitan individual can maintain a connection with home and self, while engaging with foreign cultures is an important indication of cross-cultural exchanges.

Cosmopolitanism’s Eurocentric and elite biases have been countered with acknowledgements of vernacular and rooted cosmopolitanisms (Werbner; Appiah; Bhabha). Such a move also mitigates postcolonial anxiety about cosmopolitanism as a form of Western and colonial cultural capital. Kris Manjapra opposes reductive views to see cosmopolitanism as simply a response to Western culture because “[i]t obscures the moments of response and imaginative agency” (16) that colonial subjects could attain. The argument that anti-colonial cosmopolitanism existed during colonial times and was not a Western derivative is relevant for the analysis of colonial travel narratives. As Manjapra points out, despite new research on the existence of pre-colonial and postcolonial cosmopolitanism, “...a curious lacuna exists with regards to cosmopolitanism in the colonial era itself” because critics tend to associate cosmopolitanism with “a tainted product of Western capital and Western epistemic frames” (4). Freeing cosmopolitanism from its Eurocentric moorings is necessary and helpful as it opens up a useful analytical framework to examine the complex nuances of the responses of Indian colonial travellers to England.

Homi Bhabha offers a similar revisionist approach in delinking the elitist and Eurocentric view with his concept of vernacular cosmopolitanism which brings in minority and peripheral social subjects in the fold of cosmopolitanism. He argues for embracing ambivalence to find a space between “cultural appropriation and cultural alienation-between enunciation and erasure” for new voices and different articulations of cosmopolitanism to emerge (“Spectral Sovereignty” 150).

Bhabha’s contribution to the theory of cosmopolitanism has been the foregrounding of divergences and multiplicities within cosmopolitanism by stressing on the non-elite composition of modern cosmopolitans. Following on Bhabha’s view that cosmopolitan can surface in “postcolonial translations” made in border existences and marginalized perspectives (“Unsatisfied Notes” 195), Werbner argues that cosmopolitans can be rooted, that is attached to local and specific loyalties, and “juggle particular and transcendent loyalties” (“Anthropology and the New Ethical Cosmopolitanism” 143).

Indian colonial travels motivated by aspirations of self-development and desires to reach across lines of social and cultural divisions highlight the ambitions of marginalized perspectives and voices striving to find a cultural space in scenes of power asymmetries. In this case, the concept of vernacular cosmopolitanism is appropriate since it can accommodate the contradictory notes of colonial articulations of cosmopolitanism. Werbner remarks the “conjunctural dialectics” of postcolonial cosmopolitanism are also present in vernacular cosmopolitanism. She explains her stance in the following way:

Vernacular cosmopolitanism belongs to a family of concepts all of which combine in similar fashion contradictory opposites: cosmopolitan patriotism, rooted cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan ethnicity, working-class

cosmopolitanism, discrepant cosmopolitanism. Such conjunctions attempt to come to term with the dialectical elements of postcolonial and precolonial forms of cosmopolitanism and travel, while probing the conceptual boundaries of cosmopolitanism and its usefulness as an analytic probing” (*Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism*14).

Werbner’s definition shows that vernacular cosmopolitanism can be capacious and can integrate the local with the global. Consequently, this form of cosmopolitanism can synchronize the unique aspects of rooted cosmopolitanism with transnational and elitist dimensions of universalist or translocal versions of cosmopolitanism.

This widening of the notion of cosmopolitans has led to the inclusion of colonial subjects, mainly elites who travelled and absorbed differences. Werbner remarks that to become cosmopolitan one needs to adopt a particular consciousness that “would need to include elements of self-doubt and reflexivity, [and] an awareness of the existence and equal validity of other cultural practices and values” (“A New Cosmopolitan Anthropology” 18).

The concept of cosmopolitanism has, therefore, been attractive to scholars of travel writing from Debbie Lisle (2006) to Pallavi Rastogi (“Timeless England”) and Pramod Nayar (2020) who regard the open acceptance of foreign cultures and racial/cultural others as an indication of such outlooks. Nayar’s work on the cosmopolitanism of Indian travellers, though mostly limited to male travellers who are not under the purview of this dissertation, nonetheless, has been suggestive. My work hopes to further expand the dimension of Indian colonial cosmopolitanism by disclosing a gendered cosmopolitanism among women travellers.

Furthermore, I wish to focus on the performativity of cosmopolitanism by adopting Ian Woodward’s and Zlato Skrbis’s arguments of the kind of performative



cosmopolitanism they have developed in the essay “Performing Cosmopolitanism”. Their view of cosmopolitanism as an enactment through acts and rituals tie in with Butler’s theory of gender performativity, which emphasizes the repetition of social conventions and norms of behaviour. Consequently, there is a good link between the theme of identity construction and cosmopolitan manifestations.

### Sociability

Additionally, cosmopolitanism directs the analysis of narratives to social interactions and transnational friendships since cosmopolitanism for women travellers is bound to a cultural dimension. Cultural cosmopolitanism is a form of intercultural competence encompassing code-switching, in-depth cultural knowledge and semiotic skills. Gerard Delanty and Neal Harris define this as “various cultural symbolic competencies that allow one to move within a range of life-worlds” (Delanty and Harris 130). A cultural enunciation of cosmopolitanism extends into social interactions that display both sociability and conviviality. In their article “Defining Cosmopolitan Sociability in a Transnational Age: An Introduction”, Nina Glick Schiller et al. propose a cosmopolitan sociability based on communicative competence and social relations. Here sociability pertains to acts that are not necessarily purposeful or utilitarian. The emphasis is on creating social relations to promote aspirations for a better world and also engender openness and inclusivity. Schiller et al. argue that every day practices of social interaction allow people to shape and to produce cosmopolitan sociability instead of being passive consumers of such sociability (403). The dimensions of social repertoire and social exchanges widen the scope of cosmopolitanism; thus, the optics of sociability will add nuance to my reading of Indian colonial women’s cosmopolitan enactments in imperial England.

The spotlight on social interaction will enable me to move the discussion to the issue of transnational alliances and social amity, Indian colonial women could form friendships and social bonds with English women because of their social competence and cultural knowledge which provided them with access to British social spheres. The theme of cosmopolitan manifestations, therefore, is tied to the theme of sociability and friendships.

## Conclusion

Having laid out in some detail the issues that impacted on the development of women and travel in the nineteenth century, the next chapters will provide analysis of women's performativity of mobile gendered selves. The common themes that arise in the travel narratives will be used as analytical categories to focus on different aspects of identity constructions. Indian female travellers tried to distinguish themselves as Indian and feminine in opposition to the Western woman, hence the next chapter will deal with Indian women's representation of the English woman.

## CHAPTER TWO VIEWING THE IMPERIAL OTHER: BEING FEMININE

Women travellers' access to travel writing's discursive power was often grounded in their knowledge of domesticity and interior spaces. Famous British female voyageurs from Lady Mary Montague (1689-1762)<sup>50</sup> to Fanny Parkes<sup>51</sup> (1794-1875) took advantage of their gendered privilege to gain access into enclosed private spaces in Turkish and Indian societies and report on harems and zenana life. In a similar move, several Indian women who visited England during the colonial period focus on British homes and women in their narratives. While the preoccupation with domesticity is a central theme in Indian travel narratives, this dissertation will move beyond thematic readings to examine the connections between representations of the other and Indian women's identity construction in keeping with my research aims. I plan to demonstrate that Indian female travellers had incorporated the motif of British women and homes to frame their performativity of feminine and nationalist selves.

This chapter will, thus, concentrate on the presentation of British women and British homes by female Indian travellers of the colonial period. The showcasing of British life was often an attempt to draw attention to the pitiful condition of Indian women and provide a possible paradigm for gender development. Indian women carefully curated the images they draw to interweave a reformist agenda and articulate female agency in their narratives. Janakumamah Ragaviah, Krishnabhabini Das, Mary

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<sup>50</sup> Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was a noted writer who is remembered for her letters from Turkey published posthumously in 1763. She travelled to Turkey as the wife of the British Ambassador in Constantinople, and she recorded her experience of the Ottoman court and especially female society and harem life.

<sup>51</sup> Fanny Parkes married to a minor colonial officer lived in India between 1822 and 1846. During her stay, she travelled extensively within India and visited Indian homes and met with Indian women. She compiled an account of her travel experiences in her memoir, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque during Four and Twenty Years in the East: With Revelations of Life in the Zenana* (1850).

Bhore and Atiya Fyzee, in particular, aimed their texts at educating female readers of their own society. The compulsion to reform and to improve domestic life can also be discerned in Durgabati Ghose and Kuttan Nair.

While Indians had gained some knowledge of the physical spaces and famous landmarks of England from colonial education and reports of early visitors, interior private spaces remained a mystery for a long time. As a result, Behramji Malabari, the Parsi journalist and reformer, writes as late as 1892 that “the home life of England is practically a sealed book to us” (58). Meanwhile, Mahdi Hassan, a high official from Hyderabad, acknowledges his inquisitiveness in his travelogue when he writes, “I was anxious to see an English home and real home-life” (52). The fascination with private spaces of metropolitan culture implies a reversal of Orientalist scrutiny and exoticization of the East in the voyeuristic glimpses into British homes provided by Indian travellers.

Indian women travellers like their male counterparts, tried to satiate Indian readers’ curiosity of readers through ethnographic accounts of domesticity. The female travel writers, however, differed from the male ones in their undertaking of a more engaged scrutiny in the deconstructions of imperial women. While most Indian men are content to note happy households and attribute the affective core to the “English lady”, women visitors emphasize the opportunities and privileges given to British women as the key to a better family at life home and their reports centre around their viewing of English women.

## Indian Gaze on English Women

In colonial Indian women's travels to the West, the reverse journeys also redirected the gaze and brought the other woman into Indian female scopic purview<sup>52</sup>. English women had been the object of early pre-colonial Indian travellers' gaze and continued to hold interest for later travellers. Humberto Garcia and Mohammed Tavakoli-Targhi, scholars who have written extensively on Persian travelogues, remark that Persianate travellers were enamoured of the unveiled English women they met and often compared them to heavenly figures "houris" of Islamist imagination<sup>53</sup>(*England Re-Oriented; Refashioning Iran*). In contrast, descriptions of English women by Indian women travellers of the nineteenth century are rooted in pragmatic assessments and take into consideration reform aims and transnational threats. The narratives form a very interesting story of cross-cultural encounters that are striated with gender and nationalist ideologies, nevertheless, there has been little discussion or critical interest which a study on female travels, which a research project such as this dissertation will hopefully rectify.

This chapter, therefore, aims to examine Indian women's representation of English women as a strategy to consolidate their own subjectivity and assert agency. The presence of the imperial female other in such travelogues, however, extends beyond information sharing and becomes embedded in the performativity of Indian feminine identity. Sutapa Dutta's observation that "encounters between memsahibs and Indian women in the zenana provide a historical framework to understand the

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<sup>52</sup> See Sukla Chatterjee. In *Colonial and Literary Narratives of Colonial India: Her Myriad Gaze* (2019) the writer comments that the term gaze encompasses perspective and empowerment in the act of looking (1). She also adds that gaze bestows power on the spectator (8).

<sup>53</sup> Several pre-colonial travellers, Mirza I'tisam al-Din/ Mirza Shaykh I'tesamuddin (Tavakoli 55; Garcia 100-101) Mirza Abul Hasan Khan Ilchi (55), Mirza Abu Talib (Tavakoli-Targhi 57; Garcia 181)

complex relationship between the binaries of self and other” (120) can be replicated in interpretations of Indian women’s visits to England as female Indian encounters with English women, too, provide critical insights into the “binaries of self and other”, albeit from the marginalized perspective of colonial subjects. There is a parallel tendency to deploy the other as a foil for Indian female self-constructions which is present in the travel narratives of Das, Fyzee, Bhore, and Ghose.

### *Europology*

My argument that Indian women mobilized the figure of the other in their performativity of selfhood and agency builds on contemporary scholarship on Persianate travelogues, comprising of both Iranian and Indian travels to the West. The European woman, or *farangi* woman in Persian, was held to be a cultural marker inscribing Asian admiration and approbation of the West. In *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (2001), a book on Persian travels to the West, Mohammed Targhi-Tavakoli proposes the concept of Europology, that is a body of knowledge on Europe constructed by Asian visitors to the West. This discourse about the Westerners did not assume the power or systematization of Orientalism; a point that may explain why neither Edward Said nor Bernard Lewis mentions the development of Occidentalism<sup>54</sup>. Furthermore, this Europology was divided into two opposing discourses of Europhilia and Europhobia which centred around attitudes to women. In Europhiliac discourses, Europe was represented as an orderly and law-bound heterotopia with educated and disciplined women, who were perfect companions to their husbands (73). Iranian modernists, akin to Indian colonial

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<sup>54</sup> In *Refashioning Iran*, the writer references Edward Said and Bernard Lewis to explain the commonplace belief that there is no Asian counterpart of Orientalism. He writes that: “Viewing Orientalism as a ‘one-way exchange,’ Said argues that it would be unlikely ‘to imagine a field symmetrical to it called Occidentalism.’ ...Oddly enough, both Said and Lewis agreed on the absence of Occidentalism or Europology” (Tavakoli-Targhi 19-20).

social reformers in many ways, seized the image of accomplished chaste females of the West as a template for imitation. In contrast, counter-modernists highlighted lewd and libertine women and presented Europe as an *ectopia*, an abnormal place (Tavakoli-Targhi 73). Europhobic discourse contained vehement opposition to free independent European women, who were viewed as symbols of the corruption and immorality of the West.

Encounters with English women established a cultural terrain for Indian female travellers to interrogate received ideas of reform and tradition. Indian women exploited the representations of such experience to consolidate their own subjectivity and to assert agency. They, too, like male travellers, invested in the image of the English woman the symbolic power of Western culture so that the imperial female became a synecdoche for modernity and development. Consequently, the examination of Indian female gaze on British women and homes has to be tied with the discourses of social reform and reconstitution of gender role in colonial India. To this end, the image of the imperial other will be placed in Tavakoli-Targhi's analytical proposition of Europhiliac and Europhobic discourses that he has utilized in *Refashioning Iran* to analyse Persianate travel texts (73). Such a comparative framework will enable me to plot Indian travellers' variegated responses and the multiplicity of perspectives that Sukla Chatterjee finds among Bengali female writers in *Colonial and Literary Narratives of Colonial India: Her Myriad Gaze on the 'Other'* (2019.)

### Europhiliac Discourse of Imperial Women and Homes

The Europhiliac discourse of Janakumamah Ragaviah's travelogue, *Pictures of England* (1876), is signalled from the beginning of the text. The editor projects the book as a guide for women's self-improvement by a preface where colonial and

gender discourses are affirmed. In the first chapter titled “The First Whisper”, the writer sets out her agenda as follows:

Please listen. It is about English women, they can talk when occasion offers on scientific subjects, and on those topics calculated to promote the best interests of humanity-but they rarely hold vain and nonsensical conversation. (5)

Ragaviah is circumscribing the scope of her narrative to the dissemination of a model of female behaviour that would be acceptable to local patriarchy and colonial power. This interpretation is supported by the reviewer who published his comments on April 15, 1874 in *Athenaeum and Daily News*<sup>55</sup>. The anonymous reviewer reinforces the feminine and didactic qualities of the book in his comment quoted below:

The beauty of this lady’s letter consists in the fact that it was written not to attract European criticism, but for the benefit of her country women, for which object it was originally published in a native paper. (*Pictures of England* 10)

The reviewer’s emphasis on the limited scopes of Ragaviah’s readership, native women of some local newspaper, and of the topic, something which will benefit women, is important in establishing the feminine and colonial aspects of the text. These prefatory remarks about the voyage frames Ragaviah’s depiction of English women and their homes within a positive view of English women.

In her portrayal of English women, Ragaviah draws attention to household management and praises the English system for the competence of female staff, including the housekeeper, the housemaid, the lady’s maid and the nurse. There is also appreciation for the mistress of the house in the traveller’s observation that English ladies are consummate hosts. She found evidence of their social skill in entertaining guests at home and reports that:

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<sup>55</sup> The review is included in first chapter of the English translation of Ragaviah’s travelogue (7-12).



In order that the visitor may not feel dull, the clever lady pianist cheers the family circle and the visitors with her music. (56)

The traveller acknowledges that the ladies whom she met were very friendly.

Ragaviah, however, lays emphasis on the rights and empowerment of the imperial women as a general group rather than on individual traits. In summarizing her overall impression of England, she declares:

Ladies in England hold a very different position to what they do in India, there they are the equals of the men and are their best advisers, while in this country I am sorry to say, they are held to be inferior in every respect and instead of being advisers, are treated by many as slaves to the will and bidding of the male sex (113-114)

The impassioned plea for greater gender equality takes on a very strong assertive tone in a proto-feminist demand:

When will my Indian sisters enjoy such a noble position in their household, as do our fair and beautiful sisters of the West? The day will yet come I am certain, and my God speed it. To see the comfort, forethought, love, happiness and consideration exhibited in an English home, would, I am sure, cause even the harshest men of this country to be filled with envy and inspired with a desire to emulate. (114)

Ragaviah's advocacy for women's rights must be accepted as feminist, but, at the same time, the traveller is limiting her appeal to women's domestic position or needs at home. This is contradictory to her own depiction of women working in post offices, performing in theatres and concerts, and freely moving around the city. The neglect of employment rights or economic autonomy could be due to her own privileged position and reflects a class bias.

Also, it is rather interesting to note that the feminist desire is intertwined with other discourses to camouflage or mitigate her gender subversion. For instance, she links the wish for women's improved condition to a patriotic goal of developing India. In an earlier section, she had made a similar move when she connects women's education with national progress:

That country ought to be really blessed one for the reason that almost the whole population of females are educated, and the results and benefits of such education we all know, (56)

Ragaviah's concern for the improvement of India is an indication of her nationalism, but this exists in conjunction with an acceptance of colonial hegemony. In positioning the English women and their rights as a paradigm for India, she concedes to England's superiority and is very deferential to imperial culture. She names the women who were sympathetic to Indians as examples of model of the "blessed" educated ladies: Lady Waterlow<sup>56</sup>, Miss Mary Carpenter<sup>57</sup>, Mrs. Arnold<sup>58</sup> and Miss Manning<sup>59</sup> (56). She explains that her list comprises those who contributed to bringing "the two races to a close intimacy" (56), and indeed both Mary Carpenter and Adelaide Manning had facilitated cross-cultural exchanges and collaborations.

*Some Impressions of England* (1900), a monograph by Mary Bhore, is another travel narrative endorsing a Europhiliac discourse. Like Ragaviah's *Pictures of*

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<sup>56</sup> Lady Waterlow is most likely a reference to the wife of Sir Sidney Waterlow the Lord Mayor of London from 1872 to 1873 and later a Member of Parliament from 1874 to 1885. Ragaviah mentions that she and her husband had been invited several times by the Waterlows to the Mansion House (57).

<sup>57</sup> Mary Carpenter a liberal reformer had formed strong links with Indian reform movements through her association with Ram Mohan Roy and Keshab Chandra Dutt. She promoted female education in India and also opened up the National Indian Association.

<sup>58</sup> She could not be identified.

<sup>59</sup> Elizabeth Adelaide Manning was responsible for opening the London branch of the National Indian Association with her step-mother Mrs. Manning. After the death of Mary Carpenter, Adelaide Manning became the Honorary Secretary of the NIA.

*England*, this text is aimed at instructing Indians. Here, too, the writer openly states that her remarks are circumscribed to “woman, her pursuits and her sphere of work” (38). She begins by setting out her theme as follows:

I would prefer to speak of what struck me and interested most as a woman, namely – The social life of the English, the Education of the Women and their influence on the life of the nation. (2)

The braiding of women with national development in this statement is consistent with a Europhiliac discourse where praiseworthy women embody exemplary social conditions.

Bhore’s admiration for the British woman animates her narrative, which revolves around the intelligence and competence of the imperial other in producing an ideal home. The virtues which earn the traveller’s approval are work ethic and productivity. The upper -class women, who form the object of her study, do not need to work, yet they are engaged in worthwhile activities instead of remaining idle. The traveller found that: “[t]he richest do not excuse themselves, but work very hard, for society makes many claims on the wealthy” (26).

English women’s scope of work includes efforts to sustain family unity and harmony. Thus, the traveller includes the commitment to maintain family unity and harmony as an important characteristic worthy of replication. Bhore is suitably impressed with the way women write letters to parents, in-laws and sons who are away at school, to sustain closeness among relatives. She also remarks that the British women contribute to household chores by efficiently supervising servants and doing

needlework to mend and darn clothes<sup>60</sup>. In addition, they take charge of teaching religion and morality to their children.

Bhore foregrounds the qualities that contribute to the welfare of the family. For instance, she explains how British mothers are successful in raising healthy and energetic children for they understand the value of fresh air and exercise, and do not spoil their children. The image of British women which Bhore constructs is that of good wives and mothers, it is an image that conforms to the social reconstruction of Indian woman in the colonial reform movement.

Bhore limits women's achievements to the household. In her reference to English women's social work, she distances such work from public service and links it to moral good. She explains that women who undertook social work were motivated by community spirit, and like the men, they "worked at something for the general good" (12). Bhore describes female philanthropy in the following way— "[b]oth in town and country ladies spend much time and money in charity" (7). In the depiction of English charity, she hints at a sense of female solidarity and empathy thus:

Women especially busy themselves much in raising the condition of poor women and girls...For these poor sisters the rich women have endless societies. (24)

She notes that not only the wealthy, but "all give more or less as they can afford" (27). Yet, she circumscribes women's public work with the caveat, "You will see that busy as English women like to be in matters of public interest, they take up their family duties no less seriously" (12). The reminder of "family duties" entrenches women within the domestic and private sphere.

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<sup>60</sup>The reference to needlework is interesting because the inclusion of this subject in female curriculum was initially resisted. Borthwick writes that an article in *Bharat Mihir* criticized embroidery and needlework as "merely of recreational benefit" (84) and did not consider it utilitarian.

Besides charity, the qualities of being modest, simple and polite are highlighted. Bhore remarks that the generosity and simplicity of wealthy English women drew her attention because in India one imagines “wives of millionaires would be loaded with jewels” (23), whereas in England:

...it was difficult to tell by her appearance a millionaire’s wife from any other lady. She may wear jewels on state occasions, but her daily dress is as simple, sometimes even simpler than that of others who belong to a humbler position in life. (23)

English women’s modesty and simplicity are attributes that are valued in Indian culture, and Bhore seems to be promoting cross-cultural appreciation by showing that British women embody the kind of noble principles which Indians can also respect. The traveller is keen to establish that women of the imperial centre do not abuse their social freedom and are not immoral. She recounts that the young women who study in Oxford were away from home and attended classes with men, yet “beyond the slightest nod of recognition, they have nothing to do with each other” (19). The traveller allays fears of women interacting with men with an expression of great faith in English women’s morality. Although Indians may be apprehensive of immoral behaviour, British people allow men and women to mix together because:

As for such ideas would directly occur to us here that there might be impropriety in such mixed meetings, the notion I am sure has never crossed the minds of the English. (21)

Such confidence in British moral propriety is an index of Bhore’s Anglophilia and her attempt to produce a Europhiliac discourse. Nonetheless, the traveller is able to support her lofty claim with her argument that early socialization between young boys and girls and free mixing of the two sexes in family settings prepare British men and

women to interact without compromising their virtue. Having had experience of gendered interactions from childhood, British individuals learn how to behave within bounds of conventions so that “it is second nature to them to move in mixed society” (21).

In her idealization of the imperial woman, the traveller projects a paragon who is virtuous and pleasant. She remarks that “women too were as polite” as the men (17), and, in return, society gives deference and respect to women. Girls are taught to show consideration to older women and not just elderly men.

The charm of the English women is another feature she finds interesting because she mentions that girls learn to be “agreeable to friends and visitors, and thus they give great help to their mothers in entertaining their friends” (15). The social skill of interaction seems to appeal greatly to the traveller. In another place she points out that women make time to read and learn about current affairs in order to “carry on an animated conversation” (6). Furthermore, they also develop “some interest” (10), such as music, painting, embroidery or gardening or join “literary, benevolent or political societies” (10). Ultimately, they develop into well-rounded individuals who are active, engaged and interesting.

The theme of education, a central preoccupation of most female travellers, also surfaces in Bhore’s narrative. She makes several references to women’s learning in terms of writing letters, reading, teaching morality and religion, and most importantly studying for higher education. The traveller provides a separate section on “something about my life among the girl students at Somerville College” (19). The account though is limited to women’s social freedom of attending mixed sex classes rather than having segregated classes. This is in keeping with Bhore’s view of female learning; she argues that the girls in Somerville College do not aim for “great

learning” (20) and are content with “a general, literary education” (21). The fact that they have the opportunity to experience the world of Oxford which is “highly cultured, refined and enlarging to the mind” (21) seems to be sufficient.

Bhore emphasises that British women were supportive wives and capable mothers because they had access to education. Women’s learning is implied in the traveller’s depiction of ladies writing letters, reading books and keeping abreast of “literary, political and general events” (5). However, women’s learning and contribution are limited to the demands of a patriarchal society. Her view of education is analogous to feminine learning, Tim Allender’s nomenclature for the limited educational curriculum for women in *Learning Femininity in Colonial India, 1820–1932* (2016)<sup>61</sup>. Meredith Borthwick’s work also indicates that issues of ‘feminine content’ and feminine training dominated discussions of female education. Consequently, women under the aegis of colonial education were endowed with basic literacy and numeracy skills along with “accomplishment subjects” (Allender 31) such as music, elocution or drawing, as well as more practical subjects comprising of domestic hygiene, knitting and embroidery.

Under the patriarchal structures prevailing in colonial India, education for girls was limited to a feminine learning that contributed to household management and child rearing. In her analysis of Bengali women’s writing of the colonial period<sup>62</sup>, Maroona Murmu writes that education was promoted for smooth and efficient execution of household duties rather than economic gain or individual needs (65). The aim of such training was to prepare good mothers and good wives, as many cultural

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<sup>61</sup> In *Learning Femininity*, Tim Allender explores how notions of femininity and gender conventions were developed through the curriculum in colonial India.

<sup>62</sup> *Words of her Own: Women Authors in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (2021) presents a history of the emergence of female writers in Bengal.

historians including Allender and Borthwick have concluded.<sup>63</sup> Indian women needed to be given a new orientation to shape them into suitable wives for the colonial modern men, usually English educated and influenced by metropolitan culture<sup>64</sup>. Bhore's endorsement of this premise is clearly articulated in her comment that Oxford prepares women students in the following way:

they are built up with healthy minds in healthy bodies, fit to be the associates and companions in future life of the young men who are being prepared by the country to do the great work of the British Empire. (21)

This statement sounds a bell for imperialism and patriarchy indicating that the traveller was dominated by the discourses of colonialism and gender. Bhore has perhaps internalized the prevailing ideologies of her society for she appears to acquiesce with conventional views of gender and politics. A subtle interrogation of patriarchal structure is introduced in her theme of companionate marriage and English homes. While she accepts the conventional role of femininity, she encodes the privileges and rights of women in her vision of family life.

In Bhore's account, English women's ability to be a centrifugal force in bringing families together and creating happy homes rests on their positions in society and families. The connections between women's privileges and happy harmonious family life are iterations in the narrative. Bhore keeps returning to the argument that giving women social freedom will reap benefits for society and family life. In her

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<sup>63</sup>This was in contrast to earlier beliefs that "no man would marry an educated girl" (Borthwick 61). Borthwick observes that marriage criteria changed over time and a basic level of education (writing letters, keeping accounts and reading books) became a requisite for marriage (103).

<sup>64</sup> Education, therefore, was limited to shaping females into good wives and mothers, and like the male travellers' gaze focused on the virtues of English women in maintaining a household Trailakanyath Mukharji praises the English wives who are a great help to their husbands and who "do all the household chores from cleaning and cooking to managing accounts and property" (158) for which they would need training. Behramji Malabari is similarly inclined in his depiction of the "education of the heart" (58) to produce good mothers.



picture of a happy family scene during the holidays she writes that “social freedom and ease” facilitate men and women to become “good companions” and bestows on society “a brightness, a refinement, a polish which we have not here” (14). She points out that children, both boys and girls, are taught not just to respect elder female members of the family<sup>65</sup> but to hold in honour all women in society. The deference and high regard for women influence boys and men to behave with courtesy and kindness. Women’s special position in the imperial centre is highlighted by this traveller in her remark that, “Society in England is almost entirely in the hands of women” (16) and women deploy their prominent place to make society “as pleasant and interesting as they can” (16). In return, the men are expected to show “deference” (16).

Bhore tries to convince her readers that the imperial other has developed into an accomplished and efficient woman due to “liberal education” given to women. She cites social freedom and education for women as pathways to fulfilling lives for both men and women. In a deft manner, she shifts women’s rights and wants to male needs and desires by viewing female education from a male perspective. She writes of the dilemma of men who have been transformed by colonial education and colonial employment. These men, even those who have not travelled outside of India:

often sigh for more intelligent companions in their wives, and would gladly have them taught a measure of what they have learnt themselves, but the elders of the family forbid it. Just imagine then how much worse the state of society must appear to men who, for several years, have enjoyed the freedom and charm of cultivated and refined Society in England. (36)

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<sup>65</sup> Bhore may have been thinking of the dominance of senior female members in Indian households which Borthwick explains as: “[t]he authority structure was strictly hierarchal, with the old *ginni* at the top and the youngest *bou* at the bottom” (12).

She correctly identifies that the disparity between men, who have been educated, and women who are kept illiterate, cannot be compatible. She justifies her argument for giving women more freedom and opportunities so that they can contribute to domestic life by becoming better wives and mothers. Bhore thus states:

That the wife and mother may take up her rightful duties and be the good companion and friend and counsellor of her husband and a wise and experienced guide to her children (38-39).

Bhore's subsuming of women's own needs and female self-realization to the greater cause of family and society weakens her feminist stance. Nevertheless, she succeeds in making a claim for female education and social freedom. She comes close to a feminist demand in the following statement:

When men and women are both educated and meet on terms of equality, they are at their best when they entertain each other. 21

Although the equality is in terms of social interaction, the declaration of "equality" and parity in "both educated" expresses a strong sense of female consciousness. Respect, education and elevated position of women as "noble daughters, noble wives and noble mothers" (37) produce "happiness and the higher tone of the whole race" (37), in her opinion. Bhore's depiction of English women's privileges is tinged with Anglophilia, that manifests in her admiration and longing for metropolitan culture. One could argue that the travelogue projects an image of feminotopia, that is to say, an idealized world of female autonomy and pleasure.

Another minor but significant feminist assertion emerges in Bhore's portrayal of female leisure activities. She mentions that women carve out time to pursue a special interest, be it music, painting, embroidery or gardening (10)– and that the ladies find "time to give to other matters which interest her" (4). The reference to

hobbies is a feminist countering of social belief that leisure activities will have a negative impact on women, and they will, subsequently, neglect household duties and moral strictures.<sup>66</sup> Judith Walsh has pointed out that in Bengal and Maharashtra as well as other parts of India a new anxiety arose that the educated wife would forsake her household chores and the domestic world would be destroyed.<sup>67</sup>

Despite the idealization of a society where women have social mobility and freedom along with respect and educational opportunities, Bhore insists that “all English women are not perfect” (36). The utopian quality of British society is offset by the traveller’s revelations of fallen women. She discloses the sad fact that in their struggle for livelihood, some poor women “find life so hard that the weak ones go under morally and physically” (24). The traveller does not sentimentalize her presentation in the stark facts that these women are “hardened by the rough life and are not grateful to others for others coming to spy out their misery” (25). Though she appears to empathise with the resentment and pride of the destitute women, she aligns herself with the upper-class women when she praises the “bolder spirits” who are “not easily discouraged” from observing and helping the poor (25). It is worth noting that the traveller is more open and positive towards the rural poor.

Bhore’s distancing from the urban poor of England is noteworthy among most Indian travellers, both male and female, who reverse the ethnographic gaze to scrutinize and assume superiority over working class people. The inclusion of morally

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<sup>66</sup>Dipesh Chakraborty writes that there was a strong fear that women would neglect household duties, and he quotes from Manomohon Bosu in the following: “will you find the time to do needlework, . . . a must [for civilised women]? How else would you acquire the civilisation of the bibis [European women]? Henceforth, devote yourselves [only] to reading books, knitting wool, dressing up, attending the [Brahmo] Samaj. Speak chaste Bengali, and spend the whole day discussing [the fashionable] subjects of health, cleanliness, discipline . . .” (“Domesticity in British Bengal” 10).

<sup>67</sup>Walsh cites the case of Ramabai Ranade to extend her evidence beyond Bengal.

questionable women, however, is unusual among female travel writers since they wish to avoid topics related to sexuality.

### Shifts in Europhiliac Discourse

A more probing analysis of the British woman than the one provided by Bhore emerges in Krishnabhabini Das' travelogue *A Bengali Lady in England* (1885). In *Women and Literary Narratives in Colonial India: Her Myriad Gaze on the 'Other'* (2019), Sukla Chatterjee remarks that Das's account of English women is an example of non-Eurocentric peripheral gaze (14), implying that a nationalist or anti-colonial perspective comes into play. Based on her experience of living in England, the traveller produces an ethnographic study of the imperial other where she scrutinizes British domestic life and women's conditions in two chapters entitled, "The English Lady" and "English Marriage and Domestic Life". Like Ragaviah and Bhore, this Bengali woman traveller appreciates the virtues of British women, and presents persuasive arguments to convince readers that the imperial female could be a model for emulation.

Das conveys her endorsement of English women in the laudatory portrait of a multitasking female who works both within the home and outside. As she points out the English do not divide their homes into private and public spaces; hence, women have to supervise all aspects of the home. The traveller enumerates female responsibilities as follows:

The man is the head of the household, no doubt, but the wife is literally the queen. The houses here do not have 'outer' and 'inner' divisions as they do in India; so, the woman takes care of all sections and even entertains guests. She looks after every important aspect of the household like keeping an eye on all the servants and maintaining accounts of income and expenditure. Women in

most households do their own work from washing clothes to rearing children because keeping maidservants is not easy, and moreover, it is very expensive to get work done by outside people. (75)

Women are presented as more capable than their Indian counterparts. Das implies that English women are more capable than their Indian counterparts because “the men take charge of earning money only; the rest of the household is under the charge of the women” (75). The English females are capable of taking care of every aspect of the home including the chores Indian women do not take charge of. Das writes English women “even entertain[s] guests” (75), implying with her qualifier “even” that Indian women are not burdened with this chore. In Das’s portrayal, English women are presented as hard-working in her image of women who “do their own work” and are also thrifty as they try to not spend money by employing “maidservants” or “outside people” to do household chores such as laundry.

More importantly, women are not confined to domestic sphere, and they are prominent in professional fields. In addition to their “feminine jobs” (75), the travel writer’s phrase for household management, she notices that:

the English woman runs shops, works as clerks, teaches in schools, writes books and articles in newspapers, delivers lectures at seminars and gatherings, etc. and they perform these ‘male jobs’ very efficiently. (75)

In pointing out women’s contribution to society in public and private spheres, Das produces a strong articulation of women’s rights and empowerment. She attributes the development of female capability to the different opportunities offered to British women. Education and social mobility are cited as two major factors in imperial women’s capacity building. The traveller notes with great pleasure that there are many educational institutions for female students. Her excitement prompts her to

digress from the objective tone that she maintains elsewhere in the travelogue, to include subjective and emotional interjections such as “I cannot express the delight I feel in my heart when I see groups of girls going to school like the boys and young women going to college like the young men” (76). Das reinforces the value English society places on female education by informing readers that parents spend equally on the education of sons and daughters. Women begin their education from the age of six and continue studying till they are twenty or even twenty-five; they even undertake tertiary education and become scholars.<sup>68</sup>

The intensity of her feelings can be apprehended from her decision to abandon prose and resort to verse that she appends to this chapter. In the poem, she urges Indian women to come to Europe and see the independent and free lives of German, French and British women. There is also a strong exhortation to come to England, “So I say, rise and proceed” to “unleash the chain” and “cut off the shackles” (83-85).

The other facilitating aspect for social improvement is freedom in social interaction. Like most travellers from colonial India, Das is impressed by the social liberty given to women to mix with people outside the family. Women’s appearance in public spaces and social gatherings was a novelty for Indian travellers; Hans Harder, thus, notes that female travellers from Bengal used to give “increased attention” to “local women’s situation, habits visibility” when they travelled (16-17). This theme is also given prominence by the writer of *A Bengali Lady in England* because she often draws attention to the fact that women are present in shops, parks, streets and schools without being confined to the inner quarter of the home.

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<sup>68</sup> Das continued to promote the importance of education in essays such as “Sikkhita Nari” (“Educated Woman”), “Sikkhita Nari Protibader Utor” (“Reply to the Critique of Educated Woman”) and “Srilok o Purosh” (“Women and Men”) when she returned to India. See Chakraborty and Chakraborty.

The traveller scaffolds her demand for women's social circulation with arguments that English women are not morally compromised by freely mixing with men. She categorically states that metropolitan females are truly modest and honourable women because their chastity and morality have been tested. She writes that they can claim to be truly chaste because:

... anyone can claim to be a virgin by never having seen a man's face or never having mixed with him. But those who interact with men and move around equally with them and yet do not lose their precious virtue are truly admirable.  
(81)

Das's defence of the British woman shows a liberal and broad outlook. She reconfigures notions of modesty with her view on "loose morals" and "chastity", given below:

Many people in our country consider most English women to have loose morals. This is because they move around independently in streets and gardens and do not bend and cover their faces when they see men. People will get over this wrong notion if they come here. If English women did not have the fear of God, England would not have developed so much or made a name for herself... all civilized and developed nations believe chastity to be the prime religion of women. (81)

Das is suggesting that female chastity is spiritual and not something physical. It is a robust assertion of female strength in that women can be self-disciplined and morally strong to withstand temptation and safeguard their own modesty. Besides assuaging fears of social transgression and moral laxity, she is critiquing Indian patriarchy for their nationalist and prejudiced cultural stereotyping of the memsahib, that is to say, English women living in India. Conservative members of Indian society, even those

among the social reformers, were apprehensive of Indian women surrendering to the influence of memsahibs, often stereotyped European females who were indolent and neglected housework. In this passage she is arguing for more than social emancipation since she is linking women's rights to national development. Despite her admiration for British women and attempt to counter racial prejudices, she is conflicted about the memsahib whom she categorizes as a separate group and not similar to the hardworking women she witnesses in England. About the English women in India, she writes, "they don't bother to do any work" and so all they do "is to eat, dress, gossip, indulge in music and go for outings" (82).

Although critics consider Das's thematization of women's education and social freedom as a sign of her of feminism (Nupur Chaudhuri; Sanchayita Paul Chakraborty and Dhritiman Chakraborty; and Sukla Chatterjee among others), it must be noted that the idea of education as a means for social improvement was a common theme shared by both female and male travellers. For instance, Behramji Malabari, the Parsi reformer and journalist, and Trailakanyath Mukharji, the Bengali civil service officer and writer, were vociferous in demanding female education and social allowances for women to come out of purdah.<sup>69</sup>

The hegemony of Indian colonial notions of female education persists in Das's representations. She foregrounds a particular type of learning that was deemed acceptable by Indian patriarchy in her image of girls studying in schools. So, she writes, that besides academic subjects, girls learned "sewing, knitting, music, gymnastics and sometimes even cooking" (77), and most of them are skilled in reading, writing, playing the piano, dressmaking and housework (77). In this way,

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<sup>69</sup>In *A Visit to Europe*, T.N. Mukharji writes "Women must be fully emancipated," while B.M. Malabari mentions that importance of female education to produce enlightened mothers in his travelogue *A Pilgrim's Ramblings*.



Das is supporting the colonial view of feminine learning, that is also endorsed by Mary Bhore in her monograph

The writer of *A Bengali Lady in England*, however, shifts from the position of female complicity in male dominated reforms in her articulation of a more direct female-centred opinion. The radicalism which Sanchayita Paul Chakraborty and Dhritiman Chakraborty<sup>70</sup>, and Sukla Chatterjee<sup>71</sup> locate in Das is manifest in the unconventional aspiration for gender neutral education. The traveller does not accept the narrow and limited curriculum of feminine learning. In her account of female education, she interweaves details of women studying in higher education and approaches a radical stance in her demand of equal education for men and women as opposed to limited curriculum of female learning. First, she introduces the idea of women pursuing higher studies; then she underscores the fact that “[i]n London University, women go to the same college as men, study under the same professor, pass the same examination and earn the same degree” (76).

Das’s depiction of English women and female education evokes critical attention because she subtly embedded proto-feminist aspirations in these images. The repetition of “same” underscores a radical desire to fracture gender divisions and claim equality for women. Finally, Das makes a strong feminist assertion in the implication that women can surpass men when she writes:

Nowadays, women are not afraid or ashamed to appear in the most difficult examinations which even some men fear and they also qualify in them (78).

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<sup>70</sup> In their article on Bengali women’s writing, Chakraborty and Chakraborty state that Krishnabhabini’s appeal for gender equality, consensual marriage and freedom made her radical in her context (31).

<sup>71</sup> S. Chatterjee writes that Krishnabhabini Das’s gaze was nationalist-cum-feminist (6).

She argues that the courage to compete indicates equality of men and women. To support her claim she cites the progress of women in North America where they have become judges. She concedes that in Britain, women's career choices are limited to becoming doctors or professors, but she hopes that female participation in different professions will keep expanding.

The Bengali traveller's appreciation of women's scholarship is an expression of her female consciousness and burgeoning awareness of women's rights and needs. It contrasts starkly with Trailakanyath Mukharji's attitude to women's higher studies. Although he represents himself as a progressive modern man who believes in women's freedom and education, he is unable to countenance female academic talents. His description of the learned scholarly woman as "such women are usually very stiff and they are nick-named 'Blue stockings'" betrays his inherent prejudice (42).<sup>72</sup> Das's presentation of women with degrees subverts the hegemony of patriarchal views of women and serves as a rejoinder to satirical portraits of educated women in Bengali prose and drama.

#### *Companionate Marriage and Family Life*

Another strand of Das's feminist perspective lies in her treatment of family life in the travelogue. She manipulates the performativity of a feminine persona to broach a feminist critique of Indian patriarchal society by writing on the gendered topic of home. On the one hand, she conforms to gender expectations in focusing on domesticity and marriage – themes deemed suitable and appropriate for women travellers. But within her report on the English home, she inserts a comparison with Indian homes to expose gender politics in her own society. Thus, the depiction of English social mores in the chapter "Marriage and Domestic Life" functions on two

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<sup>72</sup>He reserves his praise in positive images of devoted wives and mothers doing needlework.

levels: a) to praise the British model, and b) to expose deficits in Indian society. She emphasizes the superior position English women enjoy in her statement that “the man is the head of the household, no doubt, but the wife is literary the queen” (75), implying thereby the centrality of the wife in a home can facilitate the creation of happy and loving families. Male travellers such as Shibnath Shastri<sup>73</sup> and Rabindranath Tagore<sup>74</sup> had also written glowing accounts of such model homes, but without an analysis of the social support for women.

Das’s depiction of English marriage mirrors the idea of companionate marriage promoted by social reformers. According to this reconfiguration of marriage, friendship and intimacy defined marital relationships and couples shared responsibilities of running households. Ghulam Murshid, Judith Walsh and Tanika Sarkar have pointed out that the demand for an educated helpmeet, socialized and cultured in the same ethos as the modern colonial, man paved the way for women’s education, social mobility and some autonomy.

The sharing of responsibility and the closeness between husband and wife that the traveller finds in England were the ideals of the reconfigured view of marriage.<sup>75</sup> The traveller is wistful about the better condition of the English wife, and her travelogue contains a yearning for the kind of mutuality in conjugal lives she observes in England. Indian colonial women’s admiration for the close partnership they see in

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<sup>73</sup> In *Englander Diary*, Shastri presents the innocent and blissful image of Mrs. Hunt and her daughter greeting Mr. Hunt when he returns home (138).

<sup>74</sup> In the “Thirteenth Letter”, Tagore depicts in detail the efforts of Mrs. K and her daughters in ensuring a hospitable and friendly home (*Letters from a Sojourner in Europe*).

<sup>75</sup> In her article “Women’s Emancipation Through Education”, Asha I. Nayeem writes that there was a “demand” for educated wives in the second half of the nineteenth century. Wives had to be competent and skilled because new employment patterns meant couples lived far from the joint family and the wife would have to manage the household and raise a family on her own (38).

British marriages is also inscribed in Ragaviah's *Pictures of England* and Mary Bhore's *Some Impressions of England*<sup>76</sup>.

In her praise of courtship and romance that couples in England enjoy, Das aligns herself with the progressive social reformers who wanted to modernize Indian marriages by introducing romantic love in the equation. Walsh writes that in colonial Indian aspirations, "'love' was part of the full panoply of colonial modernity" (87). The scholar adds that young Indian men wanted to find love along with literacy and some education in their wives.<sup>77</sup> One can locate the influence of the new cultural shift towards affection and emotionality in Das's travelogue. She paints a sentimental image of a happy married couple sharing responsibilities and working together in the following context:

Truly speaking, the English married life seems very happy and wonderful to us. During happy times, both husband and wife enjoy on equal terms and again, suffer together during hard times. (99).

The traveller frames the account of English marriages in a comparative analysis to highlight the lacks in Indian society. The absence of closeness between husband and wife yields an unhappy scenario in India. In Indian homes, the wife and husband do not spend time together as the husband remains in the drawing room or goes out, while the wife is "cloistered" (99) in the inner quarter, busy with household chores (99). The traveller comments that neither partner knows "how to behave" (99). As a result, Das concludes, "Very few people in our country understand the actual relationship between husband and wife" (99).

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<sup>76</sup> Ragaviah observes that "Married life in England is like the mixture of milk and water." (6)

<sup>77</sup> Walsh writes that Western-influenced and English-educated young Indian men challenged traditional views of marriage in their desire for "more intimate, dyadic relationship" (87) of husband and wife than the joint family structure which often kept husband and wife separate.

In keeping with her attempt to deconstruct social conditions, she identifies the causes in her statement:

Of course, I cannot blame them too much—superstitions, bad customs, child marriage and the undesirable behaviour of the parents towards their children are the root causes for all unhappiness. (99)

Das shifts the blame to general social conditions rather than patriarchy, even though she implies male domination in her description of the wife living in fear “scared of the *babu*”, and sacrificing herself since she “devotes all her energy to ensuring he eats good food and lives in comfort and happiness” (99). This is careful manoeuvring so that, she can convey the misery of Indian wives without offending anyone or defying patriarchal hegemony. In the chapter titled “Daily Life”, when she portrays English family life, she notes with regret that in India, “there is no rule of having meals together where the family members talk among themselves, enjoy the company of others and relax” (144). Consequently, there is no provision for the wife to eat properly as food and time are dedicated for male needs. A dismal image is created in the typical scenario of:

There [India], the *babu* has a different kind of meal, the lady of the house satiates her hunger by secretly eating inside the house [inner quarter]: the grown-up boys finish their meals hurriedly and at a separate time, the women have to remain satisfied with whatever is allotted to them and the small children are not even counted in this list. (144)

Here the traveller is linking the neglect of women and their needs with the deficits in family life. The picture of “the lady of the house” confined to inner recesses of the home with leftovers rather than a proper meal is a harsh reminder of gender inequality. Such remarks consolidate Das’s feminist discourse.

Das's gendered perspective on companionate marriage emerges from her focus on women's needs and rights in marriages. The wife's centrality in the marriage is presented in her remarks that the English husband "tries to make his wife as happy as possible" and seeks her counsel (99). In return, the wife who "does not think of the husband as her lord" will love and try to make him happy. The wife can become a true partner because the couple "share happiness and pain in equal terms, pray to God together, and the wife helps the husband on many occasions" (98). This contrast with male travellers such as Trailakanyath Mukharji who highlighted English woman's support for her husband in his observations that an English wife assumes "far greater responsibility than they do here" (157) and is "a great help to her husband in travelling" (158).

The traveller inserts her feminist agenda in pointing out British women's rights and privileges. Das suggests that segregation of sexes is a major deterrent in forming happy households in India. Since women are cloistered within the inner quarters, there is no provision for men and women, especially husband and wives, but also brothers and sisters and mothers and sons, to develop cross-gender understanding and closeness. The drawback of segregation was also felt by Mahdi Hassan Khan who realized the benefit of allowing all family members to mix freely. After seeing English families, he wrote that the Indian custom of separating boys from their mothers and sisters destroy intimacy and empathy. He, too, noted that in England "the whole family enjoy the talk, and opinions are freely expressed" (53). In contrast, Indian homes are less cohesive and close, for he explains:

We no doubt love each other, but we do not express it in their warm and impressive way. Our mothers and sisters kiss us only when we are under fourteen years of age; after that when we meet them, they take our heads with

their arms and pass their hands over them, then pat them on our cheeks and crack their fingers, here the exhibition of their affection stops. (53)

Although the official from Hyderabad seems to apprehend that the marginalization of women contributes to a lack of warmth and affection in Indian homes, he does not propose any means of rectifying the situation. Female travellers, including Das and Bhore, however, are more perceptive in their analysis and they would suggest ways of improving the situation, which they would say begins by giving women freedom and education.

Attached to the idea of companionate marriage is the transformation of family structure in India. If the dyadic relationship of husband and wife forms the family core, there is the concomitant privileging of the nuclear family. For the Bengali traveller, companionate marriage's merit lies in the absence of coercion or interference from parents and others. Having introduced the concept of individual autonomy, Das extends it to women after they are married. She believes that the principle of showing respect to individuals should operate in the family between husband and wife and between parents and children.

Das's radical stance in her social criticism is further revealed in her arguments for romantic or non-arranged marriages and nuclear families. She makes a connection between the freedom to choose one's own spouse with ideas of personal liberty. The appeal of self-determination also prompts her to prefer nuclear families, as opposed to the traditional extended or joint families prevalent in India. In this issue also, she diverges from male travellers. Both Trailakanyath Mukharji and Behramji Malabari were uneasy with the notion of more independent family lives. Mukharji finds it unnatural that English children fly the nest and that parents push out grown up children. He writes with pride:

We do not fly from the parental nest. We bring our wives to the old family nets. When we go to marry, our mothers ask us- “where are you going, my son?” We answer- “to fetch a servant for you, mother.” This is form. (177)

In acknowledging that this is the tradition, he seems to be endorsing the joint family structure. Malabari is critical of English mothers who let nurses look after their children, indicating that he prefers to see women in traditional roles.

In spite of her praise for English family life and marriage, Das remains a pragmatist who is not blinded by its advantages. She is committed to authenticity and so informs readers that English marital system is not perfect and divorces do take place in the country. However, in the acknowledgment that there are “more cases of divorce here compared to other countries” (99), she touches on divorce rights that both men and women have in England. While husbands in India can desert their wives, women there have to endure torture and adultery because “filing a case against him [ the husband] is a very shameful and despicable act” (100). Once again, social conventions work to confine and oppress Indian women.

In addition, Das admits that despite the advantages of a nuclear family one negative consequence is that this “arrangement also makes people here turn selfish” (102). She realizes that some people end up thinking about themselves and ignoring their relatives in need. But, on the whole, she concludes that there are fewer domestic quarrels and relationships “remain cordial almost lifelong” under the nuclear family arrangement (100).

Das’s analytical framework also ensures that she is not presenting an idealized view of British women and marriages. Unlike the valorisation of British women by J Ragaviah and Bhore, the Bengali traveller exposes the faults and weaknesses of the imperial other. Despite their education and industriousness, the women of the



metropole are found to be vain, selfish and even manipulative. In her praise, she had countered stereotypes of the idleness and frivolity associated with memsahibs, now in her critical evaluation she opposes the received idea that English women are *apsaras* or celestial nymphs (77). Das refutes such projections of fairy-like beauty with the following revelation:

...after observing their faces and complexion closely for some time, we find that the shape of their bodies is not pleasant and lacks the tenderness desirable in a woman...On many occasions, their beauty is only external and pertains to their clothes and manner of dressing. (77-78)

Das's reaction is grounded in her colonial subjectivity. By objectifying the body of the imperial other she is reversing the direction of the colonial gaze. First, she is reversing the gaze in objectifying the body of the imperial other; secondly, she is undercutting the beauty of the other for being different. She betrays her racial prejudice in preferring the appearance of Indian women in her declaration, "If Indian were fairer in complexion and dressed judiciously, probably they would be more charming than the beautiful English women" (78).

Her criticism of English women centres around their appearance and the visible signs of their cultural values. Das criticizes metropolitan women for their inordinate love of fashion. The traveller is irked by the "gorgeous way women love to dress" (78) because it shows their superficiality and frivolity in this desire to "show off their wealth by decking themselves up" (78). The proclivity for fashion also includes modification and alteration of the body, which invokes further censure from the Bengali voyager. She denounces the "corsets, crinoline and many other things "because they make it "impossible to determine who is truly pretty and who isn't." (78). Das considers these fashion accessories unacceptable because they distort truth

and deceive viewers. The use of embellishments such as corsets disguise the true appearance of women, and expensive clothes often blur class distinction and create confusion.

Das's moral indignation extends to the personality of English women. While she regards them as very competent and accomplished, she compares their nature unfavourably with the self-sacrificing generous Indian woman<sup>78</sup>. The lack of humility and the apathy to guests shock her. As she states:

The English women are not humble or welcoming. They do not know how to speak politely to other people and if any guests arrive at their house, they do not set aside their own food like Indian women and become anxious to serve food to the guest. (80)

She also finds fault with their social independence. Young women not staying home and forsaking the company of elders to go to public places like "streets, gardens, theatres and other places where lots of men assemble" (80) are viewed as abusing social freedom. Das's censure is implied in her description that unmarried women display "their beauty and other attributes" (80) to attract the opposite sex. Despite finding the idea of courtship and romance appealing, she seems to be uneasy with English women's assertive role in finding a husband. Though she concedes they do not "have any evil intention in their hearts" (80), she criticizes the behaviour of young women searching for husbands. There is her witty analogy where she compares English ladies trying to ensnare men to fishermen casting their nets to catch fish (80-81).

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<sup>78</sup> Tanika Sarkar mentions that in Indian colonial constructions of the Indian woman, "Gandhi and many other nationalist leaders clung to the image of the self-sacrificing, self-abnegating mother, nurturing and modest". (289)

Das presents an ambivalent response to the British women. She writes about them mixing admiration and approbation. There is a similar equivocation in her commentary on Britain which Harder regards as an indication of a balanced evaluation. He writes that the traveller's "capacity to balance her assessment" signifies "the author's ability not to be swept away by her adoration of British society" ("Female Mobility" 6). The contradictions in attitude to British society in general and its women in particular are not limited to Das. One finds a similar wavering in Atiya Fyzee whose work will be analysed next. Such ambivalences stem from the competing discourses of feminism and nationalism. To mitigate threats of cultural influence and gender transgression in their fulsome praise of British women, both travellers assert nationalist perspectives that conform to gendered expectations. In other words, these two travellers adhere to some nationalist views on women's issues in their overall assessments. They encode feminist views and opinions, but refrain from being too vocal or assertive in their demands for female empowerment.

Fyzee's travelogue *A Time of Education* (1921) continues the trajectory of a Europhiliac discourse to an extent, as she is committed to promoting English women and their social condition as a possible model for Indian readers. Since Fyzee's travel narrative is in the form of a diary rather than an ethnographic study, she does not produce a report on women, but conveys her attitude through passing remarks and vignettes of her visit. The traveller is generous in her praise of fellow students at Maria Grey College whom she describes as "upright, disciplined and truly worthy creatures" (14 December 1906 163).

The qualities which attract her attention are hard-work and competence. From teachers and students to servants, she is constantly amazed by the efficiency and industriousness of the women she comes across. After meeting Miss Firth's friends,

one of whom runs a school, the traveller declares “[t]hese people are so capable and active” (16 October 1906 145). In fact, she is constantly amazed by their capability whether it is in terms of teaching or taking care of the home.

A feminist consciousness underlines Fyzee’s determination to showcase the energy and activities of imperial women. In the entry of September 25, 1906, she writes that the girls continue to be busy even after classes are over:

After college these fiendishly clever girls play the game of hockey. There is a special club for sports. Then they do gardening. They work right along gardeners. (131)

The image of women working and playing outside the inner quarters is a novelty for Fyzee’s readers as it presents a stark contrast to the passive and secluded lives of many women in India, especially Muslim ones. Her choice of the phrase “fiendishly clever” conveys both her astonishment and admiration.

Fyzee draws attention to British women’s accomplishment as a way of inspiring her readers to develop themselves. When she visits the home of Miss Reese, the headmistress of Maria Grey College, the traveller notes with surprise, “I saw a strange sight, the way they live. Not one servant.” (10 October 1906 140). She is intrigued that the sisters who live here do all the work ‘themselves...these sisters do everything’ (140).

Besides hard work, Fyzee praises the organizational skills of English women. She uses the word “praiseworthy” a number of times to capture the style and grace with which women organize rooms and carry out tasks. To describe the neat and pleasing way rooms in a charity home or shelter have decorated, she writes: “these people are praiseworthy in that each one has decorated such small rooms so beautifully” (1 December 1906 159). The word “praiseworthy” is also used to express

her appreciation of a well -arranged function “the praiseworthy way they had arranged things” (207) when she goes to visit a school on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1907.

The admiration for English women’s organizational ability extends to their thrift as well. Fyzee discloses to her readers that with careful management of resources, imperial women are able to acquire an education and also live well. She is impressed by Miss Baker whom she labels, “a poor girl,” for her initiative in asking money from a wealthy aunt to study and promising to repay the loan (159). In addition, she is surprised to find that even an indigent woman like Miss Baker has decorated her room with flowers “to gladden the heart” (159), suggesting that imperial women value beauty and are aesthetic in addition to being practical.

#### *Female Education*

Since Fyzee had gone to England to pursue a degree in teacher’s training, education would naturally form a central theme of her travelogue. Like the other travellers discussed in this chapter, the educational advances of imperial women are highlighted and deployed to inspire and promote female learning. Seeing St. Paul’s Girls’ School, where more than two hundred girls studied under twelve to fifteen lady teachers” (25 July 1907 207), she expresses a desire for a similar school in her country:

If such an educational institution were to be established in India, then scores of girls could take advantage of it and become accomplished. God knows when that day will come when we see them educated well with our own eyes. The manner of education in Europe is exceptional. (207)

In her vision for Indian women she places education as a goal, but she also realizes the obstacles to be faced in her pessimism that it will take a long time before girls can have a school such as St. Paul’s.

Being a college student, Fyzee had the opportunity to interact with women in academia. Therefore, she refers to female lecturers who are “extremely knowledgeable” (127). She paints a picture of women engaged in learning with the lists of lectures she had attended on botany, geometry, geography, astronomy and history, along with her tasks of carrying out scientific experiments. The theme is expanded further with references to women’s participation in other educational institutions such as University College where “three hundred girls study” (194), the Froebel Institute, headed by a female principal Miss Lawrence (195), and St. Paul’s Girls’ School (207). In the projection of female educational achievements, Fyzee also includes an Indian presence with her mention of fellow students Miss Das and Mrs. Mitter, as well as her remark “Whichever educational institute I go to, I always finds some or other Indian girl” (195).

The travelogue of a student of higher education raises expectations of a scholarly treatment of the theme of female education. Though Fyzee mentions her academic life in terms of examination, giving lessons to children in practice classes and doing experiments, the text does not focus on scholarly or academic accomplishments. This discrepancy is noticeable in the choice of details she selects to describe the teachers and students. When she visits the Reese sisters, she dwells on their painting and embroidery (140), rather than on the intellectual merit which led to one of the sisters becoming a headmistress. Similarly, when she introduces Miss Baker, her fellow student, she gives emphasis to a non-academic talent of interior decoration. An exception occurs in her depiction of Miss Firth’s ability to converse with the imposing Mr. Badshah, “who is such a knowledgeable, intelligent and clever person” (142). The English student’s talent is added as an afterthought in the comment, “she is also knowledgeable” (142). This may be read as a faint attempt to

establish gender parity; the focus, however, seems to be on female conversational skill which was a goal of social reform initiatives for constructing culturally refined women.

Fyzee's reluctance to elaborate on academic life and women's scholarly achievements could be attributed to a number of reasons. She may have wanted her text to appeal to lay readers who would not be able to relate to mere academic discourse. Perhaps a heavy ponderous academic treatise would not blend with her informal conversational style.

In her discussion on Fyzee's travelogue, Claire Chambers finds the writer's tone to be often "frivolous and hyperbolic" (54), while others describe it as "impressionistic and colourful" (*Making Britain* n.d.: n.pag). Chambers explains that such a style with its refusal of seriousness" and "archness" (54) is a manifestation of modernism: "a South Asian version of the middlebrow modernism" (54). Nonetheless, the discrepancy between her own academic goal and the light-hearted or "frivolous" style (Chambers 54) raises questions about her motives. The entry of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1906 is unusual because here she admits to an ambition for higher studies when she writes with confidence:

I am emboldened by what I have learned here in a fortnight to say that, if I go to India right now, I can open a small school. After staying two years, if God wills, then I will obtain full knowledge of the requisites for higher education. For education at a high level if only I could reveal fully thoughts on the foundation on which this college is run. (134)

It is possible that she resorted to a feminine posturing to retain her femininity in the public space of the women's journal. A feminine style is clearly discernible in the diffident tone that the traveller utilizes<sup>79</sup>.

Once when the traveller was asked to be a discussant of talk given at Caxton Hall, she writes that she "flatly refused" because she felt nervous at the scholarly gathering. Later when everyone insists that she presents the next paper, she assumes a coyness in "Alas, how, I was caught unawares" and protests with modesty, "I don't know what will happen to me" (26 January 1906 173). Chambers sees the protestations as a gendered way of writing. The recurrence of a feminine style in women's travel writing has been acknowledged by scholars including Susan Bassnett and Sara Mills, who point out that women travel writers adopt a diffident tone and often circumscribe their topics to acceptable feminine issues.

In the case of Fyzee, the hegemony of gender conventions keeps surfacing in her style and themes including education. Another compelling reason could be the hegemony of patriarchy in gender constructions. While a modicum of learning was hailed as beneficial, male reformers had strong reservations about higher education that could "denationalize" or "masculinize" women.<sup>80</sup> An anxiety that circulated in Indian society, even among social reformers, was the transnational threat of educated women transforming into "bibis", a pejorative term for idle and vain foreign ladies. There was concern that educated women would have neglected housework<sup>81</sup>. This

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<sup>79</sup> Carl Thompson remarks that women often adopted diffident and emotional tones as well as a fragmentary style in keeping with gendered differences in travel writing (*Travel Writing*).

<sup>80</sup> Judith Walsh and Tim Allender have both cited Keshab Sen's opposition to advanced education. Maroona Murmu and Meredith Borthwick also refer to apprehensions over formal education (Murmu 83; Borthwick 97).

<sup>81</sup> Judith Walsh mentions the fear of domestic Armageddon if women take up novel reading and wool knitting and domestic manuals blamed higher education for women's neglect of domesticity (83).



may have motivated Fyzee to highlight domestic skills of scholarly women and circumscribe her representation of education to socially approved female learning.

Fyzee's sustained interest in homes was a manifestation of the larger theme of female education, which was to impart social training to facilitate women's competence in their traditional roles. In her study of the diary of Nazr Sajjad Hyder, an elite Muslim woman of Punjab, Asiya Alam explains the link between reformist efforts and women's education, a theme often dealt with in Urdu women's magazines such as *Tahzib-e Niswan*, in which Fyzee's travel diary entries were also published. According to the critic, female learning was aimed at developing values of taste and cleanliness (87). Hence, Fyzee always observes and reports on the beauty and cleanliness of homes in her travel. Scholarly women such as students and teachers are framed within domestic setting, and the housekeeping skills of Miss Reese and Miss Baker connect learning to efficient households<sup>82</sup>.

Fyzee is well aware of the difficulties of advocating for education without compromising nationalist sentiments and gender restrictions. She, thus, remarks on the challenge of instilling "English education while keeping our Indian way" (26 January 1906 173) after listening to a Mr. Morison's<sup>83</sup> paper on English education and Indian women. Fyzee's incorporation of social values and features, which comply with the ideals of Indian social reform movements, demonstrate that she is braiding women's education with nationalist goals to strike a balance.

### Women in Different Spheres

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<sup>82</sup> Alam finds a similar inclination in the diarist Nazr who comments on the interior decors of places she visits because women's ability to create comfortable and beautiful homes was a component of sharafat, ideals of domesticity and social behaviour.

<sup>83</sup> Theodore Morison (1863-1936) was a professor of English at the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh who later became its principal.

Like Das, Fyzee deftly inserts images of female autonomy and female learning in her travel narrative. However, she is less direct than the Bengali housewife since she does not explicitly state the need for higher education or employment. Nonetheless, the Bombay student presents a greater range of women's professional and academic achievements than the other travellers in my corpus of travel narratives. Fyzee embeds this theme of female progress in her passing references to the diverse women she met. She conveys first-hand and \ personal experience of professional women in her vignettes. Apart from teachers, she presents women in other fields such as Miss Helen Webb, MB(London), "a lady doctor" (130), a lady editor and a woman photographer from the journal *Lady's Pictorial* (132, 135, 137), and several female musicians including singers and pianists. There is also an indirect reference to Marianne North, an early woman traveller, in Fyzee's description of the paintings in the exhibition hall of Cambridge Gardens. She writes that this woman had "travelled in America, Australia, India, and Africa and sketched all kinds of natural flora of those countries" (184).

In an interesting divergence from other travellers, she records the presence of the new working woman in London. This is noteworthy for as Elizabeth Evans has pointed out that often Indian women travellers such as Pandita Ramabai, Cornelia Sorabji and Sarojini Naidu never mentioned the figure of public women in their memoirs. Evans attributes the absence to fear of social transgression in admitting that they moved around London; she concludes, female travellers may have "feared alienating their readers, and thus, their hopes for reform if they too openly displayed their knowledge of London's public life" (*Threshold Modernism* 191). Fyzee, too, does not write of fallen women or scandalous figures, though she mentions the modern woman working in shops and offices. Hence, she notes with

interest the “[s]cores of girls working in big shops make a living in this way” (4 April 1907 186). She is intrigued by the spectacle of women dressing “in fine clothes” and posing so that “customers fully appreciate the clothes” and will be tempted to buy (186). She also mentions meeting a lady secretary at the studio of Edward Hughes (187). In this way, she subtly encodes occupational opportunities for women and indicates signs of the financial empowerment of women.

In addition, Fyzee confidently portrays her experience of London entertainment and writes of the musicians she saw. In a move reminiscent of British memsahibs’ representations of Indian nautch girls, which “in its discursive writings reveal mixed feelings of fascination and revulsion” (I. Sen 45), the Muslim traveller demonstrated both appreciation and hostility. In spite of her admiration for the imperial other, Fyzee is not blind to shortcomings. She can be compared to Das in her attempt to balance the Europhiliac discourse with Europhobic discourse. For example, when the traveller writes of famous musicians, she acknowledges the talents of Clara Butt the singer, the harpist from Sweden, and others. At the same time, she also objectifies them as women of the other race, betraying an unease. It should be mentioned, however, that the traveller does not suggest that singers or musicians are immoral or decadent.

The compulsion to objectify the body of the English woman is embedded in a desire to assert scopic mastery and to reverse colonial gaze. Indian female travellers marshalled the White woman’s body to inscribe differences in ways comparable to European depictions of native bodies. In the case of Fyzee, a voyeurism is exposed in her account of a fancy- dress ball at the college. In her choice of details, the traveller focuses on English people’s physique when she reduces the event to “a fete of beautiful outfits” (26 January 1906 174). She appears to be scrutinizing the physical

features of the dancers in her observation that “truly their bodies are like steel” and notes that “men and women are so mindful of exercise” (174).

There are several other references to bodies, perhaps in an attempt to fracture the English woman into smaller parts. In her descriptions of musicians, she shifts attention from musical talent to the physique of the performer. For instance, in describing a famous harpist from Sweden, Fyzee emphasizes the dress, an empire gown “a snake-like dress” which gives “full proof of their shapely bodies” (198). The famous singer Clara Butt is constricted to a “delicate waist” (13 October 1906 143), which evokes a line of poetry, indicating a sensualisation of English bodies.

Moreover, the traveller makes scathing comments on British women’s corsets. Though Fyzee notes the sensual beauty of Clara Butt’s “delicate waist” (143), she undermines the effect with the criticism that this is induced by an artificial sculpting of the body. She even castigates English women for the torture they undergo for “the sake of appearance”, implying that English women are vain and shallow. She compares the corset to binding the body and constricting oneself. In the critical edition of Fyzee’s text, *Atiya’s Journeys*, Siobhan Lambert-Hurley interpret this assessment of female fashion as a forerunner to “later feminist attacks on the corset as a symbol of patriarchal oppression” (89). She also locates in this negative appraisal an early version of the Islamic trend to cite Western society’s devaluation of women’s bodies into sex objects in defending the hijab (89). Fyzee may not have been thinking that far ahead, and was probably countering the Orientalist gaze on veiled or secluded women by reversing her gaze on Western women.

Similar to the Bengali Das, Fyzee often finds women she meets rather unfeminine. Consequently, she describes Miss Billington, the writer of *Women in India*, as “such a masculine woman, but so charming” (19 September 1906 127).

Then she overlooks Clara Butt's singing and focuses instead on the singer's looks, which she finds unappealing and remarks Butt was a "a very ugly woman" (143).

The inability or refusal to appreciate racial difference forms a link between Das' s travelogue and the Bombay student's narrative. Both women disclose anxiety in their encounter with English female bodies. A disparaging view of Western women is inserted in Fyzee's description:

I have become extremely disgusted by the decking up of the ladies here, especially that which I have seen on Regent Street and Bond Street. Why do they make themselves up in this way? I am at a loss. (6 October 1906 139)

Fyzee is also critical of the Western penchant for fashion, and both consider this love of clothes an example of vanity and materialism in Western culture. Yet another link with the Bengali travelogue emerges in the image of consumerism:

In London, West<sup>84</sup> is a place where the shops are filled with choice goods that are so enticing that these women make themselves paupers in the mania for clothes. (139)

Even though Fyzee is derogatory about the emphasis on fashion, she herself appears to take great delight in observing the clothes and jewellery of the women she meets. She constantly judges the appearance and style of others and reports on fashionable dresses, especially empire gowns (7 December 1906 160), and accessories such as the "one-and-a-half-inch -wide necklace of pearls" that a guest of Mrs. Sassoon was wearing at a party (1 December 1906 158). The intrusion of a Europhobic discourse in an otherwise positive depiction of English women indicates a

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<sup>84</sup> Fyzee was probably referring to the West End of London as she mentions Regent Street and Bond Street in the same entry. The editors of *Atiya's Journey*, however, suggest it could be a short form of Westminster (221).

tension between nationalist sentiments and female, if not feminist, appreciation of British social conditions

### Colonial Interrogations of the Imperial Other

While ambivalence mark the portrayal of British women in Das and Fyzee, a stronger assertion of nationalist consciousness in the travelogues of the 1930s renders these later travel texts less Europhiliac. As a result, Durgabati Ghose and Kuttan Nair in their portrayals of imperial others are not concerned with identifying characteristics that could be incorporated in a paradigm for Indian women's development.

The twentieth-century Bengali traveller, Ghose, advances a different trajectory from Bhore and others in undermining the claims made about English ladies. In *the Westward Traveller* (1035), a narrative based on her journey to England as well as Europe, the traveller remarks that England-returned Indians believe that "English women were much more hardworking than our women in India" (47). This instilled in her a desire to learn the vaunted "English habits", but having come to England she realizes that "English women, if they were to work like us, they would never have been able to compete with us" (47). She believes that the apparent superiority of English women can be attributed to two factors— the weather and the family set up. Ghose argues that people are able to work more because England is a cold country. More crucially, living in a nuclear family as opposed to the joint family prevailing in India, English women were able to work more efficiently. In her second point, she seems to concede to English women's efficiency because she is defending Indian women's drawbacks. She blames the social system of joint family and restrictive rituals which hamper household chores.

There is a strong feminist challenge in the reasoning that autonomy to work "according to personal convenience" (48) facilitates greater productivity and

industriousness; whereas always working for the “benefit of others” and “seeking permission to do so from the elders in the family” can hamper efficiency (48).

English women’s capability is also linked to female social freedom and companionate marriage. Since women are able to interact freely with other people, they could accomplish more and not limit themselves to housework. Ghose refers to the absence of “screening” prospective people by husbands and writes that “comprehensive understanding” between husband and wife allows the couple to work and enjoy life (48).

The refusal to be impressed by British women surfaces in Ghose’s vignette of a working woman’s day. The traveller is rather derogatory in her portrayal of the morning rush:

Waking up in the morning, she would hurriedly have a cup of tea, put on a shiny coat on top of the dirty dress she would normally wear, dab rouge on her cheeks and red lipstick on her lips, put on a hat and leave for work. (55)

The choice of words “dirty”, “shiny” “rouge” and “red lipstick” implies an overall unfavourable attitude. Ghose continues in the same deprecatory style in mentioning that the woman goes out with her boyfriend after she returns from work, “dance for the whole night and come home around four in the morning”, does not cook, and lets the man treat her “at some cheap place for dinner” (55). The Bengali woman seems to disapprove of the British woman’s lack of domesticity in going out at night and not cooking.

Here the earlier images of exemplary housewives have been replaced with the representation of a different woman. This portrayal is distinct also in bringing to readers a glimpse of modern working women, which Elizabeth Evans notes is uncommon in colonial Indian women’s travel memoirs. Ghose is perhaps mindful of

the social opprobrium she may face since she includes the coda that she is “narrating” the account given to her by a young man of Kolkata. Another instance of her criticism of English women arises when she sees an “educated mother” cleaning her son’s face by spitting on a handkerchief (47). This prompts her to exclaim:

Even the scavengers and sweepers in our country who are constantly cleaning dirt would never like to clean their children’s faces or their own hands with spit. (47)

Ghose’s presentation of English women veers away from the Europhiliac discourse in the writer’s focus on their shortcomings. In addition, the portrayal of the imperial other is no longer a central preoccupation of the travel narrative.

The lessening of the English woman’s imaginative hold on Indian female travelling subjectivity is also apparent in Kuttan Nair’s travelogue *A Peep at Europe* (1936). The twentieth century traveller from Madras writes of meeting several women without extolling their domestic virtues as wives and mothers. She instead offers views of educated women involved in social and political causes such as Mrs. Lasky, Dorothy Newman and Dr. Maude Royden<sup>85</sup>. Interestingly, Dorothy Newman is introduced as an admirer of Gandhi, who had decorated her room with khadi, and carried a photo of the Indian leader with his autograph. However, once Nair begins to describe her as a capable confident woman despite her disabilities, she spotlights virtues promoted in feminine learning, “With one hand she stitches, plays well on the piano and does all the cooking” (80).

Although the English woman herself is no longer presented as an idealized template for domesticity, the issues of female education and social mobility continue

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<sup>85</sup> These women were social liberals who were actively involved in the feminist movement and also sympathetic to Indian nationalist movement. See Chapter Six for more on them.



to resonate with Kuttan Nair. Thus, she concedes that “in all branches of art and literature, the women of England exert a dominating influence” (81). At the same time, she feels that Indian women are not lagging behind, as she proudly declares:

As an Indian woman, I must confess this made me feel specially happy—for this corresponds to what I believe, is also the case in India to-day, where our women are taking their place side by side with men in every field of activity.

(81)

Nair’s patriotism and desire to promote Indian women’s progress is apparent in this statement. However, a nationalist discourse complicates the response to English women’s progress. While she reports on English women’s contribution to literature and journalism with references to Winifred Holtby, Cicely Hamilton and Vera Brittain<sup>86</sup>, she adds that Indian women are not lagging behind. She writes: “We also want such journals to be run by our women in India” (82). Later she admits that there is only one English journal run by women, “*Stri-Dharma*” (82) and the vernacular papers “lack proper intellectual leadership from our women” (83). Nair discloses that Indian women “still [have] farther to go before we can break free the fetters that bind Indian womanhood” (154). Like the other travellers who preceded her, she considers segregation of sexes or lack of social mobility as a hindrance for women’s development. She argues that purdah and child marriages did not exist in ancient Indian and women had more freedom and rights previously. Nair shares with the earlier voyagers a belief that “free mingling of the sexes in the West... has to be introduced into our country” (145). She believes that the removal of the practice of female seclusion would lead to greater spread of education.

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<sup>86</sup> They were well-known writers and suffragists who wrote about female rights. See Chapter Six for further discussion.

To bolster her arguments on Indian progress, Nair counters the drawbacks inherent in Indian women's social condition with illustrations of Indian superiority. Accordingly, she demonstrates the merits of Indian social customs to argue that Indian traditions have supported a rich and ancient civilization, and can, therefore, remain relevant for the modern world. One example of the positive aspect of Indian culture she offers is the special status accorded to mothers in Indian families, which she elaborates thus:

In spite of the evils of the purdah, child marriage etc, woman at home occupies a place that is seldom hers in any other country. She gets a devotion from her sons and daughters, almost unparalleled anywhere else in the world and she has an important part in all ceremonial functions. This is all due to the very high place given to women in the Hindu religion, and religion is still a vital influence with the masses in our country. (150)

In foregrounding the deference given to women, the traveller is aligning herself with nationalist ideology, which placed women in the inner sphere and made her a carrier of traditions. Hence Nair connects Indian deference and esteem for matriarchs to indigenous social practices including religion.

In Nair's attempt to counter colonial stereotypes of Indian women's backwardness, she cites several examples of great female achievers from ancient philosophers to mathematicians to administrators. She writes that even "from behind the purdah Indian women wrote fine works without the need to seek shelter behind a masculine name as a Mary Evans had to do" (149). Although Hindu women have lost many rights under the colonial system, she mentions that the Nair women of Kerala enjoy many rights from inheriting property, including thrones, divorcing and do not have child marriage or restrictions such as the purdah. As a result, Nair announces;

It is doubtful whether, barring perhaps Soviet Russia, which is more oriental than occidental, our sisters in the west have even to-day after so much of hard fight, the same amount of freedom as the Nair women of Kerala. (152)

In her declaration that Nair women have more rights than the women of the West, the traveller is undermining colonial hegemony. A sly debunking of British superiority is inscribed through the allusion to Soviet Russia. As a result, the treatment of women's social condition is mired in anti-colonial and nationalist themes.

## Conclusion

As travel writers trying to report on the metropolitan centre, Indian colonial women seized on the figure of the British woman as an object of scrutiny. As a result, most of the travellers have inscribed their view of the imperial other in some extent. However, the depictions were often complex and unstable and shows shifts in attitude over time.

Variations in attitude and thematic issues were historically contingent as the cultural receptivity to British women became more restrained with rising nationalist and anti-colonial sentiments. Although the travel narratives in this study span a wide timeframe from 1876 to 1936, there is a common ground in the anchoring trope of the other, the British woman who functions as a marker of Indian women's needs and desires. In utilizing the polarities of Europhiliac and Europhobic discourses to frame their discussions, the female travellers privilege the Western woman as a central pivot for women's condition. The sustained fascination for the imperial other reverberates with postcolonial critics' argument that colonial discourse is centred around deviation and alterity, with their simultaneous poles of attraction and repulsion.

The travellers' wavering between admiration and criticism is, thus, an effect of colonial discourse of the discursive formation of Indian selves. The dialectic of

Europhilia and Europhobia in their travel observations corroborates Meyda Yegenoglu's observations that the ambivalence and splitting of colonial discourse reflected in its fetishistic mode of representation, can be illustrated in conflictual articulations of pleasure and fear, strangeness and familiarity, recognition and refusal of difference (*Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* 28).

In the Indian travel accounts of English women, a Europhiliac discourse is invoked to expose a deficit model of Indian gender conditions. Indeed, Indian colonial women travellers lauded those British qualities which they secretly yearned for—such as freedom in social interaction and opportunities for education. Meanwhile, the Europhobic discourse exposing the flaws of Western women provided a range of differences that consolidated Indian feminine identity. The female travellers highlighted with disparagement the English traits that would offset Indian superiority in a contrastive analysis. Thus, vain, materialistic and sometimes self-centred English women were made into foils for self-sacrificing, spiritual and benevolent Indian women, enshrined in the reconstructed icon of Indian womanhood.

Through a spotlight on feminine virtues, the travel writers projected their own femininity and endorsed social reform movements. Indian colonial women concurred with male travellers in valorising the domestic virtues of imperial women and, thereby, constructing a portrait of an imperial other who resembled the new *bhadramahila* or the new colonial woman recast by social reform projects. Female travellers accepted the male proposition of promoting female education as they realized that formal learning was a path towards self-actualization. Consequently, the women who visited England highlighted educational opportunities through depictions of female students and teachers. At the same time, the motif of education, as defined by male reformers and nationalists, aided the women travellers to secure social

sanction by remaining within the conventions of gendered writing, that is feminine writing.

In this way, the travellers disclose a link with the nationalist social reform ideology. They appear to conform to Partha Chatterjee's proposition that the women's question was resolved through a gender separation of the spheres. In assigning materialism to the West, the travellers are following the colonial binary of the East as the depository of spiritual values and the West as the world of public duties and commerce. Although Das and Fzyee seem to present unbiased pictures in their declaration that their authentic experiences counter stereotypes, these two travellers eventually recede to stereotypes and align with nationalist apprehensions about foreign women. The criticism of English women's inordinate love of fashion and shopping draw their images back into clichés of the memsahib trope.

Women's bodies have always formed sites of contestations in colonial discourse, and this holds true in female travel narratives. Just as the Indian woman's body was used both by colonizers and the colonized to represent India and its traditions and backwardness, so, too, the English woman's body became a synecdoche for England's modernity and development. Colonized Indians invest the symbolic power of Western culture in images of English women. Also the act of viewing and depicting English women was utilized to encode Indian refractions of colonial gaze and the appropriation of metropolitan culture.

Interestingly, in their search for a female model who could embody women's own ambitions and fulfil social demands of gender, the travellers seized the figure of the bourgeois and virtuous English lady, who formed the basis for social reformers' project of recasting Indian women. The dominance of the Victorian ideals of the angel of the home seeps into portrayals of Queen Victoria who is praised for her wifely and

motherly attributes by Ragaviah and Das. It is interesting to note that even the anti-colonial Das has an entire chapter for Queen Victoria and portrays her as a virtuous mother, wife and employer, almost a proper Victorian housewife. From the early travelogue of Ragaviah to Das, and finally to Nair there is complicity with nationalist social reforming ideology in mandating the feminine virtues of domesticity, thrift and modesty. The working-class woman with her greater social freedom and concomitant potential for social transgression is not considered worthy of discussion. The upper-class woman, who is preoccupied with fashion and pleasure-seeking pursuits is also rejected.

In their textual choice to portray bourgeois qualities, colonized travellers show that they were impacted by different positionalities of race, gender and class. Fyzee and Nair, for example, betray religious biases in flaunting the progress and achievements of Muslim and Hindu women respectively. With the rise of anti-colonial nationalism, there was a growing resistance to transnational influences and Ghose and Nair, accordingly, are more critical in their assessments of British women and society.

The polarities of admiration and critique are marshalled to act as foil or counter to the performativity of Indian feminine selves. The focus on conflicting or contradictory characteristics of English women was a strategic deployment of negative and positive polarities to install Indian woman as the preferable woman and to secure for her the privileges she does not enjoy. Indian women's travel narratives thus present complex discursive formations of self and other that parallels the polarities of Europhiliac and Europhobic discourses in Persianate travelogues, indicating that ambivalence is a central feature in the responses of marginalized subjects, Indian women who were doubly oppressed through race and gender.

### CHAPTER THREE FINDING MODERNITY IN ENGLAND

For nineteenth century Indian colonial travellers, England was associated with modernity and progress, as in the case of Satyendranath Tagore (1842-1923)<sup>87</sup> who travelled to England to appear in the Indian Civil Service examination. He was so impressed with what he saw that he repeatedly wrote to his wife of a longing to bring her to England. On one occasion he writes that if she were to make the journey, she would “live in a progressive society” of England and benefit from the education and modernity of metropolitan culture (*Puratani* 58). He adds that a two-year stay in England would be more transformative and educational than twenty-five years in India (*Puratani* 58)<sup>88</sup>. On his return to India, he continued to promote the necessity of travel to England and insisted on the need to experience “a state of society completely different...and far more improved and civilised” (qtd. in Lahiri *Indians in Britain* 24)

Tagore’s equation of England with modernity was fairly typical of his age, one that can be found in Iranian travel writings, too, according to Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi in *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (2001), and Hamid Dabashi in *Reversing the Colonial Gaze: Persian Travelers Abroad* (2021). An “awareness of Europe as the site of a monumental thing called ‘modernity’ to which they were exposed through European colonialism” influenced Asian travel writers who wanted to embrace modernity and reformulate their own self-understandings (Dabashi 2-3). The impact of travels to the West on Indian identities has been examined by Shompa Lahiri in *Indians in Britain: Anglo-Indian*

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<sup>87</sup> Satyendranath Tagore, the elder brother of Poet Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, was not just the first Indian to qualify for the ICS, he was also an “ardent supporter of the upliftment of women” (Murshid *Reluctant Debutante* 67.)

<sup>88</sup> In another letter he writes, “Your body and soul are still dry within the four walls of the zenana, you will find a new world when you come to England” (*Puratani* 49).

*Encounters, Race and Identity 1880-1930* (2000) and by Simonti Sen *Travels to Europe: Self and Other in Bengali Travel Narratives 1870–1910* (2005). Sen has drawn attention to the role of travel in producing modern Indian selves, and she remarks that of the various modular forms derived from the West that went into the shaping of ‘modern’ Bengali/Indian social praxis, ‘travel’ was a major one” (“Emergence of Secular Travel” 4).

This chapter will, therefore, engage with the complicated presentation of modernity in Indian women’s travel writing on England in terms of their performativity of travelling selves. It seeks to unravel the diverse strands of modernity, including enchantment with technology, experiences of urban life, ensuing colonial and gendered adaptations, and reconfigurations of such experiences. Indian travellers’ relationship to London was shaped, thus, by dynamics of modernity since their arrivals and movements through the city offered them the opportunity to experience new modes of transport and, thereby, made it possible for them to witness and participate in the project of modernity. A constitutive part of their gendered appreciation was modernization of domesticity, which captured their imagination and occupies textual space in their narratives.

In what follows, women’s projections of modern selves will be analysed with reference to their attitudes and deployment of modern signifiers in their narratives. The discussion will begin with a brief overview of colonial modernity and then moving on to various articulations of colonial female perspective in the travel narratives of Janakumamah Ragaviah, Krishnabhabini Das, Atiya Fyzee, Durgabati Ghose and Kuttan Nair.



## Colonial modernity

The theme of modernity is dealt with in a separate chapter because it was a central preoccupation in Indian readings of the West, namely England. In her book, *Travels to Europe: Self and Other in Bengali Travel Narratives, 1870-1910* (2005), Sen explains travel had an important function in “becoming modern as well as national” (5). Sen’s interpretation is also supported by Bhaskar Mukhopadhyay in his analysis of colonial travel. He elaborates on the modernity of travels in his argument that colonial journeys were:

...the experience of a specific *kind* of travel – the word ‘experience’ understood here not in its usual subjective, existential connotation, but rather in the wider sense of historically conditioned, epochal ‘structure of feeling’ - that gave rise to the genre called ‘travelogue’ (295).

Mukhopadhyay’s stress on contexts makes clear the link between colonial travel and the institution of modernity in colonial India. From Ram Mohun Roy’s (1772/74-1833) travel to England onwards<sup>89</sup>, Indians believed that an experience of the metropolitan centre would facilitate progress in India at social and individual levels. Modernization, in Supriya Chaudhuri’s view, thus, became associated with the influence of Europe and Enlightenment rationality (“Modernisms in India” *Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*).

Although the twinning of modernity with colonial power poses problems in Indian historiography, Eurocentrism, in the words of Dipesh Chakraborty “has historically haunted debates on modernity in India” (*Provincializing Europe* xiv). In

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<sup>89</sup> Ram Mohun Roy was an influential social thinker and reformer (cf. Chapter 2) had travelled to England in 1830 in the capacity as the ambassador of the titular Mughal Emperor Akbar II (1806-1837).

his influential essay, “Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History”, Chakraborty explains that the linkage was established in colonial discourse due to the fact that colonial rule in India introduced and made visible “the public and private rituals of modern individualism” and ushered in “modern industry, technology, medicine, a quasi-bourgeois (though colonial) legal system” (*Provincializing Europe* 34). Consequently, modernity in colonial India was believed to have originated with “an imaginary but palpable West” (Dube and Banerjee-Dube 2). The examination of women’s travel narratives endorses this view that modernity was tied to the European experience of Indian travellers as they were keen to discover evidences of modernity in their sojourns.

Colonial women travellers’ inclination to seek modernity in their travels was due to colonial conceptualization of modernity itself which lay within a social trajectory of change and foreign influence. Colonial Indian modernity’s historical origins were rooted “in the extraordinary social and cultural transformation” that began with the advent of the East India Company rule (Dharwadker 103). According to Margrit Pernau, the launch of innovative technology, education and economic structure (capitalism) was the harbinger of a new age and framed as modernity. These features of colonial society and transformation held great appeal for colonial Indians and correspond with Marshall Berman’s list of key characteristics of modernism— industrialization, urban growth, demographic upheaval and mobility, and expanding capitalism (*All That is Solid Melts into Air*). Moreover, cultural historians remark that such modernity was actively sought and embedded in everyday life indicating a strong urge for self-modernization (Murshid; Walsh; Pernau).

#### *Fervour of modernity*

The enthusiastic reaction of the travellers to London when they first arrived sets the keynote for colonial modernity. The thrall of the imperial centre among

colonial subjects was entrenched in Indian society even before the visitors arrived in England. According to John Clement Ball, internalization of colonial ideology meant that colonial travellers accepted London as “the zero-point of global time and space”, and the city functioned as a metonymy of imperial power and modernity (qtd, in Snaith 18). The thrill of being in London is encapsulated in one of the earliest female travelogues, *Pictures of England*. The writer Janakumamah Ragaviah uses the analogy of entering a fairy land which she stages as a spectacle for her reader’s enjoyment:

The brilliant lights even surpassed a brilliant moonlight night, and the countless people of both sexes walking up and down added fresh impulse to the spectacle, and, realized to a certain extent, the true meaning of the word “Fairy-land” (46).

When a few years later, the Bengali traveller Krishnabhabini Das encountered London streets for the first time, the busy London street crowded with buildings, vehicles and people disoriented her:

When we move around the streets of London after coming from India for the first time, we are puzzled and have to stand like an inanimate object as everything like houses, cars, people, clothes, language etc, is totally different. (63)

Das informs readers that her initial response to London was an overwhelming feeling of bewilderment that paralyzed her momentarily, turning her into “an inanimate object” (ibid). While describing the city, she generally adopted an impersonal and objective tone, but seeing men and women mixing freely in parks elicits a personal emotional response: “I cannot explain how happy I feel when I see men and women moving around, rowing and riding horses freely together but I feel very sad at heart when I remember I cannot see such sights back home in our country” (68). She also

switched from prose to verse in order to convey her heightened emotions induced by her experience of England. Setting foot in London evoked an exuberant declaration from the early twentieth century traveller, Atiya Fyzee, who exclaimed “what a grand city” London was, and wondered “[h]ow can London be described and how can it be imagined without seeing it!” (17 September 1906 124). This tendency to express wonder and amazement in a style that Claire Chambers labels “hyperbolic” (*Britain* 54), is manifested in the traveller’s image of the “jinn” (158),<sup>90</sup> to convey the amazing speed of underground tube in London. .

Women travellers’ enthusiasm recalls the sense of wonder and incredulity that pre-colonial travellers encoded in their travelogues of England. In *England Re-Oriented*, a book on pre-colonial travel narratives, Humberto Garcia proposes that the encounter with the incongruous worlds of the Mughal and Iranian cultures confronting English civilization led to disorientation and confusion. Thus, to these early travellers, the “British Empire appeared to them as the realm of magic and mimesis” (8). This is why Mirza Shaykh I’tesamuddin, lost in an unfamiliar culture, apportioned the new sights he saw to sorcery and the women as magical creatures. The trajectory of amazement endured in colonial travels with the difference that the female travellers deconstructed the wonders they view and revealed the science underlying the sorcery.

Due to colonial education, most visitors came to London “trained and entitled...to understand and partake in the modernity of the metropolis” (Snaith 15). As a result, they were quick to temper or counterblast their emotional intensity with citations of technological or rational reasons such as Das explaining the use of

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<sup>90</sup>But she offsets her naïve admiration with an attempt to depict the technological apparatus of a lift carrying passengers underground. She writes “From the street you go down a few steps by way of a tunnel and sit in a lift, which you immediately board and that’s all” (1 December 1906 158).

electricity to light up the city (31) or Ragaviah's attempt to learn from experiments demonstrated in the Royal Polytechnic (106).

But the initial frisson of astonishment and pleasure the travellers experienced in response to imperial modernity is a colonial phenomenon. To think of this reaction a result of colonial subjugation would be wrong, since the excitement of modernity is not confined to veneration for imperial culture. In a curious way, the intensity of emotion, though unusual in modernism with its stress on impersonality, objectivity and rationality, was in the Indian context associated with modernity. In her study of emotions in North Indian colonial modernity, Pernau writes that in the march towards modernity "emotions did not disappear" (3). On the contrary, modernity had "become a moral and an emotional category: being modern meant feeling the right emotions and feeling with the required degree of control and passion" (4). Fervour, ebullition and enthusiasm were mobilized and deployed for the development of community and nation in passionate exhortations as well as shame and indignation.

Following Pernau's proposition, it is possible to see Indian women's travel enthusiasm as part of their investment in modernity and attempts to persuade readers of the advantages of a modern outlook and society. *In Indian Travel Writing in the Age of Empire: 1830-1940* (2020), Pramod K. Nayar has found a similar sense of excitement among male travellers of the colonial period. His interpretation of "informed enchantment" (*Indian Travel*) is useful in apprehending female travellers' mixture of wonder and cultural literacy. Like Nayar, Pernau discerns a shift in the enchantment or wonder of England, locating it in the greater intensity with which travellers invested in modernity:

Modernity still implied the ability to create technical innovations- the

'wonders' that I'tisamud Din [Ihtesamuddin] had marveled at-but even more,

it had become a moral and emotional category: being modern meant feeling the right emotions, and feeling them with the required degree of control and passion. (4)

Pernau stresses the emotionality of Indian attitudes to modernity because she believes travellers and social reformers wanted to produce “emotional mobilization” and persuade people to adopt modern ways by conveying delight and excitement (3). Since Ragaviah, Das and Fyzee were admittedly engaged in informing and educating their readers about England, they probably wanted to strengthen their didactic goals with emotional displays and, thus, performed the role of enthusiastic travellers in London.

#### *Women’s colonial modernity*

In women’s travel narratives, the parameters for modernity are Western, metropolitan, innovative and technologically advanced. Robert Burden writes that in the late- nineteenth and early -twentieth century, which coincides with the time frame of the travels in this study, modernity was regarded in different ways: a triumphant march of technology and science, a loss of traditional values and meaning and a “liberation from ‘tradition and prejudice’”, which opened up possibilities of greater social and gender mobility and opportunity. While all three versions of the modern impacted on colonial Indian society, the understanding of modernity as technological advancement dominates in the travel narratives (Burden “Introduction”). The theme of woman’s progress in education and social freedom is intertwined with modernity, but this topic is reserved for another chapter and will not be discussed here.

## Flaneurie in London

The interstitial space of London as a contact zone opened pathways to a new identity that was more mobile and empowered in terms of gender and race. Moving around London, Indian travellers discovered not only that “the privilege accorded to the Rambler, the stroller, or the flaneur was open to appropriation”, but also that London was also “open to colonization in the process” (Burton, “Indian Travelers Fin de siècle London” 128).

Travel to England enabled these individuals to perform the role of flaneurs. A flaneur was originally envisioned by Charles Baudelaire as the casual wanderer of the city (*Painter of Modern Life*), which following Walter Benjamin, others have seen as the emblem of modern experience<sup>91</sup>. In Angela Woollacott’s definition, flaneurie, the act of being a flaneur, is associated with the quintessence of spatial practices in the city:

...the surveyor of the urban scene, the spectator of the urban life who took all in into his leisurely gaze, while he himself remaining invisible or indistinguishable from the crowd, a product of the modern city. (764)

Woollacott’s distillation of the urban experience of mobility and of gazing in the trope of the flaneur offers a good starting point in analysing Indian women’s enactment of modern viewers who observed and reported on the city. Colonial appropriation of the role of flaneur, or flaneuse in case of women, will frame the analysis of modernity in this section and divergences from this paradigm will be additionally addressed in it.

Among the early female travellers, Ragaviah and Das represented their experience of London in terms of flaneurie in their depictions of spaces and people.

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<sup>91</sup> See Jamie Coates “Key Figure of Mobility” p.29.

London, made it possible for these two travellers to move in public spaces and view other people, opportunities denied to women in India due to purdah/seclusion. Thus Ragaviah and Das are keen to take readers on a virtual tour of London with their catalogue of sights. As a consequence, a common trope in both travel narratives is the image of a pulsating cityscape. Das presents a vivid picture of London in the following depiction:

If you look below, bright shops on both sides will draw your attention. The front façade is made only of glass so the different kinds of tastefully-decorated items inside are clearly visible...The streets are very clean and made of hard stones and have pavements on both sides for people to walk on. Hundreds of women, men, boys and girls of all types and sometimes, people from other countries, are seen walking together...Different kinds of vehicles like brougham, barouche, phaeton, cab, omnibus and truck belonging to shop owners ply on the street endlessly. (*A Bengali Lady* 63)

The busy cityscape transforms London into a spectacle, which is being viewed by the traveller herself. She focuses on features that would appeal to a sense of alterity in highlighting the urbanity of London with its shops, paved streets, crowds and numerous vehicles. At the same time, she is subtly highlighting her gendered perspective in her choice of details. Her observation of “women” and “girls” walking besides men and boys is a more positive feature and linked to her theme of gendered rights and female freedom.

Das’s reference to brougham, barouche and other transports, was common in travellers’ attempts to capture the essence of London through portable images of streets, vehicles and local people for the consumption of readers back home. The chapter “Moving Around London” in *A Bengali Lady in England* provides a good



example of Das performing the role of a flaneur in offering various scenes of a busy city. Like a fly on the wall, this voyeur of the city writes:

There is no end to the different kinds of people who keep walking endlessly on the pavements. Here, plenty of people move up and down every day reminding us of the crowd during pujas or fairs in our country. People are walking, stopping for a while and moving again. Some are standing in front of the shop window looking through the glass and trying to decide which object to buy; some are just chit-chatting with friends, some looking at the dresses of others, while others are just standing gasping at people. Several watchmen are standing in between, sometimes controlling the crowd and at other times, stopping the vehicles at the street crossing and helping people to cross to the other side. Many people are coming out of the shops and many more are going inside. The shops are full of so many new things and decorated so beautifully that it becomes very difficult to decide which one to see. (66)

As a flaneur, Das appropriates the power of the surveyor amassing details as in a catalogue. She presents herself as a passive observer, separated from the crowd since she is not participating in the shopping or the conversations. She maintains a distance but seems to be intently gazing at the scene. The observation that people pause while walking indicates that the traveller has been intently watching and studying the people in front of her. The reference to consumer goods is a marker of urban lifestyle with its materialism. Das remarks on the profusion of commodities on sale in “shops are full of so many new things” to convey both the attraction of the consumer items “new” and “decorated so beautifully” (66) and the acquisitive and materialistic tendency of the crowd. Das perceptively notes that the shoppers are overwhelmed by the plethora of choices as she mentions “some are...trying to decide which object to buy” (66);

moreover, the lure of capitalist consumer displays are both enticing and bewildering because “it becomes very difficult to decide which one to see” (66). Here the traveller appears to signal an ambivalence in her mixture of fascination and faint criticism.

Urban shopping is often mentioned in Indian women’s travel writing as buying goods enabled women to enter public spaces and also take part in the world of commerce as consumers. Thus, Ragaviah also incorporates references to London as “the commercial centre of the world” (48) with shops “kept open till a late hour in the evening” (49).<sup>92</sup> She singles out the shops in the West End as she was struck by “their articles exhibited behind glass doors to the public” (49). The traveller imparts her fascination when she writes that “gas-lights [of shops] burning outside in different styles...coupled with Corporation lights everywhere, formed a really beautiful sight” (49). She even considers West End shops to be one of the wonders of London. The spectacular sight of well-lit shops with their attractive wares made a strong impact on Ragaviah since she feels “the expenses incurred and privations endured had been sufficiently repaid by what I saw, though I had yet to see more of this and other cities” (49). In Chapter IV titled “London Wonder”, she includes a reference to “bazaars or shops” that are “presided over by ladies” (65).

#### *Urban picturesque*

The projections of flaneurie rested on experiences of urban life. As Simonti Sen explains, “Being modern also meant being urban” for the Bengali colonial travellers she has analysed; she adds that “the ideal of urbanity was an integral part of the overarching vision of Englishness” (*Travels to Europe* 75). Hence colonial Indian women’s modernity is inscribed through a sustained engagement with metropolitan

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Atiya Fyzee (139, 186,192), Durgabati Ghose (46) and Kuttan Nair (85) also mention shops.

life in the heart of the empire, London. Although England had become somewhat familiar to Indian readers by the time Ragaviah published her travelogue, *Pictures of England*, in 1876, there still persisted a compulsion among most travel writers to visually capture the imperial city. Coming from a periphery which was more rural than urban, they were impressed by urban landscapes, and so most travellers emphasise scenes of vibrant city life, especially streets and public places not accessible to women in India.

It is for this reason that Ragaviah foregrounds the cityscape in her first impression of London. She begins her introduction to the city with a focus on buildings when she writes: “[a]s we were nearing Waterloo Station we crossed several bridges, and directing my views towards the innumerable turrets and high houses” (46). The fascination with a concrete world continues as she drives through London, noting how:

...it would fill pages if I should describe the lofty palatial buildings, some with escutcheons attached, the traffic, people in swarms, especially in the east centre, which is otherwise called the *City*, the shops in the West End with their articles exhibited behind glass doors to the public, and many other similar wonders. (49)

The urban landscape of bridges, well-lit streets, tall buildings and different modes of transport encapsulate some markers of modernity in this traveller’s colonial imagination. At the same time, Ragaviah is combining the experience of moving from darkness to light with a self-portrayal as a traveller who has come out of the tunnel to enter brightly lit streets.

This interest in built monuments of concrete and steel leads her to reveal London’s modernity as well as form a colonial reworking of the picturesque tradition

in travel writing. In English colonial writing, especially by women travellers to India, the picturesque was a popular aesthetic mode to represent landscapes in painting and literature<sup>93</sup>. However, the style was not free of the politics of representation. Sara Suleri draws attention to ideological inflections in her observation that, “the picturesque becomes synonymous with a desire to transfix a dynamic cultural confrontation into still life” (*The Rhetoric of English* 76). In other words, the picturesque allowed British travellers to manage and circumscribe the multiplicity and mystery of India into a fixed picture. Female colonial travellers, in a parallel move, adopt the picturesque style to contain the myriad differences of London into images of urban landscape. The numerous references to concrete monuments also indicate that a romantic attraction to nature and the countryside that was overridden by a concentrated focus on built landscapes of steel and concrete.

#### *Statistical Picturesque*

Colonial endeavours to recreate London city textually for readers back home reverberate with imperial strategies to classify, codify and label a new world. Like colonizers imposing order on the chaos of *other* lands and people, Indian travellers express a desire to master London by mapping the city for the readers. In this new trajectory of the picturesque mode, colonial travellers present topographical data and statistics to inscribe their mastery over the cityscape.

Female travellers like Ragaviah and Das follow this tendency when they chart different areas of London. Ragaviah, a visitor from Madras, provides readers with extensive facts about the size and history of different structures. For instance, she presents the length of the Thames tunnel as “over 1,200 feet, from Wapping to Rotherhithe” (60). In addition, she lists several public statues in her depiction of

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<sup>93</sup>Fanny Parkes and Emily Eden painted and wrote about India in the picturesque mode.

London attractions as when she writes: “The statues in London are as follows: King James II, Lord Canning, Charles I, King George III, King George IV, Lord Nelson at Trafalgar Square” and so forth. Das, coming from Bengal, shares a similar attraction for the wonders of London. Both travelogues offer capsule information on important landmarks such as Parliament, British Museum and Crystal Palace<sup>94</sup>. Another common feature that we see in the two travelogues is in the cartographic schemes of London. In their attempt to map, and thereby, appropriate the city, the colonial female travellers highlight their knowledge of urban geography. Das imparts her understanding of urban planning when she explains the way London is divided into eight zones for smooth postal delivery (37-38) and proceeds to offer a socioeconomic profile of each zone, revealing in the process her knowledge of social conditions. Ragaviah also finds the spatial division a novelty, and informs readers that London is “conveniently divided into E, W, N, S, SE, SW, EC, NW and so on, to afford the facility in delivering packets and letters in the suburbs” (80-81).

Such presentations of facts and statistics present a shift away from subjective descriptions towards informative guidebooks and scientific accounts. In his survey of the Indian travel writing of the colonial age, Nayar notes a similar prevalence of statistical or data-driven picturesque among the male travellers he has examined (*Indian Travel Writing*). He uses the term “statistical picturesque” to underscore the scientific dimension in aesthetic descriptions of England by Indian travellers. Nayar adds that this style of statistical presentation allowed writers to overcome the

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<sup>94</sup>The Crystal Palace, a gigantic glass and iron exhibition hall, held wonders for Ragaviah. Besides hosting different exhibitions and shows such as “pyrotechnical displays” (64) the building itself was an architectural marvel which not surprisingly captured several travellers’s imagination. It continued to hold interest for Indian travellers. Thus, Nawab Begum Sultan Jahan who travelled to London in 1911 also visited Crystal Palace, and Maimoona Sultan describes the Exhibition and the site in her travelogue (*Sultan A Trip to Europe* 93-94).

sentimentality of picturesque style for more “objective” and factual accounts. In female narratives, such attempts to utilize the “statistical picturesque” suggests a desire to occupy the kind of discursive position of authority and knowledge, usually denied to women.

The appeal of industrialized or technologically advanced structures is a recurring motif in female travelogues. Ragaviah lists several modern features in her list of London Wonders including the underground railway, the Thames tunnel, gas lights, omnibus and modern civic amenities such as the fire brigade, the police, and the postal service. Meanwhile, Das devotes an entire chapter to portraying London in terms of architecture. There are many references to the tall clean houses of wealthy neighbourhoods, the small and untidy houses of poor areas and the factories, shops, and banks and offices in the commercial centre. The predominance of the urban imagery in her representation is noticeable in her description of snow:

When it snows, there is a sound like the falling drops of rain. Later, the streets, rooftops, window ledges all gradually turn white. Oh, how wonderful! (42-43).

Here the effect of snow falling on buildings rather than covering trees or the ground indicates the dominance of concrete structures in colonial imaginings of London.

The overriding impression of a built or man-made environment extends to descriptions of parks. While the enumeration of the different parks of London may signal an appreciation of nature, the choice of bounded or urbanized parks rather than open fields or wild untamed nature functions as another instance of the appeal of urbanism. The intrusions of concrete structures unsettle images of natural landscape as in the case when Das mentions that ducks in Regent Park are swimming in an artificial lake with a man-made island full of “lacklustre plants” (*Bengali Lady* 40). Indian travellers were quick with note that the parks and other scenic sites in London

were not entirely natural and bore the imprint of human industry and technology.

Ragaviah also realizes that man-made structures are in the midst open spaces. In her depiction of St. James Park, she highlights the “many public buildings” surrounding the place and the ‘suspension bridge’ over the lake (82).

### *Engineered Picturesque*

An attraction for industrial and urban scenery prevailed among male travellers, too, which Nayar labels “the engineered picturesque”, a term originally used by Ann Komara to describe the new urban aesthetics that developed after the introduction of concrete and industrial elements in the renovation of Paris in mid-nineteenth century (Nayar *Indian Travels*). The deployment of engineered picturesque in women’s travel narratives serves multiple functions. First the focus on concrete structures situates London as an urban centre, and secondly, access to the modern architecture gives the travelling women with the flavour of modernity after they have experienced and inhabited such industrial spaces.

The engineered picturesque is not limited to depictions of London since the female travellers encounter signs of industrialization in other parts of Britain. In fact, Ragaviah seeks out such experiences. She records her visit to the mills of Manchester, along with accounts of more scenic tourist landmarks such as Windsor and Brighton. Ragaviah writes that their “chief object in going to Manchester was to see the working of the mills” (121), and is amazed by the “spinning and weaving machines”(122). This desire to see and understand factory work shows a genuine interest in industrialization. Moreover, it is an acknowledgement that technology can become the means to attain modernity. Factories register in Das travelogue (154-156), though she does not present a personal or first-hand experience. In *A Bengali Lady in England*, the theme of British industrialization is treated as part of the informative

utilitarian style that Michael Fisher associates with “the instructional travel guides” written by Parsi engineers, Ardaseer Cursetjee (1808-1877), Hirjeebhoy Merwanjee (1817-1883) and Jehangeer Nowrojee (1821-1866), who visited England in the first half of the nineteenth century (“Early Indian Travel Guides to Britain”).<sup>i</sup>

### *Technologies of Mobility*

In colonial appropriations of flaneurie, the flaneur becomes more than an observer as the act of gazing and observing endows the figure with agency and mobility. In his article “Key Figure of Mobility: the Flaneur”, Jamie Coates stresses the central role of mobility in flaneurie thus: “the flaneur used a wide range of ambulatory strategies and performances to establish his place in the world” (29). Consequently, female travellers highlight the modernity of their travel experience with reference to the urban technologies of mobility they utilize in London, which is a means of signalling their mobile embodied selves. They try to convey a sense of new found mobility and physical or embodied experiences of modernity through references to the different vehicles and transport system they use during their stay in England. Most of the travellers are keen to share with readers the trains, the buses and the cabs they rode. Ragaviah mentions that she went on the underground railway with her husband and ayah a few times (60) and describes omnibuses and cabs(78-79) as marvels of London’s modernity that readers would enjoy. Similarly, in her chapter “Moving Around London” Das references the different vehicles she sees in London including omnibuses, trams, cars, ships, boats, trains, underground trains, and different horse-drawn carriages (63-73).

Indian women travellers foregrounded the privilege of mobility in contact zones. Since the freedom of walking is discussed in chapter four on performing the body, this section will analyze how women encoded flanerier through their access to



modern modes of transport. The travellers underscore their performativity of modern selfhood by emphasizing their “increasing fluency in imperial mobility”, a phrase Arup Chatterjee has used to describe Indian travellers’ fascination with railways in England. (“Decolonising from London”150). As a result, female travellers remind readers of the various vehicles or mode of transport they encountered in London. The colonial female visitors from India express immense pleasure in registering the technologically advanced transport systems of London. They usually begin their travel accounts of London with references to the vehicles in which they moved. This narrative choice can be linked to Indian perceptions of progress. As Marian Aguiar notes, technologies of movement and mobility were part of “a cluster of representational and material practices” constituting modernity in the Indian imagination (*Tracking Modernity* xiii). Being modern travellers, they were not limited to walking as a mode of movement. Most travellers mention trains that brought them to London and cabs they then took to their hotels. It is interesting to note that though railway was introduced in India as early as 1853, trains continued to exert a magnetic pull for female travellers in England. The train’s connection with scientific development and appeal for Indian travellers has also been noted by Arup Chatterjee in his analysis. In his article on Indian visitors to Victorian London, he points out the importance of trains in the following comment:

Railways began as an “expression of technology” that, like factories, chimneys and gas-lit streets, personified London to visitors from all over.

(“Decolonising from London” 150)

The railway as an emblem of modern technology, therefore, occupy a central place in travel narratives. Ragaviah and Das like the later travellers Atiya Fyzee, Durgabati Ghose and Kuttan Nair, state that they entered London by train. The rail station

became a liminal space from which Indians visitor could step into metropolitan unfamiliarity and novelty.

In Arup Chatterjee's view, the importance of Ragaviah's travel to the imperial centre is as follows:

Ragaviah's journey imbricated archetypes of a cosmic passage, where London's railway corridor lay in a timeless liminal space, functionally quarantined from the polite business of the metropolis. It also trained the reader for an architectural modernity, like *The Building News* of October 1886, which noted that the most casual observer would have been "struck with the great changes of outline", the roofs of gigantic hotels and turrets rising sharply above the "skyline of its humbler neighbours." ("Decolonizing from London" 164)

Chatterjee's interpretation suggests that Ragaviah succeeded in capturing the technological wonders of London. It is also evident that her train journey was a conduit to architectural modernity. Moreover, it helped her appreciate the height and other features of tall buildings of the city that had impressed other travellers too.

Another reason for including train journeys could be that women were historically not free to move around in India, and, hence, the experience of a train journey remained a novelty for many readers. An idea of the dangers women passengers faced can be gained from Gagendranath Tagore's cartoon of men leering at female passengers in a train station<sup>95</sup>. In contrast to such challenges and impediments to female travel in India, trains in England appear to provide safe and accessible mobility to Indian women as the travellers often took them.

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<sup>95</sup> See fig. 1 in Appendix A.

While trains running on the surface symbolized movement and journeys, a more technologically marvellous object was the underground railway. Das viewed them as most strange wonders and she believed that such trains did not exist elsewhere (70-71). She comments that the experience of moving underground in the dark like an insect was unique (71). However, while this traveller viewed favourably most marvels of modernity and the variety of transports she noticed on the streets, she did not enjoy underground rail travel. Nevertheless, as an objective observer, she appreciated the reasons many people preferred scrambling in the dark since costs were lower as well as providing speed and greater convenience. She linked the modernity of the underground train to the overall technological progress of England in her observations on the vertical hierarchy of English transport network. She describes the three-tiered traffic system where cars and underground trains go through tunnels under the river, ships and boats sail on the surface of the river and finally people, carriages and motor cars move on the bridge over the river (71). The image of three levels of movement is a good indication of Das's perceptive analysis of London's modernity. Hers was not just a shallow report on the motorized transport system, but rather an intelligent and discerning insight into the core of modernity. Indian travellers' continued linking of modernity with technological advance is manifested in the later travelogues written by Fyzee, Ghose and Nair.

Writing as late as 1906, Fyzee, too, describes her train journeys, including the interior of a Marseilles train for her readers. The inclusion of the train in the texts offered a common framework of reference to which Indian readers could relate. In this way, London could be conveyed through intelligible archetypes that allowed travellers to approach modern alterity and imperial technological difference. Fyzee, for instance, charts the greater magnitude of London and its technology in graphically

presenting the size and frenzy of Victoria Station. She describes it as a “grand railway station” that leaves her “dizzy” with its commotion and numerous trains (18 March 1907 180). Railway travel is frequently cited by travellers to impress readers with their mobility and freedom. Trains also indicated spatial distances women travellers covered in their journeys such as going to different parts of England and not remaining bound to London. Nair, for instance, visits Scotland in addition to England when her group came to Britain.

The underground train continued to fascinate twentieth century voyagers like Fyzee and Ghose. The latter, for example, cites her personal experiences of “dark tunnels underneath...spread like serpents”(Ghose *Westward Traveller* 55). There is, however, an indication of change and progress in British technology as the travellers present new developments. Fyzee mentions the introduction of lifts to take people down to the tunnels below(158), while Ghose depicts the very modern addition of escalators, which are for her machines that relieve from the remove the effort of climbing up or down ( Ghose 55).

#### *Limitations of Colonial Flaneurie*

While my reading of colonial female travelogues shows that women could perform the role of flaneurs, gender conventions did impact and limit female flaneurie. Feminist critics such as Janet Wolff even argue that female flaneurie could not develop due to gender segregation in the nineteenth century (Woollacott). Texts by colonial subjects, however, reveal that women could work around gender restrictions and subvert the norms. In this regard, Woollacott’s insight into Australian colonial women’s flaneurie in London is helpful in understanding the complexities of gendered flaneurie. Analysing colonial Australian female travel texts, the scholar concludes that the concept of flaneuse is “at once illuminating and too rigid” (165).

She suggests that we should not reject the possibility of female flaneurie despite gender segregation in the nineteenth century.<sup>96</sup> As she points out,

By the 1880s women were encroaching on public spaces in various ways in search of new possibilities, and, rather, than rejecting the possibility of female spectatorship, it is more fruitful, as Nord argues, to ‘ask instead what...shaped it and ...its...contradictions ‘(1995, 12). (762)

Woollacott’s mediation between the constraints and possibilities for flaneuse is a useful frame for further explorations into female adoptions of flaneurie. Following Nord’s advice to interrogate “female spectatorship” (164), Woollacott recommends a more nuanced reading of women’s flaneurie to understand gendered appropriations of the figure of the flaneur. Flaneurie provided women with safe social roles to enact in public spaces while preserving their reputation. Indian female travellers could offer glimpses into London’s busy and vibrant cityscape in their travel narratives without fear of social transgression at a time when gendered spatial segregation prevailed in India.

At the same time, the force of social discipline can still be discerned since female travellers curated scenes in order to conform to gender decorum. For example, the figure of the fallen woman is conspicuously absent in female-authored narratives. This contrasts with male travellers who register the presence of transgressive public women. Antoinette Burton writes that sexual threats or instances of being solicited were commonplace in male travel texts for “every account of an English sojourn written by an Indian man in English in the 1880s and after chronicles his attempt to disentangle himself from either the gaze or attention of English

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<sup>96</sup>Woollacott writes: “While some feminist scholars have denied the possibility of the flaneuse because of women’s status as object rather than subject on the nineteenth century city street and women’s notional absence from the public domain, Elizabeth Wilson (1991, 56), Deborah Epstein Nord (1995, 11-12) and Mica Nava (1996, 39-46) have questioned such an exclusion of women from the category of actors, observers and commentators” (764).

women” (*At the Heart of the Empire* 175). Recollections of encountering public women can be located in vernacular texts such as Bengali travelogues. Shibnath Shastri, the Brahmo social reformer, for example refers to such experiences in his *Diary of England*.<sup>97</sup> He writes of his visit to Kensington Workhouse where he finds “girls who have gone astray come to find refuge in the workhouse” (64) and mentions that about 100 illegitimate children are born in the infirmary here. He also gives a more dramatic account when two women solicit him near Camden Road<sup>98</sup>. On the other hand, most Indian women travellers do not record coming across any disreputable females.

Just as colonial women visitors to England remain silent on transgressive figures, they are also reticent about threats of sexual harassment or sexualized behaviour they may have encountered. It is intriguing, therefore, to find the male cosmopolitan traveller, a journalist from Bombay, Behramji Malabari declare his discomfit when sitting next to female passengers on the bus. In his travelogue, he describes the “evil dream” of “the misfortune of having women beside you, with a trick of leaning on your arm or shoulder when they are quite capable of supporting themselves” (*Indian Eye* 33-34).

Malabari’s embarrassment, however, also points to the instability of colonial identity that extends to Indian women. Colonial subjects did not have the power to fully enjoy the role of flaneurs as race made them vulnerable to imperial male and female gazes. Hence, Antoinette Burton concludes that the Bombay journalist could not claim hegemonic masculine power in her observation:

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<sup>97</sup> The diary is based on his visit to London from April to November 1888, but the text was published in 1958.

<sup>98</sup> Shibnath Shastri writes that he was confused when these young women called out “Come in, dear”. When he realized that they were soliciting him, he deflected their attentions by informing them that he was just waiting for the tram (109).

Clearly what was in danger of being destabilized in these encounters was not the ideal English woman as much as Malabari's own carefully constructed identification with the ideal of "the Indian gentlemen"-someone who was as capable as the European gentleman of walking the thoroughfares of the Western city unmolested. In fact, Malabari's pretensions to being a flaneur- a "new kind of person with the leisure to wander, watch and browse," as Elizabeth Wilson has described him, the "archetypal occupant and observer of the public sphere" – were not as easily realized as those of his British or European contemporaries. (*At the Heart of the Empire* 175)

Burton diagnoses racial difference as the main obstacle for colonial flaneurs like Malabari who could "wander, watch and browse" but were unable to escape the gaze of onlookers and remained self-conscious and anxious about their own authority.

Another way race impinged on flaneurie was in a difference in attitude. Unlike Baudelaire's stroller who was detached and indifferent, Indian colonial travellers were eager and anxious to study and analyse the urban scenes they witnessed, intent on identifying the signs of modernity in England. They were assiduous observers who meticulously noted everything. As a result of colonial compulsions to dissect and scrutinize the imperial centre, colonial Indian women travellers' flaneurie overlapped with ethnography.

### Colonial Ethnography

Flaneurie is one strand of women's travels in London, but it does not capture the multiple dimensions of their experience. As Woollacott writes about Australian women travellers, flaneurie did not limit women to one role, for they "occupied multiple positions and relationships simultaneously" (765). Unlike European or Western flaneurs, Indian travellers were not disinterested observers enjoying

incongruities and anomalies. Instead they were instead eager visitors interested in learning from their observations and eager to circulate the lessons they had obtained. Didactic aims along with the colonial impulse to evaluate the imperial centre transform them into ethnographers. Elizabeth Evans has used the term “reverse imperial ethnography” for the hybrid texts Indian travellers produced to catalogue the social data they obtained through their voyages (180). The performativity of the role of ethnographer endowed women with cultural authority to evaluate England’s modernity.

The liminal position of being outsiders with access to the stance of metropolitan observer enabled Indian travellers to produce ethnographic reports of “participant observation” which was prevalent in early twentieth century (Evans 180). Quoting James Clifford, Elizabeth Evans explains the crosscurrents of this strategy as one of “grasping the sense of specific occurrences and gestures” while “stepping back to situate these meanings in wider contexts” (qtd.in Evans 180). She further elucidates that the ethnographer is a participant observer because of the duality of “engagement and detachment” (Buzard qtd. in Evans 180). Indian women’s travel writing similarly functions as ethnographic reports on London’s modernism that could be used to develop Indian society. This goal is reflected in women’s scrutiny of advances in technology in the public as well as private sphere of homes.

### *Domestic Modernity*

Women travellers construct a unique view of modernity, gendered and colonial, focusing on the modernity of everyday culture, especially in the domestic inner sphere. In Fyzee’s travelogue, *A Time of Education* (1921), the presentation of domesticity is refracted through the lens of social reform that was aimed at transforming Indian domestic life. Her evaluation of metropolitan household



management rests on values promoted by reformist movements in India. In her examination of colonial domesticity in Bengal, Judith Walsh identifies “handwork, punctuality, organization, efficiency, and cleanliness”, to be the “most emphasized” colonial modern virtues (35). Fyzee’s travel narrative endorses the social reform ideology in her projections of the modern domesticity that she finds in England.

Meredith Borthwick, Judith Walsh and Dipesh Chakraborty have written extensively on the impact of Victorian domestic science reconstituting interior spaces of Bengal, while Asiya Aslam and Gail Minault demonstrate a similar impulse among reformers in North India. These scholars have shown that colonial domestic manuals usually privileged the English home as a site of order and cleanliness. The priority given to efficiency, cleanliness and punctuality are all tied to the kind of order and discipline associated with the superiority of the West. Chakraborty notes that the “internal discipline of the European home” was seen as key to European prosperity and power (“The Difference-Deferral” 5).<sup>99</sup>

In keeping with her gendered and reformist outlook, Fyzee is attentive to details of home management in England. She constantly gives examples of English women’s diligence in keeping their homes clean and well-arranged, a theme discussed in an earlier chapter of this dissertation (cf. chapter 2). With regard to modernity, she focuses on efficiency, cleanliness and punctuality, traits which correlate with Walsh’s list of colonial virtues.

Fyzee’s appreciation of British efficiency is linked to the technical superiority of the imperial centre. Hence, she chooses to write about a very mundane object, the gas stove, which in her eyes is a sign of technical advancement and progress. She is so

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<sup>99</sup> In his essay “Difference-Deferral”, Dipesh Chakraborty notes that Bengali books on domestic science compared civilized European houses to “the abode of gods” and Indian homes “suffered badly in comparison...hell-dirty, smelly, disorderly, unclean and unhealthy” (5).

impressed with the device that she mentions it several times; she acknowledges her fascination in her confession, “Perhaps I have written before regarding cooking, but I feel like writing about it again in greater detail” (30 October 1906 149). The gas stove is an “iron chulha (149)” on which pots and pans are placed and temperatures can be controlled. She writes that it offers modern virtues of “speed, cleanliness, and low cost” (149). In another entry she exclaims that it is “a luxury to cook on an English stove” (28 March 1907 183), indicating that she has made use of this tool and she is herself modern in her cooking. Such a view of modernity is evidenced again in the quotidian reference to cutting vegetables:

Vegetables are cut by a machine. There are special kinds of tool for mixing and stirring them. Everything is done in a new way. There is no doubt everything is of the highest level. (149)

The observations show that Fyzee is amazed with the technological applied in kitchens and “a machine” accomplishing tasks at “the highest level” (149). In addition, she realizes that modern technology such as having “high pressured water” can help maintain hygiene in the kitchen and enable one “to observe the cleaning rules of us Muslims” (149). The link to Muslim lifestyle shows that Fyzee is not simply mirroring English modernity but interpreting and constructing an individualized modernity.

The interest in hygiene is another motif that surfaces several times in Fyzee’s narrative. The traveller keeps emphasizing the cleanliness of English homes. For instance, she is very impressed with the maids who clean in her hostel. As she writes:

Cleaning the rooms, keeping the washing things clean, airing and arranging the bedclothes, scrubbing and washing the floors, taking off the tapestries and

drapes to clean every corner, you can look at your face in the window panes and brass objects... (2 October 1906 140)

Being able to see one's face in the window panes is an indication of the priority given to cleanliness. Fyzee's list of the college maids' responsibilities functions as a useful guide on cleaning for her readers. The preoccupation with cleanliness also appears in her description of a prize giving ceremony at St. Paul's Girls' School. She conveys her approval of the event with the declaration that "In every matter there was cleanliness and neatness that was a pleasure to see" (25 July 1907 207). Fyzee's absorption in clean homes is a feminine interest that intersects with a wider cultural concern for transformation. Hygiene was given prominence in colonial India for both medical and social purposes. The Bubonic plague crisis in 1896-1897, for example, was instrumental in adding impetus to existing efforts of modernizing and reforming Indian society.<sup>100</sup>

Another ideal of domestic reform that Fyzee notices in England is the rigid discipline of time. When describing the great efficiency of servants in the Tata mansion, she uses the word "clockwork" to convey the household staff's timely and orderly work (1 June 1907 194). In the critical edition of the English translation of Fyzee's travel narrative, Siobhan Lambert-Hurley locates in this image of punctual service a reflection of time-drive factory organization that was in place in Europe ("Narrating the Everyday" 87).

A female-centred perspective of modernity is also presented by Durgabati Ghose in her travelogue *The Westward Traveller* (1936). She displays a similar focus on the domestic dimension of modernity when she visits England. Like Fyzee,

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<sup>100</sup>Srirupa Prasad has analysed the role of hygiene discourse in disciplining social bodies and impacting on the formation of modern and cultured subjectivities.

she is excited by the greater efficiency of cutting vegetables. As she writes, “One did not need a helping hand to chop different vegetables or grind various kinds of spices “(48). Ghose very perceptively attributes the greater productivity of British kitchens to differences in social systems rather than a machine. She cites personal independence as the mainspring of efficiency and productivity. In England, women cooking for the family did not have to be bound to the whims and wishes of the elders in domestic life. The allusion to elderly family members is an indirect criticism of the joint family system prevailing in India, and perhaps even a subtle privileging of the nuclear family<sup>101</sup>.

Ghose also hints at a modern attitude about social practices in her implied censure of the rigidity of rituals involving food. She notes that it is easier to serve and prepare food since the “problem of washing hands every time one cooked vegetarian and non-vegetarian items did not exist” and vegetarians “did not need to be served on separate utensils after washing one’s hands” (48). As she explains herself, she is not “criticising our Indian habits”, but deploying a “comparative analysis” (48). In this comparison, the British system emerges as more favourable for its embeddings of modern values of order, efficiency and punctuality.

The Bengali traveller offers further evidence of British efficiency in the custom of eating meals on time, simplifying menus by reducing items, and serving the same meal to everyone including “married women, widows, single women and children” (48). In her opinion, these customs help bring about discipline and order in the domestic sphere. The emphasis on time and discipline is yet another reflection of the reformist ideology and values mentioned by Walsh. The casual reference to the

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<sup>101</sup> In *Reluctant Debutante*, Ghulam Murshid suggests that modernization triggered a preference for nuclear families and cites the case of Satyendranath Tagore and Jnanadanandini Devi (134).

benefit of removing dietary restrictions for widows is an articulation of Ghose's modernist attitude in her desire to break free from the hegemony of tradition.

Ghose's gendered lens in viewing England surfaces again when she describes her visit to a Nice Biscuit Factory (49). The procedural account of making biscuits from the mixing of different ingredients to form a dough and then cutting the dough with electrical gadgets is a way of displaying her acquaintance with industrial processes. She, thereby, projects herself as a modern woman equipped with technical knowledge. Besides an interest in technology, she refers to the presence of women workers. The inscription of female workers in a factory is a sign of female modernity and gender development.

### Deconstructing Modernity: Counter-Colonial Notes

Kuttan Nair, writing towards the end of colonialism in 1936, reveals a new turn in colonial responses to imperial modernity in my examination of women's performativity of modern subjectivity. A critical note in Indian colonial travellers' depiction of modernity emerges first in Nair's *A Peep into Europe* written during the peak of anti-colonial movement in 1936. However, to appreciate fully the new turn in colonial response to imperial modernity, it is important to revisit the earlier reactions to London.

#### *Critical Modernity*

From flaneur/flaneuse to domestic reformer, Indian colonial women travellers seemed to regularly embrace British superiority in their appreciation of technology. However, a lessening of fervour can be seen in Ghose and Nair. In *the Westward Traveller*, Ghose encodes her touristic experience of museums, the underground railway and other sites, but the account lacks the thrill and wonder of Das or Ragaviah. Nonetheless, in Nair's travelogue, *A Peep at Europe*, there is a strong

assertion of anti-colonial performativity in her critique of modern urbanity. Das<sup>102</sup> had also criticized aspects of British society and imperialism, but her arguments were based on anti-colonial sentiments rather than as a critique of modernity itself. Das' negative appraisal of British society centres around British materialism, class divisions and racism.

Kuttan Nair's projection of modernity, on the other hand, is grounded in her stance as a critic of urban landscape. While others were drawn to turrets, shops and motor vehicles, the voyager from Kerala is eager to investigate London slums. Thus, she writes "I was as much interested in seeing them as in seeing the British Museum or the famous waxwork show at Madame Tussaud's or the other places of interest" (72). The juxtaposition of museums with slums is a sly tactic of reversing imperial and Orientalist exploitation of poverty and suffering to produce reductive images of the East that are at the same time exotic. She informs readers that her visit "to the St. Pancras Housing Estate gave us an idea of the wretchedness and the squalor that prevail in the slum area" (72).

Nair also reverses the condescending gaze of colonizers when she offers her "humanitarian interest" (72) and pity for the children with "sweet, little faces we met with in the streets and in front of some of the houses there, looked pathetically out of harmony with their miserable surroundings" (73). The defence of her curiosity and rationalization of humanitarian interest ironically echo the "maternal imperialists", Barbara Ramusack's term for British feminists who colluded with colonialism. In addition to her sympathy, there is a sarcastic debunking of Katherine Mayo's

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<sup>102</sup> In *A Bengali Lady in England*, the traveller criticizes the materialism of the West and laments India's servitude as a subjugated colony (161-164).

sensational book *Mother India* which proposed that India was not ready for independence because of its miserable social conditions and pernicious poverty.

Nair openly counters such charges against India by mentioning “shabby, thread-bare, sick and poor old MOTHER INDIA” and exposing “filth and wretchedness” in “an enlightened country like England with its ‘high ideals of constructive service and weal of common people’” (73). In this quotation, Nair is laying bare the often-concealed destitution at the heart of empire, and fracturing colonial hegemony. First, she is reversing imperial gaze by her focus on English society and the poverty she finds there. Her reference to Mayo’s book also creates an intertextual connection between the poverty of the colonial periphery and the imperial centre. The irony in phrases such as “enlightened country” and “high ideals” is an articulation of colonial criticism. She inserts another allusion to Mayo in her insinuation of sexual depravity in Hyde Park when she describes the place as one where there are “many chances to go astray...scenes worthy of C[K]atherine Mayo’s pen” (74).

Nair’s exposition of the shortcomings of the imperial continues in her account of her trip to Scotland where she encounters drunkards and beggars. Other female travellers also shared this focus on Britain’s social problems. Several travellers, thus, wrote with disappointment that they witnessed beggars and drunkards in London.

<sup>103</sup>Poverty and social problems were frequently invoked to undermine imperial power for these examples challenged received ideas of Western superiority.

Another way Nair enacts a critical modernist stance is by distancing herself from the enchantment and fascination with modern building and transport system

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<sup>103</sup>Krishnabhabini Das mentions alcoholic women (106), Mary Bhore refers to fallen women and Durgabati Ghose describes beggars (56-57).

shown earlier, in her comments on “the ugliness of cities like London” (73). Ragaviah’s “Fairy-land” (46) and Das’s brightly lit city have transformed into a picture of ennui and alienation. In her first sight of London, she notes “ugly smoke filling and fouling the air” (65) and “crowded mass buildings, far from attractive” (65). Later she describes it as a city of “nerve-racking din and bustle”, “miles and miles of unattractive buildings”, and “endless stream of traffic that makes life for the pedestrian thoroughly irksome” where “the individual seems to be utterly lost” in its “stupendous immensity” (72-73). Nonetheless, Nair is still drawn to the urban centre since she writes that she develops a fondness for the city, “Yet in spite of its nerve-racking din and bustle, ...one begins, as days pass on, to like this huge city” (73). She balances her own modern inclinations with a nationalist consciousness in her reservations about London.

Nair’s presentation of a modern self is also made distinctive by her political consciousness. While nationalist ideology pervades other texts, this member of the International Student Service (ISS) tour, makes perhaps the strongest claim to political participation. She writes that the group schedule for London included “a conference in the evening for an informal discussion over the India Bill with special reference to the ‘opportunities of Indian women to serve their country under the new Constitution’” (69). In their meeting with the parliamentary committee, Nair informs readers that the tour group had “made it clear that we were by no means satisfied with the franchise extended to us” (69). The traveller’s political awareness and vocal political opinions were partly enhanced and developed through the ISS tour.

In her analysis of the ISS tours, in one of which Nair had joined, Jane Haggis remarks that such tours were different from tourism because one goal was “to offer opportunities to observe and interact with European activists and service providers



engaged in political, cultural, educational and social work” (567). Nair was well-suited for such a tour, and her critique of modernity is contextualized in her own colonial experience. In *A Peep at Europe*, she presents herself as a modernist aware of its limitations and strengths. Haggis explains the multiple dimensions of her authorial stance as a dialogue on imperialism, anti-colonialism, modernity, race and womanhood (570). As the two examples from her text have demonstrated, her modernity was inflected with her nationalist and feminist perspectives.

The earlier fabulist imaginations of Lutfullah Khan and I'tesamuddin had inevitably given way to the informed or technological marvels of Ragaviah, Das and Fyzee. Now in 1936, there is the refusal to endow British sights with magic and the writers discussed here are inclined to expose the grime and paper straws. Thus, Nair punctures the vaunted glory of the English by divulging the poverty in London. While the technological advances of the West appealed to Indian female travellers, their appreciation was problematized by the colonial underpinnings of their experience. The impact of colonial subjectivity in the reading of imperial modernity manifests in two distinct contradictory ways. One strand comprised of an intense emotional reaction to arriving in London, the heart of the empire. The other strand, although developed over time, was a much more critical perspective in of modernity in London life.

## Conclusion

The female-authored travelogues of Ragaviah, Das, Fyzee, Ghose and Nair present gendered and colonial refractions of modernity. In the female attraction to London as the seat of imperial structure, one finds the intersection of critical geography, colonialism, gender and race. The result is the production of critical reports that combine observations of the flaneur and the ethnographer.

Although modernity impacted upon gender roles, women travellers, with the exception of Nair, do not broach the topic of political rights such as suffrage. Quite surprisingly, they remain silent on the New Woman, a figure cited by Joyce Kelley and Elizabeth Evans as prevalent even in the early twentieth century. This is in keeping with a reticence on sexual and moral freedom to sustain gender decorum. The travellers discussed above appear to confine themselves to surface level projections of modernity, technology and urban landscape. They participate in British modernity rather than embrace and instil modernity in India. For this reason, the female travel texts could be compared to Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar's formulation of societal modernization, which he distinguishes from cultural modernity. The former is marked by "growth of scientific consciousness, the development of a secular outlook, the doctrine of progress, the primacy of instrumental rationality...market-driven industrial economies...mass media, increased mobility, literacy and urbanization" (qtd. in Snaith 27). The latter, on the other hand, refers to ideas of selfhood and importance of imagination which is less obvious in Indian women's travel writing.

Colonial appropriations of flaneurie were problematized in two major ways. First, the role of flaneur morphed into the role of the ethnographer. Then, female Indian visitors modified their flaneurie was by the imbrications of affect in their responses to modernity. The complications of flaneurie for colonial subjects has also been addressed by Pratt in her examination of Creole ethnographies of Latin America (*Imperial Eyes*). The redeployment of European strategies by non-Europeans to encode their view of Europe is a manifestation of cultural exchanges enabled by colonial contacts. However, the appropriation is never complete because the colonial subject remains dispossessed. Pratt reminds us that the autoethnographer

employs the “metropolitan paradigm minus one dimension”, acquisition (189).

Likewise, the Indian travellers operate from a position of powerlessness.

Akin to the Chilean traveller Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888),<sup>104</sup> who travelled to Europe in 1845, Indian travellers could not adopt the roles of conqueror or “seeing-man looking out panoramically” (*Imperial Eyes* 188), they could only infiltrate the urban scene as privileged observers<sup>ii</sup>. Yet, colonial appropriation of European rhetorical tropes like flaneurie is not merely imitative. It is a strategy of self-fashioning to reinvent identities. Colonial travellers counter the hegemony of Orientalism and colonialism in creating their own discursive formations of the metropole. The self-assertions in colonial interpretations of London’s modernity and flaneurie are comparable to Pratt’s concept of autoethnographic expressions in Creole travel writing.

Taken together the body of Indian women’s travel writing on London’s modernity show that the travellers did not mirror modernity uncritically. Their presentation is at times braided with a counter colonial gaze and with an effort at developing subjectivity. Due to the pressures of colonial and patriarchal hegemony, they confined their projections of modernity to surface level markers, visible signs of technological and urban developments. In such a framework, they leave out discussions of the New Woman<sup>105</sup> and sexual freedom.

Moreover, the gender compromise is not tantamount to total submission to the dominant social ideology. While women share a nationalist vision with male travellers, the performativity of the role of flaneur fractures the confines imposed on

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<sup>104</sup> Sarmiento was an educator, writer and president of Argentina wrote his book *Travels* (1849) based on his two year journey to Europe, North Africa and the United States.

<sup>105</sup> The New Woman a term prevalent during 1880 to 1890 to refer to women who tried to break free from conventional roles.

women to remain within the domestic sphere. In their travel outside the home and into the busy streets of London, they reconfigure roles and gendered space. In this way, modernity becomes a path to counter the hegemonies of patriarchal and colonial discourses.

This chapter has tried to demonstrate that the performativity model of identity construction enabled female visitors to embody modernity in the roles of flaneurs and ethnographers. The impulse to explore opportunities of self-definition that Joyce Kelley locates in Western twentieth-century female travels (5) is also embedded in Indian women's colonial travels. However, a major difference is that women do not articulate their support for modernity, though they provide many examples of modernity itself and encode their experience of British modernity. Well, the contested and polyvocal enactment of modernity in the pages of female travel narratives is exciting, contradictory and critical; such variety is typical of the diversity of roles the women adopted during their visit to England, as will be discussed in the following chapters of this dissertation.

## CHAPTER FOUR BODIES IN MOVEMENT

Examining Indian women's colonial travels requires an exploration of the gendered dimension of such journeys. With this aim in mind, this chapter focuses on the features that set apart women's travel narratives from male-authored travel texts. Following Dunlaith Bird, I focus on embodied experiences to locate individual agency and women's self-fashioning of identity through corporeal projections. The attention to the female body is a current preoccupation of women's travel writing studies and gender theory and part of the turn towards lived experiences (Bird 24). Like Bird, I seek to explore how the body plays out on a contact stage with the difference being that instead of analysing European women in an Orientalist setting, I am engaged in studying Indian women in the British metropolis. As Bird notes, "For women travellers the body is both determined physical reality and cultural construction" (Bird 23); thus, Indian women's bodies can be read as sites to project visible gender and racial differences and to both subvert and confirm/sustain gender conventions.

Although the body of the Indian woman drew the attention of European travellers as well as reformers, travelling women and their bodies have not been studied in much depth<sup>106</sup>. Hence, I would like to shift critical attention from the colonial body in India to the colonial female travelling body. The following sections will, therefore, discuss the centrality of the body in colonial Indian women's enactment of their mobile selves. The concept of enactment will also support my

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<sup>106</sup> See Ghulam *Murshid Reluctant Debutante* (1983), Himani Bannerji *Inventing Subjects: Studies in Hegemony, Patriarchy and Colonialism* (2001), and Judith Walsh *Domesticity in Colonial India* (2004) for discussions on Indian colonial focus on women's body; and for more on European travellers' view of Indian women's body see Indira Ghose *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze* (1998) and *Memsahibs Abroad: Writings by Women Travellers in Nineteenth Century India* (1998) as well as Indrani Sen, editor, *Memsahib's Writing: Colonial Narratives on Indian Women* (2008).

central research focus on identity performativity, based on Judith Butler's theory of gender identity as a stylized repetition of acts ( "Preface" *Gender Trouble* xv).

This chapter will track the themes of freedom, mobility, clothes and sensations in selected Indian female travel texts. It will further show that there is a change in women's projections of the body, thus, the journeys undertaken in the 1870s and 1880s are quite different from those of the turn of the century and onwards. While Toru Dutt travelling in 1869, Janakummah Ragaviah in 1874 and Krishnabhabini Das in 1882 foreground social and gendered freedom, Cornelia Sorabji and Atiya Fyzee, who published their travel narratives in 1934 and 1921 respectively, are intent on presenting their Indian selves. A further change is yet again noticeable in the Indian female visitors to England of the 1930s, Durgabati Ghose and Kuttan Nair.

### Coming out of the Purdah

In many ways colonial Indian women's travel narratives parallel their male counterparts writing for both groups write from the position of the colonized subject gazing back at the imperial centre. There is thus a similar mixture of admiration and criticism that Simonti Sen suggests is due to the fact that "Women travellers in this period, mainly travelling as companions, wittingly or unwittingly conformed to this dominant frame of vision" which she considers to be colonized and male (*Travels to Europe* 23).

Sen, therefore, argues that one is hard-pressed to "distinguish a woman's account from that of a man among the ones I came upon" (23) since the themes and representations are so similar. Nonetheless, one area in which women's gendered perspective emerges distinctively is through the trope of personal freedom that

England provided by facilitating mobility. As Sen remarks in her analysis of Krishnabhabini Das:

...the very participation of a woman in an essentially masculinist project has a special interest of its own. As it has been for so many English women, for Krishnabhabini too mobility became just the other name for freedom (23).

Despite the acknowledgement of a “special interest” (23), Sen does not develop this point further. The opening up of personal mobility, though, had greater ramifications for Indian colonial women than for Victorian English women.

Historical anecdotes can help contextualize and highlight the significance of Indian women’s coming out. When the famous social reformer Keshab Chandra Sen decided to take his wife to Debendranath Tagore’s home, his relatives tried to stop him from doing so. Sen, however, succeeded in taking his wife out of the house, and this encouraged other Brahmo men to bring their wives out (*Reluctant Debutante*). However, women’s seclusion persisted for a long time as evident in an article published in the Bengali periodical *Bangamahila* in 1875, where Mayasundari laments:

Women are not allowed to see anything. In Calcutta, a bridge over the Ganges has been constructed and the people have praised it so much. But hearing was all that was ordained for us.... If we can’t get education and see the wondrous scenery of the world, there is little pleasure in our lives. (qtd. in Harder 818).

While British women travellers in the nineteenth century were often celebrated for their daring and bold adventures in Africa or South America as in the cases of

Mary Kingsley and Maria Graham<sup>107</sup>, Indian colonial women presumed a more modest ambition of stepping outside the boundary of the family home. However, one common preoccupation that aligns Indian female travel writing with the travel narratives of European women is consciousness about the body. In her book *Excursions into Modernism: Women Writers, Travel and the Body* (2015), Joyce Kelley notes the emphasis of corporeality in her observation:

...these women, though often brought into foreign spaces by modern methods of transport reveal how the body remains the most immediate vehicle through which to see the world. (5)

Like the British and American women in Kelley's study of modernist voyages, Indian female travellers foreground the way their bodies were affected through travel and register the emotions and sensations evoked by new experiences. This section will, thus, connect emotions with social construction of identity based on Sara Ahmed's linkage of emotions with social and cultural practices.

In *Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2004), Ahmed introduces the idea that emotions are embodied in texts and can shape individuals and collective groups; she points out that due to the impact emotions or feelings have on individuals "emotions should not be regarded as psychological states but as social and cultural practices" (9). The sociality of emotions encourages the practice of reading the "emotionality of texts" engendered by colonial insertions in the imperial contact zones. In other words, I would like to propose that Indian colonial women were excitable and prone

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<sup>107</sup> Maria Graham (1785-1842) was a famous British traveller who wrote about her journeys to India in *Journal of Residence in India* (1812), and *Letters from India* (1814), and to South America in *Journal of a Residence in Chile* (1824) and *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil* (1824). Mary Henrietta Kingsley (1862-1900) attained fame for her travels in Africa, in particular for being the first European to travel through unexplored routes in Gabon, and she wrote *Travels in West Africa* (1897) and *West African Studies* (1899).



to articulate strongly positive feelings of arriving in England because of the social constraints they faced in India., and thus, they attached particular emotions to England. The correlation between England and positive feelings support Ahmed's view that feelings are "a form of social presence" and that "emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries" of responses (10). Any sustained readings of the travel texts in this research corpus will show journeys to England were not played out on only one emotional note, but rather on a medley of feelings, as travellers had mixed reactions to the place <sup>108</sup>.

### *Caged Birds*

The freedom to travel abroad and then to have the liberty to move in public spaces was very thrilling for early Indian female voyageurs. Indeed, the theme of freedom of movement is foregrounded in the travel texts of Toru Dutt, Janakummah Ragaviah and Krishnabhabini Das. The sense of liberty which these women inscribed was one based on a material or physical experience. In his analysis of female social development in the colonial age in *Reluctant Debutante*, Murshid explains that for colonial Indian women, "freedom more or less meant the right to go outside the four walls of the zenana and the right to converse with other people" (113). He gives a sense of the constricted life of colonial Indian women through a quote from a nineteenth century female writer, who compared women's lives to "caged birds who can only toss about in their small world" (113). The metaphor of "the caged bird" was a popular trope in colonial women's writing. In Rasasundari's *Amar Jiban* (1876/1906), acknowledged as the first female authored autobiography in Bengali, the writer frequently refers to her caged existence; she mentions that life has made her a

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<sup>108</sup> For a discussion of emotionality in the travel narratives (selected for this research) see also Chapter 6.

caged bird (22), whereas if she had been born a boy she could have flown away (38). Consequently, the female travellers emphasize a performativity of mobile selves in their narratives, and present themselves as uncaged birds once they are in England<sup>109</sup>. Das, for example, deploys the trope of the cage to convey the release and liberation she experiences upon coming to England (11). She underscores a sense of gender freedom when she describes England as a place free of cages for here “[t]hey do not cage women inside houses” (84).

### *Freedom in England*

For early women travellers, like Toru Dutt England became a metonymy for freedom. This is explained very clearly by Dutt when she expresses her yearning for England in a letter to her friend, Mary Martin. She articulates a strong longing to return to the imperial centre in a letter dated May 11, 1874 as she writes:

We all want so much to return to England. We miss the free life there; here we can hardly go out of our own Garden” (Dutt 11 May 11 1874 227).

Dutt’s use of the phrase “free life” indicates a linkage between social liberty and the metropolitan centre. Though the traveller does not use the analogy of caged birds, she often highlights the social restrictions women faced in India. In this excerpt, she is referring to the fact that women could not freely move in public spaces and had to remain within family homes, with wealthy women having the luxury of a “Garden” as in the case of the Dutt women.

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<sup>109</sup>Janakumamah Ragaviah also references the motif of caged bird to signal her sense of liberation when she arrives in London. She writes that she became “a bird out of the cage” (49).

Dutt repeatedly stages England as a place where a free life can be lived, and so there are several instances in her writings where she mentions “the free air of Europe and the free life there, are things not to be had here” (20 September 1874 230); this freedom is counterpoised with women’s incarcerated life in Indian society. She longs for the “whiff of the free bracing air of dear England” (23 November 1875 256). In another letter, she explains the system of gender spatial practices by which women were confined to inner quarters and also to their immediate family circles. She writes:

Bengali reunions are always for men. Wives and daughters and all womenkind are confined to the house, under lock and key, *a la lettre!*” (24 March 1876 271)

Dutt’s expression of a critical view of Indian society combined with her yearning for England has led a critic such as Ellen Brinks to claim that the young traveller was “an unabashed Anglo- and Francophile, dismissive of her own culture ...and longing to return” at the beginning of her epistolary friendship (34). However, given the social context, one could argue that Dutt’s idealization was based on gender freedom and not simply on Anglophilia. In fact, this traveller frequently cites the loss of personal liberty upon returning to India. She laments that there is “[n]o noontide walks here as in England!” (9 May 1874 226); and again, she reminds her friend of her immobility and internment when she writes “I have hardly walked since I left England” (15 December 1874, 234). The memories of walking are important because she links mobility with personal freedom and social liberty, and England is fondly remembered for the pleasure of walks, as in her comment, “We do so miss our country walks in England” (9 May 1874 226).

Walking is a recurrent trope as it functions both as a reminder of a liberty lost as well as an internalization of romantic ideals. In her study of colonial travel culture, Inderpal Grewal explains the symbolic value of walking in what follows:

Going for walks had become an important aspect of English life, for it not only enabled the appreciation of nature that had become an integral part of English Romanticism, but also incorporated the movement and mobility required for such appreciation... (172).

Grewal regards such intertwining as an effect of English education and Romantic aesthetics that valorised self and freedom. She also notes that by connecting home with cage, freedom was configured in spatial terms, making England a space of freedom and tradition instead of a place of political domination and hegemony. (167).

Dutt's linkage of walking with home continues in her letters, and she signals her growing reconciliation of living in India with favourable statements about Baugmaree, the family home outside Calcutta. For instance, she refrains from complaining and even finds beauty in her home "the long avenue [was] bordered with high casuarinas" (3 May 1876 277). Although her comparison with English landscape suggests a colonial mindset formed by European education when she observes that the casuarinas were "very like the poplars of England" and that "the scene was as lovely as any we have seen during our sojourn in Europe" (277).

Nevertheless, Dutt did develop a fondness for garden walks since she writes in a subsequent letter that she felt "a pang" when there was a possibility of the garden been sold and she "was rather glad" that it did not happen (26 August 1876, 298).

Interestingly, her appreciation for Baugmaree coincided with incipient nationalist sentiments as she immersed herself in learning Sanskrit and the study of

India's ancient past. She published translations of Sanskrit tales in her lifetime; later, a collection of her translations was posthumously published in *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882). It is perhaps due to this return to her cultural roots that she can declare in December 1876 that "Baugmaree... is as good as England; in some respects, at least in my opinion, it is better. One feels more at home" (25 December 1876 321). The validation of Baugmaree signals Dutt's identification with Bengali culture and an acceptance of her Indian heritage. The shifts in her attitude to India are indicative of the ambivalence and contradictions marking colonial consciousness. While England would always remain associated with freedom and mobility, it is important to remember that the young Bengali traveller was not blindly infatuated with the imperial centre. In her letters to Martin, there is a gradual development of anti-colonial consciousness in her references to colonial racism and injustices.<sup>110</sup> As Brinks writes:

Although Dutt's political views were clearly in a formative stage, attributable to her youth, it is clear that the persona in her letters undergoes a marked change over the last four years of her life. (*Anglophone Indian Women Writers, 1870-1920* 34)

Brinks' comment helps to contextualize Toru Dutt's youthful age and brief life. She may have developed into a more critical anti-colonial writer, therefore, Dutt's Europhilia and Anglophilia have to be viewed in connection to her age. Yet, the criticisms of Indian society that she raises in her letters were valid, and her positive fulsome response to the liberty of social interaction, mobility and educational

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<sup>110</sup> See letters of July 15, 1876 and September 1876.

opportunities in England were equally reasonable and cogent arguments that would continue to resonate with other female travellers from colonial India.

### Freedom of Mobility

Dutt's delineation of the privilege of freedom in movement has a strong implication for Indian women's colonial travel writing. A central feature of Indian colonial women's textualization of identity is the depiction of mobile or moving bodies in their travel narratives. England is rendered not just as a place of freedom but a place safe and conducive for walking and riding buses or trains, for movement in short. Walking becomes a recurrent motif in texts because women were often not allowed to appear in public and hence unable to walk or use public transport. When Satyendranath Tagore wished to take his wife to Ahmedabad where he was posted as the Assistant Collector and Magistrate, his father insisted that the daughter-in-law leaves home in a palanquin rather than a carriage, which would be more public or revealing (Murshid, 74-75). Two years later, however, his wife Jnanada Devi arrived at the Tagore house in a carriage, indicating that travel to Bombay had empowered and given her the courage to defy social conventions to a limited extent.

As a result, women's mobility in England transforms the metropolitan centre into heterotopias. As Michel Foucault writes, in regard to heterotopia, this is "a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled" ("Des Espace Autre"8). The heterotopia spatiality that Foucault referred to could be discovered through travel as voyages often lead to alternate worlds, places that are not only utopian but also free from the rigidity and constraints of the world or home left behind. Among the early Indian female travellers, there was the excitement of finding such liberating spaces where the women could be free and mobile.

Although the main attraction of heterotopias for Indian colonial women was the freedom to move, they do not record any instances of unregulated movement. Cultural differences often give rise to disorderly mobility, a point that Peter Smethurst and Dunlaith Bird have noted in their research on travel. However, the travel narratives of colonial Indian women do not record instances of unregulated movement that one may find in heterotopias. It is possible instead to find in Indian women's colonial travels evidence of orderly mobility, which the female travel writers try to normalize by transforming the mobility into a socially recognized performativity. What is interesting about Indian female travellers' comments of walking in London is that it was not "disorderly" like the vagabondage of Isabelle Eberhardt or Colette but that for the Indian colonial context, walking in public spaces was subversive and could fracture gender norms.

Bird's interlinking of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity with Pratt's contact zone provides a fruitful direction to analyse Indian women's mobility in England as a heterotopia (*Travelling in Different Skins*). Bird suggests that it is useful to broaden the concept of performativity to include Pratt's view, in which performativity is regarded as a form of performance, such as a theatrical activity "the fact of its taking place, in the embodied event or practice" (qtd. in Bird 70). In this context, the contact zone can take on the significance of a stage where women can perform unusual or "unconventional constructions of gender" (80), and the difference or alterity of the new space can mitigate the transgressions and help normalize behaviours. Once women could textualize their transgressive mobility, be it orderly or disorderly, the act of writing would give legitimacy to the mobility, "the physical reality" and "the constructions of identity" recreated in the travel texts (Bird 85).

Indeed, the performativity of mobile identities can through repeated citations influence cultural and gender conventions.

The staging of mobility in the texts of colonial female travellers is also noted by Hans Harder in his article “Female Mobility and Bengali Women’s Travelogues in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries” (2020). In his discussion of Bengali women travellers, the scholar remarks on fraught presentations of mobility as follows:

...the dynamics of women’s travel writing include a strong tension between feelings of confinement and the performance of an outing. What is happening in the travelogues is thus, in a way, the overcoming of seclusion by the physical act of travelling and the public performance of writing about it. (833)

Harder’s observation supports Bird’s argument that female travellers’ encoding of mobility can be regarded as theatrical activity intended for audiences. Female voyagers to England foreground their physical presence on the streets, parks and other public places of London to inscribe their mobility in the contact zone.

### *Moving in the City*

The theme of mobility is most strongly delineated in accounts of “walking” in the city. Nearly all the writers mention their enjoyment of walking in England. Travelling to England in 1874, Ragaviah was enchanted by the freedom of mobility in the metropolitan centre. The traveller from Madras sets the tone for a mesmerizing experience of London with her descriptor “Fairy-land” (46). The impact that the city has on her is described in the following passage:

One like me, a bird out of the cage, could walk or drive from morn to eve without fatigue and forgetful of hunger in order to see the wonders of this place and the advantages of this land. (49)



Ragaviah's positive evaluation of her trip seems to be based on the technical marvels that city offered that captivated male and female travellers. What is distinctive, however, is the foregrounding of a sense of release, that is both physical and mental. She draws attention to the idea of deliverance, or being unshackled, in the analogy of "a bird out of the cage" (49). Her use of the trope of "caged bird" underscores the practice of gender segregation and renders her statement "One like me, a bird out of the cage" a declaration of release from gender restrictions.

The theme of being set free continues in her image of motility, which presents her as energized and dynamic when she writes that she was on the move from "morn to eve" and without "fatigue" or "hunger". Ragaviah reiterates her state of being in motion and describes walking as a new activity, when she writes:

Physical exercise, which was never brought to a practical bearing while in my native land, I paid attention to, and availed myself of the opportunity of taking daily long walks in Hyde Park in company with my husband, which was really conducive to health. (51-52)

The traveller's choice of words is revealing as she is pointing out that the chance to walk was fortuitous and she took advantage of it; as she puts it, "availed myself", implying that this would not have been possible in India. She also mentions parks and physical activity in two other places<sup>111</sup> in her travelogue, giving further proof of the significance that freedom of movement held for Indian women travellers.

While Ragaviah mostly confines her elaboration of freedom to the physical act of movement, she does show a wider understanding of freedom in her statement about

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<sup>111</sup> She devotes a sub-section to parks (81-82) in her chapter on London Wonders and she mentions that English people "never shrink from taking exercise in the open air" (109).

religious tolerance. She writes that in England men and women are “free to enjoy what religious opinion they choose” without state interference (114). A more politically conscious notion of freedom is found in Krishnabhabini Das’s travelogue *A Bengali Lady in England*. This text is considered by many to be an anti-colonial narrative because of the criticism of colonial system and British exploitation that the writer includes in her travelogue. An example of her bold critique emerges in the following excerpt:

I would briefly reply that England is the example of independent life while our India is totally subservient. It is casually said that even a slave becomes independent as soon as he sets foot on the English soil. I am also seeing that a new kind of feeling arises in my mind as long as I am inhaling the free air of England and living with free and independent people. (137)

Das’s deployment of the rhetoric of freedom for both political subjugation and gender oppression produces a braiding of political freedom with personal liberty and social freedom. She gives as much emphasis to the need for national development and autonomy as she does to women’s development. In terms of corporeal representation, Das follows the same trajectory as Dutt and Ragaviah in making England a space for gender freedom.

The traveller Das, too, regards her journey as a release from social constraints. Mobility is synonymous with freedom for a nineteenth century Bengali housewife. Thus, she writes that when she was in India, she led a confined existence with limited opportunities, and so she writes:

My female readers! I was also cloistered in a house like you; I had no relationship with my country or the world. I would try to pacify my mind with a few things, but could not do so. (1)

In this portrayal of life in India, Das is suggesting that she was not only sequestered but also frustrated as she had to “pacify my[her] mind with a few things” but failed to do so. She continues with the theme of incarceration in the verses she pens as she embarks on the sea voyage. Here she utilizes the trope of the caged bird to compare her journey with “breaking the cage with a lot of effort” (11). Those who have remained behind are portrayed as “blind in cages” (11). Her previous existence in India acts as a foil to the liberty she witnesses and also enjoys.

In her thematization of mobility, however, Das differs from Dutt and Ragaviah. Since the travel narrative, *A Bengali Lady in England*, takes the form of an ethnographic report, the writer does not offer personal anecdotes or descriptions of her own experience. But, in her account of London city she repeatedly highlights female mobility and social freedom. In this way, the Bengali writer develops her theme of the uncaged bird distinctively.

The imperial centre is projected as a space where women can move easily and freely. In her chapter on London, Das seems fascinated by the presence of women on the streets and in parks. Writing about Sunday mornings, she notes that “[t]here were more women than men walking on the streets” (44) as women are devoted to ritual practices such as going to the church. She sees not only that women exercise along with men but also that members of both sexes row boats in the lake inside Regent’s Park (41). In another place where she describes women rowing boats in Hyde Park, she becomes emotional and confesses:

I cannot explain how happy I feel when I see men and women moving around, rowing and riding horses freely together but I feel very sad at heart when I remember that I cannot see such sights back home in our country. (68)

Das is conflicted because her vicarious pleasure of seeing English women's mobility brings back the memory of Indian women's deprivation. In the verses that are added in the chapter titled "The English Lady" 83-85", she presents a contrast between India and England in terms of spatial liberty. In India the 'andar mahal', or the inner quarter of Indian homes where women reside, is "like a prison" (84), and Indian women's "hearts" are "confined/Within their homes" (84). On the other hand, English women can "go to meetings and parks at will" (84). Remembering the "tearful and desolate figure" of her Indian sisters (85), Das declares that she cannot "feel happiness" (85) By mentioning that she has "cut off the shackles" (85), she indicated that she has come out of the cage and could participate in the unfettered movement that heterotopias of England offered to women. Although Das does not present herself as a mobile woman fleeing from place to place as did Ragaviah, the depiction of London city with its streets, shops, building and parks imply that she was able to move around the imperial metropole without any problem.

## Sartorial Freedom

### *Discarding the Sari*

Autonomy over the presentation of the body through sartorial choice is another way of indicating social freedom and agency in the travel texts. Das gives an example of empowerment through dress. She describes how she changed her outward appearance, when she embarked on the train from Howrah in the following manner:

Earlier when I travelled to my father's house, I used to pass through these stations with my face all covered up. Well, where was my veil today? When I tried to unconsciously pull the veil over my head and instead touched the cap on my head, I felt a little ashamed of myself for wearing different clothes. Today, an acquaintance would fail to recognize me; maybe they would consider me a 'memsahib' and either give me a salute or move away in fear. How strange! (3)

In this passage, Das acknowledges that she has dressed up like an English woman in India. She conforms to social expectations in expressing embarrassment for adopting foreign clothes. However, there is a note of pride in drawing attention to her performativity as a 'memsahib', enacted through her choice of a hat instead of a veil, and the mobility to travel beyond her father's house to England.

The rhetorical question about the "veil" is an indirect assertion that she has discarded social restrictions and her 'face' is not "all covered up" in this journey (3). There is a sense of physical encounter or embodied experience of encroaching into a public space with the uncovered face and journey to a new place. She signals her change with the fact that people who knew would no longer recognize her. The transformation is empowering because the "acquaintance" would now either "salute" her or fear her. The impact of her travel to England seems to be visible on Das from the moment she begins her journey and even before she sets foot in the imperial centre.

In a later chapter in her travelogue, Das writes: "It has been several months since I came to England, I have started eating and dressing like the English;" (33). Her sartorial changes indicate the influence of colonial modernity and reconfiguration of Indian women. As part of the modernizing efforts of the social reform project, male

reformers had imposed Western clothes on Indian women. Western-educated colonial professionals such as the Indian Civil Service officer S. Tagore, and barristers W. C. Bonnerjee and Manmohon Ghose, insisted that their wives wear European styled gowns as the Indian sari was considered too revealing for colonial ideas of virtue and modesty. Another reason why the sari was discouraged was because the manner of draping it without any blouse or petticoat made it cumbersome and unwieldy for movement. Among travellers, Krishnabhabini Das and Toru Dutt are two women whose cultural hybridity emerge in their choice of clothing.

Returning to Das, the statement that she began to dress differently in England shows that travel freed her from social norms and allowed her to explore a limited disorderliness. She seems to reverse European women's appropriation of native costumes for cross-cultural dressing in the way she tries to pass off as "memsahib" (3;33). For Das, alteration in clothes was tied to the performance of being a modern travelling woman. She signals a transformation wrought by spatial dislocation and movement in terms of adaptation with and transculturation of foreign cultures rather than internalization of colonial values. Her sartorial choice seems to be part of self-determinism because she raises this issue again in another chapter and justifies her choice there. She insists that wearing foreign clothes does not imply that "you have lost all love for our country" (33). Das's references to her dress seems to indicate an unease and an anxiety to being the object of scrutiny. In the first chapter, she is almost proud that an acquaintance would either show respect or be frightened; on the other hand, in chapter five, she appears to feel self-conscious that her fellow countrymen "native person" (33) "would make fun" of her (33). This provokes in her a defensive textual strategy where she anticipates arguments against foreign manner of dressing

and counters them with the reasoning that all imitations are not detrimental and selective change can be beneficial.

*Indian Bodies on Display*

*Saris on Show*

The interest in clothes is linked to the corporeal dimension of subjectivity, a point emphasized in the poststructural thinking of Judith Butler. In her book *Bodies that Matter* (1993), the gender theorist discusses in depth the relation between materiality of body and identity. She remarks that bodies are materialized as “sexed”, that is, become culturally intelligible (x) and that the materiality of body is achieved through the power of regulatory norms. Gender identity is often inscribed on the body and the discursive formation of sexed identity is played out in a process of materialization. Butler highlights the connection between discursive pressures and the gendered body where the body embodies cultural possibilities when she states:

A stake in such a reformulation of the materiality of bodies will be the following: (1) the recasting of the matter of bodies as the effect of a dynamic of power, such that the matter of bodies will be indissociable from the regulatory norms that govern their materialization and the signification of those material effects: (*Bodies that Matter* xii).

Butler’s emphasis on regulatory norms in “recasting” the body and its reiterative power resonates with Indian patriarchal attempts to reconfigure the body of the Indian woman through her dress. Since the female body was accepted as a marker of cultural identity by all groups in colonial society, including British colonizers, traditional Indians and reformist Indians, women’s clothes, especially that of the Bengali Hindu female, became a central issue in the debate over reform and modernization.

Himani Bannerji writes that the Hindu Bengali woman's dress was considered to be an obstacle in progress and refinement by liberal male reformers who wished to bring women out of seclusion. Consequently, these men adopted the role of Pygmalion in fashioning their Galatea (113). Bannerji offers as an example of what she terms "ideological-aesthetic meddlesomeness" of enlightened Bengali men (101) to re-dress women of their own class, the case of Debendranath Tagore, a leading figure of the Brahmo Samaj movement, and a driving force behind social reform movements, who tried to modify female dress in his family<sup>iii</sup>

Bannerji interprets the decision to experiment with women's clothing as part of colonial ideas of morality and modernism. The sense of shame instigated in Debendranath and other men resulted from the indoctrination of Western values of modesty and notions of sexuality. While Debendranath looked to local Muslim traditions, the newly Western educated younger generation turned to Western metropolitan culture for inspiration. The England-returned Manmahon Ghose, W.C. Bonnerjee and Satyenadrath Tagore wished to imitate English culture and thus imposed Western gowns on their wives.<sup>112</sup>

The impulse for mimicry led to early female travellers like Krishnabhabini Das and the Dutt sisters to adopt gowns when they travelled to England. In fact, Bonnerjee and Satyenadrath went so far as to insist that their wives discard the sari and wear gowns instead, even when they resided in India.<sup>113</sup> Existing photographs of

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<sup>112</sup> See Borthwick and Murshid for more detailed discussions.

<sup>113</sup> Janaki Majumdar wrote that her mother Hemangini Bonnerjee was not permitted to be barefoot or wear saris. Although she complied with her husband's wishes at home, she still asserted her own agency when resorted to her native customs when visiting her family. This entailed changing her clothes surreptitiously in the carriage.



Toru Dutt show that she and her sister used to dress in Western styled outfits rather than Indian clothes. (See Fig.2 Appendix A)

Satyendranath Tagore's wife, Jnanadanandini Tagore, however, did not passively accept male reconstruction and asserted autonomy in her choice of dress. In her memoir *Puratani*, she has described her dissatisfaction with the cumbersome "bizarre outfit" her husband had designed. When she saw Parsi women wearing saris in public in Bombay, she decided to copy their style and refashion the Bengali way of draping the sari. Devi's successful self-determinism in sartorial choices finally led to the replacement of Westernized gowns by the traditional sari and established its popularity among female travellers from different parts of India. She had added the blouse or chemise and the petticoat to saris and also changed the way it is draped for more convenience. This style has become known as the Brahmika sari. Jnanada not only introduced this modification of the Parsi style, but also promoted the sari she had designed by writing about it in periodicals and offering to send illustrations to those who were interested in it (see fig. 3 in Appendix A).

Devi's version of wearing the sari is a notable example of women's agency and the link between travel, embodiment and performativity. The style she created was a direct result of the impact of travel; its hybrid fusion of Western and Eastern fashion indicates one positive outcome of colonial cultural exchanges. <sup>iv</sup>

The numerous references to clothes such as the sari in women's travel narratives underscore the theme of sartorial decisions and corporeality. References to the ways the body is fashioned and presented, thus textually produce performativity of Indian female identity. Indeed, the sari soon became emblematic of most Indian women when they were in England. In choosing to wear saris rather than Western

gowns, Indian women travellers display acts of self-determinism and show that women's body can become a site for articulating national identity.

Cornelia Sorabji castigated by most critics as an Anglophile because of her “unreserved admiration for the British and for the empire” (Lokuge xvii), also chose to project herself in a sari during her stay in England. Her nephew Richard Sorabji states that during her Oxford days when students had to dress formally every evening for dinner, “Cornelia wore a sari at all times and was very insistent on this” (R Sorabji 24). This remark corresponds with the staging of the performativity of “Indian woman” that is achieved through the repeated acts of being seen in brightly coloured saris. In her memoir *Indian Calling*, a deliberate crafting of an exotic image is clearly revealed in her recollection of her court presentation. She intimates that some special request was made to Queen Victoria when she mentions that she was granted permission to wear “one of my pretty colours” (*India Calling* 35) instead of white, the mandatory colour that all debutantes had to wear at such events. Consequently, she made her appearance in “an azalea sari, something between pink and yellow” (35). Despite her assertions of a transnational identity and mobility, she purposefully dressed in saris to exhibit her Indian identity. In her self-presentation as a colourfully dressed woman, she could be seen as complicit in perpetuating Orientalist images of colonial Indian women (see Fig.4 Appendix A).

#### *Theatricality of Indian Identity*

In Sorabji's reiterations of traversing through England and Europe in saris, there is an element of a staged performance of Indian identity. She seems to take pleasure in the compliments and effect she creates with the spectacle of being an Indian woman in the West (See fig. 4 in Appendix). Although she jokes about being

mistaken for a heathen because of her skin colour and dress, she revels in standing out in a crowd, exploiting the Oriental allure of her dress.

The theatricality of Sorabji's Indianness emerges in an amusing anecdote when she attempted to cross the French border. Once when she was travelling with Mrs. Darling, one of her several British benevolent friends and guards, Customs Officer on the French side seized Sorabji's silk saris, believing the bolts of fabric were being smuggled into Italy for sale. Mrs. Darling, therefore, suggested that Sorabji demonstrate to the border authorities that the fabric was actually her dress. The only solution to the debacle was for Sorabji to undress and then drape her sari to show how the fabric transforms into a sari. Reluctantly, she agrees to strip, "one pull and my draperies were at my feet" (43). Unfortunately, her woes did not end there for she was still not allowed to proceed as the officers wanted to show them again the process of draping. She draws attention to the performative aspect of her being Indian as she describes the audience reaction in "Do it again! [T]hey kept saying, as if they were Alice in Wonderland or Peter Pan" (43). Although there is something discomfiting about an Indian being asked to undress, Sorabji minimizes the humiliation of having to undress humorously, in remembering "how we laughed at their faces" (43-44).

Sorabji's deployment of the sari to secure her self-projection as an "Indian woman" formed part of a larger aim to showcase her Indianness to British people. Both Sayan Chattopadhyay and Antoinette Burton detect signs of deliberate efforts to garner British sympathy for the plight of Indian womanhood and Sorabji herself (Chattopadhyay 7; Burton *Heart of Empire* 111). Lady Hobhouse, her British benefactor, had raised funds for the young Parsi student's education in Oxford by

stressing that she was a young lady “of pure Indian birth” in a letter to *The Times* (Chattopadhyay 6).

Thus, it was important that Sorabji was perceived as a colonial female subject to consolidate her unique position as the other and to gain discursive authority. Chattopadhyay explains that despite her own sometimes ambivalences about her Indianness, Sorabji had to underscore her Indian identity, since “speaking as an ‘Indian’ to communicate with the metropolis was the only authorial position available to Sorabji (11). While she distances herself from the general category of Indian women, especially the “Purdanashins<sup>114</sup>”, the secluded women she represented in courts, she plays to the metropolitan society’s expectations of being an Indian woman. Her fellow students viewed her as the “other”, and often expected her to fulfil their fixed ideas of “Indian”, requesting her, for example, to write an “Indian play” (40). She tried to tell her friends that she was not a playwright, and hence could not write a play in order to not become simply an “Indian” student. Yet, ultimately, she had to comply and agreed to translate a Sanskrit play for the English stage. Chattopadhyay considers the offer of translation to be an attempt to redefine her role from being an “Indian” to an “English translator” of Sanskrit, similar to Monier Monier-Williams and Friedrich Max Muller, two renowned Oxford University orientalist (7). Chattopadhyay adds further that the image of Indian woman sometimes weighed her down; it is an irony that the first time the Christian Anglophile student formed friendships outside family ties, she had to “play the Indian ‘other’ amidst an English society” (Chattopadhyay 7).

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<sup>114</sup> Purdahnashin was the legal term for women who followed purdah and veiling and met only with few male relations. Under the colonial legal system, they received special dispensations and were represented by special counsel (Ahmad).

Inevitably, Indian women like Sorabji excited interest and inquisitiveness. Comic situations arose when British individuals cannot differentiate among colonial subjects, betraying the limits of imperial knowledge and the penchant for stereotyping. This was the case with an English cleric who told Sorabji “it’s *so* like Home to see you,” but it transpired that the Home he had in mind was South Africa where he had worked with coolies and not India where Sorabji came from (45). There are also instances of old ladies trying to convert Sorabji and addressing her in pidgin English. Once when she corrected such a lady, she was told “but you look so very heathen!” (44). Though Sorabji deploys humour to deflect the trauma of racism, these instances of British misreading of the Indian body expose the illegibility of the colonial body to the colonial gaze.

### *Royal Stylizations*

The preoccupation with clothes among female colonial travellers is grounded in the potential for agency and control over self-images through fashion. The Maharani of Cooch Behar, Sunity Devi, became a minor celebrity by self-fashioning herself as an exotic Indian princess. In her memoir, she makes a point of referring to how she dressed in saris at Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee celebrations and the admiration she gained there. Indian clothes helped her gain media attention in England and social and nationalist approval in India. Although Fyzee mentions in *A Time of Education* that she saw the Maharani appear in gowns (27 October 1906 147 and 1 November 1906 150-151),<sup>115</sup> Devi often dressed in saris for official events and portraits (see fig. 5 in Appendix A). She followed Jnanada Tagore’s style of wearing the sari over Western garments.

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<sup>115</sup> Fyzee writes “The Maharani of Cooch Behar was wearing quite an English outfit, which was glittering with diamonds placed here and there” (1 November 1906 150-151).

The Maharani of Cooch Behar, however, in contrast to Jnanada Devi, appears to be keen on forging a transnational cosmopolitan identity rather than to holding on to a traditional national image and modernizing the sari. At the 1902 Coronation Ceremony, she contributed to the glittering array on display with her outfit. In her own words, what she wore was a “handsome dress made by a French milliner for the occasion. The heavy gold embroidery was unique; it was very like the Delhi embroidery and was much admired” (Devi 157). Taking a cue from Julie Codell’s observation on nineteenth century portraits that “Victorian Britons and colonial subjects relying on clothes as identifiers of their agency were self-fashioning cross-dressers” (“Nineteenth Century Contexts” 512-513), one could interpret Sunity Devi’s incorporation of Indian and French styles in her dress as attempts to construct a transnational image. Despite her desire to take part in the larger social picture of Britain through mimicry of Western cultural markers, Devi’s fame and popularity rested on her image as an Indian princess. Thus, she incorporated Indian touches in her European styled outfits, something evident from the dress she wore for the 1902 coronation.

This dress has been memorialized through a state photograph taken at the Lafayette Studio in London that became famous (see fig. 9 chapter 5)<sup>116</sup>. By bridging different cultures through a white satin gown that imitates the drapes of a sari and a necklace with both European and Indic motifs, the Maharani produces an image of colonial hybridity and unsettled notions of essentialized identities. In *Royal Patronage, Power and Aesthetics in Princely India* (2011), Angma Jhala reads into this portrait a reflection of Indian aristocratic women’s engagement with local

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<sup>116</sup> This photograph is discussed in detail again in the chapter on cosmopolitanism.

traditions and wider global and metropolitan practices. More interestingly, Devi's mixture of gown and sari, in addition to her uncovered face, destabilizes gender identity. In terms of gender performativity, the exposure of an Indian female body in a public text fractures the purdah system, which was often considered to be an impediment to progress. The high-collar and drapes of her gown cover the contours of her body from the gaze of others, but her uncovered face looking directly at viewers challenge stereotypes about Indian colonial women, especially aristocratic ladies. At the same time, the display of jewellery, heavily coded with Oriental wealth and British colonial honour, caters to Orientalist discourse and indicates the penchant for theatrical performativity by being seen to represent Indian royalty in England (see Chapter Five).

The Maharani's photograph belongs to a tradition of Indian royalty hiring photographers and crafting their images during their visits to the metropolitan centre. Many colonial subjects, including some Indian princes used portraits to "expose fault lines of power and control" (Codell "Photographic Interventions and Identities"). They utilized modern technology of the photograph studio and by hiring their own photographers they could control and craft their own images. In this way, Sunity with her 1902 Lafayette Studio photograph could resist colonial representation regimes in terms of race and gender and produce what Codell calls "vernacular modernism", to counter the representational regimes imposed by colonial structures ("Photographic Interventions and Identities").

Aside from opportunities to refashion identities through portraits and photographs, England appears to have been a heterotopia for aristocratic Indian women by providing them an alternate life, one released from oppressive customs. Like the Maharani of Cooch Behar, Chimnabai II, Lakshmibai Mohite before her

marriage (1871-1958), wife of the Gaekwar of Baroda, had visited England and met Queen Victoria. She, too, used to observe purdah in India, but as her husband commented, Chimnabai, “enjoys [in Britain] to the full the liberty she lacks in Baroda’, where women remained in seclusion, and ‘not even myself can at the present time lift up the veil’” (qtd. in Taylor chapter 7). Although the Baroda queen did not write a travelogue or a memoir, she commemorated European modernity in her book on women’s social reform.

### Muslim Female Bodies

The display of Indian female bodies takes on added nuances when it comes to Muslim women’s presentations. Thus, the deployment of female bodies to challenge current conventions was a tactic also favoured by the Begums of Bhopal, sometimes referred to as the Nawab Begums or Nawabs of Bhopal, a line of female rulers of the princely state in North India. Several photographs of these female Nawabs offer evidence of female agency, corroborating Codells’ argument that:

Victorian portrait convention thus fit Judith Butler’s concept of performativity as a ‘regulatory frame’: from ‘a set of repeated acts’ for aristocrats in the eighteenth century and for everyone else in the nineteenth century (“Victorian Portraits” 494).

In their portraits, royal Indian travellers appropriated Victorian material culture in terms of dress, props and backdrops to stage images of authority and respect. Codell points out that nineteenth century portraits do not show the sitter in their true likeness, rather, they “construct or produce the sitter through cultural allusions widely disseminated for public consumption” (496). In other words, the conventions of photograph or portraits functioned as form of regulatory practice which colonial



subjects could exploit to access the power embedded in these signs. Corresponding to Sunity Devi, the Nawab Begums of Bhopal posed with faces uncovered and British medals on their bodies. These photographs were circulated to a global audience and included in albums commemorating Durbars in India.

Nawab Begum Sultan Jahan Kaikhusrau, whose visit to England has been narrated in *A Trip to Europe* by Maimoona Sultan, attended the Delhi Durbar of 1911 in burqa and face fully covered as evident from a photograph . Here, her projection of a Muslim identity is modified through her gesture of pinning the British medals of the Order of the Indian Empire and Order of the Star of India (See fig.6 in Appendix). The effect is one of cosmopolitanism and cross-cultural engagement<sup>117</sup>.

The Nawab Begum's selective use of clothing resists the hegemony of imperial culture with the Muslim styled veil, simultaneously reinforcing imperial power with the Bhopal ruler's proud display of the honours given to her. In this way, she codes visual power and asserts a corporeal self-determinism in her photographs. Sultan Jahan, the Nawab Begum of Bhopal, was the only royal Muslim woman to attend the coronation ceremony of George V. Although she attended the event in burqa, she informed King George and Queen Mary that her daughters-in-law who had accompanied her on this trip could not come to the court because they did not wear the burqa, which suggests that the burqa could be enabling at times for some.

One of the earlier travellers to manifest the agency of the burqa was Malika Kishwar, the Begum of Awadh, who visited Queen Victoria in 1857 to appeal against the annexation of her son's kingdom of Awadh by Lord Dalhousie (Fisher; Taylor). In

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<sup>117</sup> The cosmopolitan performativity of the Begum Nawab of Bhopal will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on Cosmopolitanism.

his study of Queen Victoria's relationship with India and its people, Miles Taylor notes that the Begum of Awadh was the only royal Muslim female to have interacted with the British queen. Clearly, she refused to compromise with the tradition of purdah during her journey and her meeting and remained hidden from the gaze of Prince Albert throughout the occasion (Taylor). The deployment of burqa and the practice of purdah suggests that Muslim women could manipulate such symbols and connect themselves to a large system existing beyond the colonial structure, thereby, subverting the control of the British empire over their bodies and their culture.

### *Muslim Student Experience*

Issues of veiling and nationalist ethnic identities preoccupied non-royal female visitors too. For example, Fyzee, a young Muslim student from Bombay, was keen to retain her Muslim Indian identity when she was in England. Though she did not observe the purdah, she mentions in her travelogue that she continued to use her head covering in London. First of all, she tries to establish a visual marker of her ethnic identity. In her November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1906 diary entry, she draws attention to her commitment to her roots when she writes, "I have continued wearing my Indian clothes and do not intend to ever give them up" (151). She also allays fears of religious transgressions in assuring her readers that she observes clothing strictures by covering her head and using the cloak favoured by her family to cover the body (151).

Although Fyzee does not mention that she wore a sari, the editors of the English translation of her travelogue, Siobhan Lambert-Hurley and Sunil Sharma state that photographs show that the student from Bombay did wear it while in England. (See figures 7 and 8 in Appendix A) Fyzee's pride in Indian dress and performativity of Indianness surface in a number of remarks she made on other travellers' clothes.

While she admires the Western styled gowns of Maharani Sunity Devi (151) and Mrs. Sassoon (2 January 1907 167; 22 June 1907 196), she is critical of Indians who mimic Western clothes without any aesthetic sense. Upon meeting an Indian lady, who does not meet Fyzee's sense of style, she writes:

This lady is pretty, but unfortunately, she wears badly tailored and tasteless, gaudy English clothes, with a wig or coiffed hair on her head in which there are strings of fake diamonds and pearls! (21 November 1906, 154).

She remarks even more scathingly that the woman made "herself an object of ridicule" (155). She is censorious as well and even advises the woman that "we can continue wearing our clothes in this country without any problems", and ends by writing, "Why Indians make a spectacle of themselves in this way I don't know" (155).

Although Fyzee differed from the earlier travellers like Das and Dutt in her commitment to retain ethnic attires, she shared with the nineteenth century voyagers a delight of the freedom of walking. Her statement, "I went around on foot and, in my view, this is a great luxury" (25 November 1906 156) indicates the novelty of walking continued even when the new twentieth century began. Within days of arriving in London, Fyzee can proudly claim, "I walk for miles, but don't feel it. There is an amazing quality in the air," (21 September 1906, 129) underscoring the energizing weather and atmosphere of England. The traveller recognizes the value of her mobility and acknowledges the fact that her empowerment comes in what is a contact zone in her simple declaration: "It is true that London is a wondrous place" (21

September 1906 129).<sup>118</sup> Besides drawing attention to the presentation of Indian identity through clothes, women travellers, including Fyzee, further develop the theme of embodied travel by foregrounding physical sensations in several ways. In addition to her references to Indian clothes, she textualizes sensory experiences by citing the impact of London at a corporeal level.

### Sensations and the Body

Attending to senses other than the visual can help to discover the layered nuances of travel writing. In their introduction to the *Routledge Research Companion to Travel Writing* (2020), Alasdair Pettinger and Tim Youngs stress the need to “place[s] the senses alongside one another to show how all are important to travel” (8). Taking a cue from Pettinger and Youngs, the following section will examine the presentation of sensations in the travel texts of Atiya Fyzee and Sunity Devi.

#### *Food*

Taste or gustatory sensation is often overlooked in critical readings, but a traveller’s relationship with food can be indicative of social responses in cross-cultural encounters. In her chapter on “Taste” in *The Routledge Research Companion to Travel Writing*, Heidi Oberholtzer Lee explains the importance of food, thus,

Travel writing typically contains descriptions of food and eating, taste and orality, production and consumption, and these can be read for their embodiment, incorporation, appetite and desire. (236).

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<sup>118</sup> In addition, Atiya Fyzee conveys her pleasure of walking again and again in her diary: “I went for a long walk with Miss Firth” (29 September 1906 133); “Today I went for a walk” (15 Jan 1907 172); “this morning I walked a great distance” (23 March 1907 182); and “This morning at 11 o’clock, we had gone walking on the commons” (24 March 1907 182).

Food not only encodes desire but also signifies cultural values. Lee refers to a hermeneutic of food, that is to say, the process of foregrounding certain foods and attaching cultural and political importance to them (237). In Indian representations of eating, there is a tendency to highlight the enjoyment of Indian food in England through references to foods such as *kichri*, *achars* and curries. This is particularly noticeable in Fyzee's travelogue for she often refers to her appetite and the gastronomical delights she finds, prompting Lambert-Hurley to call it an obsession ("Narrating the Everyday" 83). The references to food, however, are more nuanced than just records of gourmandizing as they are embedded with nostalgia and homesickness of diasporic experiences.

Fyzee's allusions to cuisine are connected to memories of home and encoding of Indian culture. For instance, the first reference to Indian food occurs a week after she arrives in London. The joy of finding familiar dishes is palpable in Fyzee's enthusiasm for the "*khichri* and yoghurt *kadhi*, and two or three types of tasty *achars*" her cousin Vazirunnisa served in her remark: "what blessing could be better than this simple food" (22 September 1906 129). The comfort of eating spicy food is again noticeable when one compares Fyzee's response to different meals. In her letter dated 29 December 1906, she notes that Mrs. Sassoon's reception was a lavish affair "decorated with flowers" and the guests comprised a "distinguished gathering", yet the food "fancy refreshments" do not elicit any particular response from her (166). In contrast, when she went to her cousin's home after the reception, she writes that she "ate with extreme relish" the "spicy delicious vegetables" found there (166). This difference indicates that Fyzee's preoccupation with food is not a simple a gourmand's love of eating. The fascination for Indian food is part of her longing for home and attempt to connect with her Indian culture, and perhaps highlight for

readers her steady attachment to Indian identity. This may explain why Fyzee did not elaborate on “the fancy refreshments” at Mrs. Sassoon’s party on December 29<sup>th</sup>, but offers a list of Indian dishes that Mrs. Sassoon served a few days later on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1907– “[t]here were many Indian dishes: *pulao*, *murgh ka salan*, chutney, achar, pigeon *koftas* on chicken cutlets were delicious” (167). The strong link between food and ethnic identity comes across in Fyzee’s introspective comment after she receives some savoury snacks from her cousin. She writes:

After a long time, I ate some delicious *desi* [from the country] things. Life is not possible without our Indian things! (15 January 1907 172).

Fyzee’s delight in *desi* or national culture and her acknowledgement that to be Indian one needs such Indian cultural markers are common in travellers and diasporic individuals.

In *Postcolonial Life-Writing* (2009), Bart Moore-Gilbert points out that travel “foregrounds issues of embodiment in relation to diet, physical comfort and health” (89) and as Lambert-Hurley indicates such references to Indian food underscore the existence of a cultural gap between colonizer and colonized (“Narrating the Everyday” 84). It is possible that food served as a strategy to overcome strangeness and provide some comfort. For instance, among the very letters of Toru Dutt written from England that have survived (Lokuge presents five in her edition of the letters), there are some references to Indian foods. This is quite surprising in her Anglophile family with its cultural immersion in an English lifestyle of gowns, piano practice and French lessons, when the Bengali traveller discloses to her cousin:

We have taught Isabella to cook some Indian dishes, and on our table, with mutton cutlets and roly-poly, comes up hot *Kuchoree* or cabbage *Churchuree* or *ambole* of eels. Isn't it nice? (22 November 1870 220).

Dutt's juxtaposition of Bengali everyday food such as curries with English dishes of cutlets and puddings is a vivid example of cultural hybridity through food<sup>119</sup>. By teaching Isabella to cook Indian dishes, the Dutts' were also contributing to the transnational movement of food, and perhaps laying the groundwork for contemporary British love of Indian curry!

### *Frissons of Being in England*

In *Autobiography of an Indian Princess*, Sunity Devi records a different kind of bodily experience. As a royal visitor, she had privileged access to the highest echelons of London, the aristocratic circle, a fact that distinguishes her sojourn in two distinct ways<sup>120</sup>. The Maharani's insertion into English society was also an embodied experience that foregrounds corporeality. The bodily dimension in travel has been noted by Sarah Jackson in her study of tactile representations in travel writing. In her essay on "Touching", Jackson emphasizes that "accounts of the tactile remain largely overlooked by both authors and critics of travel writing" (222), and cites the dominance of the ocular in travel depictions. Although Jackson focuses on sensory experiences of inhospitable and rough terrains, her observations on "multisensory quality of geographical experience" (Jackson 225) can be applied to Indian colonial women's experiences of the imperial centre.

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<sup>119</sup> A similar hybrid culture flourished in the Bonnerjee household since Janaki Majumdar writes in her memoir that every Sunday "my mother used to go down to the kitchen to cook a real Indian dinner.... we and our visitors all greatly enjoyed this meal", including the English servants (*Family History* 73).

<sup>120</sup> Cornelia Sorabji is probably the only other traveller with equal entrée into the domain of English aristocracy.

Indeed, Sunity Devi's tactile impressions are vividly evoked in her memoir. She recalls that when she met Queen Victoria, she was the only woman present "whom the Queen kissed" (113). The sensory details of Sunity's corporeal experiences chime with Paul Rodaway's theory of haptic aesthetic (which uses touch as a means of negotiating and appreciating environments (Jackson 225).

Jackson applies Rodaway's theory of touch geography to propose a new way of exploring and suggests that "sensuous geographies" can be drawn from tactile response to new environments. Thus, Jackson's view of touch as a form of exploration through contact opens up the multi-sensorial dimensions of geography. By focusing on touch, travellers can explore their surroundings innovatively.

The sensory of experiences of England in Devi's memoir recreate a sensual and intimate description. For example, the Maharani conveys the opulent atmosphere of Windsor Castle with phrases such as "like a fairyland" and "all gilt from ceiling to floor" to convey the grandeur of the bedroom she was given (114). Along with the magnificence, she encodes a sense of physical well-being and indulgence when she writes "I never saw anything so splendid and yet so comfortable" (114). The word "comfortable" introduces elements of touch geography. Then, she also adds a haptic memory, that is a detail about touch, in recalling that "I was struck with another thing; the face towels were of the finest linen", highlighting the sensory detail of the soft towels (114). She was also excited by finding a bath attached to her room for she states, "I screamed with joy at the sight" (114).

Devi's account of her visit to England also differs because of the boldness with which she conveys tactile and other sensory impressions. She writes with a befitting modesty, for Indian social decorum that she never touched wine unless



absolutely necessary (104), and that she refused to dance with the Prince of Wales at the first state ball she attended (107).

However, with time, the Maharani becomes acculturated with English social mores and manners. Devi, thus, confides that when she was first introduced to Prince William, who later became the German Emperor, Kaiser William, he “bent down and kissed my hand” (109). To mitigate possible disapproval from her Indian readers, she protests, with “I blushed and my throat grew dry; my hand had never been kissed before by a man” (109). At the same time, she reminds readers that it was a distinction to be treated so by an important royalty and quotes her husband the Maharajah saying to her:

Sunity, it is a great honour that your hand should be kissed by the future German Emperor; you ought to feel proud. (109).

The Maharani appears to defend her cultural transgression, thus, by alluding to her husband’s pride and approval of the English custom of showing courtesy and respect to a lady.

Devi also acknowledges that “[i]n London I was asked to many dances, and I enjoyed them one and all” (120). She writes of dancing with the Earl of Dunham and mistaking his twin brother for him. Of all the travellers, Sunity Devi comes closest to describing a sense of liberty when visiting England, though this depiction is not an example of unregulated or unrestrained behaviour of vagabondage, a term Dunlith Bird uses to refer to the gender transgressions and other kinds of disorderly behaviour that some travellers indulge in when they leave home (*Travelling in Different Skins*).

An instance of being released from constantly being mindful of decorum and restraint in courtly life occurs when Devi visited Hatfield House. She was invited to

go inside the maze in the garden with Princess Victoria and Princess Helene of Orleans. Soon, however, the ladies were lost in the labyrinth, and she writes that they “ran screaming and screaming deeper and deeper into the maze” (121). They finally escaped by breaking through the hedges and came out with their “dainty muslin and laced gowns” (121) torn to “ribbons” (122). The incident of the Maharani getting lost and appearing dishevelled must have made a deep impression on her English hosts because years later when she again visited Hatfield, her host Lord Salisbury mentioned that “In 1887... a Maharani of Cooch Behar came to Hatfield House and lost herself in our maze” (122). The fact that British people remembered the incident is further testimony of the impact that Sunity Devi had as an exotic and beautiful Indian princess.

#### *Weather and the Female Body*

While England offered moments of thrill and excitement, the sensations that travellers experienced were not always enjoyable. The female travellers produce a textured impression of the imperial centre by writing about the different ways their bodies were affected. Weather, for instance, often caused suffering and misery, a fact that many travellers reported<sup>121</sup>. In *A Time of Education*, Fyzee registers the various ways English weather permeated her body and her mood.

Fyzee writes that the cold winter affects walking by making it difficult to step on icy roads or impossible to go out and walk. Further evidence of the weather’s impact on Indian bodies is found in references to illness among fellow Indian students. Miss Das, one of the three Indian students in her college, has to be sent to the Isle of Wight to recover (23 November 1906 155). Then she describes falling sick

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<sup>121</sup> Krishnabhabini Das and Sunity Devi both comment on the dismal weather that greeted them on first arriving in London.

herself, possibly a nervous breakdown, brought on by the news of her grandmother's death. She writes, "For eight days I lay there, listless with a fever and a headache. I didn't feel like walking, talking or sitting" (9 March 1907 179). But the editors of the English translation suggest that she may have been suffering from "the proverbial lovesickness" ("Friendship and Notoriety" 57). As a result of her poor health, she is sent to stay with the sister of the college headmistress. Later, she leaves her college and returns to India without completing her training.

Fyzee's citations of physical malaise and suffering constitute a contrast to the kind of elation of being in London that most travellers recorded. It points to the multiplicity of experiences that women underwent, including pleasure and suffering. The notorious fog of England and its unpleasant cold winters are mentioned in other travelogues as well. Das alludes to the menacing fog of the country which had a palpable effect on her. She was unable to work in dark gloomy atmospheres and wanted to escape from London (41-42). Despite the glamour and excitement of a royal tour, Devi, too, writes that when she first arrived in London, the cold weather and bitter wind disappointed her (103). The stress of the body traversing foreign environments manifests in references to illnesses in travelogues including Majumdar's brother Kitty dies after he gets infected with double pneumonia (*Memoirs* 81), and Devi's children fall ill when visiting England for the first time (*Autobiography of an Indian Princess* 104).

Impediments and constraints that travel to England held for colonized subjects constitute a significant theme in travel narratives. Women's performativity of bodies in motion reveal both freedom of movement as well as the pain and constrictions they underwent. Fyzee's failure to finish her degree and the decision of her fellow student, Miss Das, to leave Maria Grey and go to Cambridge signal the fact that

England was not always an enabling place as far as women's right to choose was concerned; it could also appear as a space of constriction and impediments.<sup>122</sup>

## Indian Bodies in Metropolitan Gaze

### *Nationalist Consciousness*

It is possible to trace a shift in Indian women's projections of England in the travelogues of the 1930s. By the time Kuttan Nair and Durgabati Ghose travelled to England, the resonances of a heterotopia with freedom and mobility had become muted, and the travellers encode different embodied experiences of England. Unlike Sorabji or Devi, the later travellers are not keen about establishing Indian presence by constantly performing Indianness. Travelling in the nineteenth century, Sorabji and Devi seemed to be engaged in a process of defining and explaining Indian identity and culture to the British people they interacted with. Meanwhile, Nair and Ghose are more confident of being accepted in British society.

In *The Westward Traveller*, Ghose, for instance, is critical of English mores and focuses on the discomfort that Indians have to endure when visiting England. She emphasizes the challenges of finding good bathing facilities, reminding one of Devi's delight when the Maharani discovered an attached bath in a Windsor Castle suite. Ghose mentions that she and her husband had moved out of their hotel to stay in a shared house. However, they felt compelled to return to the hotel because they did not

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<sup>122</sup> The negative side of England emerges with the barriers it places on women's volition. Cornelia Sorabji and Pandita Ramabai had to abandon their goals to study medicine by their benefactors and patrons. Antoinette Burton has written in detail about Ramabai's and Cornelia's discontent at having to comply with the wishes of their sponsors in *At the Heart of the Empire*.

like the shared bath in the place they had rented; as she explains, “one did not like to use the same tub that five others had used earlier” (54).

Ghose’s complaint about the poor sanitation system of England is worth examining because she is reversing the colonial discourse of hygiene in which India is positioned as backward. She seems to undermine British modernity and the rhetoric of cleanliness by exposing the lack of adequate toilets and bathrooms in London houses (53). She writes that it is difficult to share one single bath in England, which is less of a problem in her home country because Indians are “much neater” than the British. Consequently, she writes that she and her husband “felt uncomfortable” with the shared house and returned to their more expensive hotel (54).

Ghose continues the theme of deprivation and challenges for the Indian body with her remarks on food. She writes of her longing to eat curry when she is in Europe.<sup>123</sup> One of the attractions of London that the Bengali traveller Ghose describes is a restaurant in Gerrard Street which served a variety of Indian food like “fish kaliya, curry, meat kofta, kebabs, shammi kebab, biryani, puloa, chops, chapatti, parathas, jalebis, cheese cakes etc...” (50). She notes with pleasure that “their shrimp and brinjal curry...tasted quite good” (50), an indication that Indian travellers considered food to be important gustatory adventures in their travels<sup>124</sup>. She writes that Sri Abaninath Mitra, her fellow passenger on the ship voyage, had taught the Italian chef on board how to cook “aloo dum”, which she appreciates and writes that “it really helps other passengers if there are a few more people like him” (7).

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<sup>123</sup> Durgabati Ghose craves her native food when is on the ship and waits eagerly for the “long-desired curry and rice” when she is in Switzerland (Ghose 32)

<sup>124</sup> Toru Dutt and Janaki Majumdar both mention that even in their Anglophile households, Bengali food was part of their hybrid lifestyle. Toru writes a cousin that they taught the cook Isabella “Kuchoorree” “cabbage Churchuree” and “ambole of eels” (22 November 1870, 220).

Apart from writing frankly about missing Indian food, Indian female travellers appear more confident about their sartorial choices. Ghose and Nair normalized the wearing of Indian saris in England by refusing to mark it as special or unusual. They mention that they wore saris not as conscious efforts to valorise Indian culture but as a quotidian practice of everyday material culture.

In her examination of colonial Indian presence in England, Shompa Lahiri notes that many Indian students felt the need to cultivate “the cuff and collar cult” in order to adapt to English society and form friendships (*Anglo-Indian Encounters* 160)<sup>125</sup>. She cites the example of K.P.S. Menon who found it expedient to dress as an English gentleman while he was studying in Oxford in the 1920s. (*Anglo- Indian Encounters* 160). In contrast to those Indians who imitated English ways as part of colonial mimicry, the colonial Indian women travellers of the 1930s retain their traditional dress.

In *A Peep at Europe*, Kuttan Nair makes several references to her sari-clad body. Besides the pride of displaying her national identity through sartorial choices, the Kerala traveller’s foregrounding of her embodied experience indicates that Indian colonial women were gazers as well as objects of the gaze. While visiting Prague, she writes that the all-female Indian group were a spectacle for the Europeans, as in her following observation:

To attract a crowd wherever we went with our coloured sarees on, had become quite a common thing by this time. But it was only in Prague that Policemen had to disperse the crowd that collected when some of us we out shopping.

(40)

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<sup>125</sup> Shompa Lahiri writes that it helped students to gain social access and acceptance.

Nair's comment that attracting crowds had become "a common thing" suggests that she and her fellow travellers had accepted the sensation they created with their racial otherness well. Nair had earlier explained that the Venetians, like people of other parts of Europe, were "simply fascinated by the Indian 'saree' and they, by no means hide their appreciation of it" (17).

In presenting embodied aspects of travel, Indian narratives also introduce the issue of being observed by others. Indian women's travelling body functions simultaneously as an object constructed for projection or performance by the traveller as well as an object viewed and analysed by others. The double consciousness of being both subject and object is an effect of racism embedded in ethnographic spectacles.

The awareness of being the object of colonial gaze is present in the travel texts of Sorabji and Fyzee. Fyzee's frequent reports of the admiration and praise she received for her clothes reflect the glare of a colonial observation of her body and her attempts at self-validation. Soon after she arrives in London, the journal *Lady's Pictorial* requests permission to photograph as well as write an article on her. The journal's interest indicates abiding metropolitan curiosity about colonial subjects. The desire to know is, however, embedded in prejudice and voyeuristic consumption. Fyzee is disappointed to note that a journalist and a photographer from *Lady's Pictorial* were surprised by the "artistry and suitability" of her clothes (1 October 1906 135). The encounter reveals to the traveller prevailing racial prejudice and the process of othering. Her recognition of the colonial propensity to categorize colonized people as inferior and base can be found in statements such as: "they [the British] had ungainly thoughts about Indians. If they met an Indian who does not meet their fixed views, they become totally flabbergasted (135). Later, when she met the Honourable

Maude Lawrence, she is acutely conscious of being scrutinized by her hostess. She writes that the British lady “inspected my clothes very carefully too and expressed her approval” (28 May 1907 192).

Sorabji, too, observes that a metropolitan gaze is often trained on the Indian woman. She comments in her memoir that Indian female bodies evoked greater interest than men’s because for some years “Indian boys and men had been coming in respectable numbers. But their clothes had not the same allure or suggestions of foreignness” (44). At the same time, though, these instances of misreading Indians expose the illegibility of the colonial body. Indian bodies could be manipulated and modified to confuse metropolitan society, occasionally to the advantage of the colonial subject. Although the female travellers in this study do not mask or conceal their ethnic identities. Shompa Lahiri’s study of the Anglo-Indian Olive Christian Malvery’s blending into mainstream British society as a Cockney indicates the possibility for Indian subjects to integrate with the metropolitan white population and subvert racial distinctions (*Indian Mobility*).

However, in the cases of Nair and Ghose, there is a marked difference. While Sorabji and Fyzee accept the burden of performing Indian identity through their appearance, later female travellers are more critical of the spectacle they have to perform for European voyeurs. Travelling in the 1930s, Nair is no longer awed by opportunities for movement or social interaction available to her. She is instead irritated by the curiosity of onlookers, which reveals a resistance to the colonial subject position she found herself in. Aware of being the object of the European’s gaze, she compares herself to a zoo animal when she comments “We had been ever since we landed in Europe, ‘walking zoos’ as it were” (160-161). Lahiri locates in



Nair's analogy of "walking zoo" a reflection of "objectifying ethnographic gaze" on colonial women, (*Indian Mobilities* 98).

Ghose and Nair seem to be more critically aware of the process of objectification they experience than earlier travellers. Ghose, for instance, often compares British prejudices about Indians with the way the British people behave themselves. It is as if she has distanced herself from her Indian identity and is dispassionately evaluating both colonizers and colonized. She punctures colonial claims of "calling themselves educated and civilised" by exposing that British have a dirty habit of using spit to clean themselves <sup>126</sup>(47).

Nair also employs a similar strategy of reversing the direction of stereotypes when she alludes to Katherine Mayo's representations of India in her description of slum. Meanwhile, Nair indicates evidence of her deployment of the third eye when she perceives the condescension with which British people responded to her opinions. She describes interactions with the "Englishman" as she labels the listener in the following manner:

He will put your questions and thereby appear greatly interested in your problems, and when you have exhausted yourself with the narration of hard, honest facts given in all seriousness, you are in the end met with a gentle "But, my dear young lady....", which makes you realise at once that you have been only wasting your lungs all the while. (75-76)

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<sup>126</sup> Ghose's comparisons are not always directed to criticism of the British as she is objective enough to note that English people "have less attachment towards material objects" (49) and that "people on an average, and especially women, ate much less" (54).

Nair's recognition that Englishman will only offer a polite but superficial attentiveness is a perceptive analysis of the position of colonized subjects. She even criticises British sense of humour for being "a glorified version of that spirit of condescension, the natural outcome of a sincere conviction of his being above all criticism" (75). In her scathing remarks, Nair is employing satire and irony to debunk colonial power. The appeal to a comic mode is not unique to Nair as Ghose also uses this as a strategy to satirize Englishmen as in her humorous quip about feeding cabbages to tigers and lions in Regent Park Zoo in her comment, "May be like the Englishmen, tigers here are also used to having salad with their meals." (51). As mentioned earlier, Sorabji also resorted to humour and irony in her account of travel experiences. Nonetheless, a difference emerges in the fact that Sorabji's humour was self-directed, while Ghose and Nair are aiming the satire or irony at the colonizers.

While Nair and Ghose continue the theme of being objectified by European eyes, it is possible to argue that the later travellers are more resistant and, thus, portray negatively the voyeuristic intrusions on their bodies. A sense of being accosted and physically violated emerges in Ghose's memory of an incident in London. Once when the Ghoses and their friends, Abani Babu and his wife, were walking along Thames they were followed by slum children who taunted them. While the boys "pestered" them for money with shouts of "Give us pennies!", some girls "touched" their saris with admiration (57). Ghose's intermingling of irritation at being asked for money and of pride for the girls' appreciation in their comments of "beautiful" for the saris point to an ambivalent response of being the object of scrutiny; it seems to be flattering and intrusive.

A similar note of ambivalence also marks Nair's response. Her travelogue *A Peep at Europe* is regarded as a highly critical depiction of England because of her

anti-colonial and nationalist perspective. Yet Nair, along with Ghose, underscore women's freedom in England suggesting that Indian continued to enjoy less social freedom than their British counterparts even as late as the 1930s. Consequently, Nair acknowledges that "any woman, it seems, may walk about even late at night without fear of being molested or made an unwilling victim" (74). She supports this claim with her personal experience of having "wandered about the streets long after the twilight had died away, knowing little of the place, but feeling absolutely safe and secure" (74). The comment highlights another aspect of England for female travellers -- women's safety in movement. This security Nair feels comes from the dutiful and responsible policeman who "unlike his compeer in our own country" (74) helps people in public spaces.

## Conclusion

The analysis of Indian women's identity performances in this chapter shows that body and corporeal acts are significant in the process of self-fashioning. While the travellers engage with the general category of Indian woman, they present variations in their projections of mobility and clothing. It is worth noting that early travellers, such as Dutt, Ragaviah and Das, writing in the nineteenth century, conform to the pattern of celebrating England as a place of freedom. However, the later travellers, Sorabji, Fyzee, Ghose and Nair, refrain from identifying England with freedom, and in terms of sartorial decisions, they highlight ethnic dress to cement their Indian identities.

The notion of Indian identity is, however, complicated by slight differences in the style of wearing the sari. Fyzee, for instance, valorises Indian dress but does not mention that she wore a sari. She highlights instead the fact she retained the Fyzee

charsaf, a modified version of a long cloak worn by Turkish women. Though she references saris in her memoir, Sorabji underscores a difference from other Indian women by informing readers that she drapes her sari in the Parsi rather than the Brahmika style favoured by most Indians. Devi presents yet another design choice in her fusion of sari and gown, which also reflects her hybridity. The variations in these sartorial interpretations of national identity mirror the ethnic divisions and multiculturalism of South Asia. They also trace women travellers' development from women wearing Western style gowns, to be seen as hybrid figures, through the combination of gown and sari, and finally to more nationalist avatars by privileging Indian customs of wearing the sari.

The changes in attitude to mobility parallel wider social development, including the rise of nationalism and concomitant anti-colonial sentiments in India. However, the theme of mobility intersects with gender concerns, and so the women continue to associate gender and movement with England despite improvements in women's condition in the later period of colonialism. Women's performativity of identity, especially gendered selves, is not limited to mobility and clothes. There are other dimensions which will be discussed in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER FIVE PERFORMING COSMOPOLITANISM

The aim of this dissertation is to track the development of female subjectivity and agency in colonial travel narratives. These constitute important archival sources for constructing a genealogy of gender development in South Asia. An analysis of such texts reveals the emergence of a female subjectivity over time which counters stultifying images of passive and immobilized native women unable to represent themselves. A surprising dimension of these self-constructions is the articulation of cosmopolitan attitudes in female travellers' performativity of identity.

This chapter takes an analytical approach to cosmopolitanism to understand it as a historically grounded practice. What follows, therefore, situates the analysis in the context of postcolonial and gender studies to highlight cosmopolitan enunciations in relation to structures of domination. My reading of female travel narratives discloses a performativity of cosmopolitan identity by Indian women visitors traversing geographical and social landscapes of the metropolitan centre. Their cosmopolitanism is mainly predicated in the cultural sphere in several distinct ways.

One notable strand is the successful appropriation and display of cultural capital; another is an assertion of belonging to a wider world, and still another is the forging of transnational networks. My discussion will be informed by recent scholarship in this area, including Pnina Werbner's reconfiguration of elite Eurocentric cosmopolitanism to bring in manifestations from below, and among non-elites in producing a vernacular cosmopolitanism<sup>127</sup>. Under the rubric of vernacular cosmopolitanism, I will focus on cultural manifestations which Ulrich Beck in *Cosmopolitan Vision* (2006) and Ulf Hannerz in *Two Faces of Cosmopolitanism*:

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<sup>127</sup> See Werbner "Vernacular Cosmopolitanism", "Paradoxes of Postcolonial Vernacular Cosmopolitanism in South Asia and the Diaspora" and *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism: Rooted, Feminist and Vernacular Perspectives*.

*Culture and Politics* (2006) contend are central in cosmopolitan values. Hannerz's view of cosmopolitanism as bifurcating into two streams of cultural and political strands is reflected in Indian women's cosmopolitan enactments. Finally, the chapter will try to demonstrate that Indian women's colonial travel narratives project cosmopolitanism as identity performativity, an area that has not received much attention in research on Indian women's colonial writing. To do so, the discussion will be divided into three parts reflecting three different strands of cultural cosmopolitanism in terms of cultural capital, royal cosmopolitanism and imperial subjecthood in the travel texts of Atiya Fyzee, Sunity Devi, Maimoona Sultan and Cornelia Sorabji.

### Cosmopolitan Performativity

In my route to cosmopolitan history of Indian female travellers, I will link the concept of cosmopolitanism to theories of performativity, a central argument of this research project. I intend to demonstrate that the articulation of a cosmopolitan identity is a performativity based on strategic choices.

Ian Woodward's and Zlatko Skrbis' perspectives that cosmopolitanism is embedded in attitude and practice can guide any analysis of performative views undertaken of Indian travelling cosmopolitanism. These two critics have offered persuasive arguments for a performative approach in their article "Performing Cosmopolitanism". Their strategy is to "think about cosmopolitanism through the prism of a performative approach" (Woodward and Skrbis "Performing Cosmopolitanism" 135). As they tell us:

We suggest that a fruitful way to think about cosmopolitanism is through the prism of a performative approach. Recent developments in performance theory ( Alexander, 2004a , 2004b ; Butler, 1997[1988]; Geertz, 1973 ; Schechner,

1993 ; Turner, 1982 ) seek to understand the performative character of culture by drawing upon theoretical resources of symbolic action, ritual and social drama to show how social action is contingent upon history and collective sentiments, but must be brought into existence by continuous performative acts which actualise and reproduce the identities of social actors and the meaning of co-habiting objects and settings ( Butler, 1997 [1988]: 409; Bennett, 2010 ). (135)

Woodward and Skrbiš, thus, give attention to cultural knowledge in presenting the argument that “performative acts” are based on “ritual and social drama” and that the repetition of such acts consolidates cosmopolitan projections. Their emphasis on culture and its relevance to performativity is further underscored in their proposition that:

Cosmopolitanism is propagated by the effective display of particular representatives, objects or carriers, who through their social performances can display a viable or socially warranted form or aspect of cosmopolitan identity (137).

In their proposition, Woodward and Skrbiš link cosmopolitanism to modern consumer culture and maintain that the display of material-aesthetic signifiers is central to enactments of achieving cultural citizenship.

My reading of women’s travel texts suggest that women’s cosmopolitanism was a strategic deployment of cultural resources to insert themselves in discourses of travel writing, colonialism and modernity. Cosmopolitan experiences produced by travel extended beyond physical mobility and confronting a foreign culture as it leads to opportunities for intercultural development.

The emergence of cosmopolitanism, is, however, complicated by conflicting interests of nationalism. The contradictory notes and ambivalences constitute a part of the multivalences of cosmopolitanism itself. In their introduction to *osmopolitanisms* (2017), Bruce Robbins and Paula Lemos Horta underscore dualities and contradictions within cosmopolitanism when they state:

According to the new understanding, cosmopolitanism can be defined as any of many possible modes of life, thought, and sensibility that are produced when commitments and loyalties are multiple and overlapping. (1)

Such acknowledgement of multiple allegiances and variegated forms by Robbins and Horta opens up the space for the discussion of colonial and gendered cosmopolitanism and its entanglements with Anglophilia, mimicry and elitism. A complex intertwining of local loyalties and interest in foreign cultures is noticeable in Indian female travellers' attitudes and practices.

The understanding of cosmopolitanism as the detached free- floating attitude of male Western elite figures has undergone changes to take in cosmopolitanism among marginalized groups such as migrants, women and non-Western people. In what follows, the theme of cosmopolitanism in women's colonial travel narratives will be analysed in the light of recent scholarship on this area to demonstrate, among other things, the manifestation of vernacular cosmopolitanism in countering Eurocentric biases and hegemony in research on cosmopolitanism.

### Vernacular Cosmopolitanism

Vernacular cosmopolitanism as proposed by Pnina Werbner encompasses a range of cosmopolitan practices of non-Western cultures and alludes to an embrace of difference in terms of ethnicity, religion and nationality ("Paradoxes of Postcolonial Vernacular Cosmopolitanism" 108). This scholar elaborates on the inclusive and



wide-ranging parameters of this form of cosmopolitanism in her elaboration that “vernacular cosmopolitanism belongs to a family of concepts all of which combine in similar fashion apparently contradictory opposites” (“Paradoxes of Postcolonial Vernacular” 109). Following Werbner, I will take vernacular cosmopolitanism as an overarching cosmopolitan framework because it shares common ground with rooted<sup>128</sup> and critical cosmopolitanisms<sup>129</sup>. This form allows for imbrications of multiple attachments: “local, parochial, rooted and culturally specific loyalties may co-exist with translocal, transnational transcendent, elitist enlightened, universalist and modernist ones” (Werbner “Anthropology and the New Ethical Cosmopolitanism”144).

### Colonial Women’s Cosmopolitanism in England

Colonial travellers faced challenges similar to those contemporary migrants’ experience when they have to tackle personal and social obstacles in becoming cosmopolitans. In their research on Chinese migrants to New Zealand, Bingyu Wang and Francis Collins make a pertinent observation that cross-border mobilities and in-between status do not automatically give rise to cosmopolitanism. They emphasize that cosmopolitanism must be “enacted through creative translation and negotiation of the social structures and power relations that individuals encounter” (2778). Their view is applicable to Indian colonial travellers, especially women, who are doubly marginalized figures and have to balance between complicity and resistance to dominant discourses of gender and colonialism.

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<sup>128</sup> Rooted cosmopolitanism as proposed by Kwame Anthony Appiah refers to the condition where a cosmopolitan can remain “attached to a home of one’s own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people” (1997:618 qtd. in Levy et al. 421).

<sup>129</sup> In their concept of critical cosmopolitanism, Gerard Delanty and Neal Harris foreground a reflective element to encourage transformation and social change (“The Idea of Critical Cosmopolitanism”).

Unlike British India with its rigid hierarchies and rampant racism, London surfaces as an enabling space for ‘webbed’ or intercultural exchanges, based on social mobility and cultural capital. Writing on Persian travellers of the colonial age, Humberto Garcia mentions that “metropolitan publics were more accommodating than [those] in territories ruled by the British East India Company” (*England Re-Oriented* 2). Travellers from colonial India, too, could therefore take advantage of the relatively greater cultural openness of metropolitan London to textualize London as a contact zone for intercultural connections between the centre and the periphery. Hence, travel texts authored by female colonial visitors form a space of cultural engagement and critique that can be approached through the lens of cosmopolitanism.

The discrepancy between their subordinate position as colonial subjects and their elitist cultural capital complicates their performativity of cosmopolitanism. A dialectical tension emerges from opposition between the travellers’ lack of power as colonial subjects and their aspirations for high cultural status in identity constructions. Thus, Indian female travellers’ deployment of cosmopolitanism has to be configured within the parameters of imperial, gender and nationalist discourses.

### *Cultural Capital*

Hannerz’s framework of braiding culture and politics is reflected in Indian women’s cosmopolitan enactments. Most of the travellers performed a cosmopolitan identity through references to their access to metropolitan culture. Hence, it was essential to establish their movement across the very different cultural life-world of England as a resource or capital to form cosmopolitan identity. This deployment of cultural knowledge is part of the transformative power of cultural agency among travellers.

In their article “Moulding Cultural Capital into Cosmopolitan Capital” (2017), Johan Lindell and Martin Danielsson, elaborate on this process. They explain the use cultural capital has among contemporary cosmopolitans for cosmopolitan capital which they define as:

...those resources that individuals draw upon in order to gain or maintain their social positions as fields become increasingly “transnational” (Kim 2011; Weenick2008); it is seen as ‘a portfolio of resources’ that are globally acknowledged and asked for’ (Weiss 2005:273). (54)

Cultural capital within cultural cosmopolitanism is more than consumption of cultural commodities whether objects or places or Beck’s banal cosmopolitanism. For travellers the acquisition of cultural capital was a crucial aspect of mobility and travelling orientation as most travellers wanted to learn about foreign culture.

Hannerz also associates cosmopolitanism with prized resources when he writes that “taking a Bordieuan perspective, we could find cosmopolitan tastes and knowledge serving as symbolic capital in elite competitive games of distinction” (*Two Faces of Cosmopolitanism*16). Hannerz’ perspective on elite access to cosmopolitanism is borne out by the colonial travellers, who belonging to privilege sections of Indian society, were capable of accessing the cultural resources of the imperial centre in their visits to England.

For example, Janakumamah Ragaviah, who published her travel narrative *Pictures of England* (1875) devotes two chapters to “London Wonders.” In her cultural display, she cites Crystal Palace, Madam Tussaud’s Wax Work Exhibition, public statues, St. Paul’s Cathedral, Tower of London, and Westminster Abbey among sites fascinating her, and lists places such as Kew Garden, Greenwich, and Brighton with its Aquarium, Pavilion and Baths which attracted many tourists. The

need to inscribe familiarity with colonial cultural heritage is also shared by Krishnabhabini Das who was in England from 1882 to 1890. In *A Bengali Lady in England* (1885) she presents a similar picture of London in describing Parliament House, Crystal Palace and British Museum.

Atiya Fyzee, the Muslim student from Bombay, is another good example of such Indian endeavours to enact cosmopolitanism. *A Time of Education*, the English translation of her Urdu travelogue, maps for readers a cultural landscape of London with references to concerts, plays, museums and other places of cultural value. Fyzee embeds her performativity of cosmopolitan identity in an appreciation of foreign culture and her ability to decode and understand imperial culture. In this regard, she was typical of other Indian female voyagers who also draw attention to their cultural experiences. As Tim Youngs reminds readers, it is possible to gain mobile capital through travel because all that the traveller sees and remembers can be transformed into a commodity (“Where Are We Going” 179). To make his point clearer, Youngs quotes Hutnyk:

The technological channels...the machineries of traveller perception, writing, camera, etc. –are the tools by which capitalism transmutes all culture, emotion, identity into a form open to exchange. (qtd. in Youngs “Where Are We Going” 179).

Youngs’ observation that travellers commodify their travel experiences through retelling in written or visual texts is applicable to colonial Indian women’s proclivity to record and impress readers with “knowledge and consideration of cultural goods produced outside one’s own national culture” (Skrbiš and Woodward “Cosmopolitan Openness” 59). Since cosmopolitanism involves acquiring and consuming new cultural experiences female travellers from colonial India meticulously record their

visits to places of interest through the recurring motif of tourist landmarks, which is actually a generic feature of travel writing.

Fyzee's formation of cultural subjectivity is grounded in her immersive experience of metropolitan London and resonates with Skrbis' and Woodward's interpretations that cosmopolitanism is "a disposition of openness to the world around" ("Cosmopolitan Openness" 53). A keen interest in the culture of the other is expressed in visits to British Museum, Imperial Institute which housed colonial and Indian collections, the Royal Academy, the museum at Cambridge, Winchester Cathedral, Hampton Court and many more places.

### *Museum Visits*

An intertextual connection emerges in common places of interest that are mentioned in women's travelogues; the touristic gaze links early travel texts with the ones published several years later in the twentieth century. Royal visitors such as Sunity Devi, Maharani of Cooch Behar, and Maimoona Sultan who chronicled the visit of the Nawab of Bhopal, Begum Sultan Jahan, appear to have traipsed through the same museums and exhibitions as the commoners, Ragaviah, Das, Fyzee, Ghose and Nair<sup>130</sup>. Indian visitors were drawn to the British Museum for a complex desire to see artefacts of global culture and ascertain India's position in a global order. In her article "Indian Spectacles on London and Paris", Antoinette Burton deconstructs the complicated motives:

The curatorial displays on offer in London's museums, were not, in other words, passively consumed. They were quite purposefully re-produced both as

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<sup>130</sup> The parallels in information and appreciation conform to Antoinette Burton's view that in Anglophone Indian travel writings "attractions were displayed in fairly formulaic terms" (*At the Heart of the Empire* 47).

critiques of how the British saw Indians as well as evidence of Indians' capacity to discover 'India' at the heart of the empire and to consume British (imperial) culture like other 'native' Britons. (137)

The British Museum, Madame Tussaud's and theatres are often invoked since they had become a synecdoche for British culture. The fact that the travellers were able to negotiate and grapple with the urban metropolis is explained by Elleke Boehmer as a consequence of their existing urban and cosmopolitan imagination and social formation ("Cosmopolitan Exchanges"). Sunity Devi and Atiya Fyzee both record their admiration of British Museum, while the Bhopal Nawab elaborates on the wax works at Madam Tussaud's Exhibition. One difference, however, among the later travel texts is that they submit fewer details of either London city or these tourist sites. Perhaps because these places of interest had become familiar to Indian readers after the proliferation of travelogues about England. Fyzee, therefore, offers snippets of history, architectural information and other details as opposed to the detailed accounts of Ragaviah and Das. However, the motif of museum visits was retained even in the travelogues of later twentieth century travellers<sup>131</sup>. Burton suggests a possible explanation in the view that "digests of English history [were] rehearsed in order to contextualize in both space and time the map of London" (*At the Heart of the Empire* 47)

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<sup>131</sup> This may explain Durgabati Ghose's decision to make a passing reference to museums she had visited. She reels off a list of buildings to establish her knowledge:

The street was called Exhibition Road and the houses on both sides had various exhibitions and museums. We saw the War Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, the Natural History Museum amongst others, all of which were worth seeing! (46).

Kuttan Nair also demonstrates her cultural consumption of notable landmarks of London. She mentions that on the second day she and her companions went on "a general char-a-bancs tour of London" (66) to cross off the necessary tourist visits. She singles out her visit to the Tower of London and the London University Colleges in her travelogue.

Visits to museums and other places of interest is a genre expectation that, however, undergoes transformation in the later Indian travellers since they focus more on their own presence at these sites rather than the places themselves. One finds this tendency in Fyzee's narration of her museum visits. In the diary entry about her first visit of British Museum, she does not offer any detail of the building or the collections, and instead she highlights her task to note and "memorize the animals common to each clime of the world" (11 October 1906 142). Though in her account of a second visit, she makes some effort to convey the magnitude of the reading room with "What a majesty this room has" (24 November 1906 156), the focus remains on herself with an emphasis on her reactions. She deflects attention from the reading room to her own feelings in "how can I describe its design" and adds "I was so mesmerized by the Grecian room" (156).

The interpolation of place names in travelogues is a crucial part of performing a cosmopolitan identity. Among contemporary tourists we find a similar proclivity to consume foreign places leading John Urry (1995) to propose 'aesthetic cosmopolitanism' which is a delight in difference rather than superiority and includes "extensive mobility: curiosity about and appreciation of other places and cultures" (qtd. in Molz "Cosmopolitanism and Consumption" 35). Such connoisseurship and cultural mastery appear in Fyzee's inscription of the various cultural events she participates in and confidently explains for her readers. While she lived in London, she was not only occupied with lessons, but was very busy attending numerous lectures at Imperial Institute, Jehangir Hall and Caxton among others. In addition, she seems to have spent considerable time visiting stately homes, public gardens and even studios.

*Theatre Visits*

One cultural experience that Fyzee describes in great detail is the pantomime, “Sinbad’ she saw in Drury Lane. It was a novel experience for her, and her comment “I remained stupefied” (2 January 1907 167) indexes the effect of the theatrical show on her. As a result, she felt it necessary to impart the wonder to her readers in detail as she writes:

I will describe some of it, especially for the interest of sisters, who, I am convinced, will find it enjoyable. (167)

Although, Fyzee’s theatre experience was limited to a pantomime show, without dialogue, her detailed descriptions of the scenery and costumes provide an intertextual connection with earlier travellers Ragaviah<sup>132</sup> and those who travelled later, Ghose and Nair<sup>133</sup>. Fyzee’s compulsion to share her excitement is not surprising. In Indian cultural experiences of England, going to the theatre forms a high point in most travellers’ performativity of aesthetic cosmopolitanism. Given that women in India did not attend theatrical shows in the nineteenth century, there is a potential to claim gender freedom in references to seeing a play. In addition, the theatre signals travellers’ acculturation in imperial culture and their participation in high cultural events. Skrbiš and Woodward refer to Richard Peterson’s ideas of “omnivorous

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<sup>132</sup> A detailed description of the theatre can be found in Janakumamah Ragaviah’s *Pictures of England* where the traveller provides detailed features of the theatre including the number of people who can be accommodated, the seating arrangement, the actors and the scenery (84-85). To add authenticity to her text, she mentions the plays she saw- *Manfred*, *Richelieu*, and *Fair Rosamond*, and adds that she went with her husband and servants and had box seats, which are the prestigious ones.

<sup>133</sup> Kuttan Nair writes that they rushed through the University colleges to “attend in the afternoon, a performance by Ruth Draper, the famous mono-actress” (68). Durgabati Ghose, too, informs readers of her cultural interest when she writes that she went to the Hippodrome Theatre to see “The Pitcher and the Demon” (57), a play based on *The Arabian Nights* like the one Atiya Fyzee had witnessed; she also demonstrates her cultural knowledge in her reference to other types of performance she had seen- “Non-stop Variety” which “combines dance, music, theatre and tableau”(58), a mime performance and a ‘casanova’ performance (58).



disposition” and “‘omnivorous’ tastes” to explain that cosmopolitanism is often signalled through cultural experiences that foster “connoisseurship” and cultural mastery (“Cosmopolitan Openness” 59), which we find reflected in Fyzee’s cultural experiences.

*Intertextual Links with Pre-Colonial Male Travellers*

Indian enchantment with London entertainments was a longstanding affair that can be traced back to pre-colonial Persianate travelogues through intertextuality. Humberto Garcia in *England Re-Oriented* (2020) and Hamid Dabashi in *Reversing the Colonial Gaze* (2020) focus on Persian travel writing’s fascination with theatrical spectacles. Apart from the novelty of new cultural repertoires, Garcia finds in Mirza I’tesamuddin’s descriptions of the theatre, an appreciation of English politics and economy. For the Indian traveller:

Georgian theatres are a microcosm of social-financial efficiency. English “economic intelligence can be deduced from” the way theatre managers generate profits by lowering expenses. This inference presupposes the readers’ familiarity with the Mughal extravagant stagecraft, which operates as a negative foil to London theatrical companies. (Garcia 89)

Garcia goes on to argue that English theatrical spectacles reflected the superior English management of finances since this type of entertainment was less profligate and disreputable than the expensive private performances of dancers and singers in India. At the same time, theatres are also commercial ventures where audiences had a stake and voice, and so they operated in a manner similar to the British government in its “mimetic rituals of British sovereignty” (89). As Garcia notes:

In this elaborate conceit, the theatre is a merchant ship besieged by the perilous sea as well as a monarch beholden to his people, reflecting the

complicity between trading monopolies and state power in the eighteenth century. The stage represents a sovereign domain, while the audience is invited to behave like citizens free to resist the managers' "imperial sway." Implicit in this "proclamation" is a performative model of governmentality. (89)

In conflating the organized commercial or corporate formations of theatres with English political authority, Mirza I'tesamuddin hints at the manipulation of illusion and insubstantiality of gestures and speech in both theatrical spectacles and government protocols that he discovered in his dealings with Robert Clive, Captain Swinton and the East India Company. Although such political readings are not present in Indian women's accounts of the theatre, their enjoyment and positive response to plays could be related to I'tesamuddin's presentation of the theatre as an alternative to wasteful private Indian entertainments of Mughal extravaganza. I'tesamuddin considered Indian entertainment to be excessive and prodigal since "the idle rich hire professional singers and dancers for private performances in their homes" and dissipate "hundreds of thousands of rupees from the inheritance of their parents" (qtd. in Garcia 88). Women travellers may have also been trying to promote a new kind of entertainment that would be more family oriented and permissible for women to attend as well as economical.

### *Cosmopolitan Aesthetics*

Fyzee constructs a cosmopolitan performativity by both narrating the experience of cultural activities as well as a cultural mastery in being to appreciate foreign culture. For instance, after listening to Backhaus play the piano at Queen's Hall, she writes that she was "wonderstruck" and rhapsodizes, "I have not heard such sweet songs even in my dreams. My breath stopped. My hair stood on end" (6 October 1906

138). In this way, she emphasises cultural knowledge and connoisseurship. Thus, she often adds subjective impressions in her evaluation of musical performances she attended. She displays familiarity with Western music in the confident manner of her comments: an authoritative note is struck when she notes that the young “girl” and “Welsh boy” at Sydney Sprague’s home) played well “at a maestro’s level” (26 July 1907 207). Indeed, she did possess a good understanding of music because her opinion of Dame Melba’s musical talent in “What a voice this woman has!” (30 July 1907 208) “correlates with the views of contemporary reviewers”, according to the editors of *Atiya’s Journey* observer (“Notes” *Atiya’s Journey* 235). Cultural appraisal, therefore, is presented as both access to and competence in metropolitan imperial culture.

The traveller foregrounds her ability to appreciate cultural merit because it distinguishes her from more philistine or unsophisticated Indian visitors. At a meeting of the National Indian Association, two trained singers of Guildhall School of Music, Alice Coates and a Miss Kingsford, had performed (Notes *Atiya’s Journeys* 229). Unfortunately, some Indian guests were unable to enjoy the unfamiliar music, and so she reports that, “an Indian gentleman declared how terribly she is crying!” much to Fyzee’s amusement. She found the comment so hilarious that she writes she had “a hard time controlling my laughter” (4 March 1907 177). This incident of cultural dissonance in the above-mentioned gentleman’s lack of cultural literacy becomes a clever means of drawing attention to her own cosmopolitanism. Fyzee’s successful engagement with British high culture, her cultural authority and knowledge.

Another way Fyzee projects an aesthetic sensibility undergirding her cosmopolitan taste and knowledge is through references to paintings and flowers. She spends considerable time looking at paintings, going to photo studios such as that of

the famed Edward Hughes, and visiting public gardens. As a result, Fyzee is able to move away from the “formulaic” descriptions of common tourist landmarks (Burton *at the Heart of the Empire* 47) and present a more personalised and evocative depiction of cultural landscapes in the imperial centre. Besides remarking that she had visited the Royal Academy with Princesses Sophia and Catherine<sup>134</sup>, she shares with readers details of visual artefacts in the Wallace Collection (29 June 1907 200), Marianne North’s sketches exhibited in the gallery in Cambridge Gardens (30 March 1907 184) and Colonel Temple’s paintings in the Indian section of Imperial Institute (4 March 1907 176). This interest in paintings suggests that Fyzee found pleasure in beauty and showed signs of an aesthetic disposition, Pierre Bourdieu’s concept for prioritizing form over function and valuing objects for their aesthetic qualities<sup>135</sup>. As Bourdieu notes, “art and cultural consumption... fulfil a social function of legitimating social difference” (“Introduction” 7), and in Fyzee’s case, cultural appreciation is deployed to signal her distinctiveness.

Fyzee is set apart from the other seekers of cultural capital among the female travellers with her sensuality. The strand of cultural cosmopolitanism is very vivid and rich in her travel text because it is blended with an aesthetic sensibility that is rare in my corpus of female travel writing. *A Time for Education* is remarkable for the sensuous evocation of London through frequent references to flowers, food, dress and jewellery. People and places are brought alive with minute and detailed descriptions that form an important part of the traveller’s cosmopolitanism. On the one hand, these details indicate Fyzee’s cultural familiarity and on the other hand, they establish her intercultural engagement and aesthetic mode of thinking.

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<sup>134</sup> They were daughters of Maharajah Duleep Singh, the deposed prince of Punjab. See also Chapter Six for more on Sophia Duleep Singh.

<sup>135</sup> For more on aesthetic disposition see also Nicholas Holm “Critical Capital” (2020).

What is notable about Fyzee's aesthetic cosmopolitanism is the sensuality of her descriptions. She lavishes great attention on decorative and ornamental details of estates and gardens, with a particular emphasis on flowers. Sen in *Travels to Europe: Self and Other* (2005) and Nayar in *Indian Travel Writing* observe that Indian colonial travellers often adopted the picturesque mode to describe British landscape in a reverse appropriation of Orientalist tendency to use this rhetorical mode for Indian natural scenery. However, the exoticisation of England through sensual descriptions of flowers in gardens and inside homes has not been examined, perhaps because very few visitors, if indeed any, have foregrounded the floral motif in their travelogues. But with her notes on English flowers, Fyzee appears to be producing a counter-narrative of European botanical surveys of plants and vegetations in the peripheries. Her depictions of English gardens with their trees and flowers is reminiscent of the traveller Marianne North, whose sketches Fyzee sees in Cambridge Gardens.

Fyzee differs from the other travellers in this study in always searching for flowers, which she dutifully records in her diary. For instance, when she visits Church of Saint Baptist, she is impressed by the flower arrangement:

...a heap of flowers that seemed to have been put there not in a special way but carelessly, but, if you looked carefully, every flower was properly in its place (30 September, 1906, 134).

Then at a concert at Queen's Hall, she notes with approval the custom of sending floral tributes to performers and writes, "the stage was filled with flower bouquets. This is a beautiful custom." (6 October 1906 138). While dining at a hotel with the Maharani and Maharaja of Baroda, she is drawn by the lavish display of flowers at a wedding taking place there. Amazed at the vibrant colours and pleasing arrangement,

she muses: “[t]housands of ashrafis must have been spent on the flowers” (20 October 1906 146).

More than merely observing, Fyzee relishes the sensuality and beauty of flowers. When Lady Temple gives her hyacinths, she expresses joy with, “Ahaha! How amazing they are!” (6 March 1907 177). Fyzee’s passion for flowers manifests in the entry detailing her visit to Cambridge Gardens; she expresses a yearning to share her delight for she writes: “My dears, if only, I could pluck all the flowers and send them to you” (30 March 1907 183). Whenever she visits a stately home, Fyzee seems to pay equal attention to the luxurious interiors of paintings and fine furnishings as the gardens. The value she places in flowers can be understood from her description of Princess Sophia’s home where the grandeur of the house is combined with Fyzee’s observation that “the house and garden are full of flowers” (23 July 1907 205). At another time, when she sees a green-house she is moved by seeing so many flowers as if “there was no end to the variety of flowers” (27 May 1907 191).

Fyzee expresses a love for flowers in by conveying the sensory impact they have her on. For example, she remarks that a “fine bouquet of flowers” could rejuvenate her when she was suffering from fever. She writes that after putting red roses that she had received in vases, “life became more pleasurable” (8 July 1907 202). Fyzee’s delight in the ornamental details and sensory attraction of flowers and gardens reflects a cultural refinement in terms of taste and values. Following Bourdieu, it can be argued that such a disposition is linked to social position and education, thus, the cultural and sensory representations in the travelogue are projections of a privileged economic condition.

Fyzee's keen eye for flowers has been noted by Siobhan Lambert-Hurley who refers to the length and elaborate description given of chrysanthemums the traveller saw in Mrs. Sassoon's house. As Lambert-Hurley points out, it a very detailed description of a simple flower arrangement at a reception, for Fyzee writes at length:

I cannot help describing the flowers. Such big chrysanthemum flowers that their circumference must have been ten inches! Some twenty-five to thirty such big white ones were there in a long vase; in the second, purple coloured, and in the third, copper coloured red ones. They had all been grown in a special hothouse and the way they were arranged in the vases was an art itself. (6 October 1906 139).

This passage illustrates the traveller's sensual appreciation of colours as well as her aesthetic temperament in her remark on the arrangement of the flowers. Her subsequent comment that: "They are so awesome in size. Certainly, artifice has been worked upon in nature, otherwise these flowers are not that big in reality" (139) indicates that the sensory indulgence was also accompanied by a critical observation. Atiya is not a decadent aesthete, enjoying voluptuous pleasures of food and flowers which abound in her narrative, rather her evocation of the senses is undergirded by an exploratory experience of England which she wants to convey with facts complemented by emotional and sensory details.

Lambert-Hurley, though, considers the voluptuous descriptions rather surprising and asks "How many Muslim reformers of this era can be imagined to dedicate an entire paragraph to the size, colour and arrangement of Mrs Sassoon's chrysanthemums?" ("Narrating the Everyday" 85). While Fyzee may indeed be unusual in her love of art and beauty, an interest in flowers, nonetheless, establishes a link with an earlier Muslim cosmopolitanism flourishing in India. The inflections of a

Perso-Mughal cultural tradition set Fyzee apart from many other travellers. In “Cosmopolitan Exchanges”, Elleke Boehmer notes that Indian visitors to England arrived with cosmopolitan backgrounds. But whereas she traces the formation of cosmopolitan identity to colonial education, Fyzee’s cosmopolitanism seems to be rooted in both colonial imaginary and Indo-Persian cultural heritage.

The Persian veneer of Fyzee’s cultural imagination surfaces in her allusions to Persian poetry, that is connected to her appreciation of flowers. Tulips inspire Fyzee to recall poems, and she links the beauty of English flowers with Indian culture. Thus, to express her joy at the coming of spring in March of 1907, the traveller turns to Indian verses, and writes “The garden is on fire with spring of tulips and roses” (22 March 1907 182<sup>136</sup>). Later when she sees a garden full of tulips, ranging in colour from crimson to purple, she is struck by the “black mark of mourning” on red petals which prompts her to quote from Persian poetry, “*Lalah dar sinah dagh chun darad / Umr-ikutah u gham-i fuzun darad*”<sup>137</sup> (27 May 1907 191).

As always, Fyzee is a perceptive observer and not lost in sensual details; seeing the beauty of flowers in the tulip garden she states that the beauty of the flowers made her realize the bounty of God “seeing God’s power” as well as appreciate the hard work and competence of the British people (192). The intrusion of British culture in her ruminations on nature is a reminder that Indian colonial valorisation of nature could be attributed to colonial education and the study of English romanticism, a point Grewal makes about English educated travellers such as Toru Dutt (*Home and Harem* 173). Concurrently, the admiration for industriousness of British people could be read as colonial awe of imperial culture. Yet the inclusion

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<sup>136</sup> Sharma presents the original as “*bahar-l lalah u gul se lagi hai ag Gulshan mein*” (182).

<sup>137</sup> “Why does the tulip have a brand on its breast? /It has a short life and much sorrow” (Trans. Sharma, 191).



of Persian poetry in Fyzee's narrative complicates the colonial response and adds nuances of cosmopolitanism in her travel account. The reference to Persian culture is a reminder of a high cultural tradition in India, that was separate from British imperial culture and interjects a nationalist element in Fyzee's presentation of England.

Fyzee makes several allusions to Persian poetry, which serve to encode her Indianness and sustain her ethnic identity. For example, while listening to the popular singer Clara Butt, she recalls a verse from Persian poetry (13 October 1906 143), indicating that her mindscape had not been colonized. She was not a tabular rasa carrying the imprint of imperial culture, but a critical thinker connecting and constantly bridging two cultural orientations as in associating a British singer with Persian poetry. The ambidexterity of navigating through Western music and Eastern literature positions her as a cosmopolitan individual, not limited by her colonized status.

Fyzee's cosmopolitanism is also marked by pride in her access to and display of high culture. Consequently, she often mentions instances of Indians showcasing Indian culture to British and fellow Indians. There is a long but undated entry, possibly made in December 1906, about a speech given by Yusuf Ali<sup>138</sup> on Muslim history. She writes that the talk covered the theme of prominent Muslim women that included Shah Jahan Begum, Nawab of Bhopal and to her surprise, Atiya Fyzee herself (162). Another instance of nationalist assertions took place in another NIA meeting when Abdul Qadir (4 March 1907 177) recited one of Hafiz's ghazal. He translated it for the audience, which was well-received by the audience. Yusuf Ali also read out a "ghazal of Hafiz" at one of his lectures. (17 November 1906 153).

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<sup>138</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1872-1953) an ICS officer in the United Provinces and a Muslim scholar known for his English translation of the *Quran*.

These references to Indian speakers regaling audiences with Persian ghazals and history of India constitute a strategy to embed nationalist sentiments, that were not lost amidst the glamour and excitement of the imperial centre. The traveller's juxtaposing of imperial culture and Indian traditions in a text delineating her travels to Europe suggest a resistance to the dominance of imperial culture and conveys her refusal to be an Anglophile colonial mimic.

In addition to registering pleasure, the parade of cultural experience is for Indian colonial female travellers a display of pride, which accords with Robbins' and Horta's opinion that cosmopolitanism is exhibited as "a badge of privilege" ("Introduction" 5). The importance of cultural knowledge lies in its potential for a cosmopolitan identity to emerge through a form of cultural citizenship which validates Indian investment in English cultural discourse.

Visits to England and its cultural wealth are leveraged as capital, both cultural and cosmopolitan, by female colonial travellers. While Fyzee represents cosmopolitan articulations of colonial women in general, there is another distinct manifestation of gendered cosmopolitanism among the royal female visitors to England.

### Royal Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitan identities of Indian elites emerge very strongly among Indian royalty. In this regard, Sunity Devi, the Maharani of Cooch Behar, occupies a distinct position as an icon of female cosmopolitanism and modernity. After all, she was an early woman traveller who was socially prominent and a popular figure both in India and in England. Along with the female Nawab of Bhopal, also referred to Nawab Begum, this royal traveller from Cooch Behar produced a unique strand of royal cosmopolitanism.

Elite colonial subjects belonging to Indian aristocracy were able to access social capital and enter English society differently from ordinary Indian travellers. A recent development in cultural history has turned the spotlight on Indian princes in imperial British imagination and policy ( Cannadine; Wainwright; Taylor). As Martin Wainwright points out, social rank and class in British hierarchical society carried great cachet and could, at times, overturn racial differences. The travel texts of Sunity Devi and Maimoona Sultan indicate that Indian princesses and princes were able to take advantage of this opening to enter into a network of aristocracy. The appearance of Devi and her husband, the Maharajah of Cooch Behar at Queen Victoria's golden jubilee celebration and later at the coronation of King Edward VII formed part of British policy to consolidate imperial power through alliance with Indian princely states. Indian presence had become a feature of Victoria's court since the Queen took a personal interest in having Indian subjects around her. Maimoona Sultan's visit was similarly facilitated by British policy because her mother-in-law, the Nawab Begum of Bhopal had been invited to attend the 1911 coronation of King George and Queen Mary.

#### *Indian Royal Spectacles: Ornamentalism*

There was a political dimension in showcasing the empire's royal subjects, something which David Cannadine has termed ornamentalism (*Ornamentalism: How the British Saw their Empire*). Having Indian princes on view signified the grandeur and might of the empire, and the Indian princes for their part collaborated in this process, too, as they benefited from having imperial support in retaining royal power, albeit in limited form. Devi's utterances of praise and loyalty for the Queen clearly reveal the Princely State of Cooch Behar's paying tribute to Victoria, Empress of India. British authorities used the occasion of the golden jubilee to showcase Indian

dominion through “the largest and most impressive deputation of Indians ever to visit England” during Queen Victoria’s reign (Taylor 262).

The presence of Indian royalty as a form of imperial control produced “ornamentalism”, through a strategic spectacle of symbols and images suggesting imperial unity; a point David Cannadine explains as:

[O]rnamentalism was hierarchy made visible, immanent and actual. .  
 .[C]hivalry and ceremony, monarchy and majesty, were the means by which  
 this vast world was brought together, interconnected, unified and sacralised  
 (122).

He adds that class took precedence over racial othering. By subordinating racial difference, the emphasis on the social hierarchy of empire enabled the manifestation of cosmopolitan ideas and practices. While Cannadine, along with Wainwright and Miles Taylor, offer a revisionist imperial history in arguing that Indian royalty happily participated in such “ornamentalism”, their insights throw valuable light on the collaborative process and mutual gains. The court encounters highlighted in these travel narratives indicate a strategic use of such royal interactions by both British and Indian royalty.

Indian royalty was given prominent space in British courtly spectacles. Meanwhile, as Cannadine writes, reports of these visits used to be circulated in the Indian local press to increase prestige and acclaim among their own subjects at home. In pursuing these goals, the Cooch Behar Maharani also attended the coronation of Edward VII in 1902 and George V’s in 1911; and, Sultan Jahan, Nawab Begum of Bhopal, attended the coronation of George V and Queen Mary in London in 1911 as well as the Delhi Durbar. Maimoona Sultan, her daughter- in- law, who travelled in

her entourage, wrote about this trip to England in a travelogue, first written in Urdu and then translated into English by G. Baksh.

Devi and Sultan express pride and a sense of achievement in being able to travel to England. In their narratives, their visits are projected as formal royal state visits. Devi frequently refers to state protocol and the warm hospitality showed by members of the royal family. The princess from Bhopal similarly writes about the state dignity accorded to her mother-in-law, the Nawab Begum of Bhopal. Thus, their accounts do not depict the visits in terms of tributes from weaker states, but rather as official visits of coeval standing and of aristocratic networking.

#### *Sunity Devi and Social Conquest*

Devi, the Maharani of Cooch Behar, distinguished herself as a royal cosmopolitan figure in several ways. Her social success in England has secured her a minor place in the cultural history of the empire. In her memoir, *The Autobiography of an Indian Princess* (1921), she writes that she was the first Maharani to attend the royal court. Despite avowals of modesty and shyness, she records a sense of achievement in the description of her experience of social whirlwinds and the praises she had garnered there.

Devi's cosmopolitan self-fashioning is evident in cultural artefacts such as photographs and paintings which attest to her manipulation of Indian and English social codes and cultural objects. Angma Jhala's decision to begin her book *Royal Patronage and Courtly Aesthetics* with an analysis of a famous photograph of the Maharani offers an idea of Sunity's prominence in establishing transcultural networks.



Figure 9 Sunity Devi's La Fayette Studio Portrait, 1902,  
Victoria and Albert Museum Collection, London.

Analysing the famous portrait of this royal personage (see fig.9 ) Jhala writes:

The young Hindu queen of the eastern Indian kingdom of Cooch Behar was richly clothed in the apparel she had worn earlier that year for the coronation of King-Emperor Edward VII. Her self-fashioned style reflected both the aesthetic norms of empire and indigenous courtly Indian traditions of ornamentation. On her head she wore a diamond-encrusted tiara made by a European jeweller. She complemented it with a high-collared, white satin gown designed by a French dressmaker, embroidered in gold-thread, wrapped around her body like a sari. As for jewels, she radiated diamond-and pearl-encrusted bangles, rings and a heavy necklace that combined European and Indic motifs. Most significantly, she displayed prominently the Badge of the Imperial Order of the Crown of India on her chest– an honour given to esteemed Indian for their services to the colonial Raj. (1)

Jhala's commentary on the 1902 Lafayette Studio portrait highlights the juxtaposition of Indian and Western styles in the Maharani's outfit. Devi's patronage of European jewellers and a style combining "European and Indic motifs" (Jhala 1) links her to Mica Nava's view of British women's cosmopolitanism in the early twentieth century. In her book *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference* (2007), Nava argues that female purchasing power and consumerism of exotic objects led to the development of cosmopolitan attitudes and feelings. The practice of shopping and buying foreign goods facilitated women's transformation into subject from objects as well as helped them become agents in transnational exchanges (Nava 14).

Reversing metropolitan consumerism and Orientalism, Devi was patronising European jewellers and adopting Western fashion to manufacture glamour and difference. In this way, she is challenging Orientalist depictions of the East as a repository of exotic and sensory objects. Her display of Western jewellery, thus, counters stereotypical images of Eastern opulence by transferring the metonymy to the West. Then the possession of a French-designed gown places her in the prevailing commercial cosmopolitanism of Edwardian England identified by Nava. Furthermore, the Maharani's purchasing power is an indication of her financial leverage and of her ability to make a material connection with Western culture.

Another layer of counter colonialism lies in the way the photograph speaks back to colonial culture of imperial portraits. In "Victorian Portraits", Codell observes that imperial travellers from Lady Mary Montague to Richard Francis Burton deliberately dressed in native fashion to project cultural mastery. Burton's photo of wearing a *jubba*, dressed as a Sufi Pathan, on his way to Mecca is a much-cited example of cultural cross-dressing by colonizers to infiltrate local societies and garner

more intimate knowledge of the natives (501). The Maharani's use of Western accessories is a reversal of such colonial cross-dressings by Lady Montague wearing Turkish costume or Burton donning Indian clothes. Although colonial subjects' appropriation of dominant culture is often regarded as mimicry, Devi's efforts are more complex than mimicry for several reasons. First, the careful selection of items underscores cultural knowledge and appropriation of Western objects, signifying a transnational awareness. More importantly, she is highlighting difference instead of assimilation by wearing Indian bangles with Western tiara. As a result, she is not blending or purely copying Western fashion. Then, she also signals financial power or libidinous economy through the wealth underlining her display of consumption. The Maharani of Cooch Behar's success can be measured through the fame she attained for her sophisticated style, so much so that another traveller Fyzee refers to Devi's clothes in her own travelogue (Fyzee 27 October 1906 147).

Devi's sense of style and shuttling back and forth between Indian and British high society attest to Nava's argument that everyday practices are important in establishing a corporeal and cultural interplay between objects, subjects and races. Like wearing a sari over a gown, Devi very comfortably blended her cultural knowledge of, and social access to, two different cultures. On the day of the Jubilee, the Indian princess had worn "a pale orange-coloured gown with a sari to match" (108), revealing, thereby, that she could be an Indian in a British setting (see Fig. 5 in Appendix A). Devi's bodily inscription of cosmopolitanism is memorialized for posterity in Sydney Prior Hall's painting of her in this outfit, which remains in the Royal Collection Trust and hangs in the Durbar Corridor of Osborne House.

The Maharani of Cooch Behar is, thus, a striking example of gendered and colonial cosmopolitanism. Like Sorabji, Devi had a cosmopolitan background which



facilitated her social transactions in England. Daughter of a famous Brahma Samaj reformer, Keshab Chandra Sen, she was brought up by a progressive and Western influenced parent. Her Brahma liberalism was evident in her memories of growing up hearing stories “from the Bible and other sacred books” (*Autobiography* 21) and being taught English and Bengali. Once her marriage to the young ruler of Cooch Behar had been arranged, she received additional lessons in painting and other languages such as German. Since Keshab Chandra Sen was a leading promoter of female education, his daughter had been educated and taught both English and Bengali. Devi was already acquainted with British people such as Miss Piggot, the nuns of Loreto Convent who visited her father’s school, and the officials at her husband’s court prior to her travel to England.

In *Autobiography of an Indian Princess*, Devi proudly asserts that she was the first Maharani to be presented at the court of Queen Victoria. Although Malika Kishwar, the Begum of Awadh (also spelt as Oudh) and mother of the deposed Nawab Wazed Ali Shah, had met Queen Victoria as early as 1857, unlike Sunity Devi she was not the queen of a ruling dynasty. As the wife of Nripendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur, Maharajah of Cooch Behar, the Maharani enjoyed a privileged status. More importantly, she took part in many social events which established her as a prominent Indian figure in London. Being the daughter of Keshab Chandra Sen also helped since she writes that Queen Victoria had remembered her father, and the monarch had even showed her the photograph she had kept of the Brahma leader. Devi was frequently mentioned in the British press and often invited by the British royal family.

Devi’s narrative conveys the splendour and excitement of Queen Victorian’s Golden Jubilee celebrations of 1887. The Maharani expresses her gratitude in being honoured as the only Indian royal female so received, a fact she reiterates several

times in her narrative. The moment she arrived at the Jubilee ceremony at Westminster Abbey, the crowd standing outside shouted their desire to see her with shouts of “let’s have a look at you” (108). When she complied by putting down her parasol, she recalls how she was “heartily cheered” by the good-humoured crowd. Besides her popularity with members of the metropolitan high society, Devi registers the importance and the privilege she gained. She notes she was “the only Maharani present” (108) and it was a “signal honour” to be there, especially when the Queen’s eyes met hers. The litany of royal names she lists include, the King of Denmark, Prince William the future Emperor of Germany, Princess Alex the future Empress of Russia, the Archduke of Austria, the Prince and Princess of Wales, and of course the Queen, confirming her entry into such hallowed aristocratic circles during her visit to England. Apart from the formal Jubilee ceremony, she was included in a whirl of social events, everything from garden parties to dinners and balls. The Queen invited the Cooch Behar royals to dine and spend a night at Windsor Castle (113). They were honoured with a red carpet at the station and the Royal carriage being sent for them. Sunity conveys her awe at the pomp and honour, and she confesses “I felt quite grand” (114) at the welcome she received and she writes her suite was “splendid” and “like a fairyland” (114).

Devi’s reminiscence of manoeuvring through the cultural maze of metropolitan society testifies to “a personal ability to make one’s way into other cultures”, a strong component of cosmopolitanism according to Hannerz (qtd. in Molz 35). Furthermore, the Maharani’s repertoire of semiotic codes and social etiquette in attending balls, dinners, garden parties and other events constitute a cultural competence that helped her to transcend local and national boundaries. She presents numerous examples of informal and close interactions with British royalty. Not only

was she invited to country houses, balls and dinners, members of the British family often visited her too. During her first trip to England, she recalls that the Duchess of Teck and Princess May, future Queen, came to her residence and played with her children (104). Few years later when she was in England once again, Devi writes that the “Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Connaught and her daughter” paid her a surprise visit (164), which indicates social acceptance and close ties. The Indian Maharani’s social skills seems to support Werbner’s view (“Vernacular Cosmopolitanism”) that cultural competence can be a strategy for transnational social mobility, a point also made by Woodward and Skrbis (“Performing Cosmopolitanism” 132).

In addition, Devi’s willingness to engage with a foreign culture is another cosmopolitan characteristic according Skrbis and Woodward in “Cosmopolitan Openness”. During her first visit to England, the Maharani gradually attained a mastery of English social conventions. She writes of her learning experiences by narrating how the Indian royal couple was misinformed about the dress code for a dinner at Guildhall and her husband was conspicuous in the wrong dress (110). But she adds that the Prince of Wales tactfully smoothed over the faux pas to ease the Indian Maharaja’s embarrassment; her understanding of the Prince’s intervention indicates that she was both observant and perceptive about English social customs. The fact that “felt self-conscious of a colonial gaze, directed at her, emerges in her pride that her curtsy to the Queen was judged favourably. She states that “the people who were present in the room said afterwards the Maharani of Cooch Behar’s words were clear and her curtsy was most graceful” (110). Devi, however, overcame her initial shyness and achieved great social success.

Like a true cosmopolitan, Devi holds in high regard opportunities for cross-cultural encounters that produced her transnational mobility. Thus, she imparts details of her social engagements and the opportunities to meet influential members of British aristocracy. In addition, she relishes the sumptuous splendour of English high society as she notes the presence of “princes and princesses in their full-dress costumes, and covered with splendid jewels and decorations” at the Jubilee celebrations (108). An indulgence of sensory pleasure is expressed in her joy at seeing “masses of scarlet roses specially sent over from Paris” on the table at a dinner with the Kinnaird’s (110). These examples of admiration for beauty and almost sybaritic pleasure match with John Urry’s proposition of “aesthetic cosmopolitanism”, which is based on aesthetic savoir faire and affective pleasure obtained from cultural difference and novelty made possible by a predisposition for openness and willingness to move beyond one’s own cultural borders and show curiosity and appreciation (cf. Molz 35). Devi’s sensory indulgence, however, does not transport her away from national culture since she writes that the “perfume of the roses took my memory back to the old Belghuria garden [her paternal home]” (110). In this way, she is bridging cultures and maintaining multiple allegiances.

*Maimoona Sultan: A Muslim Cosmopolitan*

Maimoona Sultan’s visit to England though a royal tour is markedly different from that of the Maharani of Cooch Behar. She was restricted by rigid social protocols of the royal household in which she was married, prompting Siobhan Lambert Hurley and Sunil Sharma to write that her travels were composed of curtained motor cars and hotel rooms (“Introduction” *Atiya’s Journeys* 5) Claire Chambers takes a more sympathetic view in pointing out that the young writer was an over-protected teenager lacking experience and freedom (55). The constant citations

of her mother-in-law the Nawab's activities and opinions leave very little space for the author's own view. The text bears the imprint of being under the "Begum's sculpting" (55), Chamber's phrase for the mother-in-law's authority and influence. Yet Sultan's narrative has archival value as it underlines a royal perspective on England and provides a distinctive gendered and classed commentary on the metropole. Certainly, it is a unique commentary on Indo-British relationships because it is from a female Muslim perspective and it presents the theme of Muslim cosmopolitanism through the figure of her mother-in-law, the Nawab Begum.

Like Sunity Devi, the Begum of Bhopal appears confident and entitled in her easy acceptance of the courtesies extended to her. Maimoona dutifully registers that the British King and Queen had "graciously inquired" through an emissary, Colonel Sir J.R. Dunlop-Smith, when the Begum arrived at Dover. Later, when the Begum pays a visit to the King and Queen at Buckingham Palace, this female colonial travel writer a detailed account that heroically strives to establish the Bhopal Nawab's prestige. Formal codes of protocol are rendered as personal gestures of goodwill and respect in Sultan's descriptions as in the following: "Their Majesties advanced a few steps to meet Her Highness, and shook hands with her as well as with Hamid Sultan" (62), her husband. The young traveller's mention of "rich uniforms" worn by officers of the Royal Household who escorted the Begum when she visited Buckingham Palace encodes the love of pomp and ceremony among royal tourists. Additionally, the references to the magnificence of the grounds and the halls the Nawab Begum visited enunciate the kind of aesthetic interest that such cosmopolitans would display.

At the levee, where all dignitaries except the King and ladies of the Royal House were required to stand, the Nawab Begum of Bhopal "was honoured with a seat being allotted to her" (64), lending credibility to Sultan's claim that her mother-

in-law was a recipient of state honour. This incident also confirms Cannadine's argument that the British government respected social hierarchy and accorded due respect to India royalty. Meanwhile, Sultan is keen to demonstrate a close bond between the Indian ruler and the British monarch. Hence, she writes that the polite enquires made by the King about her brother in law "showed his special interest" (63). A family connection with the British monarchy is again underscored in the proud boast that her husband Hamid Sultan could easily recognize Queen Alexandra; he "knew the face at once" (65) and identified her among all the ladies. There was indeed a historical bond between the two royal families for a transnational friendship had existed between Queen Victoria and Shah Jahan Begum, the Nawab Begum's mother and previous ruler of Bhopal. Though the two female rulers had never met, they had forged a tentative link through their correspondence (Taylor).

The cosmopolitan performativity of the Begum of Bhopal is constructed through Sultan's selection of details. The Muslim ruler is projected as being a cultured woman who enjoys painting in her free time. This aesthetic interest is further reinforced with her visit to an exhibition of water-colour paintings at the Studio of the Royal Society of Artists in Pall Mall where she was welcomed by the Society's President (88). She also found time to go to Kew Gardens to look at flowers. As mentioned earlier, the confidence and self-possession of the Muslim female ruler are foregrounded in her encounters with British royalty. Her familiarity and cultural knowledge emerge in her tact in handling the bereavement of Queen Alexandra. After all she knew that "[i]t is against the English etiquette to condole with a person a long time after the bereavement" (64) and so did not refer to the death of Edward VII when she met Queen Alexandra.

When recounting the courtesy call on Alexandra, Nawab Begum is presented as being on par with the British queen. For instance, when the British royal figure raises the topic of her husband's death, the Begum creates a parallel by suggesting that the Queen, too, must have suffered as she did herself with the deaths of her daughters, mother and husband. Then the Nawab Begum wedges in her own accomplishments by referring to books she had authored. Her agency is further asserted when Colonel Sir Dunlop-Smith explains that the Begum was a Ruling Chief, reminding everyone that she is not a powerless courtly woman, but a Muslim woman of authority and independence in spite of her burqa. The Begum's adherence to veiling is a strong articulation of cultural preservation that counters charges of mimicry and Anglophilia in royal cosmopolitanism. The Begum had taken off her veil when meeting Queen Alexandra, but she wore her burqa at the Coronation ceremony. The Begum's power to govern and still observe the Muslim practice of female veiling is perhaps best captured in the famous photograph of her at the Delhi Durbar of 1911 (see fig.6). Here she is wearing a full burqa, but has a medal pinned on top of her burqa. In a portrait, preserved in the Royal Collection Trust, she like Sunity Devi in the Lafayette Studio photograph, is proudly displaying her British honour as well as an Indian styled crown with a peacock feather, thereby producing another representative example of Indian cosmopolitanism that juxtaposes British imperial and Indian traditions.



Figure 10: Nawab Begum Sultan Jahan Kaikhusrau, Royal Collection Trust



Figure 11 Nawab Begum in Burkha and Medal <https://thefridaytimes.com/23-Feb-2018/begum-of-bhopal-at-the-1911-delhi-durbar>

The issue of South Asian royal visitors maintaining their burqas signifies Indian royal attempts to conserve and declare their distinctive identity, thus performing a vernacular cosmopolitanism. Despite her observance of the veil, the Begum's visit had many parallels with Maharani Sunity Devi's excursions in England. In fact, the two did cross paths because they were both invited to the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary. Sultan notes that the coronation ceremony was well attended by visiting dignitaries from India, Egypt, China, Japan, France, Russia and other European countries. Among the Indian contingent of ruling princes, women who were present included the Maharani of Indore, the Maharani of Cooch Behar in "English costume" (76), a point underscored by this travel writer, and the Nawab Begum— the only Muslim and female ruler on view. In addition, she attended formal social events at Buckingham Palace and Lady Jersey's garden parties. Like Sunity Devi she, too, had received a royal medal as had her two sons. Though she met numerous people, her social forays were more circumscribed compared to Sunity Devi's social life. This was partly due to her Muslim lifestyle. She could not attend the Guildhall luncheon given by the Mayor of London for the new king because



of her veil. Her two sons attended but they “did not partake of any meat for fear of acting against the injunction of the Koran” (83-84). Sultan may have added the last point to allay fears over cultural contamination and threats of being receptive to foreign influence brought about by socialising with non-Muslims.

Although there is very little trace of Sultan herself in the travel narrative, a cosmopolitan world view emanates in her ability to find connections between different cultures. For instance, in her description of George V’s “training” (73) she compares it to Islamic cultural history, making the point that “the Mussulman princes too were brought up in this way” (73). Another instance of a cosmopolitan assertion in the young traveller lies in her critique of British lack of knowledge about Muslim religion and way of life. In a departure from her usual neutral tone, she firmly states that the European “ignorance, though colossal, is by no means, unpardonable” (101). Sultan’s account of the British royal court may have been an indirect, second-hand description based on what her mother-in-law had told her; nevertheless, the rest of the trip was a narrative of her own experiences. England was also not the only destination of her travels as she recounts passing through different parts of the continent. The inclusion of the visit to the Ottoman palaces and to the Sultan and Sultana enlarge the scope of cosmopolitanism and global travels by Indian royalty. In Turkey, the British Ambassador had made arrangements for the Begum to meet the Ottoman ruler. The meeting, though just a social courtesy call, indicated a transnational alliance between Muslim rulers sharing a similar heritage. Besides the common bond of religion, the Begum speaks in Persian with the Ottoman Sultan, referencing the existence of a cosmopolitanism outside of English culture and signifying a non-European one. The citation of a Persian common cultural heritage is historically significant. Hamid

Dabashi, among other scholars, has noted that a strong Persian cosmopolitanism flourished in Asian societies.

Another marker of the prestige enjoyed by the royal visitors is the public interest they generated. Like Sunity Devi, the Nawab Begum appears to have captured British press's attention. Sultan writes that newspapers covered the Bhopal Nawab's arrival from the day she reached Redhill. The residents of the neighbourhood offered her "a warm welcome by putting up flags in several places on the way to the house" (59). Later, residents presented her with a book and a copy of the Bible. In return, the Begum published a letter of thanks in a local newspaper (60-61). *The Standard*, a London daily, even used the phrase "ornament of womanhood" in relation to her (qtd. in Sultan 97). Many female reporters wanted to interview the ruler but she only met with the lady correspondent of *The Daily Express* (98).

However, British curiosity about Indian women was often intrusive and irritating as Fyzee and Sorabji had found to their dismay. One fall-out of the voyeuristic appetite of the press was cultural misunderstandings and distortions. Sultan mentions that there were scurrilous "silly and amazingly ridiculous" (99) reports of the Begum having brought over a large supply of Indian water to perform her ablutions before prayers. Another reporter wrote that this water was necessary because "Her Highness was held sacred by her Hindu subjects" (100), and so she had to use 'clean' water to remain unpolluted. As Sultan observes, the conflation of Hindu and Muslim rituals exposes English ignorance of Muslim culture. She thinks that the journalists had probably heard about the Maharaja of Jeypore bringing water from India "and this led them to honour us with a similar supposition" (100). Then the press also reported that the entourage travelled with live chickens and an astrologer. Sultan explains that they had procured live chickens to adhere to Islamic tenets of

halal food, but that the story of the astrologer was false and may have arisen because of the long beards and orthodox Muslim dress of two officials who were in their group.

### *Royal Networks*

Cosmopolitan performativity by Maharani Sunity Devi and Nawab Begum of Bhopal signify a neglected dimension of Indian cultural history – the role and power of courtly women of India. Jhala's books *Royal Patronage, Power and Aesthetics in Princely India* (2011) and *Courtly Indian Women in Late Imperial India* (2008) redresses such gaps and shines light on the power of royal Indian women as actor and symbol in a crucial time of transformation; however, Jhala focuses on zenana politics and marriage and does not examine the role of travel. Travel though is central in the development of Devi and the Begum of Bhopal who used their travel experience to boost modern values in their own states by promoting female education. More importantly, they secured advantages and benefits for their princely dominions by establishing close ties with the British royal family. Milinda Banerji's statement that "[t]o enhance her husband's and her own status within empire, Sunity forged connections with several male and female members of European, especially British and German, royalty" (*The Mortal God* 203) indicates that social repertoire and cosmopolitan identity could lead to benefits and privileges. In her autobiography, the Maharani hints that her husband was conferred the honour of G.C.I.E, after she had raised the issue of a decoration with the Duke of Manchester (*Autobiography* 118-119).

Devi and Sultan of the Bhopal retinue underscore their associations with British royalty and high officials both in England and India. Their emphasis on belonging to a similar social niche is an attempt to forge a cross-cultural link and

compensate for their racial and political subordination. Wainwright notes that such markings of class hierarchy for Indians belonging to upper echelons of society “was far preferable to one based on racial or ethnic categorization” (11), which would discriminate against them. Indians, in his opinion, capitalized on the British penchant for social hierarchy which was transposed to Indian society. Although social rank or class among the different races did not erase power difference as relations remained unequal, rank could function as a mechanism for social entry. Many Indians took advantage of their social rank of being princes, landlords or chiefs to gain British social acceptance.

Though fully aware of their subordinate or dependent position, Indian royal visitors collaborated and were complicit in the policy of “ornamentalism”, because they also benefitted from the ceremonial encounters carefully staged by the British government. A monarchist ideology, is entrenched in the Bhopal Nawab when she regrets that though people in “Republics” like France enjoy absolute freedom, these people do not have someone on whom they can “centre their affections” ( Sultan 47). This desire for a unifying presence was manipulated by British authorities. The discourse of an imperial connection, Charles Reed argues, was largely disseminated through the myth of Victoria, highlighting the paradigm of a maternal and benevolent ruler.

Taylor provides further support for this argument of royal cohesion through his observation that the name and image of the Queen were circulated in “ornamentalism” to impose and consolidate British authority in the colonies. The process of using the Queen as a symbol is explained by Theodore Morison as part of an official policy to evoke imperial sentiments of loyalty and devotion among colonizing subjects to create a nodal point for uniting British dominions. Morison

observes that while pride of race united settler colonies to Britain, a common fealty to the empress amalgamated various ruling princes of India (Taylor). The British monarch was a point of reference in bringing together the ethnically and religiously diverse group of Indian princes in jubilee celebrations and ceremonies in England and at durbars held in India. It is not surprising, therefore, that such very different personalities, as Devi and Sultan, converge in their views in professing loyalty to the British monarchy in their travel narratives<sup>139</sup>.

Cannadine may have overemphasized the bonds of class and social hierarchy in mitigating racism and seeing the empire as a social hierarchy, yet his proposition of social engineering through a network of elites bound by “a common lust for titles” (86) and desire for pomp and glory seems to be a motivating factor among Indian royal tourists who would declare fealty and loyalty to British monarchs at every opportunity. Indian princely states often supported British imperial authority to bulwark their dynastic power. Cannadine’s view of native complicity in propping up this ornamentation is borne out by the actions of the Indian royal visitors. The scholar rightly points out that the Indian princes highly valued these marks of distinction. Indian royalty’s appreciation of these honours bestowed by the British government is encoded in my female travel narratives.

The Maharani of Cooch Behar proudly records the order of C.I. “Crown of India” presented to her by Queen Victoria during her first visit as well as the coronation medal she later received from King Edward. She also displays the medal in her Lafayette Studio portrait. The Begums of Bhopal were equally proud of the honours they had obtained. In fact, Shah Jahan Begum, who was the Nawab before

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<sup>139</sup> Janakumma Ragaviah (94-97) and Krishnabhabini Das (59-62) too write of their admiration for Queen Victoria in their travel narratives.

Sultan Jahan Begum, had posed with the Star of India that she had received in a photograph for the album *Chiefs and Representatives of India* (1877) (Taylor). The irony, however, was that while the awards elevated the rulers among their peers, these honours also placed them in a subordinate relation to the British sovereign; a point that complicates postcolonial responses to such royal cosmopolitanism.

An analysis of courtly women's mobility and alliance reveals the existence of a transnational network in female royal spaces in India and in England. This was facilitated by the newfound mobility of Indian courtly women arriving in England. Devi and Chimna Bai, the consort of the Maharajah of Baroda, could enjoy being out of purdah whilst in England but not in India. Both royal women also visited Queen Victoria's court, as this was something the British monarch encouraged. Victoria acknowledged the role of native aristocracy and courtly women and inspired "a devoted sisterhood of Indian female rulers" (Taylor). Moreover, by encouraging royal women to visit the court and feting them with honours and celebrity status, her court encounters "served as important rites of passage for a younger generation of royal women in India signifying their membership in a small club of consorts" (Taylor 232). She created an exclusive honour, the Order of the Crown of India, for women.

While the Begums of Bhopal had forged a fragile link with British royalty, as evident from the correspondence between Queen Victoria and the earlier Nawab Begum Shah Jahan (Taylor), Sunity Devi was more successful in developing personal relationships with British royal figures. Her social mobility as a Westernized individual, with her gowns, fluency in English and relative freedom from religious restrictions (unlike the Begum of Bhopal) enabled the Cooch Behar Maharani to form extensive and even intimate ties with British aristocracy.

## Imperial Subjecthood

Indian colonial travellers' tendency to textualize England and to criticise the country signals a cosmopolitan confidence that comes from "membership in some larger, stronger or more compelling collective" (Robbins and Horta, 2), that is to say, a sense of belonging to a wider world. Colonial aspirations to connect with a community beyond the local region were integral to cosmopolitan manifestations. For example, Raja Ram Mohan Roy considered to an early exponent of cosmopolitanism had tried to join a transnational community in his attempt to forge networks in Europe beyond the British Empire Padmanabhan "Unity in Diversity: Indian Idea of Cosmopolitanism" 505). This colonial Indian social reformer had written to Napoleon's government with a proposal to remove the passport system and facilitate global travels.

A global or aspirational cosmopolitanism articulated in Roy's desire to attain global citizenship, hence sets the stage for cosmopolitan expectations of imperial subjecthood among colonial Indians. This theme of border-crossing and citizenship represents the political dimension of cosmopolitanism, complementing the cultural strand in Hannerz's framework of "two faces of cosmopolitanism".

Indian anticipation of gaining citizenship and other civic rights in imperial England was triggered by the Proclamation of 1858<sup>140</sup> which promised to recognize the people of India as British subjects and grant them similar rights as other subjects. Elleke Boehmer explains the impact of the intimations of political rights that were announced in the Proclamations of 1858 and 1877<sup>141</sup>:

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<sup>140</sup> Proclamation of 1858 transferred the administration of India to the Crown with promises of equal subjecthood.

<sup>141</sup> Proclamation of 1877 declared Queen Victoria the Empress of India.

At a time when a fully independent Indian nation was barely conceivable and Indian citizenship unobtainable, Indians in Britain became increasingly more involved in exploring, defining and asserting what their broader citizenship might entail. (*Indian Arrivals* 91).

Boehmer remarks that the two proclamations stimulated Indian expectations of “citizenship of the empire” as well as a sense of equality with Britons (91). She adds that a sense “of participating in shared imperial subjectivity with Britons” developed as a result (92). In *Becoming Imperial Citizens* (2010), Sukanya Banerjee discusses colonial attempts to exploit the question of citizenship in the British Empire as “a node for self-fashioning, and a way of gaining cultural and social access” (10). Her insight dovetails with the aspirational cosmopolitanism of some of the female travellers in this study. As Banerjee notes the promise of citizenship did not necessarily offer emancipatory possibilities but rather engendered the imaginings of new subject positions (15). In this regard, Cornelia Sorabji, the Parsi lawyer who came to England to study at Oxford University presents an interesting example.

Cornelia Sorabji begins her memoir *India Calling* (1934) with an enactment of a cosmopolitan identity. She announces that she was successful in straddling two cultures in the allusion to Sir Mountstuart’s <sup>142</sup>introduction that she was a “Friend who has warmed her hands at two fires” (5). A note of pride is sounded in her statement that she had been “privileged to know two hearthstones, to be homed in two countries, England and India” (5). The narrative then develops the constant flux of moving between India and England. She also details her cultural connoisseurship of British culture in her reminiscence of her student days at Oxford. Though she was

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<sup>142</sup> Elphinstone Grant Duff, who became Sir Mountstuart, was a diplomat and man of letters. He served as Under Secretary of State for India and then the colonies. He was also appointed Governor of Madras in 1881.



studying law, her “life in England was not all work” (34), she enjoyed the experience of cultural immersion: “I was taken to Art Galleries, Plays, Concerts: to Ranelagh and Hurlingham: to sittings of the Privy Council to hear debates in the Houses of Parliament, to tea on the Terrace” (34).

Sorabji’s reference to visits to British Parliament is worth noting as her cosmopolitan performativity contains a political dimension. In her memoir, she often refers to her acquaintance with political figures and her visits to Parliament. For instance, she adds that “[i]n the course of the years I have heard every Prime Minister speak, since Gladstone: and mostly from the Speaker’s Gallery” (34). The colonial traveller’s vested interest in politics is manifested in her claim of citizenship in the context of the British Empire. Following Banerjee’s argument in *Becoming Imperial Citizens*, it could be said that Sorabji’s avowals of loyalty to the British monarchy and her Anglophile identification are signs of a desire to belong to the wider community of the imperial system. Sorabji did not base her wish for citizenship on universalist ideas of citizenship like Dadabhai Naoroji<sup>143</sup> or Mohandas Gandhi. The Parsi lawyer’s “civic self-fashioning” (Banerjee 18), to use Banerjee’s useful phrase, was predicated on her actions- her cosmopolitan upbringing and her service to the empire. Sorabji regarded her work that is the legal counsel she offered the purdahnashins, secluded women, as a form of social welfare for the greater good of the empire.

#### *Limits of British Subjecthood*

Indian women’s success in establishing themselves as cosmopolitans in England was an indication of their capacity to insert themselves in the social scene, and thereby, they also tested the strength of the imperial promises of equality. Sorabji,

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<sup>143</sup> Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917) was an Indian nationalist who had settled in England. He was elected to Parliament in 1892 as a member of the Liberal Party and was actively involved with the Indian National Congress.

for instance, challenged the Canadian authority's denial of her privileges and rights as a British subject when she tried to enter Canada from the United States of America. In her memoir *India Calling*, she narrates a long tussle with the Emigration Officer over her status as an alien in Canada. Although her passport was "visaed for the British Empire" the Emigration Officer of Canada would not allow her to enter. She then tried to persuade the concerned officer to let her into the country with the argument:

I'm not an alien in Canada. I was an alien in America. I come, as you know, from British India, and am equally with Canadians of the British Empire. (*India Calling* 207).

First, contrary to the expectations of the Indian cosmopolitan traveller, the officer in charge did not concede that Canada was part of the British Empire and neither did he consider a passport "visaed for the British Empire" (205) complying with entry requirements. Ironically, she had been invited to deliver a speech at a banquet dinner in Toronto organized by the Daughters of the Empire. Sorabji glosses over the incident as an "amusing" anecdote (205) to display a nonchalance, befitting a globe-trotter, and perhaps to mask her failure to obtain privileges of British subjecthood. Nonetheless, the challenge of crossing the border and entering Canada exposes the limits of cosmopolitanism and the hollowness of the imperial citizenship set before colonial subjects.

Sorabji was not the only Indian traveller laying a claim to British imperial subjecthood. The princely Indian visitors to England also leveraged their position within a British Empire to find space in imperial social and political imaginary. One such attempt can be found in Sultan's travelogue *A Trip to Europe*. She recounts that the Bhopal retinue's visit to Turkey was facilitated by the British Embassy, which

provided protocol and other services. The Nawab Begum's meeting with the Ottoman Sultan had been arranged by the British ambassador in Istanbul. The Bhopal traveller's experience, supports Martin Wainwright's observation that Indian subjects could accrue benefits of a British passport as subjects of the British Empire. Moreover, the Begum's self-identification with the Empire is registered in the travelogue. Like many Indian travellers who arrived with a familiarity gained from colonial education, England was a hyperreal space for the Begum. It is, thus, that Sultan writes that after reaching Redhill, a town in Surrey where they had rented a house for their stay in England, her mother-in-law relaxed and announced with relief that "she [the Begum] felt at quite at home the moment she landed on the English soil. Paris, she said, is a very charming place, but it looked entirely foreign" (59). The Nawab Begum's othering of France, in her comment that Paris is "entirely foreign" (59), may constitute a part of her British identification in supporting the rivalry of Britain over France. Indian travellers' familiarity with England has been noted by many critics such as Elleke Boehmer in *Indian Arrivals* and Antoinette Burton in *At the Heart of the Empire*.

In Sunity Devi's autobiography, however, the subordinate role is counterpoised with an affiliation with Empire and Crown. The Maharani evades Cooch Behar's subjugated position as a subsidiary state, and focuses on her proximity to the Royal family and the state's integration in a large powerful empire. Consequently, Queen Victoria is often alluded to as "our Empress" (105, 154) referring to the title of Empress proclaimed in 1876, and she is also held out as "my ideal" (105). The Maharani's profession of loyalty coincides with Martin Wainwright's claim that the British imperial authority encouraged loyalty to the Crown to foster an imperial identity, which was a subjecthood rather than citizenship.

Victoria's role in serving as a centrifugal force drawing together the rulers of the princely state is evident in Sunity's admiration and love for her.

*Anxieties of Anglophilia in Cosmopolitan Identity*

The fact that Indian colonial women's desire to project cosmopolitan identities was grounded in their knowledge and social repertoire of British culture contained risks of being perceived as Anglophiles or mimics. After all, cosmopolitanism as Urry and Hannerz remind us is a cultural disposition embodying sentiments, affiliations and interpretive skills that transcend local and national boundaries. Thus, the openness to a shared normative culture sometimes led to imitations of Western cultural mores, which in turn, has contributed to an anxiety over the Western roots of colonial cultural capital. In her examination of the Indian author Santha Rama Rau, Antoinette Burton traces the development of a cosmopolitan identity to colonial formations; she, thus, explains:

As she [Santha Rama] framed it, at least at the start of the narrative, such cosmopolitanism depended on an identification with and an allegiance to Britain and things British for its vision and its cachet—articulated here through the idiom of orientalism. (“Cold War Cosmopolitanism” 151)

Female Indian travellers such as Devi, Sultan, Fyzee and Sorabji were careful not to abandon their Indian identities when navigating through English society. Apart from wearing Indian clothes to underscore their national origins, the women proudly articulated their national pride in encounters with British individuals which shows that they were not reduced to mimic women. Indian colonial women's travels need to be therefore framed within vernacular cosmopolitanism with its inclusion of “contradictory opposites” (“Paradoxes of Postcolonial Vernacular” 108). Such a reading will make it possible to detect the dynamism of intercultural exchanges.

A memorable enunciation of national pride within a cosmopolitan performativity can be found in Sorabji's memoir when she narrates her encounter with the famous dramatist George Bernard Shaw at a house party in Worcestershire. While the reference to meeting Shaw functions as an example of her cosmopolitanism, a critical nationalist underlining emerges in the conversation that follows. To Shaw's query, "Why are you not in prison?", the female traveller recalls she countered with confidence "that it was clear with what kind of Indian alone he was acquainted" (41-42). This exchange reveals several aspects of Sorabji's cosmopolitanism. First of all, it attests to her cultural poise and assertiveness, hallmarks of a cosmopolitan disposition. Secondly, it relates to her assertions of an Indian ethnicity; her answer that there is more than one kind of Indian is a declaration of plurality of Indian identities and indicates that she will not be categorized or typecast to one kind of Indian. Pallavi Rastogi interprets this social exchange as having "enormous consequences" because of Sorabji's insistence on shaping her own representation and her refusal to be bound by Shaw's idea of Indian identity ("Cosmopolitan Ethnicity in the Victorian Metropolis" 735).

A similar resistance to British stereotyping of Indians appear in Fyzee's travelogue in her criticism of British prejudice when she writes:

If they meet an Indian who does not meet their fixed views, they become totally flabbergasted. I don't know at which level they place Indian in their minds that everything surprises them! (135).

Like Sorabji, Fyzee is sensitive to the need to create a particular image of Indians in England. She, too, is self-conscious about how Indians, especially Muslims are portrayed. She constantly focuses on British attitudes and perspectives on Indians, and, thus, frequently reports on speeches made about India. To boost the image of

Indians in England, she writes of the important Indian scholars, industrialists, social workers and aristocrats she meets in London and portrays a vibrant Indian cultural scene. In this way, she crafts a cosmopolitan London where a plurality of ethnic groups lives harmoniously.

Devi, too, reveals a consciousness of being an Indian subject in the British empire. She shows critical self-reflection in her realization that Cooch Behar despite enjoying the status of a “Princely state” was actually under British colonial hegemony, and she is astute in her comments for the need to retain Indian roots. In writing about her sons’ education, she observes that immersion in a foreign culture at too young an age could become culturally deracinating. For instance, the consequence of giving her sons a thorough English education meant that they had learnt Greek and Latin, but had “found it difficult to speak freely and fluently in the Cooch Behar language” and do not know Sanskrit or Urdu. Thus, she opines, “Now I think it was perhaps a waste of time to educate a ruler’s heir in England” and suggests “I think there should be Sanskrit teachers in England as well as teachers of Urdu and Bengali” (148).

Devi’s desire to develop an “Indian Eton” so that “our boys could be educated without being cut off from their home life” (147) is an assertion of nationalist feeling. She continues to expand her nationalist pride in stating that “my people do not require a Western education” because for “thousands of years ago India produced astronomers, poets and sages, when most of the European races were cave dwellers” (147-148). This confident assertion of India’s heritage offsets the threats of Anglophilia generated by the Western markers of her portraits.

Another significant way Indian colonial women travellers countered colonial underpinnings of cosmopolitanism was by registering affiliations with a wider

community beyond centre and periphery. The voyages of these women under study were not limited to the British Empire, and most of them toured continental Europe. Kuttan Nair and Durgabati Ghose, for example, convey the extensive of their voyages in their titles, *A Peep into Europe* and *The Westward Traveller*, while their visits to Britain constitute only one small part of their travelogues. Both A Fyzee and Sorabji refer to trips taken beyond the borders of Britain. Fyzee, for example, visited Holland, Germany and France before returning to India. Among the early female travellers, France was a popular destination as seen in the travels of Dutt and Ragaviah.

The references to differential regions of Europe establish a global cosmopolitanism as opposed to a colonial cosmopolitanism limited to British imperialism. In fact, Sultan offers evidence of a non-Western cosmopolitanism in her travelogue. When the Begum of Bhopal converses with the Ottoman Sultan in Persian she is linking herself to a Persianate cosmopolitanism. The influence of Persian literary humanism, the basis of this cosmopolitanism according to Hamid Dabashi (*Reversing the Colonial Gaze*), can be seen in Atiya Fyzee's narrative, too, where are allusions to Persian poetry. By their references to Persian culture, Sultan and Fyzee inscribe an alternate cultural sphere that subverts the hegemony of colonialism in Indian colonial performativity of cosmopolitanism.

## Conclusion

The cosmopolitanism of Fyzee, Devi, Sultan and Sorabji can be framed with reference to Werbner's notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism because they negotiate with difference and cultivate dualities of local and global in their travelogues. The dexterity with which they move across cultures indicate agency and critical consciousness among colonial visitors. As Boehmer and Burton have noted the travellers arrived with a cosmopolitan outlook that provided them with the confidence

and skillset to insert themselves in the social scene and to critique the metropolitan culture. One can trace the burgeoning confidence in the women's responses which were not limited to unqualified admiration. In their perceptive analyses of British society, one finds a similarity with Tapan Ray Chaudhuri's remark that the colonial views in Bengali society reflected a "measure of intellectual self-confidence in relation to Europe" (*Europe Reconsidered* 1).

Indian women travellers' utilization of cultural capital to access power in British and Indian societies provides an instance of the transformational potential of cosmopolitanism. As this section has tried to show the performativity of a cosmopolitan identity was linked to gaining agency, and it provides a new insight into colonial cultural formations. However, gendered or female cosmopolitanism has remained an under-researched area because of cosmopolitanism's Eurocentric links and the cultural dominance of the West.

Cosmopolitanism thus provides the female travellers in this study with a cultural cachet to gain authority and assert themselves. Their dual allegiances to British and Indian cultures are worth investigating offer insight into the contradictions and paradoxes besetting Indian experiences of the imperial centre. Indian women travellers contributed to social developments by mediating between two cultures.

My analysis of the female authored colonial travel narratives suggest that travelling colonial women could become architects of cosmopolitanism through everyday encounters. Indian women made use of their access to spaces, social encounter and even commodities in the imperial centre to insert themselves in the culture of the metropolitan centre. They succeeded in reaching out across cultural differences through cosmopolitan practices identified by Werbner's "dialogue, aesthetic enjoyment and respect" ("Anthropology and New Ethical Cosmopolitanism")



143). At the same time, they also cultivated “a doubleness that allows both commitment and distance” and “the possibility of dialogical knowledge of the other person or group”, hallmarks of cosmopolitan experiences identified by Thomas Bender (“Cosmopolitan Experience and Its Use” 116).

In this chapter, I have tried to map the cosmopolitan contours in Indian women’s travel narratives to show the modern and aesthetic orientations in female travellers’ depictions of England. Indian colonial cosmopolitanism, thus, marks a significant intervention in colonial cultural history in shifting the Eurocentric bias of cosmopolitanism and paving the way for provincializing cosmopolitanism. In terms of social interaction, too, female travellers were able to successful deploy their social competence to develop networks which will be analysed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER SIX INDIAN WOMEN'S SOCIABILITY

Closely connected to the theme of cosmopolitanism is sociability, the presentation of affective transcultural relations in travel texts. Indian women's travels to London brought them in contact with British women which led to social interactions and alliances that rupture the usual postcolonial interpretive framework of polarity. Thus, the theme of friendships across colonial borders informs several travellers' accounts of England. Some of these friendships were no doubt tentative and fragile associations; nevertheless, they signal possibilities of cultural bridges in the foregrounding of social camaraderie in travel narratives. The thematic projection of friendship enables female travellers to consolidate their performativity of transnational and cosmopolitan identities. The theoretical concept of "cosmopolitan sociability" proposed by Nina Glick Schiller, Darieva Tsypyima and Sandra Gruner-Domic (2011) presents a transition from cosmopolitan self-fashioning to sociability. Combining elements of cosmopolitanism and social interaction, the concept builds a foundation for further analysis. As they put it:

We define cosmopolitan sociability as consisting of forms of competence and communication skills that are based on the human capacity to create social relations of inclusiveness and openness to the world. As such cosmopolitan sociability is an ability to find aspects of the shared human experience including aspirations for a better world within or despite what would seem to be divides of culture and belief. (402-403)

This chapter treats the theme of cosmopolitan sociability by examining women's representations of conviviality rather than merely registering the historic event of friendship across racial lines. Such a theme forms the interest of Humberto Garcia in *In England Re-Oriented: How Central and South Asian Travelers Imagined the West*

(2020). He states that the social performances of Indo-Iranian male travellers were influenced by “elite transcultural homosociality, male bonding over women’s alienated bodies, and the different modes of theatricality” (4). Following Humberto Garcia’s view that metropolitan sociability empowered pre-1858 Persianate travellers to critique imperial manhood, this part of the dissertation looks at the potential for agency and self-realization through female social transactions in the colonial period.

In his examination of Central and South Asian travellers to England in late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Garcia demonstrates that feminine conviviality initiated the building of a cosmopolis, and Persianate travellers could take advantage of recreational venues centred on female bodies, such as the theatre, and of more genteel female-dominated contact zones of drawings and salons to immerse themselves in British society and even form homosocial bonds with metropolitan men. He writes:

For Persianate travellers who felt lost in Britain, Englishwomen’s beautiful bodies helped reorient them toward a second home, a familiar gentlemanly community. (7)

While male travellers could form cross-gender networks, Indian female travellers restricted their interactions to other women and formed female bonds. The presentation of such female friendships in travel narratives are, therefore, important in understanding connected histories of empire and transnational networks facilitated by colonial regimes.

### Overture of Friendships

Friendships or overtures of friendliness, even if they are wavering and hesitant, need to be examined and acknowledged. As Leela Gandhi reminds us in her book *Affective Communities: Anti-Colonial, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism and the Politics*

of *Friendship* (2005), friendship has become “the lost trope in anticolonial thought” (13). Citing Jacques Derrida, she proposes that the concept of friendship captures “all those invisible affective gestures that refuse alignment along the secure axes of filiation to seek expression outside, if not against, possessive communities of belonging” (9). Gandhi demonstrates the formation of novel and complex networks through shared anti-colonial sentiments across racial divides with examples of noteworthy amity between philosopher and activist Edward Carpenter (1844-1929)<sup>144</sup> and young M.K. Gandhi (1869-1948)<sup>145</sup>, the future nationalist leader, and literary contacts between C.F Andrews<sup>146</sup> (1871-1940), Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)<sup>147</sup>, Manmohan Ghose (1869-1924)<sup>148</sup> and Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950)<sup>149</sup>.

Colonial antagonism between individuals from the periphery and the centre is subverted in the politically radical subcultures of writers, socialists and theosophists. The turn to connections within the empire has also led Jane Haggis and her co-writers to explore cross-culture collaborations in *Cosmopolitan Lives on the Cusp of Empire Interfaith, Cross-Cultural and Transnational Networks, 1860-1950* (2017). In this book Clare Midgley explores exchanges between Brahma Samaj leaders and Unitarians over transnational debates about the women question. While, Jane Haggis et al. and Leela Gandhi foreground amity and mutual understanding in their deployment of the motif of friendship, Elleke Boehmer examines literary networks among Indian and British writers in *Indian Arrivals, 1870-1915: Networks of British*

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<sup>144</sup> Carpenter was a socialist and philosopher known for his publication *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure* (1889).

<sup>145</sup> Gandhi the leader of nationalist movement against British rule in India had studied law in England from 1888 to 1891.

<sup>146</sup> Andrews was a missionary with sympathy for the Indian nationalist cause and he was closely connected with Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi.

<sup>147</sup> Wilde, an Irish poet, playwright and novelist was also a leader of the late nineteenth century Aesthetic movement.

<sup>148</sup> Manmohan Ghose was an Indian poet and educator who was a close associate of Laurence Binyon.

<sup>149</sup> Aurobindo was a philosopher, poet and a nationalist leader.

*Empire* (2015). These scholars, however, focus mainly on male Indian figures and politically invested alliances, hence sorority or gendered female connections and social links are not covered. Gandhi, for instance, probes dissident friendships and looks at political and social subversions in Edwardian socialist milieu in *Affective Communities*; in contrast, my dissertation gives attention to personal attachments within social frameworks in Indian women's colonial travel narratives.

The neglected area of friendships between British and Indian women finds space in female travel writings. Hence, “the invisible affective gestures that refuse alignment” (9), as Leela Gandhi so evocatively phrases it, shapes my discussion of women travellers' representations of transnational links and affiliations. Narratives of cordiality and interaction between women across racial and colonial divides attest to rare but real cultural contacts that complicate simplistic binaries of colonial history.

### Indian Women Travellers' Sociability

Women's intercultural sociability was enabled by their location in the metropolitan centre. As many scholars have pointed out, the English at home were more open to Indians and less rigid in demarcating racial boundaries than when they resided in colonial societies. Despite a sizeable body of British individuals living in India, in Sumita Mukherjee's view they remained aloof and insular with the result that Indian subjects had very little interaction with them (*Nationalism, Education and Migrant Identities*). Consequently, being in London “offered some of Britain's Indian imperial citizens the possibility of engaging on a more equal basis with metropolitan political debates and cultural interventions previously denied them prior to their arrival” (Nasta 9). Boehmer elaborates on this issue further and demonstrates that despite growing divide between colonizer and colonized in the periphery, the metropolis of London with its cosmopolitan diversity mediated differences in race and

ethnicity and produces “islands of hospitality” (*Indian Arrivals* 13). The harmonious note of these statements must be countered with the fact even in the heart of the empire there was increase in racial hostility and prejudice against Indians at the turn of the century (Lahiri *Indians in Britain* 77).

Given the otherwise bleak scenario of cross-cultural encounters, Indian female travellers’ success in establishing mutuality and conviviality is remarkable. It is worthwhile to additionally note that female sociability was not limited to royal visitors, because several privileged but not courtly women wrote about their experiences of interpersonal and private affiliations. A history of intercultural proximity can be retrieved from the memoirs and travel narratives of Indian colonial women who had travelled to England. Women’s ability to bridge cultural gaps and form friendships is an example of transnational networks and female agency that are often forgotten. While Rabindranath Tagore’s<sup>150</sup> social success and friendships formed when he went to England for the first time are well-known, his sister-in-law’s experiences are less familiar.

Among the early female travellers of the nineteenth century, Jnanadanandini Tagore provides a compelling story of her experience of British cordiality. Although she travelled alone with her children to England in 1877, without having her husband or other family member accompany her, she appears to have adjusted well in metropolitan society since documents friendships with English women in her memories told to her daughter and recorded in *Puratani* (Indira Devi).

Jnanada mentions Miss Sharp and Miss Donkins with whom she was able to converse since she knew English. The Bengali traveller must have succeeded in

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<sup>150</sup> Tagore’s first visit to England was between 1878 to 1880. For more see Tagore’s letters from England, *Letters from a Sojourner in Europe* (2008) translated by Manjari Chakravarty.

bridging cultural gaps because she became friends with these two British women. She stages a close relationship Miss Donkins' urgency and concern for her children. Her British friend, Miss Donkins, had rushed outside in nightclothes to call a doctor for the Tagore children when they fell ill (40). The traveller also recalls visiting Brighton with Miss Sharp where they strolled companionably by the sea shore (39).

*Toru Dutt: Epistolary Friendship*

Jnanada Devi's intercultural link was preceded by Toru Dutt's experience of cross-cultural friendship. Dutt's friendship with Mary Martin presents a deeper and more well-documented instance of transnational linkages between English and Indian women. The Bengali young woman had originally met her British friend, the daughter of Reverend John Martin, vicar of their parish and also a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College, when she and her family lived in Cambridge, England, in 1872. The friendship continued even after Toru returned to India, and the two young friends maintained a lively correspondence for four years until the Bengali traveller's death in 1877. Their letters constituted a vehicle for sociability for the Christian Bengali writer, who led an isolated life due to her family's detachment from mainstream Hindu society.

In her letters, Dutt frequently references the confined and alienating existence her family endured in India. Two years after returning from England, she writes plaintively "I feel a little lonely sometimes" (26 June 1876 284). She elaborates that life in England was "more active" whereas in India she has to lead "a rather solitary and sedentary life" (284). She blames gender segregation in India for their social disengagement. As she writes in a letter dated March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1876:

I have not been to one dinner party or any party at all since we left Europe.

And then I do not know any people here except those of our kith and kin, and some of them I do not know. (271).

Besides the traditional custom of confining women to domestic spheres, the Dutt family were ostracized for converting to Christianity. In a poignant acknowledgement, Dutt writes:

The day before yesterday my mother's *cousine* was married. She is a Hindu and so is her family, so of course we were not invited (28 February 1876 261)

The young traveller's description of "pretty ceremonies" (261) of a Hindu wedding is redolent of sadness at being left out.

Mary Gibson finds yet another reason for Dutt's alienation and loneliness. In her analysis of the traveller's poems in *Indian Angles: English Verse in Colonial India from Jones to Tagore*, she highlights that that traveller's cosmopolitanism had set Dutt apart from her Indian peers. Gibson remarks that Dutt was exceptional for her "education in Calcutta, in France and in the higher lectures for women at Cambridge opened intellectual vistas unavailable to most British or Indian women writing in the last decades of the century" (*Indian Angles* 184). This cosmopolitanism was, however, both enabling and constricting.

While Dutt's travels had endowed her with a cosmopolitan sensibility fostered by foreign education and cultural contacts, it differentiated her from others in her own community. The exposure had influenced her perspective. In the "Introduction" to *Toru Dutt: Collected Prose and Poetry* (2006), Chandani Lokugé writes that the young traveller viewed Calcutta life "through Europeanized and Christianized lenses" ("Introduction" xxii). Consequently, a cultural estrangement contributed further to her



detachment from Indian society. She became unhappy with living in Calcutta and aligned herself with British culture and society.

Due to these circumstances, Dutt was disconnected from her local society and she turned more and more to Martin for rapport and emotional support. As a result, the correspondence with Martin often functions as a conduit to vent her emotions. It is with the English friend that the lonely Dutt could share the grief of losing a cat, a delight in her horses, the excitement of hiring a piano and the sundry news of friends and relatives. She quotes her father commenting favourably about Martin in his declaration, “where in Calcutta will you get such warm-hearted friends?” (13 May 1876 277).

In contrast to the lonely detached life in India (Lokuge; Grewal), Dutt stages a former rich and active social life in England through her letters. The traveller recreates a life of friendships and camaraderie with frequent inquiries about common friends and fellow classmates in England. These citations of British friends help Dutt to enact a performativity of sociability, which was sadly missing in her life in India. The few friends in Calcutta that she mentions are often those the family had met through travel. One is Miss Ada Smith who had arrived from England and whose family was known to Govind Chunder Dutt from his first visit to England (23 November 1875), and the other is Mrs. Rustomjee and her daughter whom the Dutt had met in Bombay in 1863. Dutt conveys a sense of a shared social circle with Mary Martin by sending love and regards to British friends such as Mrs. Cowell (13 January 1876 259), Miss Rosie Fullerton (13 March 1876 264), Miss A.L. (13 March 1876 264) and Mary Hall and Lizzie Hall (28 August 1876 301). References to teachers, M. Girard, M. Boquel and Dr. Garrett, also contribute to the creation of mutuality.

Dutt's exchanges with Martin suggests a close relationship based on mutuality that Gibson considers to be an important cornerstone of transnational friendships between Indian writers and their British counterparts in fin-de-siècle nineteenth century. In her discussion of Manmohan Ghose, Sarojini Naidu, and Rabindranath Tagore, Gibson states that "each established a 'shadowed mutuality' with British poets and artists, and each published poems that arose from this encounter" (231) where 'shadowed mutuality' refers to a process of affiliation, that is the process of growing close. Such feelings of being connected figure prominently in Dutt's letters. The two correspondents share mutual interests in literature and colonial relations, which are reflected in their lively epistolary discussions on contemporary writers and political events.

A special feature of this friendship is the projection of reciprocity and mutual respect. In the Dutt- Martin friendship there is a decentring of privilege since both letter writers seem to treat each other as equals. The lack of inhibition in discussing racial attitudes is a strong indication of such closeness. Lokuge supports such an interpretation by drawing attention to Dutt's acknowledgement of Martin's reproof for using "native" to describe her compatriots in the letter dated March 13, 1876 - "the reproof is just an, and I stand corrected" (263 in Lokuge). Barnita Bagchi sees Martin's reference to the word "native" not as an example of colonial domination but as an acknowledgement of racialized vocabulary and its detrimental effect ("Analysing Toru Dutt's Oeuvre" 187). Exchanging views on racial prejudice seems to have been part of their epistolary conversation.

Bagchi cites Dutt's frank criticism of colonial treatment of Indians in the June 26<sup>th</sup> letter as a mark of equality and openness between the two friends (188). Here the traveller had reported on the heartless attitude of a British magistrate. After several

British soldiers had shot peacocks belonging to a Bengali farmer, an altercation ensued between the villagers and the soldiers. Although only one British soldier was wounded in contrast to the death of nine Bengalis and seven wounded, the magistrate acquitted the white men and fined the villagers because he wanted that “natives should know how precious is the life of one British soldier in the eyes of the British Government” (26 June 1876 283). To underscore her argument of colonial oppression, Dutt quotes an old porter who had witnessed the Mutiny of 1857 saying “Ah! The English have mismanaged the whole affair!” (283). These examples demonstrate that the Bengali traveller upheld and asserted an Indian perspective in her correspondence, even when censorious of British policy. Bagchi, thus, comments:

One can infer that this was a friendship that did not articulate itself in the idiom of dominant colonizer (speaking for the cause of British colonialism and imperialism (and submissive colonized (accepting the concept, and praising the putative practice, of ethical colonialism or imperialism): rather, both parties looked at the India-Britain relationship with clear, critical eyes. When we discuss the transnationalism fostered by the British Empire, and varieties of the cosmopolitan, this insight into the nature of Dutt’s female friendships is crucial in our theoretical framing. (188)

No wonder Dutt could mention numerous examples of colonial brutality and discrimination to her friend without any fear of offence.

Bagchi’s opinion that Toru Dutt’s friendship is important in opening up new dimensions in colonial relations is justified. Dutt’s attitude cannot be slotted into either Anglophilia or anticolonialism since it is both complex and contradictory. Bagchi’s assessment corresponds with Natalie Phillips’ observation that Dutt occupies a range of subjectivities and selectively chooses to support either colonialism or

nationalism. Scholars, therefore, consider her liminality between traditional Indian and Anglophile colonial subject as a site of critical intersection. Hence, the letters should also be read in this light of contextualization and the awareness that the writer constructed a particular self-image.

At first Dutt aligns with colonial ideology and performs Anglophile mimicry in her identification with England and English homes and culture. Dutt projects a strong affiliation with European culture through repeated examples of playing the piano and reading English and French books and references to other cultural markers such as the Royal Academy in London (251) and European music. At the beginning, much of the correspondence proceeds along a lively and erudite discussion of European literature. Dutt appears to be a voracious reader who was *au courant* with contemporary writers including Mrs. Barret Browning, Charlotte Bronte, William Thackeray, Henry Heine, Victor Hugo and others. She keeps herself cognizant of literary culture by reading *Punch*, *Illustrated London News*, *Graphic* and other newspapers borrowed from libraries in Calcutta.

Gradually, however, she moves away from Anglophilia to a more critical appreciation of Indian culture and space. Two years after returning to India she writes “Our winter skies are so beautiful and variegated in colour” (300). As she embarks on her goal to learn Sanskrit in 1875 (23 November 1875 256), she begins to emphasise the merits of Indian culture. The letters reflect this change in the references to *The Iliad of the East*, Frederika Richardson’s translation of *Ramayana* (24 March 1876 271) and *La Femme dans l’Inde Antique* by Clarisse Bader (24 April 1876 272-273). There is also a diminishing of the fervour to return to England. In a letter dated 2 October 1876, she comments about “our return to England. (Will that ever be?)” (307) signalling her reconciliation to the reality of remaining in India. There is an

acceptance of India as home in her desire to “go to dear old Baumaree” (2 October 1876 308). The hope previously associated with the return to England is now transferred to their country home, “We shall, I hope, soon go to dear old Baumaree (4 October 1876 308). A more telling indication of her shift towards India is the decision to return their piano to Harold and Company (308). It is as if with the giving away of the piano the traveller is divesting herself of allegiances to British culture. She clarifies her changed position in the comment “India is my *patrie*” (25 December 1876 321) and even declares “Dear old Baumaree... is as good as England; in some respects, at least in my opinion, it is better” (321).

Dutt’s assertions of nationalist sentiment and pride of being commensurate with Martin, despite colonial asymmetry, endow her correspondence with a transnational dimension. Both Gibson and Bagchi acknowledge Dutt’s multiple affiliations but links them to the “web of interconnections and circulatory communicative and cultural energies” of a globalisation “fuelled by imperialism, and traveling between India and Europe” (Bagchi 183).

Nonetheless, the idea of a deliberately planned or crafted persona gains strength from Lokuge’s observation of self-censorship in the letters. The editor of the Oxford edition of *Toru Dutt Collected Prose and Poetry* notes that Dutt does not mention her French novel *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d’Avers* in her letter to Mary Martin (xvii-xviii). Again, she addresses a range of topics and does not dwell much on her sister Aru or her mother. The sister’s death is stoically presented “It is a sore trial for us, but His will be done” (19 September 1874 229). It is possible that Dutt wanted to emphasise her literary persona, and thus, alludes often to her father teaching her arithmetic (19 September, 1874, p.230), reading literature or helping her publish but remain silent on her relationships with her mother and her sister.

Dutt's friendship with Martin is important for its contribution to the transnational connections wrought by colonial networks. Additionally, the letters of the Bengali traveller create a space for the textualization of Indian female agency at a time when women had limited scope to assert their identity or develop their subjectivity.

### “Striated Textures” of Sociability

While friendships based on mutuality offers optimism such as the one between Toru Dutt and Mary Martin, Gibbons cautions against facile readings of colonial amity and warns of misunderstandings. The complexity of transnational relations surfaces in Janaki Majumdar's reminiscence of her family's life in England in her memoir titled *Family History*. Her father W.C. Bonnerjee had sent his wife Hemangini and three young children to England in the summer of 1874. The family settled in London before the author's birth and shuttled between the imperial centre and India. Janaki Majumdar grew up as a transnational figure, moving between the two countries. She later settled in India after her marriage to Prio Krishnar Majumdar (1879-1947). Although in *A Family History*, Janaki Majumdar enacts herself as a well-loved and accepted member of British society, she refers to the more difficult experiences of her mother and her sister, thereby, producing a jaggedness in the fragmentary and limited cross-cultural exchanges that were present in colonial encounters of Indian and British writers in nineteenth century. Boehmer describes such meetings as having “uneven intensities and striated textures” (“Zigzag Lines” 18)<sup>151</sup>.

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<sup>151</sup> The literary connections and pairings that Boehmer refers are the posthumous connection between Toru Dutt and Edmund Gosse and the bonds between Manmohan Ghose and Laurence Binyon, and W.B. Yeats and Mohini Chatterjee.

Boehmer's image of "striated textures" implies that friendships and alliances between colonizer and colonized were fraught with tensions and asymmetries in power meant that the relationships were not even and could be contradictory and convoluted as in zigzags in Majumdar's family's experience of British people in 1874-75. There is evidence of the "considerable wariness [which] still beset attempts at reaching across the cultural divide" that observers in her analysis of Anglo-Indian encounter in the colonial period (*Indian Arrivals* 13). Hemangini Bonnerjee, Janaki's mother, had to travel to England with small children and live there because her husband wanted to acculturate the family in English ways. W.C. Bonnerjee had arranged for his family to board with Colonel Wood who needed to supplement "his meagre pension" (Majumdar 51). Unfortunately, the family were not treated well by the Woods because as Majumdar explains:

... they had a strong colour prejudice and disliked all orientals, classing them as 'native', and it was only the generous sum paid by my father that caused them to take in his family. But my mother and her children were subjected to numerous indignities. (52)

Since this instance of racial prejudice took place before her birth, Majumdar adds a note from her elder sister Nellie who gives a vivid account of the traumatic experience of discrimination and abuse from the Woods. She describes what happened after their parents went back to India with the younger children and left Nellie and her brother in England so that they could continue their education. She gives a graphic description of the racist attitude of her host family in what follows:

I was frightfully severely punished as they thought I was wilfully obstinate and stubborn; but on thinking it over now, I believe I was merely stupid—half

an idiot. I bear the marks of being pushed under an iron bed which cut open my head. (53)

Although she cites evidence of abuse in the way she was injured and cut her head, Nellie seems keen to minimize the Woods' responsibility and direct the blame to herself for being "obstinate" and "stupid". There is ambivalence in Nellie's attitude to the Woods because she keeps on trying to rationalize their behaviour as in the following segment:

Col. and Mrs. Wood were fairly decent, but the children's behaviour was deplorable. They despised her [Hemangini] for being an Indian, for not knowing the language well etc., and she never retaliated. They were decent to my father because he held the purse-strings (53)

Here, Nellie presents further substantiation of the Woods' racism and hypocrisy. Their hypocrisy at exploiting and taking money from the Bonnerjee's and then ill-treating them comes across clearly. There is also a strong racist outlook in telling the children that they were "inferior" and dirty because of their skin colour. Yet, Nellie like Janaki Majumdar complicates this testimony of suffering by downplaying the negative attitudes of Colonel Wood and his family. Somehow both sisters gloss over the dark side of the history, perhaps out of shame or colonial internalization of their own inferiority.

While they try to lessen the guilt of the Woods, Majumdar and her sister keep on highlighting the fortitude and resilience of the mother, Hemangini Bonnerjee, who though ill-treated never complained. Antoinette Burton finds this emphasis on the mother's forgiving nature an attempt to construct her as "a kind of martyr-heroine" ("Introduction" *Family History* xvii) suggesting that early Indian diasporic figures dealt with racism in this way. Hemangini's endurance could also be indicative of the



forbearance that colonized subjects had to live through in colonial encounters. The Bonnerjee family, thus, attempts to cover up earlier humiliations for Majumdar writes that:

The most amazing part is that my mother never bore a grudge against them, forgave them all the indignities, and was extremely good to all the family later on, when she was wealthy and in an established position in her own house in England, and they were poor and unhappy. (52)

Nellie, however, concedes to one negative repercussion of the Woods' behaviour. She admits that the three elder children learnt from the Woods to disparage their mother. Majumdar's recollection also confirms this view as she writes that after Hemangini returned to England in 1888 and set up her own home in Croydon, there was a distance between her and her elder children. They had grown out of touch and despised her lack of education.

It is strange that Majumdar does not deny or erase the negative experience, but she refracts the pain and humiliation in transforming it into Burton calls a "morality tale" (43). In Majumdar's narrative, the Woods are punished for their bad behaviour, and the gentle forgiving Hemangini is rewarded with material wealth and prestige.

Another possible for the ambivalence in criticizing the Woods could be linked to Majumdar's larger aim to produce a history of her family where the family's prestige and social standing remain inviolate. Moreover, this text is the narrative of the author's own life and her family background, thus, she would want to position herself as a social success.

The Woods' treatment is thus presented as an anomaly in an otherwise successful cross-cultural experience of England. Majumdar inscribes numerous examples of sociability to offset the prejudice of the host family. She produces a

display of Anglo-Indian sociability by describing Hemangini's achievement in entering a social circle through religion. Majumdar writes that her mother created social ties through the church, the Plymouth Brethren, and its meeting house called Iron Room. Her mother organized "Mothers' Meetings" on Thursday afternoons (82) which were attended by ladies interested in religious discussions. She presents the names of women who came to their home to authenticate her claim, and so she lists—Mrs. Harling, Mrs. Alexander, Mrs. Brown, and Mrs Firth among others (83). Hemangini's gradual attempts at forging social links is also corroborated by an interpolation from Mrs. Arthur Alexander who was a friend of Susie. She writes thus: "Mrs. Bonnerjee became friendly with my mother" and that she herself was often invited to their home (77).

Majumdar's insistence on portraying her family's social position in England as happy and of high standing could be linked to a desire to enact an identity of being popular and socially prominent. It is a memoir meant to memorialize a family history, hence, there is the motivation to project her personal social achievement as well as her family's acceptance by British society. This may explain her strategy to minimize the negativity of the Woods' racism and counterpoise the early history of discrimination by presenting instances of social success with her later popularity among British friends and their warmth and cordiality towards her.

In her memoir, Majumdar, thus, paints a picture of halcyon days of a life of conviviality. She writes that when her parents returned to India in 1900, they had left her in the care of the Carpenters who were not only neighbours but also family friends. She was fortunate that the Carpenters were wonderful hosts as she writes, "[t]here could not have been a greater contrast between the way I was treated by them

and the way my elder sisters were treated by the Woods, and I was indeed lucky” (88).

In spite of constantly moving between England and India, Majumdar managed to make many friends in England, something she proudly asserts in her text. In her memoir, she creates lists of friends; for instance, she enumerates,

My friends at that time [while at school around 1900], beside the Carpenters, were the Wilkinsons and Coleridges, the Barnards (with whom I spent several delightful week-ends), Flora Dinn (Mrs Petch), whose brother Hugh was my first ‘flame’, Gertrude Down (Mrs. Le May), Agnes Sterry, Dorothy Stewart Mrs Reed), Stella Trinder and the Lees, and Lilian and Winnie Scott. (103)

She also remembers with fondness “all sorts of new and exciting friends” (108) she found at Cambridge, where she studied Natural Science.

In Majumdar’s textualization of Indian-British friendships, the fault lines of Anglo-Indian social encounters become visible. On the one hand, her memoir is a testimony to the cosmopolitan openness and hospitality of British society. The ease with which her parents left her with the Carpenters and her references to spending weekends at the homes of British friends as well as friends staying at their Croydon residence, evoke images of social transactions that bridge racial boundaries. But this picture of bonhomie or camaraderie is also complicated by occasional spectres of racism or colonial “wariness” as Boehmer terms it (*Indian Arrivals* 83).

Besides the overt prejudice of the Woods, there is also opposition to her brother’s engagement to an English girl, for “great difficulties arose” (86) in Majumdar’s words. Although the Bonnerjees had consented to Nellie marrying an Englishman, George Blair, they were reluctant to have an English daughter-in-law (86), and “her parents were even more unwilling for her to marry an Indian” (86).

Despite the initial opposition, the families eventually agreed and Shelley was able to marry Gertie Johnson.

The mention of inter-racial marriages in the text represent another small but significant aspect of the colonial experience of a metropolitan centre. The Bonnerjees and Sunity Devi's family provide instances of racially mixed marriages. These relations are interesting because in several cases, as in Sunity Devi's daughters and Majumdar's sister Nellie marrying British men, there is a surprising element of liberalism and agency in women crossing racial and cultural boundaries. Indian women's travel texts are generally silent about representing men or even interactions with men. Janaki Majumdar is exceptional in stating that she had a flame, Hugh the brother of her friend Flora Dinn (103). While Indian male travellers describe English women and in the case of pre-colonial travellers even reference friendship with white women (cf. Mirza Abu Taleb), the women are conspicuously silent, and their reticence could be regarded as an integral part of their performativity of being feminine.

### Transnational Friendships of Indian Female Students

Indian women's transnational alliances continue with Cornelia Sorabji, Mary Bhore and Atiya Fyzee who refer to social visits as well as goodwill and bonhomie with metropolitan acquaintances. Although Mary Bhore does not list any particular individuals, she implies that she had access to private homes and was able to gain first-hand knowledge of British social lives. The closeness and affections these travellers enjoyed may have been facilitated by their gender since male students were not privy to such intimacy.

With the turn of the century, there was a hardening of attitude towards Indian male students in Edwardian England (Lahiri Indians *in Britain* 77). Shompa Lahiri's

study of Indian students' experiences of England demonstrates a recurring theme of hostility, prejudice and even fear and Lahiri concludes that male students were regarded as political and sexual threats (76). She writes: "[b]y the twentieth century Indian students were no longer so fortunate in their reception and the warmth of the British welcome had distinctly cooled" (*Indians* 52-53). However, when it came to women students such as Cornelia Sorabji, she discerns a marked difference: "the experience of pioneering Indian women who came to study in Britain in the nineteenth century suggests that female students were subject to fewer difficulties and consequently reacted more positively to their residence" (75). Thus, Mary Bhore and Atiya Fyzee, both students in the Edwardian period record, their appreciation of British hospitality.

Indian women's solidarity with British women in the imperial metropolis countervails the dominant trend of alienation and distance between women of different races in colonial discourse. British women's imperialist and racist perspectives come across in memsahibs' writings on India with the exception of a few like Fanny Parkes, as she had actually visited a zenana and met Indian women. Since European women in colonial India rarely met elite or educated women, their depictions of the native women were confined to the servants they employed, or generalizations about Indian women. Cultural historians find a similar complicity in imperial racism among British feminists. Antoinette Burton suggests that despite well-intentioned goals the women were unable to overcome prejudice ("The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and 'The Indian Woman' 1865-1915" 137).

British people including women in the imperial centre were more hospitable and accepting of Indians. Most travellers, male and female, were pleasantly surprised to confront a more genial face of British society. Indian women's warm recollections

of their social life in England resonates with Ranajit Guha's pithy statement: 'the Englishman in England was less prejudiced than the Englishman abroad' (qtd. in Boehmer *Indian Arrivals* 84)

### *Intercultural Encounters*

Women's narrativization of their intercultural encounters bestows them with agency as they control and shape the presentations of meetings and relationships. Travellers such as Cornelia Sorabji and Atiya Fyzee exploit their ability to construct images of conviviality in their social interactions. Sorabji and Fyzee cite many British friends in their travel narratives, evoking a liberal society, ready to include visitors in its fold. These two travellers imply that English society was steeped in cosmopolitan sociability and warmly welcomed them in the social circuit. Sorabji begins her memoir, *India Calling* with a reference to "one of the many delightful visits" she had at York House owned by the Grant Duffs<sup>152</sup> (*India Calling* 5). She goes on to mention the "kindness" of her British friends several times in her text. She lists among her friends, influential members of elite British society including Jowett, the Master of Balliol, Lord and Lady Hobhouse,<sup>153</sup> and the Max Mullers<sup>154</sup>. In addition, the traveller writes of numerous country house visits and her opportunities to mingle with Gladstone, Balfour, the Poet Laureate Tennyson, the playwright George Bernard Shaw and more, and thereby becomes in Siobhan Lambert-Hurley's opinion "an indefatigable name dropper" ("Empire, Society, Diasporic Communities" 66). Through this litany of celebrity names Sorabji is able to leverage the reflected glory of their fame and achievements.

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<sup>152</sup> Grant Duff (1829-1906) had served as Governor to Madras (1881-1886) and had been appointed as Under-Secretary of State for India and then for the colonies.

<sup>153</sup> Lord Hobhouse had served in India as part of the Viceroy's Legal Council and upon returning to England, both he and his wife were closely associated with National Indian Association.

<sup>154</sup> Friedrich Max Muller (1823-1900) famous professor of Sanskrit and Indology at Oxford.

However, she does not succeed in projecting a close or intimate relationship with them. Sorabji's text is peppered with references to powerful and influential members of British high society who had invited her to their homes. The display of her familiarity with this world is used to scaffold an image of being an insider, one privy to inner history of famous British individuals. For instance, she divulges her privileged access to the personal history of Florence Nightingale and Jowett by revealing her knowledge of their youthful encounter. She also discloses that the Oxford scholar had confided to her that he was perhaps more apprehensive of the students than they of him.

While she was in Sommerville College, Sorabji claims that she had made many good friends; however, the names she lists belong to guardian figures, suggesting unequal or asymmetrical relationships. She was definitely well-liked and accorded kindness and invitations. She refers to the "kindness" of A.M. Bruce a fellow student who "adopted" her as a special Fresher (25), and includes in her list of friends the English novelist Mary Cholmondeley<sup>155</sup> and Una Artevelde. The majority of individuals who are presented as friends, however, appear to be unequally placed in relation to her, in that they are more powerful, older and socially superior to her.

Through her adopted grandmother, Lady Ford, Sorabji was introduced to Lord and Lady Hobhouse, who made it possible for her to study in Oxford by arranging a "a substitute scholarship". Another figure whom she recalls fondly is Augustus Darling, "a beloved friend" (42), sister-in-law to Lady Ford. Cornelia acknowledges this lady's affection and care with the appellation "My English Mother."

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<sup>155</sup> Mary Cholmondeley (1859-1925) wrote a number of novels, *The Danver Jewels*, *Sir Charles Danvers* and *Red Pottage*.

Among her benefactors, there is Miss Manning of the Indian National Association, who would guide and host Sorabji in England. In addition, Sorabji writes of going on holidays to the Riviera, North Italy and Switzerland with her “English Mother”, as well as going to Ascot, staying at country houses, being presented at the court and attending parliamentary debates. She also highlights her social connections with powerful members of British society outside of England in her assertion that she had known six viceroys (*India Calling* 175).

In Sorabji’s recording of social affiliation, close friends are seldom mentioned. In *Anglophone Indian Women Writers, 1870-1920*, Ellen Brinks offers an interesting phrase “kinning with British figures” to capture Cornelia’s strategic projection of social networking in England (138). While analysing this Indian student’s letters, Brinks comes to the conclusion that friends who hosted and helped Cornelia during her Oxford period were mainly guardians and mentors, who continued playing the role of surrogate family even after she graduated. The scholar finds a link between this new kinship and the earlier family ties that both her parents had made with British individuals. Reverend Sorabji Kharsedji, her father, became estranged from his natal family after his conversion to Christianity. Brinks writes that he moved in with Mr. Valentine, his school’s principal, and “found an alternate family” (136) first in Mr. Valentine and later in the English missionary community. Sorabji’s mother, Francina, too, had ties with British residents in India, as she was adopted and brought up by an English family, the Fords. These connections provided the Sorabji family with knowledge of British culture and eventually facilitated their entry into English society. Sorabji’s attempts to parade close affinities with the British community may also stem from her family’s alienation from their Parsi community due to her father’s conversion to Christianity from Zoroastrianism.



The construction or enactment of a performativity of social acceptance in British society becomes apparent when the social whirlwind recorded in *India Calling* is juxtaposed with the trauma depicted in her private correspondence. Analyses of Sorabji's letters to her family by Antoinette Burton (*At the Heart of the Empire*) and Chandani Lokuge ("Introduction" *India Calling*) indicate a different picture of constraints and even criticism of British friends. Lokuge comments that the "effusive response" to British society should be questioned ("Introduction" xvii). Both Burton and Lokuge found dissonances between the letters and the memoir.

In her inclination towards throwing around names of the powerful, Sorabji resembles Atiya Fyzee, about whom Siobhan Lambert-Hurley writes: "she namedrops" and lists as many as 150 names in her travelogue, perhaps to emphasize her "connections with 'the great and the good' (Lambert-Hurley, "Forging Global Networks" 67). The travel texts of Fyzee and Sorabji succeed in conveying the feelings of a busy social life filled with cultural events and dinners and lunches. Their narratives enact the lives of social butterflies flitting across garden tea parties and hobnobbing with aristocrats. Indeed, the Muslim traveller from Bombay stages her encounters as signs of social conquest. She, therefore, indexes the social status of her British acquaintances. When describing Miss Samuel's party, Fyzee mentions that "[s]even very important people had been invited and there were many fashionable ladies (178). About her friend Flora Sassoon, she not only underscores the opulence and sophistication of the wealthy Jewish family, but also informs readers that Mrs. Sassoon and her daughter were photographed in several magazines (196).

Although her social circuit was smaller and less glittering than that of Sorabji, Fyzee could still take part in some lavish social events of Edwardian London. She could go to clubs such as the Lyceum with Miss Billington and also attend the Henley

Royal Regatta. In Siobhan Lambert-Hurley's opinion, the tendency to inscribe personal acquaintance with social elites was "fairly typical for authors in this period, whether Indian or British, to use this technique to boost their own sense of importance" ("Forging Global Networks" 66).

### *Liberal Connections*

A distinctive feature of Fyzee's British social circle was the liberal but not necessarily anti-imperialist outlook of the members. It was comprised of members who had been to India or were sympathetic to the cause of social development in India. These individuals were interested in bridging the social distance between a colonizer and his colonized subjects. Many of the friendships alluded to in the travelogue were based on contacts made in India and then rekindled in London, indicating enduring links produced by the empire. Like Sorabji, Fyzee benefitted from family connections, in having friends such as Lady Oliphant, who got in touch with her before returning to Bombay (175).

Another similarity with the Parsi lawyer is that both women held their academic mentors in high regard and convey respect and gratitude for them. Fyzee repeatedly mentions the care and help of Miss Wood, Principal of Maria Grey College. There is also an echo of the surrogate parenting that Brinks locates in Sorabji's text. Fyzee's travelogue mounts a similar projection of surrogate parental treatment in her account of Miss Wood's care and consideration after she had a breakdown upon receiving news of her maternal grandmother's death. The Principal arranged for Fyzee to stay at her own sister's home to convalesce and to appear for exams from there. Fyzee's text gestures at a maternal affection conveyed through the phrase "motherly kindness", to describe the care she received from her host, Miss J. Woods (18 March 1907 180). She gratefully acknowledges the comfort and ease she

received during her exams (20 March 1907 181). She finds the same level of care, “spoiling me like a child” (31 March 1907 185) in Miss Beck, the representative of the India Office, who received her when she first arrived in London and accompanied her to many events of the National India Association.

Such veneration and fondness for mentors in Sorabji and Fyzee was not unusual among Indian students. Lambert-Hurley comments that this was due to the guidance and support offered by mentors and teachers to Indian students who had to confront the intellectual and personal challenges of studying in a foreign country. Hence, they found comfort in these attachments (75). Boehmer’s contention that “Indian visitors were made to feel at home by one or more British mentor or friend: the UCL Professor Morley in the case of R.C. Dutt, say, or Friedrich Max Muller in respect of K.C. Sen” (*Indian Arrivals* 85) supports this interpretation of the closeness felt by female Indian students towards their teachers.

#### *Nationalist Networks*

Fyzee’s social performativity went beyond her circle of British acquaintances. In marked difference to Sorabji’s memoir, Fyzee memorializes the vivid presence of an Indian community in Britain. This could be due to the fact that she was writing for Urdu readers, presumably people in India, unlike Sorabji who was targeting English readers. Therefore, the travelogue *Time of Education* (1921) provides historically significant details about Indian global networks and Indo-British collaboration. The text reveals the pivotal role played by the National Indian Association (NIA) in the lives of Indians in England. NIA facilitated Fyzee’s encounter with sympathetic Britons and fellow Indians who were in London. It was a symbol of Indo-British collaboration from the beginning when it was founded by Mary Carpenter in 1870 with the assistance of Keshab Chandra Sen, an instance of cross-cultural

collaboration. The association aimed to promote education in India, especially for girls, and encourage friendly social exchanges between visiting Indians and Britons. The association thus regularly arranged lectures, soirees, meetings and even guided tours. In Lambert- Hurley's opinion, the NIA created a contact zone of free mixing which would have been "impossible in the Indian colony" in Lambert-Hurley's opinion ("Forging Global Networks" 68).

Fyzee mentions several instances of meeting fellow Indian visitors and English individuals through events organized by the NIA. In one such event, she notes the mingling of an international group of people where she finds a few of her Muslim relatives, a fellow Bengali student, a former colonial officer, several English ladies and the Turkish ambassador. Apart from the pleasure of socializing, the meetings were also important in reinforcing a Muslim female identity and asserting the rights and status of such women. Thus, she inserts detailed information of speeches delivered on Muslim history and the role of women. In an entry made in December 1906 (no date given), she describes a lecture given by the Muslim scholar Yusuf Ali on Muslim history and notes that the audience included numerous friends including Miss Beck, Mr. and Mrs. Arnold, Mr. and Lady Sale, Sir Lee Warner, Sir Raymond West and all the members of the Society of the Artists<sup>156</sup>. Of greater interest, though, is her insertion that Yusuf Ali went on to discuss the role of contemporary Muslim women who have contributed to India's progress. He listed Atiya Fyzee among other progressive women such as Nawab Begum Shah Jehan of Bhopal (no date 162).

Fyzee's presentation of social interaction in Edwardian England points to a remarkable development in pan-Indian network of women. In the Muslim traveller's

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<sup>156</sup> For biographical notes on the attendees see "Appendix 1" *Atiya's Journey: A Muslim Woman from Colonial Bombay to Edwardian Britain*, pp.237-270.

affiliations with women of different races and ethnicities of India, one can find the staging or performativity of the fuzzy sense of community, which an Grewal in *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire and the Cultures of Travel*, argues is a consequence of travels from India to England (133). Even in 1906 many Indian visitors identified themselves with their regional or religious community; Fyzee addresses her Urdu speaking readers of the journal *Tahzib un-niswan* as sisters and refers to her friends as Bengali or Parsi. However, she does make a distinction between the British and the Indian visitors, and she aligns with the latter.

Fyzee's social interchanges with a diversity of women are also significant in establishing the traveller's cosmopolitanism and the existence of a network of Indian women in England. Fyzee's expression of pleasure at receiving invitations and her enjoyment of the many social events she attends convey her openness to and appreciation of women outside her own community, indicating a global outlook and conviviality. Thus, she names as friends– Navajbai, wife of Ratan Tata, a very successful Parsi industrialist, Flora Sassoon, belonging to a Jewish family of Bombay, the Bengali Meera and Leela Roy and their mother Mrs. P.L. Roy, her fellow Bengali students Miss Das and Mrs. Mitter, and the famous lawyer Cornelia Sorabji, a Christian Parsi.

While in London, she also socialized with Indian royalty, in particular the Maharajah and Maharani of Baroda who often invited her out, Maharani of Cooch Behar, Princess Sophia Duleep Singh and Princess Catherine Duleep Singh.

The inclusion of Indian aristocrats serves several purposes for the display of Fyzee's sociability in England. Firstly, the acquaintance with royalty lends glamour to Fyzee herself. Also, the allusions to Maharajahs and Maharanis in her letters could be part of a tendency in the traveller which Lambert-Hurley identifies as a tactic to "boost her

own sense of importance by emphasizing connections with ‘the great and the good’” (“Forging Global Networks” 67). Fyzee’s interactions with Indian nobility also serves to broaden the parameters of Indian diaspora community in early twentieth century London. Instances of seeing Maharani of Cooch Behar driving by in “a very fancy car” (6 October 1906 139) or meeting the Maharaja and Maharani of Baroda at Hyde Park Hotel (14 October 1906 143) attest to the fact that Indian royalty continued to be figures of allure and exoticism in London even in the early twentieth century, recalling the sensation Maharani Sunity Devi created during her first visit to England.

Among her royal acquaintances, Fyzee’s friendship with Princess Sophia Duleep Singh is noteworthy as the Indian princess was a dedicated suffragette in Edwardian England. The traveller, however, remains silent on her friend’s suffrage activities, even though she makes numerous references of meeting the Princess at different events and staying at her home. Fyzee appears intent on foregrounding the social glamour of Indian royalty in remarking that the Princess had invited her to exclusive social events such as the Henley Royal Regatta (4 July 1907 201) and to Lady Jersey’s party (16 July 1907 203). The reticence on her friend’s involvement in the campaign for women’s rights is intriguing. Despite the fact that several of her acquaintances, including Krishnabhabini Das and Mrs. K.G. Gupta <sup>157</sup> were actively engaged in working for women’s education and emancipation, Fyzee distances herself from feminist activism. Lambert-Hurley, however, believes that the traveller must have been influenced by these social activist (“Forging Global Networks” 71). Perhaps it is due to encounters with these women that Fyzee went on to promote

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<sup>157</sup>Krishnabhabini Das worked with the all-India women’s organization and K.G. Gupta was associated with the Brahma Samaj (Lambert-Hurley “Forging Global Networks” 71).

female education later in her life, even though she does not demonstrate an active involvement in feminism in her diary entries.

In her travelogue *A Time of Education*, she subtly embeds feminist concerns through her depiction of the British women and by contributing to a social picture of solidarity among women from different communities of India. In Lambert-Hurley's opinion such developments had positive impacts because the networks formed "between women activists from opposite sides of the Indian subcontinent— Bombay and Bengal—that would, on future, boost a national women's movement in India" ("Forging Global Networks" 71).

### *International Circle*

Fyzee's social circle was not limited to Anglo-Indian members. There is a reflection of wider ripples of transnational movements in her references to international visitors she met in London. An international dimension emerges in the mentions of the different nationalities she finds among the people she meets including: American ladies (21 December 1906 165); the German landlady where her brother boarded (23 September 1906 129); the Turkish Ambassador Rifat Beg (4 March 1907 177); "a painter from Japan" and "a few Japanese women" ( 16 April 1907 188); a Swedish harpist (25 June 1907 198); "an extremely nice Canadian girl" (20 July 1907 204); the American Sprague (26 July 1907 207) and others she encounter on her journey to England and her return trip to India. Fyzee's text produces an animated depiction of Indian participation in a vibrant Edwardian metropolitan society which distinguishes her travel narrative from the more formulaic presentations of London by Indian visitors describing places rather than people. In the light of contemporary scholarship on cosmopolitanism and sociability, Fyzee's

social pictures contribute greatly to understanding formations of connections in imperial history, which have dominated recent readings of the empire.

The presence of a thriving Muslim community in England that is encoded in Atiya's representation of her family members and other Muslim students and visiting male reformers is another important ethnographic detail of her travel narrative. The travelogue references several family members residing or studying in England—her brother Ali Azhar Beg, a nephew Tyab Ali Akbar, her cousin Vazirunissa and cousin's husband. The textualization of a Muslim diaspora also accentuates her performativity of a Muslim woman in England (cf. chapter four). Fyzee is keen and strategic in projecting her adherence to the Muslim way of life. Her participation in mixed gatherings, in terms of gender and race, positions her as a modern woman, and one open and confident enough to interact with different people. However, there is a loud silence in her neglect of her relationship with the famous Urdu writer and philosopher Muhammad Iqbal. She writes that "Mr. Iqbal" was also there at a party given by Mrs Syed Ali Bilgrami in Cambridge (22 April 1907 189). The traveller introduces him simply as "[t]his gentleman is a very learned scholar and also a philosopher and poet" (189). Siobhan Lambert-Hurley and Sunil Sharma draw attention to this reticence because they note that Atiya's close friendship with Iqbal when she was in London in 1906-7 is well known ("Friendship and Notoriety" 57). They consider this to be either an instance of self-censorship or sisterly editing to protect her reputation from the Tahzibi sisters, the readers of the journal where the entries were published. The scholars even suggest that "reading between the lines, one gets the sense that her indifferent health at this time may have been the effect of a more romantic liaison: the proverbial lovesickness" (57).



## Twentieth-Century Social Bridges

In this same vein one must approach the insertions of female friendships and Indian-British social encounters in the later travelogues of Kuttan Nair (1936) and Durgabati Ghose (1936). Writing at a period closer to decolonialization and Indian independence, these two travellers view England with more critical eyes than Atiya Fyze or Cornelia Sorabji. Also, they were tourists passing through England on a European tour, and hence did not have the time to form friendships. Yet, they still encode instances of British hospitality and Indian claims of cosmopolitanism.

In the travelogues of Durgabati Ghose and Kuttan Nair another trajectory of Indian engagements and amity surfaces. *A Peep at Europe* by Nair is a valuable source for understanding apolitical friendships which as Jane Haggis explains is distinct from overtly anti-colonial politics of friendship and “that acknowledges rather than discursively overrides the intersectional inequalities of colonial social formation, while searching for ways to build affective aspirational cosmopolitanism” (“The Politics of Friendship” 562). This is in keeping with the overall tenor of the International Student Service (ISS) tour which aimed at introducing Indian students to centres of progressive social development in Europe such as the Sokol movement in Czechoslovakia, where physical culture and gender equality were promoted and meeting with expatriate Indians engaged in anti-colonial and nationalist movements (Haggis “Politics of Friendship” 562).

In England, the friends Kuttan Nair discovers in British society are individuals who are active in peace and humanitarian circles (Haggis 575). The affective community that welcomed her and then extended hospitality and conversation she was privileged to experience were bound by a common commitment to political rights and anti-colonial liberalism. Thus Nair’s entry into sociability and friendship centres

around the figure of Mahatma Gandhi. Among the individuals who extended their friendship are Professor Harold Lasky and his wife (Nair 76). Professor Lasky (1893-1950)<sup>158</sup> was a noted friend of India and a beneficiary of numerous Indian students. One finds a common admiration for Mahatma Gandhi among the liberal individuals of British society who welcomed Indian visitors. Dr. Maude Royden (1876-1956)<sup>159</sup>, another friendly British host to Nair's group, was a preacher of Ecclestone Square who was drawn to Gandhi's message of love and power. To convince readers of the British woman's admiration for the Indian leader, Nair includes a long extract from Dr. Royden's letter (78-79) which ends with- "one's heart is filled with admiration and gratitude" for Gandhi (79).

Yet another friend, Agatha Harrison (1885-1954)<sup>160</sup> who went to the Y.W.C.A. to meet Nair's group is described as being part of the "ardent admirers of Gandhiji", "interested in the activities of the Indian National Congress" and "in perfect sympathy with the national aspirations of our country" (77). A similar esteem and appreciation of Gandhi can be noticed in Dorothy Newman who had invited Nair to her home for lunch. She used to dress in India khadi fabrics, decorate her room with khadi sheets and window blinds, and filled her book shelf with the works of Gandhi (80). The political scaffolding of these friendly overtures chime in with Nair's own nationalist ideology and bolsters her performance of a patriotic Indian identity. Nair is able to project herself as a torchbearer of Indian nationalism and nationalist pride in putting forward examples of British support for India.

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<sup>158</sup> Harold Joseph Lasky was an academic at London School of Economics and Political Science a prominent member of the British Labour Party and held Marxist views.

<sup>159</sup> Maude Royden a suffragist was also the first female preacher in England. Additionally, she toured worldwide including visiting India to promote women's rights from the 1920s to the 1940s.

<sup>160</sup> Agatha Harrison was a welfare worker and supporter of Indian independence. She regularly attended India League meetings and the Women's International League.

Nair's sociability also contains an element of feminist transnationalism. The traveller's interest in women's franchise was evident in her passionate views on the India Bill and Indian women's rights under the new constitution (69). She strongly asserts that the group of female travellers were not "satisfied with the franchise extended" after hearing the discussion led by Marquis of Lothian (69). Additionally, many of the women who befriended the Indian student group were involved in campaigns for women's rights. Dr. Royden, for instance, was committed to women's rights, and she had been to India to attend "the All-Indi Women's Conference" (77) as the traveller notes. Nair's group of women travellers appears to have been warmly welcomed by British suffragettes since there are several references to invitations. Mrs. Howe Martyn, who is briefly included as the conduit for meeting Mrs. Lasky [Laski], was another suffragette who had also travelled to India to campaign for birth control. Meanwhile, Mrs. Frida Laski (1884-1977) was not only the wife of the famous Professor Laski, a "well[-]known writer and friend of India" (76) as Nair presents her, but also a recognized supporter of feminist causes. The traveller seems to eclipse the interaction with Frida Laski by foregrounding a chance encounter with Professor Laski himself (76-77). She elides the issue of female networking and focuses on the Laskis's involvement with Indian nationalism. She also quotes Laski's appeal to Indians to "care more for his [their] country than for his [their] career" (76-77). Nair's exchanges with these women committed to feminist causes suggest that Indian women could draw on a gendered identity to claim a space in transnational networks.

Although Nair plays down the feminist work of her hosts Dr. Royden, Mrs. Howe Martyn and Mrs. Laski, the cordiality extended to Indian female travellers by such feminist activists indicates a link between female travellers and the British suffragist movement. The Indian traveller reveals an interest in women's rights in her

discussion on British women's writings. Nair develops this theme around *Time and Tide*, a female-led magazine founded in 1920, which highlighted feminist issues. The founder and editor, Lady Rhondda(1883-1958),<sup>161</sup> was a journalist dedicated to feminist causes. The traveller, however, once again passes over the feminist aspect of the publication and emphasizes anti-colonial sentiments that she found. Thus, Winifred Holtby(1898-1935),<sup>162</sup> a frequent contributor to the journal, is described as “a humanist”( 81), with sympathy for “darker peoples” in Africa and India (82), but the fact that the British writer used to campaign for female rights is not mentioned. A similar reticence marks the portrayal of Cicely Hamilton (1872-1952)<sup>163</sup> as a “most gifted writer, more politically inclined” which does not touch upon her active involvement in feminism or that she was the founder of Women Writers' Suffrage League(npg.org.uk).

Nair's citations of famous suffragettes in her list of writers in combination with the warm welcome that the traveller received from women suggests that Indian female travellers could take advantage of an international sisterhood to create a space for collaboration and mutual support. The allusions to the female writers demonstrates that the Indian traveller was cognizant of developments in British women's movement, and by introducing these figures in her text she is textually recreating a female network. The literary references direct attention to the intersecting histories of nationalism, gender and personal development in colonial subjects.

Ghose was much less politically vocal than Nair, but even in her travelogue we find a reflection of politics in branches of friendship. In her encounter with the

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<sup>161</sup> Lady Rhondda (Margaret Haig Thomas) was a campaigner for women's rights including voting rights, a journalist and also the founder of *Time and Tide* a feminist magazine.

<sup>162</sup> Winifred Holtby a social reformer who was also a journalist and a writer. She was vocal in her support for the rights of black workers in South Africa.

<sup>163</sup> Cicely Hamilton was a writer, actor and suffragist.

famous psychologist Dr. Ernest Jones (1879-1958)<sup>164</sup>, two features of a new colonial reality emerges. One is the reflection of the intensification of a nationalist momentum as Dr. Jones asks about “swaraj” Indian independence (45). Secondly, both Ernest Jones in England and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)<sup>165</sup> in Venice regard the traveller’s father Dr. Bose (1887-1953)<sup>166</sup> as a colleague and an equal. They show their esteem for her father by being very hospitable and cordial. Ghose writes that she was invited to lunch by Jones in London (45) and Freud showed her around his house and garden and then introduced her to his wife and sister-in-law (72). She was later invited to lunch by Anna Freud, daughter of the great psychologist. In her interactions with these famous scientists, she is treated with warmth and graciousness as a guest rather than as a visiting ‘native’ or colonial subject under imperial scrutiny. Apart from affability, a note of cosmopolitanism is also registered because the Bengali traveller is accorded the status of being the daughter of a friend. Ghose’s family connection ensures hospitality and cordiality, and it also signifies the cosmopolitanism of Indian social encounters in Europe.

Another interesting theme that emerges in Ghose’s travelogue is the camaraderie of Indians abroad. Although their friendship is with fellow Bengalis, people of their own region, the depiction of Indians holidaying together is a representation of Indian mobility and provincializing of Europe for their own ends. In England the Ghoses toured England with Sir Abaninath Mitra and his wife who had visited Berlin before they joined the Ghoses in London (Ghose 46). Then in

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<sup>164</sup> Ernest Jones, a friend and colleague of Sigmund Freud, was a key figure in establishing psychoanalysis in Britain. He founded the American Psychoanalytic Association in 1911, and the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. He also set up an institute and clinic in England.

<sup>165</sup> Sigmund Freud is recognized as the founder of psychoanalysis.

<sup>166</sup> Dr. Girindra Sekhar Bose was a reputed psychologist in Calcutta and the founder of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society.

Paris, Belgium, Brussels, Cologne, Berlin and Prague Durgabati Ghose and her husband are accompanied by Jitendra Mohan Sen and his wife. The presence of fellow Bengali tourists heightens the visibility of Indians in an European landscape and Ghose's text *The Westward Traveller* gains importance as a document archiving Indian mobility.

## Conclusion

The reading of women's sociability, in the preceding pages of the chapter, imply that they wanted to represent themselves not as flaneurs, but as insiders succesful in being able to infiltrate or embed themselves in English social milieu. This is significant in calibrating imperial society's openness and acceptance of strangers. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, gender may have facilitated social interactions at the turn of the century. A wave of proto-feminist consciousness could have been a contributing factor in British amicability towards Indian women. Female students definitely enjoyed the benefits of a social commitment to women's development in the scholarships and educational opportunities they received. At the same time, the liberal attitudes of a segment of English society which was sympathetic to Indians further facilitated sociability and fostering social links. It is worth noting that many of the Indian women were befriended by British women with feminist sympathies.

Consequently, women travellers discussed in this chapter insist on presenting not just knowledge but records of interactions. The friendships they project can be placed on "a continuum or range of affective relationships that were spaces of contestation, resistance and praxes of a plurality of cosmopolitanism" (Haggis "Politics of Friendship" 561), Jane Haggis's commentary on friendships formed in the ISS study tours. To take a phrase from Leela Gandhi, these connections and

friendly social exchanges formed ‘a breach in the fabric of imperial inhospitability’ (*Affective Communities* 189).

Mutuality and warmth of friendship that are intimated in these friendly interactions overturn simplistic binaries and polarities of colonial relations. The incursion of affect in inscriptions of rapport and harmony among women introduce a new dimension to the transnational history of the British empire. Additionally, by drawing on affect, it is possible to meld individual experiences with social and historical experience. As Sneja Gunew writes, “[w]hile we might all agree that there are universal emotions, we might differ on how we typically display or recognize their manifestations” (175). In her study on emotion and affect in diaspora communities, she also points out that affect or emotion changes and is transformed with time and place (182). Consequently, Indian colonial travellers’ attitudes and feelings towards the British community may differ from those who remained in India, and as a result, Indian women’s views and interpretations of interactions in England need to be analysed to gain deeper understandings of colonial relations and global connections.

For these reasons, women’s representations of sociability and friendships form an important document of colonial experiences of the contact zone. The study of sociability and social interaction of female colonial travellers to England constitute a central but often overlooked strand in colonial women’s identity construction. With the inclusion of women’s representations of social activity, my examination of women’s self-fashioning has moved from a focus on women’s gaze on the other to a critical engagement with the travellers’ active participation in the social milieu of England. In this way, I hope to have been able to offer a wide-ranging as well as nuanced reading of women’s identity performances.

## CONCLUSION: JOURNEY'S END

Indian women's colonial travels in the period of high colonialism offer fascinating glimpses into colonial women's history. The tentative stirrings of female spatial mobility and self-fashioning, which emerge in the pages of women's travel texts suggest that we need to rethink and re-vision prevailing constructions of Indian colonial women as silent objects of the colonial archive. The preceding chapters have demonstrated that women were able to adopt a range of roles in their identity constructions and were not silent about them. Anindita Ghosh's proposition that we look for women's creative tactics in dealing with gender and racial oppressions was instructive in directing my research project into unexplored dimensions of female travel (*Behind the Veil: Resistance, Women and the Everyday in Colonial South Asia*). While there has been some work on Indian perceptions of the West (Ray Chaudhuri; S. Chatterjee), there has been few sustained engagements with the impact of travel on Indian travellers. This dissertation has, therefore, attempted to look at women's travelling selfhoods at some length. It has hopefully contributed to the shift in critical attention from representations of the other to self-representations, with particular emphasis on corporeality and sociability, and disclosed new insights. This research work has, thus, put women travellers' projections of the self at the centre, rather than the destinations of travel, and examined the processes of their identity construction.

My examination of Indian female-authored colonial travelogues through the prism of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity shows that women succeeded in enacting multiple identities. The variety of figures that can be located in the travel texts signifies to women's protean flexible self-fashioning and to resistances to being "shuttled violently" between the binary of modernization or tradition as Spivak notes



in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (102).<sup>167</sup> Women negotiated with the demands of social discourses by simultaneously occupying different subject positions related to femininity, nationalism, modernity, cosmopolitanism and sociability and inserted themselves into discourses of travel and gender. However, two issues that complicate the history of women’s agency and subjectivity are first, the extent to which they developed anti-colonial attitudes and a feminist consciousness in a culture dominated by colonial and patriarchal hegemonies; and second, the ambivalence in their attitudes that at times pose challenges in drawing definite conclusions. Female travellers’ performances of self-identity are marked by fragmentations and gaps that prevent us from having a clear trajectory of female self-development. This chapter will, therefore, first review the main themes of Indian female travel, then discuss the issues of fragmentations and the possibilities of emerging feminism and anti-colonial stances in the travel narratives.

To begin with, it is salutary to remember that the women travellers, despite belonging to the niche category of an elite and educated cohort, were diverse individuals with very different life trajectories. They varied in travelling purposes; their heterogeneity is also reflected in their travel narratives which range from short monographs to memoirs and travelogues. The emphasis of lived experience in life-writings and travelogues make these texts useful sources in coming to terms with transnational history of female mobility. The texts, however, are not of the same quality; they differ in style, depth and length. One limitation of my work, consequently, is that the texts do not deal with all themes in equal measure, and, some

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<sup>167</sup> See Gayatri Spivak in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” where she writes: “Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the ‘third-world woman’ caught between tradition and modernization” (102).

travellers have been covered in numerous chapters since these writers have embedded multiple themes in their texts. Taken together, however, these women travellers have contributed to transforming England into a contact zone that led to transgressions and refashioning identities.

### Feminine Identity

The dissertation began by arguing that women travellers were keen to establish a feminine identity. This is in keeping with Somdatta Mandal's observation on female travel writing that the "feminine tradition was considered to fall into private and personal sphere" ("Mapping the Female Gaze" 144). Mandal also adds that "what they [female travellers] narrated was usually related to detailed descriptions of customs, religious practices, habitat and dress codes" (146). As argued in Chapter Two "Viewing the Imperial Other", the trope of the imperial other was deployed to showcase Indian women's adherence to normative rules of gender behaviour. Consequently, a number of travellers focus on the manners and customs of English society, particularly the women. Janakumamah Ragaviah and Krishnabhabini Das, housewives accompanying their husbands on their voyages to England, viewed English culture from the perspective of their domestic social position, and were, thus, attentive to household arrangements and the place of women in English society. However, what is striking is that even female students like Mary Bhore and Atiya Fyzee, revealed an intense interest in feminine topics. In *Some Impressions of England*, Bhore limited her representation of English women in the family. In this way, she reinforced societal expectations that women signify the traditions and values of domestic life.

The tendency to project a domestic image despite travelling to England for educational purposes can be considered as a performative practice that corresponds

with Judith Butler's argument that the performative act is a constructed one. In her essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution", she underscores the performative aspect in producing "the appearance" of identity thus:

...the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. (520).

Butler's observation that the "audience" and "actors" have to agree on a mutual understanding implies that identities have to be socially recognized and culturally intelligible. Such an interpretation is applicable to Mary Bhore and Atiya Fyzee, women who deliberately downplay their academic lives and identity as students, and instead give stress domestic interests. No doubt, the compulsion to portray themselves as domestic is also due to the fact that all acts have to be "in accord with certain sanctions and proscription" (Butler 525). In other words, gender performativity had to follow a cultural script or template, which meant that female travellers felt compelled to conform to gender expectations and write on topics that were accepted as feminine.

### Overall Themes

An insistence on projecting feminine identity also emerges in the treatment of modernity in Indian women's colonial travel narratives, as was revealed in the third chapter of the dissertation, titled "Finding Modernity in England". Although the travel texts show that the women were excited by the prospect of visiting the modern city of London, they seem to curtail their own modernity when they restrict themselves to gendered perspectives on modernity. As the analysis of the travelogues demonstrates, the women situated the markers of modernity at the surface level or the

outer world, rather than interiorized modernity in terms of personal transformation. A female-centric view emerges in the search for modernity in household matters such as cooking and hygiene. As was also shown, the female travellers distanced themselves from becoming modern themselves by focusing on technological marvels and urban landscapes. From a pioneering Indian female traveller like Ragaviah to the twentieth century Kuttan Nair, there proved to be a common fascination with the train and other technologies of motion. England was repeatedly associated by the women in their works with freedom of movement and industrial advancement because of factories and modern transport systems. The female travellers portrayed their experiences of visiting a modern city, and, thereby, managed to confine modernity as a feature of their journey that did not impact upon their selfhoods.

The reluctance of the female travellers to modernise interior selves supports Partha Chatterjee's proposition that Indian nationalists resisted the intrusions of Western modernity in the private realm of home and culture ("The Nation and Its Women" 119)<sup>168</sup>. By representing themselves as feminine and traditional Indian women, the female travellers fall in line with Chatterjee's view that women were emblems of Indian spirituality and tradition; clearly, they represented themselves as feminine and traditional. The female travellers' interest in British modernity can be explained as typical Indian anti-colonial and nationalist aims to "cultivate the material techniques of modern western civilization while retaining and strengthening the distinctive spiritual essence of the national culture" (P. Chatterjee "The Nationalist Resolution" 239). Through their travel texts, the women attempt to produce a distinct

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<sup>168</sup> See also P. Chatterjee' "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question" (237).

form of modernity, one that is different from Western manifestations, and compatible with Indian cultural traditions and nationalist goals.

The patriotic element of conforming to nationalist expectations of Indian womanhood also manifests in female travellers' showcasing of Indian identity through sartorial choices. Chapter Four, "Bodies in Movement", focused on corporeality and traced the trajectory of women's empowerment in terms of clothes and physical movement. Several travellers, namely Sunity Devi, Cornelia Sorabji and Kuttan Nair, proudly asserted their ethnicity by wearing the sari, while Atiya Fyzee and the Nawab Begum of Bhopal highlighted their observance of veiling practices during their stay in England. My study indicates that while the foregrounding of ethnic identity was a reflection of growing nationalist sentiments in Indian colonial society, the analysis of the theme additionally attested to a development of female agency. Women travellers' decision to wear saris or the veil illustrates one of the creative tactics by which women would oppose colonial hegemony. Indian female costume, particularly, the sari, was considered to be unsuitable for public appearances; thus, women's modification of the sari to meet the demands of convenience and European notions of modesty is an example of the travellers' assertions of female autonomy. The chapter's focus on the body provided other examples of female agency at the material level of everyday practices through discussions of mobility and sensations.

To a great extent, women travellers appear to be framed within the nationalist debate over the women's question. Their journeys mirrored the concerns and shifts in the discursive terrain of women's social position. For example, the travels of Toru Dutt, Janakumamah Ragaviah, Janaki Majumdar and Krishnabhabini Das are in sync with the reformist aims of progressive male Indians who wanted to transform the

inner domain and modernize women. The fathers of Toru Dutt and Janaki Majumdar were intent on transplanting English values into their own homes; both men sent their wives and children to England so that their families could immerse in the culture of the colonizers. A similar desire to reconstruct and develop Indian society marked the travels of Ragaviah and Das, who viewed their journeys as useful means of transferring modernity to India. In contrast and as we have seen, Fyzee, Ghose and Nair distance themselves from the Europhiliac discourse of England as a model for modernity. In fact, the latter two are intent in critiquing imperial culture instead of highlighting its merits. Such changes in attitude to imperial culture among the travellers parallel the dynamics of the Indian colonial reform movement and its overshadowing by the nationalist movement.

Breaking with preoccupations over nationalism and femininity, Chapter Five deals with the theme of cosmopolitanism in colonial women's travel texts. My study showed that female travellers' cosmopolitan identity discloses the complex process of colonial negotiations with imperial culture. Clearly, Fyzee and Sorabji provide interesting examples of the way colonial subjects could take advantage of the colonial infrastructure to study in the imperial centre and train for professional careers (though Fyzee fails to achieve this goal) without compromising their national integrity. In asserting their regional and religious identity, these women proved that intercultural competence could be effectively harnessed for cultural empowerment. This study also revealed that like them, the female royal visitors, Maharani Sunity Devi and Nawab Begum Sultan Jahan, benefitted from their knowledge of English social codes to enter into a royal network. They could exploit their position as exotic Eastern princesses to garner public interest and gain recognition from British royalty and the British government.

My analysis indicates that women's success in establishing transnational networks and cross-cultural exchanges was another strand of female travellers' agency. This aspect of their travel accounts is covered in Chapter Six that deals with the theme of sociability. Even without the privileges of royalty, elite women travelling to England could form friendships and enter into British social circuits. Nevertheless, women's social forays were not always positive and warm, as in the case of the racism that Janaki Majumdar's family faced, when they first came to England. Sorabji has also remarked on the occasional instances of prejudice she had to confront. However, the fact that most of the female travellers in my corpus write of being warmly welcomed indicates that colonial female subjects played pivotal roles in contributing to transnational alliances in informal settings. The travel narratives reveal that women also participated in the process of creating networks within the empire, thereby promoting connected histories of the imperial centre and its peripheries.

The travel narratives indicate that through their preoccupation with different topics, women were not passive but actively engaged in the process of identity construction. However, the lack of strong feminist articulations and oscillating attitudes to imperial culture also at times problematize the issue of colonial female subjectivity and agency. Women travellers complicate their responses to England with enactments of multiple identities which waver and shift. They do not remain within the neat categories of feminine and nationalist boundaries, and cross over into other roles, constantly, shifting their positions as they do so. At first glance, female travellers' compulsions to project feminine identities and underscore their nationalist loyalties seem to confirm conventional colonial history and gender development, although they often subvert such ideological constructions and project their own views.

Women's travels to England were, after all, framed within the discursive terrain of the debates surrounding reform and the woman's question. Female travellers, thus, at times appear complicit with male-led reform initiatives and patriarchal nationalism, but their narratives also mirror the shifting dynamics of wider cultural and political movements in India. For instance, Dutt, Ragaviah, Das and Majumdar convey their appreciations of England and consider their journeys to be formative steps towards modernization. In contrast, Ghose and Nair, writing in the 1930s, are more hesitant to position England as a model for India's development and appear keen to expose faults and flaws in English society, hinting at the influence of rising anti-colonial sentiments in India.

With regard to the discourse of gender, there is a similar vacillation which again reflects the nationalist retreat from reformist aims. Das's strong articulation of proto-feminist demands is not repeated in other narratives; in fact, it is surprising to note that even the female students, Sorabji, Bhore and Fyzee, refrain from asserting female rights. One is hard-pressed to find radical and bold declarations of gender injustice and disparity of Tarabai Shinde of Maharashtra or Begum Rokeya of Bengal among England-returned female visitors. The discrepancies between the muted expressions of the travellers and the strong assertiveness of women who never left India is notable.

Despite the absence of feminist voices, women's active incursions in England through spatial mobility and textual productions challenge the passivity model of colonial Indian women in contemporary historiography. Female travellers may have collaborated and complied with aspects of patriarchal ideology, but their performativity of multiple identities and their travel accounts of England uncover the presence of Indian female agency in many spheres. The diversity of views is not an



indication of fragmentation and ambivalence; instead, they are suggestive of the complexity of gendered and colonial responses to England. Female travel texts offer a window into “the multiplicity of strategies for constructing selfhood that women have been adept at in South Asian contexts”, to use Anindita Ghosh’s comment on Indian colonial women’s cultural productions (Ghosh 2). Taking its cue from Ghosh among others, this dissertation brings to light the cross-currents of resistance and complicity in Indian women’s travel texts to show that a range of responses to metropolitan culture, from admiration to criticism, and from identification to distancing, are registered in the narratives discussed. The plurality and contradictions in female travellers’ attitudes are noteworthy features of colonial discourse and often erupt from the tensions of balancing colonialism and nationalism as well as patriarchy and female consciousness.

The multiple selves that women often subvert the hegemony of dominant discourses of patriarchy and colonialism. As was shown in previous chapters, by proving that they could be modern, cosmopolitan, sociable and yet remain feminine, the travellers, chosen for analysis in this dissertation, were demarcating a space for female agency and female subjectivity. The analysis of women’s performativity of Indian feminine identity demonstrates that these travel writers constructed such personas to gain access to authority and secure social acceptance.

### Reluctant Feminists

Women’s adherence to normative gender restrictions was not limited to Indian female travellers; quite a few studies have shown that Western women travel writers also put on “ostentatious display of conventionally ‘feminine’ attitudes” (Thompson *Travel Writing* 181). In the case of Indian women, they had to contend with the pressures of nationalism as well as gender, hence, they opt for careful navigations of

cultural codes to show gender propriety. Historically, Indian women had a contentious relationship with modernist notions of feminism because of potential conflict with nationalism. Fears of foreign influence and of prioritizing women's issues over the nationalist struggle had led to ambivalence and hesitation among women. A case in point is Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), a poet and a prominent figure in the anti-colonial nationalist movement, who maintained that the Indian women's movement was not "feminist" (Roy "Becoming Women"). Such stress on "feminine" behaviour can be regarded as overcompensation for the multiple transgressions of gendered spatial demarcation as they travelled and wrote. More interestingly, though, female travellers embedded their advocacy for rights through feminine approaches.

Female travellers at times problematic relationship with feminism emerges in the memoirs of Sunity Devi and Sorabji. Despite her involvement in female education, Devi remains silent on her social work and states that "it is better for women not to take part in political work" (Devi 199). A similar contradiction besets Cornelia Sorabji's memoir who betrays from time to time conflicted attitudes about the women's movement. On the one hand, she worked for women's legal representation and was a member of various women's organizations such as the Bengal League of Social Service for Women and the Federation of University Women of India (R. Sorabji). Women's hesitation to be perceived as feminists seems to have affected Das as well. Both Somdatta Mandal and Ghulam Murshid note that despite promoting female education and women's rights, Das towards the end of her life retreated into conservatism (Mandal "Introduction" in *A Bengali Lady* xix; Murshid *Reluctant Debutante* 202).

Although Indian colonial women travellers were diffident about voicing feminist concerns, they represent an Indian colonial form of feminism. Here Padma

Anagol's remarks on feminism is instructive for she points out that individuals who are conscious of "injustice towards women", who articulate dissent or use confrontational or non-confrontational tactics to "improve the disadvantaged statue of the female sex", could be considered as feminists (*The Emergence of Feminism in India* 13). She defines Indian feminism in the following way:

a theory and practice based on presenting a challenge to the subordination of women in society and attempting to redress the balance of power between the sexes" (13).

According to this viewpoint, feminism is the awareness of gender disparity and the desire to remove oppressive practices. Anagol's widening of the parameters of feminism allowed me scope for the inclusion of awareness raising activities as a form of feminist practice in Indian women's colonial travel narratives.

As seen in Chapters Two and Three, women travellers narrated their accounts of English women and modernity from gendered perspectives. Moreover, they scaffolded the descriptions within a comparative framework where the juxtaposition between Indian and English lifestyles and cities revealed lacks in Indian society. Das, Bhore and Fyzee, in particular, drew attention to the needs and aspirations of Indian women by depicting privileges that English women enjoyed in their daily lives. In their account of modernity, Fyzee and Ghose portrayed the advantages that modern domestic arrangements could provide for Indian women. These examples illustrate the strategy of encoding female opportunities within a feminine vision of domesticity and women's social position. Such a move also parallels the direction of the women's movement in 1920s India which Rosalind Parr argues was still "infused with the ethos of the social reform" and "directed towards 'feminine' or 'private sphere' issues such as women's education the reform of marriage, and health" (4). Viewed from

feminist lenses, Bhore's report on English women's contribution to homes and social work can be read as advocacy for the privileges and rights for Indian women. The concern with domestic issues and family life in the selected travel texts becomes a strategy for the female travellers to introduce women's rights within the private sphere. Thus, most female travellers remark on English women's opportunities for education, social interaction and freedom of mobility.

With their subtle promotion of female rights through pragmatic examples, Indian colonial women travellers exceeded the scope of female development envisioned in the social reform movement to reconstruct Indian women, as in the vision of the "bhadra mahila" in nineteenth century Bengal. It is worth noting that most of the female travellers contributed to women's upliftment in their own communities. A glance at the royal travellers' contributions show that they were instrumental in setting up schools and colleges in their states. Maharani Sunity Devi had promoted female education and set up schools in Cooch Behar, Darjeeling and Calcutta. In addition, she joined women's organizations such as Sakhi Samiti, Mahila Shilpasharma and the Calcutta branch of the National Indian Association (Banerjee 201-202)<sup>169</sup>. Meanwhile, Nawab Begum Sultan Jahan, the head of her own state, was able to implement important measures for women's development in Bhopal, thereby contributing to Muslim female education<sup>170</sup>. Among the other female travellers also, we find a similar impulse to campaign for women's empowerment in various degrees.

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<sup>169</sup> Milinda Banerjee mentions that Sunity Devi helped to establish and finance Sunity College (1881) in Cooch Behar, Maharani School (1908) in Darjeeling and Victoria College in Calcutta.

<sup>170</sup> In "Out of India: Journeys of the Begam of Bhopal", Siobhan Lambert-Hurley gives a thorough account of the many achievements of Nawab Begum Sultan Jahan: "Within her own state, an area of nearly 7000 square miles, containing around 700, 000 people she made concrete efforts to improve the lives of women by establishing and maintaining various educational institutions, a zenana (women's) hospital, a ladies' club and ladies' prayer rooms in mosques" (264-265).

Das's contribution through her essays has been mentioned in an earlier chapter. Fyzee, too, made her mark on women's history by giving lectures on Indian women and joining women's organizations (*Making Britain*). Nair is recognized as one of the first-generation feminists of Kerala and her feminist consciousness manifests in her narrative in her strong opinion on women's freedom and rights. Although Indian colonial women had a contentious relationship with feminism, the endorsement of English female freedom, education and autonomy in travel narratives position female travellers as proto-feminists, which is more appropriate for feminism, albeit an anachronism in the timeframe of the dissertation. After all, the word was not included in the *Oxford English Dictionary* until 1933<sup>171</sup> (Mukherjee *Indian Suffragettes* "Introduction").

### Cosmopolitan Nationalism and Anti-Colonialism

With regard to nationalism and anti-colonialism, colonial women travellers waver between appreciation of imperial culture and nationalist and anti-colonial sentiments. While the duality inherent in such an attitude is quite typical of colonial ambivalence, the female voyagers appear to be deliberately maintaining multiple allegiances. The deployment of a cosmopolitan outlook marks women's endeavours to balance British imperial culture with Indian traditions. Cosmopolitanism, thus, provides female travellers a means to stage their feminist desires for social mobility and female agency as well as nationalist and anti-colonial resistance. Devi's cultural hybridity, Sorabji's social repertoire and Fyzee's aesthetic appreciation of Western arts should not be reduced to mimicry or slavish admiration of British culture in any estimation of their works.

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<sup>171</sup> OED defined feminism as "advocacy of women's rights" (Mukherjee *ibid*).

Indeed, a close reading of such texts discloses that these were subtle strategies of encroaching into British social sphere and eliciting respect and even admiration. These travelling women utilized their cultural knowledge to insert themselves into the social scene of London. An Indian presence in the metropolitan centre hence unsettles the binary of colonial relationships. As Charles Reeds writes about Indian royal visitors to imperial England, female travellers “could also borrow, embrace and appropriate cultures, politics and social norms from multiple sources without abandoning their own histories and experiences” (130). Female travellers appear to wield cosmopolitanism to undermine colonial hegemony and subtly access social power. In fact, to be accepted by British society in colonial times was a measure of social success and empowerment in the midst of hegemonic British culture. Cosmopolitanism made it possible for female travellers to embed nationalist concerns and anti-colonial attitudes without openly defying imperial authority. Such a position saved them from risking confrontational and antagonistic encounters.

Like cosmopolitanism, sociability presents another avenue for female resistance to colonial oppression and fracturing of colonial hegemony. Elleke Boehmer in *Anglo-Indian Networks* (2015) and Sumita Mukherjee in *Indian Suffragettes* (2018) have underscored the value of transnational alliances in literary spheres and international suffragism; however, the importance of the cross-cultural exchanges and friendships of women in everyday contexts have not been examined in any detail. Indian colonial women’s travel narratives are, thus, important in revealing these forgotten moments of solidarity and mutuality that form the links of the webbed connections of British Empire. The bonds formed outside political goals indicate that respect and affection engendered an alternate network in the epistolary friendship between Indian Toru Dutt and English Mary Martin.

Indian women refashion their identities when they present themselves as guests, friends and even exotic royal celebrities, as opposed to being confined to the category of “natives” or colonial subjects in London. It is for this reason that in their travel narratives Ragaviah, Bhore and Ghose refer to the social invitations they received in England. Correspondingly, Devi, Sorabji, and Fyzee keep mentioning details of a hectic social life in their travel texts. These references to social encounters signal social acceptance and success in creating networks. Nair’s memories of her travel experiences in her work shows that mobility allowed Indian colonial female subjects to join an international sisterhood based on mutual commitment for female rights.

Female travellers’ social successes were means of countering the prejudice and discrimination that colonial subjects would meet. In the narratives of Sorabji and Fyzee, they acknowledge their pride in being able to change British preconceptions about Indians. They were justified in recording such self-esteem because it was a considerable achievement to evoke respect and admiration from the colonizers for them at that time. An idea of the power the Indian visitors yielded can be gauged from Lord Curzon’s anxiety, then, the Viceroy of India (1899 to 1905). In a report on “Native States”, he wrote:

Already I have heard cases in which Indian princes have been addressed as ‘sir’ by ignorant but highly placed persons in England... “English ladies of the highest rank curtsying to the Maharani of Kuch Behar (qtd. in Visram *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes* 176).

Curzon appears to be critical of British admiration for Devi since her social success in London could undermine British colonial authority in India and subvert the hierarchy colonizers had imposed. In *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes* (1986), Rozina

Visram states that Curzon was opposed to frequent travels by Indian royalty. To curtail European trips by Indian princes, he introduced a rule by which rulers had to give detailed notice and obtain permission to travel (Visram). Devi seems to be also aware of the hostility to be overcome for in her memoir, the Maharani refers to Lord Curzon's disapproval of her family's cosmopolitanism by alluding to his remark that "the Cooch Behar boys were too English"<sup>172</sup>(Devi 147).

Lord Curzon's anxiety over the Cooch Behar royal family's popularity and cultural competence in England signals the subversive element embedded in cosmopolitan performativity. Indian women's colonial cosmopolitanism presents London as a "cosmopolitan thought zone" (Manjapra) with the possibility of re-worlding the imperial centre. Resistance did not have to be limited to defiance and violent altercations, and travellers could imaginatively engage in unsettling rigid hierarchies through cultural exchanges and social circulation. The Anglo-Indian female friendships were not politically motivated, yet they are examples of dissident friendships which rupture rigid colonial demarcations. At the same time, these cross-cultural connections imply that modernity and feminism which female travellers developed were not simply imitative but transnational as they were forged within collaboration and mutuality. The travellers were intent on interrogating English culture and through careful analysis they selectively chose the aspects that met their needs. Though the choice was often influenced by nationalist concerns, the preferences were self-determined and not imposed upon her by colonial culture.

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<sup>172</sup>In *Autobiography of an Indian Princess*, Sunity Devi referenced this quote to explain that British colonial intervention in her sons' education had led to a situation where the young princes were not fluent in Indian languages. She blamed the colonial system for this cultural alienation and makes a nationalist plea for Indian education.



## Conclusion

The analysis of Indian female colonial travel narratives in the preceding pages will, hopefully, offer a corrective to traditional views of the figure of the Indian woman in colonial history. Moving away from celebrations of British reformist interventions or criticisms of male-led nationalist attempts to minimise women's development, my dissertation tries to relocate critical attention to women's own agency and selfhood. Attending to women's subjectivity, the examination reveals that women rearticulated notions of gender and nationality and broke free of binaries. Travel led to moments of intersection and crossings that initiated a dynamic process of self-construction. These Indian female colonial travel narratives can be considered as auto-ethnography as Pratt terms the efforts of marginalized individuals to redeploy the rhetorical conventions of dominant cultures in self-representations and critiques of colonizers.

Indian colonial women's travel narratives open a rich archive of the experiences of colonial subjects in metropolitan settings. Colonial travel writing has much to offer contemporary scholars, and to tackle the range and diversity of themes and issues involved, it would be useful to adopt the "lens of multiplicity"<sup>173</sup> to read colonial women's texts. This dissertation has engaged with only one dimension, the self-presentations of female travellers, which has opened up the intricate intersection of femininity, modernity, nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Other aspects of travel remain unexplored such as the ship voyages to England and the places the travelling women visited. Further explorations of women's travel texts could include a

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<sup>173</sup> In her analysis of the diary of Nazr Sajjad Hyder, Asiya Aslam pertinently observes that researchers need to adopt the "lens of multiplicity" (73) to read colonial women's texts.

comparative analysis with male travellers of the same timeframe and thereby enhance understandings of gendered travel.

Moreover, scholarship on colonial travel writing will not only help to understand the past, but also contribute to the expansion of postcolonial studies. By bringing to attention an often-neglected group of texts, Indian colonial women's travel writing, my dissertation will complement works done to encompass marginal voices. Furthermore, the utilization of different theories such as corporeality, cosmopolitanism, sociability and affect reveals to me new pathways beyond historicist surveys and offers new critical approaches to the study of colonial texts. These for me have been the lessons I have learned from analysing the writings of the remarkable women who left home to sail across the *kala pani* and visit the metropolitan centre. Happily, travel and travel writing continue to flourish despite pandemics and wars. Journeys go on while old routes continue to be retraced and old connections revived in new ways over the centuries. Hence, insights from the past can guide us in our new voyages and help us to secure multicultural harmony through intercultural communication and exchanges.

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### End Notes

<sup>i</sup> Fisher highlights the prevalence of the informative style in his analysis of the travel accounts of Cursetjee, Merwanjee and Nowrojee in his statement that the travelogues -“tended to be a utilitarian and instructive travel guide closer to a technical manual, delineating features of cities, industries, geography, flora and fauna..” (“Early Indian Travel Guides”101).

<sup>ii</sup> Pratt writes that Sarmiento refashioned the rhetoric mode of European naturalists to describe the pleasures afforded by Paris, she explains that -“What Humboldt saw in the jungles and pampas, Sarmiento sees in the shops of the Vivienne, the collection of the Jardin des Plantes, the museums, galleries, bookstores and restaurants (Imperial 188). She considers these details to form an example of “transculturating gestures” (188).

<sup>iii</sup> Debendranath Tagore’s daughter Swarna Kumari Debi recalls that when her father decided to improve the education of the female members of his household, he invited a preacher from the Brahmo Society to give lessons but had to face the quandary of unsuitable, rather transparent, saris of the women. Debi remembers:

On this occasion clothes of the denizens of the women’s quarters were reformed, [due to the fact] that it was impossible to appear in front of men [non-kin] in the Bengali woman’s usual garb of only a *sari*. My older sister, maternal aunt and sisters-in-law used to come to the study in a kind of civil and refined outfit of a *peshawaj* [outfit of aristocratic Muslim women]and a shawl. My esteemed father always had a distaste for the clothing of Bengali women, and deeply desired to reform it. He did not stint in his efforts to realize this wish, at times on my Didi’s [older sisters] but tirelessly on the infant daughters. In those days the youngest children in our household wore clothes similar to the girls and boys of Muslim aristocratic families. (Debi 1916 30-31 qt in Bannerji 102).

<sup>iv</sup> The traveller acknowledged the fusion of Muslim, Parsi and Bengali styles in her design (Murshid *Reluctant Debutante* 247). The incorporation of blouse, petticoat, shoes and stockings in her outfit were imported from Western fashion and removed the transparency that might have been problematic in wearing just a sari. In addition to ensuring modesty and veiling (with an extra wrapper), the new style was also convenient to move about in.

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## APPENDIX A

### Images of Colonial Indian Women



Figure 1 Gagendranath Tagore, 1916 Untitled

[sothebys.com/en/auction/ecatalogue/2012/modern-and-contemporary-south-asian-art-including-indian-miniature-paintings/lot 27.html](https://sothebys.com/en/auction/ecatalogue/2012/modern-and-contemporary-south-asian-art-including-indian-miniature-paintings/lot-27.html).



Figure 2 Toru Dutt

*Life and Letters* by Harirar Das



**Figure 3 Jnanada Devi**

*The Tagores and Sartorial Style*, Malaviaka Karlekar, p.208



**Figure 4 Cornelia Sorabji 1896**

*Opening Doors: The Untold Story of Cornelia Sorabji* by Richard Sorabji 73.



**Figure 5 The Maharani of Cooch Behar, 1887, Sydney Hall, (Royal Collection Trust)**

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/403601/the-maharani-of-cooch-behar>



**Figure 6 Nawab Begum at Delhi Durbar,**

<https://thefridaytimes.com/23-Feb-2018/begum-of-bhopal-at-the-1911-delhi-durbar>



**Figure 7 Atiya Fyzee in Sari**

<https://sister-hood.com/sister-hood-staff/atiya-fyzee-1877-1967/>



**Figure 8 Atiya Fyzee in Maria Grey College, Brunel University London collection**