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**Images of Empire: A Study of Visual Representations in Early British India,
c. 1757-1820**

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Abstract

This PhD thesis is a study of the role of images produced by the British and the Indians, and their cultural politics in the creation and consolidation of the British Indian rule between the mid-eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. I examine how the political legitimacy of early British Indian empire was constructed through imagery in accordance with the contemporary political discourse. Applying conceptual history to understand the semiotics of power in the formation of imperial self-image, I argue that political changes in India under the Britons was accompanied by conceptual changes. Drawing upon a rich and diverse colonial archive, I have studied images of people, landscapes, and flora and fauna by means of three cardinal concepts, political authority, dominion, and command, respectively. My focus here is on the representations of the hierarchies and differentiation in the visual arts, and my examination of images has revealed that images not only reflected the ideals of British imperial power, but also shaped them. The key feature of my thesis is the juxtaposition of the artworks of British artists with those by Indian artists who produced art for British buyers and collectors. Such juxtaposition reveals and highlights the duality of Britain's imperial realities in India. Whilst images by British artists celebrate the rise of Britons to political prominence in mid-eighteenth-century India, Indian artists though recognizing the British ascendancy largely problematize and even critique it. On their part, images by British artists were not completely immune from the anxieties of power. As a result, the British imperial self-image appears to be one of multifarious contestations, and images themselves become part of a political commentary on Britain's imperial project.

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I, the author, Apurba Chatterjee, confirm that the Thesis is my own work. I am aware of the University's Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means (www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means). This work has not been previously presented for an award at this, or any other, university.

Two recent publications have originated from this thesis: firstly, Chatterjee, Apurba, 'Imperialism, Imagery, and Political Legitimacy: Visualizing Early British India through the Eyes of Thomas and William Daniell' in Mikael Alm and Karen Harvey (eds), *Power of Description: Language and Social History in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Uppsala, 2019); and secondly, Chatterjee, Apurba, 'Visual Arts and British Imperialism in India in the Eighteenth Century: A Colonial Society in the Making' for *Discover Society*.

Introduction

A picture is worth a thousand words, but, more importantly, visual representations convey deeper and more subtle significances than words are capable of producing. These are constituted by the images' literal and historical backgrounds, the decisions made by artists and patrons alike, audience response, and, above all perhaps, the ideas that are revealed about power. Here, I am concerned with such considerations, which I conceive in terms of visual languages of imperialism in the particular context of British India during the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Beginning with the British victory at the Battle of Plassey in 1757, I examine the period of the British rise to political prominence over the course of the late eighteenth century, up to around 1820. My focus is on the images produced both in India and Britain during the period under study and their attendant role in the creation and consolidation of British rule in India. In doing so, the present thesis explores how the political legitimacy of imperial authority was constructed through imagery in accordance with the political discourse of the times. In other words, this is a study of how Indian life and culture came to be viewed and understood as a part of the British empire.

My analysis is based on the centrality of the dialogue between art and imperialism which, according to Holger Hoock, can be viewed in Britain's rise as a global imperial power and its concomitant development as a leading artistic nation in the latter half of the eighteenth century. As a result, the British empire was as much a cultural artefact as it was a product of warfare and diplomacy. Art helped generate the idea of empire, which was in turn vital to Britons' idea of themselves as a nation.¹ Indeed, art made Britain's empire a tangible entity. Visual arts not only brought empire into the material culture of British homes, but also provided the basis for artistic—and in turn civilizational—commentaries regarding India's (a)historical past and its present under the Britons.² Seen in this light, the collection and also forceful, acquisitive possession of the objects of art also defined the British presence in India.³ At the core of the formulation of political legitimacy of the British Indian rule was the development of an imperial self-image which, as this

¹ Holger Hoock, *Empires of the Imagination: Politics, War, and the Arts in the British World, 1750-1850* (London, 2010).

² Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (London, 1977); Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories. Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York, 2004); and Margot Finn and Kate Smith (eds), *East India Company at Home, 1757-1857* (London, 2018).

³ Richard. H Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton, 1999); and Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire. Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750-1850* (New York, 2005).

thesis argues, was both created by and found expression in imagery. Artistic representation of India, in this regard, became a medium for comprehending, managing and even responding to the colonial experience.

At the very outset, it is important to highlight what constitutes visual arts for the purpose of the present thesis when thinking about its relationship with the political legitimacy of British Indian empire. In this thesis, I have examined ninety-eight images in all, of people, landscapes, and flora and fauna in India, which includes painting on paper in various media including oils, watercolour, and gouache, as well as those reproduced in aquatint. The genres that I have chosen are broadly: portraiture (both single and in groups), landscape art, and natural history illustrations, in order to investigate the British rendezvous with India in all of its manifestations. Whilst satirical prints provide an extraordinary glimpse into the culture of imperialism, they are outside the scope of this work due to the limitation of space. Furthermore, objects and artefacts, sculptures, and cartography, although provide fruitful ways of inquiring into the visual representations of Britain's imperial power, could not be included here.⁴ My emphasis on these genres of paintings and their reproduction as prints, nevertheless, provides the thesis with a uniformity to address the complexities of imperial encounters that unfurled at the turn of the eighteenth century. British imperialism, in this context, can be understood as widening the horizons of the artists in terms of places to travel and with new subject matter to depict and represent. However, I am not only concerned with artworks by British artists, but also those by Indian artists. The growth of British empire in India was reflected in the art of native artists, whose own lives came to be fundamentally altered under Britons. This thesis foregrounds the artistic endeavours of Indian artists who themselves remain largely unknown, and their images being until very recently relegated to the background in the understanding of Britain's imperial art. The chapters that follow thus situate the

⁴ The best interpretation of satirical prints on British rule in eighteenth-century India, in particular, on Hastings' impeachment trial and its effects on Britain is Marcia Pointon, *Brilliant Effects: A Cultural History of Gem Stones and Jewellery* (London, 2002), pp. 179-201. On the cartoons of Nabobs, see Christina Smylitopoulos, 'Portrait of a Nabob: Graphic Satire, Portraiture, and the Anglo-Indian in the Late Eighteenth Century' *RACAR: revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 37.1 (2012), pp. 10-25. On sculptures, Joan Coutu, *Persuasion and Propaganda: Monuments and the Eighteenth-Century British Empire* (McGill, 2006), pp. 270-321; on objects and artefacts, see Sumathi Ramaswamy, *Terrestrial Lessons. The Conquest of the World as Globe* (Chicago, 2017), Finn and Smith (eds), *East India Company at Home*; and Rosie Dias and Kate Smith (eds), *British Women and Cultural Practices of Empire, 1770–1940* (London, 2018); and on maps, see Mathew Edney, *Mapping an Empire. The Geographical Construction of British India* (Chicago, 1997); and on the symbolic importance of maps as a visual artefact, see Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India* (Durham, 2010).

artworks by Indian artists on a large scale at par, and for the very first time in direct juxtaposition to those by British artists.

In such a context, the chronological choices for this thesis also require an explanation. The period from the defeat of Nawab Sirajuddaulah at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 at the hands of the British to the rise of British till 1820 saw the escalation of British interest in India as a result of their increasing political power. Back in Britain, Robert Clive's Indian exploits fascinated the public sphere (as we shall see in Chapter 1) and by 1769, the first professional British artist, Tilly Kettle had arrived in India. This is, however, not to say that the earlier drives for visual recording were non-existent. In fact, Chapter 2 analyzes the paintings of the British factories in India commissioned by the EIC around 1730 from George Lambert and Samuel Scott in London. The chronology as applied here encapsulates the peak of the artistic engagement as the British influence in India grew and had begun to stabilize. This thesis deals with times when India had started to make its forays into the artistic circles in Britain as painters like William Hodges and Thomas Daniell who themselves had spent quite a few years in India, based their diploma pictures at the Royal Academy of Arts on Indian themes, and the British Governors-General like Lord Moira patronized an Indian artist named Sita Ram to illustrate his countrywide tour. Accordingly, the geographical delimitation of my study has been determined by the range of British interest in various parts of India within the time-period as mentioned above.

Artworks by both British and Indian artists not only made India visible to Indians and Britons alike, but also contributed to the imagination of themselves within Britain's rapidly expanding empire. The outcome was thus a confrontation of varied realities, and the politics of representation that followed in their wake. The period between 1757 and 1820 when reconsidered in the light of artistic overtures, gives important insights into how visual arts came to reflect on and represent the British rule in India. Whilst images by British artists registered Britain's imperial role and the variations of its consequences, works by Indian artists reveal an urgency to understand the implications of British supremacy. The resultant ambivalence, as I argue, presents the variegated and competing observations on the nature of sovereignty, subjectivity, and commemoration. I therefore understand the aesthetic scene in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century as fraught with a struggle for 'visual ascendancy' over India, which was ultimately entangled in the culture of imperial politics. To this end, my introduction first looks at the artistic world in eighteenth-century

Britain and the connections that it forged with India as a larger background to the issues that the chapters deal with. Thereafter, I take an account of the existing scholarship, before turning to the primary sources and methodological premises, and finally, my mode of enquiry into visual arts and politics in early British India.

Historical Background

The eighteenth century in England was characterized by the discovery of what Nicholas Pevsner has referred to as ‘the Englishness of English art’.⁵ Not only did drawing and painting become an integral part of moral philosophy, education, and a fashionable lifestyle,⁶ but such developments were also matched by the increasing professionalization and institutionalization of art and artistic practices. These, in turn, became central to the definition of the British ‘national’ character. Foremost in this regard was the foundation of the Royal Academy of Arts in 1768. Flourishing as a national institution, the Royal Academy standardized artistic education and professional practices in London. Various art competitions and exhibitions that followed as a result brought artists in close contact with patrons and also public authorities who often became dedicated connoisseurs of culture.⁷ Viewing, understanding, and critiquing artworks became hallmarks of a polite respectability that bore connotations of cultural refinement and sensibility, thereby helping to determine socio-political status and hierarchies.⁸ Whilst artistic activities came to be considered highly prestigious, the actual economic status of the artists themselves was often a far cry from this ideal. Writing on the Royal Academy and the British Institution, which was founded in 1804, James Hamilton eloquently posits, ‘behind the walls of paintings, beyond the plinthed busts and the modelled figure groups, social and economic competition involving patrons, artists and priestly organizing councils of the Academy and the Institution was driven by the hydraulic forces of cash flow and money in the bank’. These avenues for artists, as Hamilton further states, were plagued

⁵ Nicholas Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art* (New York, 1955).

⁶ Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting. The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680-1768* (London, 1988), p. 2. See also Pratapaditya Pal and Vidya Dahejia, *From Merchants to Emperors: British Artists and India, 1757-1930* (London, 1986), p. 14.

⁷ Holger Hock, *The King’s artists : The Royal Academy of Arts and the politics of British culture, 1760-1840* (Oxford, 2003) pp. 1-3.

⁸ Peter De Bolla, *The Education of the Eye. Painting, Landscape, and Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (California, 2003).

by hatred, mutual rivalries, and intrigues for ‘such are the energies released when people of temperament and genius meet within a limited and fluctuating market, and try with mixed success to club together to support themselves and each other, and express their ambitions’.⁹

One of the possible escapes from this difficult situation was a visit to India. In 1786, on his way back to Britain after spending a few years in India, artist Ozias Humphrey clearly had mixed feelings. On the one hand, his visit did not turn out to be as profitable as he had expected, whilst on the other hand, he did not seem completely disappointed altogether. This is clear from what he wrote to his fellow artist and recent arrival in India, Thomas Daniell, ‘I think it is a blessed and glorious country for the purposes we all visit it and (probably) superior to any other on earth’.¹⁰ The ‘purposes’ that Humphrey refers to here were largely those of receiving artistic commissions and making financial fortunes. Thus, although India could be a land of richness and munificence for British artists, viewed as a safe haven from the fierce competition to secure artistic patronage at home, their experiences varied widely in reality.¹¹ For some, India became a land of frustration and despair, for example John Alefounder committed suicide due to a lack of artistic commissions and Humphrey himself never fully received the money he claimed for his work. For others, the huge fortunes and artistic commissions acquired by artists like George Willison, Tilly Kettle, William Hodges and Johan Zoffany were inspirational enough to increase India’s attraction for professional British artists during this period.¹²

Although direct artistic patronage from the East India Company (hereafter EIC) was rare, the right to issue permissions to artists necessary for their travel to India rested with the Company’s directors. In order to seek this permission, these artists involved themselves in diverse socio-political and economic networks of which the directors of the EIC were often a part. Art, as Geoff Quilley has suggested, added to the Company’s dignity.¹³ In India, not only did artists seek the patronage of British officials in the EIC’s service, but such support and cooperation also enabled

⁹ James Hamilton, *A Strange Business: Making Art and Money in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 2014), pp. 5 and 86-7.

¹⁰ Royal Academy of Arts (RA): Ozias Humphry Correspondence, HU/3/132.

¹¹ Mildred Archer, *India and British Portraiture 1770-1825* (London, 1979).

¹² For an understanding of the careers of various British professional artists in India, see Sir William Foster, ‘British Artists in India 1760-1820’ *The Volume of the Walpole Society*, 19 (1930-1931), pp. 1-88.

¹³ Geoff Quilley, ‘Signs of Commerce: the East India Company and the patronage of eighteenth-century British art’ in H. V. Bowen, Margaret Lincoln, and Nigel Rigby (eds), *The Worlds of the East India Company* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 183-85.

them to visit different parts of India and acquire a clientele among Indian rulers and elites.¹⁴ For instance, when Thomas and William Daniell published their magnum opus, *Oriental Scenery*, the first volume was dedicated to the directors of the EIC, and the subsequent ones found important EIC officials as their dedicatees.¹⁵ With an increasing political presence of the British by the middle of the eighteenth century, demand for art was steadily on the rise. Influenced by contemporary associations between artistic activities and polite and respectable taste, Britons brought with them to India a love for pictures. Images were given as gifts, exchanged as valuable memorabilia, and also used as decorations for walls in British homes instead of wallpapers, which were unsuited to the Indian climate.¹⁶ More importantly, images were visual records of British life in India: after their Indian career, military and civilian personnel would often display in their country estates images of their Indian sojourn.¹⁷ Whilst promotion of the arts was formally necessary to maintain the standards and expectations of behaviour at home, and a requisite for inclusion and even mobility within Britain's high society on return and resettlement, images also privately gave Britons in India a sense of comfort and succour in an alien, faraway land that would never be their home.¹⁸ Simultaneously, with the growing political power of the British, the demand for the images of India's land and its people steadily rose. Through such portrayals, artists presented the British public with visions of India as it became increasingly inter-linked with a national culture of empire.

Professional artists were, however, not the only British artistic presence in India in the eighteenth century. Besides art being an important part of education, military curricula also featured training in drawing.¹⁹ By the second half of the eighteenth century, due to the increasing political power of the British, the administration of the EIC became more complicated and tedious. In such a context,

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Thomas Daniell, *Oriental Scenery. Twenty Four Views In Hindoostan Drawn And Engraved By Thomas Daniell, And With Permission Respectfully Dedicated To The Honourable Court Of Directors Of The East India Company* (London, 1795). Hermione de Almeida and George H. Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance. British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (Aldershot, 2005) p. 318 note 38 for an explanation on years of publication of various series of the *Oriental Scenery*.

¹⁶ Archer, *India and British Portraiture*, pp. 55-58.

¹⁷ Pauline Rohatgi and Pheroza Godrej, 'Introduction' in Pauline Rohatgi and Pheroza Godrej (eds) *Under the Indian Sun. British Landscape Artists* (Mumbai, 1995), p. vi and James Hamilton, *A Strange Business: Making Art and Money in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 2014), pp. 295-296..

¹⁸ Ranajit Guha, 'Not at home in empire' in *Critical Inquiry*, 23.3 (1997), pp. 482-493. See also, anonymous, *Hartley House* Vol. 2 (London, 1789), p. 90. For images featuring in inventories of Britons in India, see for example, IOR/ L/ AG/ 34/ 27/ 3, Inventory series from Bengal, 1781-1782.

¹⁹ Mildred Archer, *British Drawings in the India Office Library*, Vol.1, Amateur Artists (London, 1969), p. 5.

officials of the EIC often undertook artistic activities in their pastime to escape what Jeffrey Auerbach has referred to as ‘imperial boredom’.²⁰ Skills of drawing were useful in surveys, and in fact, artistic vision often came to be conflated with that of military surveillance. Thus, when Colonel Colin Mackenzie surveyed southern India after the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War, as Nicholas Dirks has shown, he combined his military insight with an aesthetic sensitivity.²¹ Artists, for their part, also importuned precision and objectivity, achieved through the use of scientific equipment such as the Daniells’ use of perambulator and camera obscura.²² The simultaneity of the military and the artistic within early British Indian art is evident in the cartouche of James Rennell’s map of Hindustan (Figure 1). Here, whilst a brahmin subserviently hands over a book of *Shaster/Sastra* or Hindu law codes to Britannia, an artist’s palette and brushes together with the surveyor’s tools lie at her feet.²³

Whilst British artists were recording India’s life and landscape in their art, the growing political presence of the British did impact Indian artists as well. Working previously in royal ateliers, Indian artists faced troubles in securing artistic commissions with the decline of the Mughal empire, and then that of its successor states with the rise of the British. As a result, they looked up to the British for patronage, leading to the birth of what has been called the Company School of Art, named after the EIC. As Mildred Archer has shown,²⁴ this tradition of Indian art for the British developed in various centres of the Company’s Indian administration, and largely displayed a combination of Indian and European artistic modes and conventions. Although works by British artists were mostly preferable, British communities in India often patronized Indian artists, whose works were cheaper than those of their British counterparts. For their part, Indian artists’ images were characterized by attention to minute details. Such an approach was facilitated by their use of the techniques of opaque watercolour or gouache. The British, however, preferred transparent

²⁰ Jeffrey A Auerbach, ‘Imperial Boredom’ in *Common Knowledge*, 11.2 (2005), pp. 283-305.

²¹ Nicholas Dirks ‘Guiltless Spoliations: Picturesque Beauty, Colonial Knowledge, and Colin Mackenzie’s Survey of India’, in Catherine B. Asher and Thomas R. Metcalf (eds), *Perceptions of South Asia’s Visual Past* (New Delhi, 1994), pp. 211-232.

²² For the Daniells, see Apurba Chatterjee, ‘Imperialism, Imagery, and Political Legitimacy’, pp. 113-137. On scientific objectivity, see Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (Zone Books, 2010). For the interconnection between artistic and scientific vision, see Barbara Maria Stafford, *Voyage into Substance. Art, Science, Nature, and the Illustrated Travel Account* (Cambridge, MA, 1984); and Charlotte Klonk, *Science and the perception of nature : British landscape art in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries* (New Haven, 1996).

²³ G7625 1782 .R4 (Library of Congress).

²⁴ Mildred Archer, *Company Drawings in the India Office Library* (London, 1972).

watercolour to gouache which they viewed as dry and hard.²⁵ British artists deemed the work of their Indian counterparts as lacking in design, harmony, and perspective, and therefore generally flat. Due to these fundamental lacunae, their works were not considered as exhibiting any refinement. At best, Indian artists were skilful copyists, and thus they were many-a-times employed to copy paintings by British artists.²⁶ Indian artists, nevertheless, proved to be important to the British on various fronts. As Jennifer Howes has recently emphasized, not only did they serve as assistants to British artists as well as patrons and collectors of fine art, but they also catered to the demands of documentation in military surveys as draftsmen.²⁷ This thesis corroborates a timely and important reassessment of art produced by Indian artists for the British. Moving away from the conventional idea of viewing Indian artists in terms their adjustment to the European formats, scholars now understand them on their own terms as capable of exploring and adapting various indigenous and occidental artistic styles and formulae. In doing so, the term Company School has been revised in favour of a new phrase, that is, Indian export art.²⁸ Such an approach thus becomes my starting point in navigating the artistic representations by Indian artists under British rule.

In this respect, artists, both British and Indian, had become what can be referred to as ‘go-betweens’. They were everywhere, mediating Britain’s imperial presence through the visual documentations of people, places, and nature, alongside that of the British life in India.²⁹ Often present in Indian royal courts, accompanying their patrons on diplomatic missions and to the battlefields, travelling along the riverside (in the case of Indian artists hawking images from place to place), as well as featuring their artworks nearby the Company’s factories, both British and

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 6

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Jennifer Howes, ‘Indian ‘Company School’ Art from 1780 to 1820: Collecting Versus Documenting’ in Julia A. B. Hedgewald (ed.), *In the Shadow of the Golden Age. Art and Identity in Asia from Gandhara to the Modern Age* (Bonn, 2014), pp. 371-96.

²⁸ William Dalrymple and Yuthika Sharma, *Princes and Painters in Mughal Delhi* (London, 2012). More recently, there has been an exhibition at the Wallace Collection completely dedicated to the works by Indian artists, curated by William Dalrymple. The exhibition is called, *Forgotten Masters: Indian Painting for the East India Company*. See the exhibition catalogue, William Dalrymple, *Forgotten Masters: Indian Painting for the East India Company* (London, 2019).

²⁹ The best work on ‘go-betweens’ as cultural mediators is Simon Schaffer, Lissa Roberts, Kapil Raj, and James Delbourgo, *The Brokered World: Go-betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770-1820* (Massachusetts, 2009). See the Introduction. See also, Kapil Raj, ‘Go-Betweens, Travellers, and Cultural Translators’, in Bernard Lightman (ed.), *A Companion to the History of Science* (Sussex, 2016), pp. 39-57.

Indian artists were witnesses to an India gradually coming under British authority.³⁰ Artists were inseparable parts of the Britain's Indian empire as they not only represented the imperial experience, but also became embroiled within the same. For example, whilst Indian artists like Shaikh Zain-al-Din came to work for Sir Elijah Impey and on his departure, for his neighbour in Calcutta, Sir William Jones, British artist Thomas Daniell waited on Indian rulers and watched *nautch* performances, and also provided information on weather in northern India for General Robert Kyd.³¹ The rest of this introduction thus, focuses on images as cultural productions of British Indian empire and their importance in the re-evaluation of British imperialism.

British imperialism in India and the visual arts

In order to take the notion of British Indian empire as a cultural enterprise forward, my enquiry here is located at the intersection of new political and new imperial histories. New political history takes into consideration the cultural symbolism of power, alongside the discursive, historical, and social contexts of its performance and representation.³² The academic study of imperial history began in Britain in the late nineteenth century, that is, the age of 'high imperialism'. British imperial history was thus originally a patriotic mission, narrating the tale of the indomitable march of values of the Enlightenment and modernity that helped salvage subject populations in the colonies from centuries of ignorance and decadence. In other words, it was an ideological defense of British expansion within which the histories of the colonies were hardly accounted for in their own right. This celebratory tone, however, began to wane after the Second World War as the process of decolonization had set in.³³ Focus then tended to shift away from Britain to the role of indigenous people on the spot in the making and the ending of the British empire. The 1960s and

³⁰ Clive Dewey, 'Figures in a Landscape: Anglo-Indian Art' *Modern Asian Studies*, 16, 4 (1982), pp. 683-697. See also Ratnabali Chatterjee, *From the Karkhana to the Studio: Changing Social Roles of Patron and Artist in Bengal* (New Delhi, 1990), pp. 32-33 and 37.

³¹ IOR/P/3/53, 30 Jul 1790, pp 680-95 (Asia, Pacific, and Africa Collections: British Library); Michael J. Franklin, *Orientalist Jones. Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer, and Linguist, 1746-1794* (New York, 2011), p. 15; and Apurba Chatterjee, 'Imperialism, Imagery, and Political Legitimacy: Visualizing Early British India through the Eyes of Thomas and William Daniell' in Mikael Alm and Karen Harvey (eds), *Power of Description: Language and Social History in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Uppsala, 2019), pp. 119-120.

³² L. Bowen, 'Politics' in Garthine Walker (ed.), *Writing Early Modern History* (London, 2005), pp. 195-197.

³³ Richard Drayton, 'Where Does the World Historian Write From? Objectivity, Moral Conscience and the Past and Present of Imperialism' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 46.3, (2011), pp. 675-678.

1970s came to be dominated by national histories with a strong focus on anti-colonial struggles. In such a context, studying empires came to be equated with apologia for their cause.³⁴ During the 1990s, there was a shift from national histories to more inclusive imperial histories in which the colonies and the metropole were studied together. One of the most prominent examples is the multi-volume *Oxford History of the British Empire*. Ranging from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, it addresses the rise of the British empire and its demise, and aims at a comprehensive account of imperial politics, ideologies, and economics, and their impact on the people it ruled.³⁵ The series however, falls short in its aim of providing for non-western populations' perspectives on the British empire. Indigenous people were still largely viewed through the prism of imperial power and its ideologies.

The response, however, was to re-examine Britain's relationship with its empire and the complex legacies of British imperialism. Such an approach emerged out of the growing trend in British historiography that has called for a closer integration of empire into British national history. According to David Armitage, the concept of empire was intrinsically linked to the formation of the early modern British state. For him, 'Empires gave birth to states, and states stood at the heart of empires', and expansion beyond Europe came to shape the British national character.³⁶ This entanglement of the British state and its colonies in imperialism has been explored by Kathleen Wilson, who attempts to bring them closer through a 'new imperial history'. Taking cues from post-colonialism, cultural and feminist studies, and literary criticism, Wilson urges a move away from studies of imperial politics and the extension of British institutions abroad towards an understanding of the lived experiences of imperial subjects, and the impact of the colonies on the metropolis. An important dimension of the new imperial history is the espousal of sources apart from the textual, not least because written archival evidence often obscures the voices of the colonized.³⁷ Thus, new political history's emphasis on the culture of power together with

³⁴ Stephen Howe, 'Imperial and colonial history' in *Making History. Changing the Face of the Profession in Britain* http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/themes/imperial_history.html [As Accessed 15 January 2018].

³⁵ P.J. Marshall, 'Introduction' in P. J. Marshall (ed.) *The Oxford History of The British Empire: Volume II: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 1-26.

³⁶ David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000). For a similar approach, see C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian. The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London, 1989) and Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London, 2005).

³⁷ Kathleen Wilson, 'Introduction: histories, empires, modernities' in Kathleen Wilson (ed.), *A New Imperial History. Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 1-26.

tendencies in new imperial history to move beyond the written text provides the historiographical context for my study of visual arts in early British India.

My focus on visual representations also draws upon a reappraisal of the eighteenth century in Indian history. The Mughal empire was founded by Babur in 1526 following his victory in the first battle of Panipat and taken to the apex of its glory under emperor Akbar during the second half of the sixteenth century. However, the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 and the wars of succession that followed marked the onset of the empire's decline. On the eve of the British expansion in India, the territorial power of the Mughals came to be replaced by a plethora of political entities, both defiant of and aligned to the Mughal emperor. The picture of the eighteenth century in Indian history has thus been one of decay and dislocation. For British writers in the age of empire, the last days of the Mughal empire were unstable, characterized by incessant warfare and anarchy which only came to an end with the 'Plassey Revolution' in 1757 and the establishment of peace and order under British authority. This bleak image of the eighteenth century is echoed in Indian nationalist historiography, in which scholars view this period as marking the end of the Mughal imperial system and the commencement of a foreign domination that cast India into economic backwardness for many years to come. The general conclusion therefore hints at stark discontinuities from times past.³⁸

Recent historical scholarship, although accepting an idea of disruption following the collapse of the Mughal imperial order, has tended to reject the traditional view of outright British domination of a politically and economically dislocated India. A number of regional studies highlight India's economic vitality during the first half of the eighteenth century, which became the backbone of the polities that succeeded the Mughal empire. Referring to northern India, C.A. Bayly has suggested the rise of a range of locally oriented intermediaries between the ruling elite on the one hand, and the masses on the other. These intermediaries included merchants, bankers, revenue farmers, and *zamindars* (potentates controlling huge blocks of land and people as well as peasant elites). With the growth of monetary economy, there was a constant need for cash to be able to pay for the army and administration. Due to the breakdown of Mughal revenue administration in 1707, the Mughals and the rulers of regional polities became increasingly dependent on these groups for

38 Marshall, 'Introduction', p. 1.

timely and regular cash payments of revenues. As a result, these intermediaries gained a significant stake in political life.³⁹

The idea of wars as causing permanent damage to the economy has also been questioned. According to Frank Perlin, new regimes proved themselves capable of constructing administrative systems for the regeneration of regular income.⁴⁰ He agrees with Bayly that the localization of political power and resources went hand-in-hand with imperial decline. Furthermore, he suggests the growth of what he refers to as the 'rurban-type economy', that is, a dense politico-economic network bringing together regional courts, urban centres, villages, local units of manufacture and cash crop cultivation, as well as distant markets in Bihar, Bengal, southern Deccan, Maharashtra and Gujrat.⁴¹ Perlin does a particularly good job of making a case for the interconnections of the history of trading corporations, South Asian history, and the history of international commerce during the late eighteenth century.⁴²

Historians have also argued in favour of continuities between the Mughal imperial order and the early British administration. Studying the career of Saiyid Muhammad Reza Khan, the *naib diwan* (deputy in civil and revenue administration) and *naib nazim* (deputy to the *nawab* appointed by the British) of Bengal between 1756 and 1776, Abdul Majed Khan points out that there was significant overlap between the Mughal and the British systems of administration. Men like Robert Clive were part of the Mughal military aristocracy in popular perception, and Reza Khan showed great *esprit de corps* towards his Mughal legacy even while working in conjunction with the British. Throughout his career, according to Abdul Majed Khan, Reza Khan attempted to uphold the traditional ideal of governance, thereby aiming to persuade his English superiors to accept Mughal administrative practices.⁴³ Mughal statecraft, especially that under emperor Akbar,

39 C. A. Bayly, 'The Rise of Corporations' in P. J. Marshall (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History: Revolution or Evolution* (Delhi, 2003), pp. 137-139 and *ibid.*, p. 9. For views contrary to those of Bayly, see M. Athar Ali, 'Recent Theories of Eighteenth-century India' in P. J. Marshall (ed.) *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History*, pp. 90-98.

40 Frank Perlin, 'The Problem of the Eighteenth Century' in P. J. Marshall (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History*, p. 55.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

43 Abdul Majed Khan, 'Introduction: The Twilight of Mughal Bengal' in P. J. Marshall (ed.) *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History*, pp. 359-370.

continued to serve as a model for the early British administration.⁴⁴ The British thus adapted to a political culture that the Mughals had initiated.

The prosperity of the regional polities in the wake of Mughal decline, however, presents the Company state as marking the culmination of political order in eighteenth-century India. According to Seema Alavi, the success of the EIC can be attributed to its capacity for adapting itself to the models of indigenous fiscal and trade networks that continued until the early nineteenth century. She further suggests that although the EIC continued to derive sustenance from indigenous political and military traditions, in its drive towards political sovereignty the company tended to erode the power of the regional polities, circumscribing them as a result.⁴⁵

Whilst the idea of Mughal decline remains difficult to deny,⁴⁶ it can be stated that the picture of disjuncture was not all-pervasive. The crumbling of the imperial centre was accompanied by the rise of new regional centres of power where the rulers, aided by the consortium of landed, banking and commercial interests, rechanneled resources leading to prosperity. As the British gained territorial power, they were confronted with these potentates on the political scene. In this context, whilst there were attempts to negotiate with pre-colonial administration and governance, in their rise to political power the British displayed a tendency to break the authority of indigenous regimes. The continuity of Mughal traditions, therefore, also came to be matched by the political and administrative transformations initiated by the British. Recent historiography has nevertheless attributed a greater afterlife to Mughal idioms of authority than was previously acknowledged, which as we shall see, had its implications when thinking about visual arts in eighteenth-century India.

A revisionist understanding of India after Aurangzeb redirects attention to the role of the EIC. Beginning with the conferring of the right to duty-free trade by the Mughal emperor Farukhsiyar in 1717, Bengal came to hold a pivotal status in the EIC's commercial nexus. By the mid-eighteenth century, sixty percent of the Company's Asian imports were Bengal goods. Apart from these direct transactions, the servants of the company were involved in covert, illegal private trade, using official rights to duty-free trade to personal ends, thereby defrauding the Bengal *nawabs* of

44 P. J. Marshall, 'Introduction', pp. 6-7 and Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India. The British in Bengal* (Cambridge, 2007).

45 Seema Alavi, 'Introduction' in *The Eighteenth Century in India* (Delhi, 2002)

46 P. J. Marshall, 'Introduction', p. 3.

huge amounts of revenue.⁴⁷ Problems mounted in 1756 with the British attempt to fortify Calcutta, the Presidency town in eastern India, in the wake of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) in order to deter an anticipated French attack. The reigning *nawab*, Siraj-ud-daula, saw this as a direct challenge to his authority, and retaliated. Thereafter, Siraj's defeat in Plassey as a result of the coalition of indigenous and British interests, and the sequence of events that followed, are too well-known to be repeated here.⁴⁸

Studying the EIC's conquests, P. J. Marshall has argued that there were no conscious attempts to gain political dominance of India on the part of Britain until the passage of the Pitt's India Act in 1784. Though the connections between trade and politics in this age cannot be ignored, the Company's acts should be seen as a response to the political and economic conditions in eighteenth-century India. According to Marshall, the British were active participants in struggles for power in the regional polities. This involvement in local politics later gave way to empire. The empire in India was the creation of men on the spot. The company servants acted on directives from Britain at their own discretion, exploited opportunities for territorial and commercial gains that came their way, and guarded their hard-won victories by the use of force.⁴⁹ As a result, lack of proper communication and knowledge about local conditions made the exercise of effective control from home impossible, thereby leading to a classic instance of what Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher have referred to as 'sub-imperialism'.⁵⁰

Whilst this emphasis on local interests is useful in understanding the historical context in India as a prelude to the EIC's intervention, it is also important to remember that the EIC's trade had always been accompanied by the use of armed forces. Furthermore, the British monarchy had promoted the Company's aggressive designs through offers of loans and privileges.⁵¹ This view

47 Cited in Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition. A History of Modern India* (New Delhi, 2008), pp. 41-42.

48 For the events related to Plassey and its aftermath, and the debates regarding it, see Rajat Kanta Ray, *The Felt Community: Commonalty and Mentality before the Emergence of Indian Nationalism* (New Delhi, 2003) and Sushil Chaudhury, *Nabābi āmale Murśidābād* (Bengali; Murshidabad in the Age of Nawabs) (Kolkata, 2004).

49 P. J. Marshall, 'The British in India: Trade to Dominion, 1700-1765' in P.J. Marshall (ed.) *The Oxford History of The British Empire: Volume II: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 487-507.

50 For an extensive treatment of the idea of 'Sub-imperialism', see Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London, 1961) pp. 1-26.

51 Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*, pp. 38- 39. See also, John Shovlin, 'War and Peace: Trade, International Competition, and Political Economy' in Philip J. Stern and Carl Wennerlind (eds), *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 305-327.

thus altogether denies that the British state had any role to play in directing and influencing the organization that it had fostered. C. A. Bayly's analysis is also similar to that of Marshall; he views the eighteenth-century Indian polity and society as conflict-ridden and finds the British as a player in this state of affairs. However, Bayly differs from Marshall in his recognition of the British motive of obtaining revenues and thus suggests that the strategic interests of the EIC were more important than those of trade, and that the benefits of trade came as an appendage to political conquests.⁵²

Such understandings of the EIC as acquiring territorial power in India by accident is paralleled with considerations of the Company as a national organization. Writing the history of the Company, Philip Lawson argues that it should not be seen as a mere offshoot of imperial policy, but as an essential part of British history. Whilst introducing profound social and political changes in the Indian subcontinent, the company was ultimately instrumental in reshaping British policies in matters of trade and diplomacy. Although the EIC owed its existence to royal prerogative, often its imperial role ran contrary to its own as well as the state's interests. The EIC nonetheless was embedded in the British notions of nationhood and helped define the nation's tastes and sensibilities. The Company was thus, according to Lawson, central to, and had influenced and was itself influenced by the contemporary debates on political economy.⁵³

Placing the EIC within British politics, Huw Bowen, echoing the position of Dame Lucy Sutherland, has argued that the concerns of Indian empire did not figure in British politics formally before 1780. However, since the 1760s, there seemed to be an interest in Indian affairs following the conquests by Robert Clive. Moreover, ministers did not consider themselves to be capable enough to understand or, in fact, take responsibility for Indian matters. It was also widely believed that only the EIC was well-placed to take such decisions as its authority was sanctioned by none other than the British crown itself. The perpetuation of such ambiguities from the 1760s acted in favour of the state, and the Crown and the EIC had continued to enjoy harmonious relations.⁵⁴

52 C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the making of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 48 and 117.

53 Philip Lawson, *The East India Company. A History* (London, 1993).

54 Dame Lucy Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth-century Politics* (Oxford, 1952); and Huw Bowen, 'British India, 1765-1813: The Metropolitan Context' in P.J. Marshall (ed.), *The Oxford History of The British Empire: Volume II: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998) pp. 530-550.

In their seminal study on British imperialism, P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins have presented a different viewpoint. They argue that the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries saw the emergence of ‘gentlemanly capitalism’ in London. This resulted from an alliance of financial and landed interests which was well represented in the British Parliament and considered overseas trade as vital to the growth of national income. According to Cain and Hopkins, the need for revenue to bolster commercial profits remained central to the EIC's political advances in India, and the British government was keen to appropriate the Company's gains for its own budgetary needs. The EIC's conquests were thus directly linked to domestic impulses. This approach prioritizes the role of the metropolis without necessarily refuting the political and social pressures in eighteenth-century India as previously discussed, and thus views imperialism as an integral part in the composition of British life.⁵⁵ Such ideas have been recently supported in the work of James M. Vaughn, who suggests that the British state took an active interest in imperial expansion in India. Such an undertaking was largely shaped by the prominence of Tory politics in the British Parliament, which facilitated wars of conquest and the domination of Indians for land revenue and commercial gains.⁵⁶

This approach finds support in Philip J. Stern's questioning of the transition of the Company from a mercantile unit to a ruling power. According to Stern, the EIC should be understood as body politic in its own right, with a set of coherent, if composite, political ideas about the nature and extent of authority, and the duties of rulers and subjects. The early modern world was characterized by composite state systems, marked by the presence of various forms of legal and political power that overlapped with each other, and the EIC in such a context acted as a form of government that claimed jurisdiction over British trade and traffic, and erected laws, dispensed justice and collected taxes in Asia. Its power rested on English charters, grants from Asiatic rulers, and its own use of force. Situating the Company within a greater story of transformation from the early modern to modern forms of state and sovereignty, Stern argues that opposition to the EIC's activities in Britain came in the wake of the contention between the ideas of composite state and those of

⁵⁵ P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688–1914* (New York, 1993), pp. 15, 46 and 92-94.

⁵⁶ James M. Vaughn, *The Politics of Empire at the Accession of George III: The East India Company and the Crisis and Transformation of Britain's Imperial State* (London, 2019).

sovereign British nation-state and empire.⁵⁷ Stern's analysis thus frees the Company from an exclusively national context, and places it at the centre of historical understanding as a territorial and military power in its own right.⁵⁸

Although the company's administrative framework, as Stern shows, had its roots in the latter half of the seventeenth century, much of the EIC's history during this period was about striving for a greater political role as evinced from Sir Josiah Child's exhortations regarding actions against the Mughal empire during the 1680s. This aspiration, however, reached its fruition only in the mid-eighteenth century, in the wake of British conflict with France. Stern's idea of the variegated nature of the company's political legitimacy in relation to the political thought of the period, nevertheless, is useful for this thesis. Besides a focus on the institutional history of the EIC, scholars have also begun to focus on the private trading interests of the servants of the company. According to sociologists Emily Erikson and Peter Bearman, the densely embedded trading networks formed by EIC ship-captains, factors and officers, who were allowed by the Company Directorate to pursue their private interests in 'country trade', that is internal trade in the east, played a crucial part in shaping the EIC's commercial hegemony. The company's employees, whilst seeking individual profits, built on and elaborated the company's infrastructure to bring about an extension of markets far beyond what was envisioned by the Directors, leading to what Erikson and Bearman suggest was a 'globalization before globalization'.⁵⁹ Thus, drawing inspiration from Stern, and Erikson and Bearman, this thesis understands visual representations as the work of both the EIC as a corporate entity and individuals associated with it in their official capacity as the employees of the Company.

Before turning to visual arts in the British Indian empire, this understanding of politics in the eighteenth century and the role of the EIC warrants an analysis of the ideological orientations of the early British Indian empire. According to Thomas R. Metcalf, British imperial governance in

57 Philip J. Stern, '“A Politie of Civill & Military Power”: Political Thought and the Late Seventeenth-Century Foundations of the East India Company-State' *Journal of British Studies*, 47.2 (2008), pp. 253-283 and Philip J. Stern, *The Company State: Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* Online Edition (New York, 2011).

58 See, for example, Philip J. Stern, 'History and Historiography of the English East India Company: Past, Present, and Future!' *History Compass*, 7.4 (2009), pp. 1146-1180

59 Emily Erikson and Peter Bearman, 'Malfeasance and the Foundations for Global Trade: The Structure of English Trade in the East Indies, 1601-1833' *American Journal of Sociology*, 112.1 (2006), pp. 195-230. See also, Emily Erikson, *Between Monopoly and Free Trade. The English East India Company* (Princeton, 2014), mainly Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

India was based on a dichotomy of similarity and difference, between India and Britain, with the latter largely overruling the former. For Metcalf, India was ruled not by a coherent but diverse set of ideologies whereby India's past and present were often cast in the light of British life and history, thereby justifying imperial authority.⁶⁰ The notion of difference also figures prominently in Sudipta Sen's work, in which he suggests that although by the mid-eighteenth century the Company state was deeply embroiled in Indian politics and society, its imperial ambitions necessitated a deliberate distance from Indian life and subjects. The Anglo-Indian EIC, as he argues, derived its administrative structure and autonomy from the political and ideological realities of the Georgian state in Britain. Sen's claim of the British state as the pivotal influence behind the Company's Indian governance is largely based on his questioning of the idea of the British empire as a creation of Britons in India whose actions only came as a response to the changes within Indian politics.⁶¹

The notion of difference is nuanced in the work of Robert Travers' recent study of the British authority in Bengal during the late eighteenth century. Although he argues that ideas of the EIC's power, especially that of the 'ancient constitution', were shaped by the language of politics in Britain, his approach differs from that of Metcalf. According to Travers, the notion of tension between the ideals of similarity and difference that informed the British empire in India during the late nineteenth century fails to account for the interaction between the British and the indigenous state, polity and society as a result of the colonial encounter that influenced the nature of British authority in the eighteenth century. Travers, nevertheless, suggests that the imperial authority often set limits to such encounters, thereby appropriating indigenous voices to colonial rule.⁶²

The mid-1780s, however, marked a watershed in the history of British Indian empire. Notwithstanding the disagreement among historians regarding the nature and pace of the British expansion in India, it is well-established that the 1780s witnessed both an ideological change regarding the role of the EIC, and that of India's role within the British empire. As Huw Bowen has suggested, this period saw the culmination of the Company's development as the imperial agent of the British Crown, and the Company's own internal administration came to be modified

60 Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, 1995).

61 Sudipta Sen, *Distant Sovereignty. National Imperialism and the Origins of British India* (New York, 2002).

62 Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India. The British in Bengal* (Cambridge, 2007).

in order to deal with their Indian empire.⁶³ Recent works by historians like C. A. Bayly and P. J. Marshall have shown that such a transformation resounded in the wider spectrum of imperial crisis in the wake of the American Revolution. The British loss of America coincided with an increasing belligerence in India that gave rise to an imperial ethos which was conservative and based on a sense of cultural superiority.⁶⁴ Scholars have thus begun to argue in favour a closer correspondence between the British experience in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds, particularly in terms of the ideas of sovereignty and subordination, as well as juridical and legal regimes.⁶⁵

Crucial to this new imperial ethos was again the idea of the British as distancing themselves from the larger realities of Indian society and politics. Jon E. Wilson takes Sudipta Sen's approach a step further and argues that the colonial state as it evolved in eastern India since the mid-1780s stood in stark difference from not only the pre-colonial political life, but also from that of the British state itself. Drawing upon George Simmel and Martin Heidegger, he concludes that the British Indian empire came to be based upon abstract principles which were a complete disconnect from the actual needs and aspirations of its subjects, thus rendering them as 'strangers'. Although a visual analysis does not feature in his agenda, Wilson's argument on Britons' disjuncture from India is best illustrated by his use of the statement of the celebrated author of *Siyar-al-Mutakherin*, Ghulam Hussain Khan Tabatabai on Indians being treated by the British as 'pictures on a wall' — symbolic of the British government's ignorance of the lived experience of everyday life in India. The outcome, thus, was one of an inherent imperial anxiety of not knowing India sufficiently enough, thereby precluding the prospects of its effective rule.⁶⁶ Such an approach was at the centre of the idea of 'Indian difference' that, as David Washbrook points out, became more prominent

⁶³ Huw Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge, 2006), Introduction.

⁶⁴ Christopher Alan Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London, 1989), pp. 89-99, and 133-163; and P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires. Britain, India, and America c. 1750-1783* (New York, 2005).

⁶⁵ Jerry Bannister, 'The oriental Atlantic', pp. 151-176; Robert Travers, 'Constitutions, contact zones, and imperial ricochets', pp. 98-129; and Philip J. Stern, 'Company, state, and empire', pp. 130-150, in H. V. Bowen, Elizabeth Mancke, and John G. Reid (eds), *Britain's Oceanic Empire. Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds, c.1550-1850* (Cambridge, 2012).

⁶⁶ Jon E Wilson, *The Domination of Strangers. Modern Governance in Eastern India, 1780-1835* (Cambridge, 2008). For the discussion of Ghulam Hussain Khan Tabatabai's visual reference, see pp. 5 and 13. Ghulam Hussain Khan Tabatabai was drawing upon his own dissatisfaction with the British regarding the redressal of his grievances, see Robert Travers, 'Indian Petitioning and Colonial State-Formation in Eighteenth-Century Bengal' *Modern Asian Studies*, 53.1 (2019), p. 114.

in the late nineteenth century. Like Metcalfe, Washbrook suggests that India came to be viewed as fundamentally different, either as representing Britain's own feudal past or as a society fallen into utter disarray and plagued by misgovernment. The British endeavours to remodel India into 'Civilis Britannica' led to the formation of a timeless entity which was devoid of its former dynamism.⁶⁷ The colonial interference with what Ronald Inden has referred to as the 'Cultural-Symbolic Constitution' of India resulted in the freezing of existing hierarchies which had originally been flexible and fluid.⁶⁸

The formulation of Indian difference had its implication in imperial politics in Britain as well. To Nicholas Dirks, the history of British imperialism in India is one of scandals. Studying the Indian administration and later the impeachment of Warren Hastings, Dirks points out that the scandals helped mark their Indian empire 'safe' for Britons. The insistence on India's difference from Britain helped to reconstruct the egregious excesses in the early days of the empire into tales of national triumph to validate the British political sovereignty in India, and became central to the idea of indigenous socio-cultural norms and practices including *sati* and female infanticide as 'scandalous', thus in need of reform through Britain's civilizing mission.⁶⁹

Jon Wilson's use of Ghulam Hussain's visual metaphor is ultimately indicative of the potential of the visual in thinking about the politics of British Indian empire. As the discussion on the historiography on visual arts below would make it clear, images epitomized the distance and difference between the British and Indians. Here, I suggest that visual imagery not only displayed India's difference, but was also instrumental in creating and giving meaning to it. Historical focus on the mid-1780s as a decisive point in British Indian administration becomes even more significant in the light of the fact that this period saw a phenomenal increase in the number of British artists working in India, to some extent because of the Governor-General Warren Hastings' generous patronage. Visual arts, as this thesis shows, became a political commentary on the nature of British presence in India. Imagery sheds valuable light on the intricacies of the British government as political insights from Britain interacted with state and society in India. The study

⁶⁷ David Washbrook, India, 1818-1860: The Two Faces of Colonialism' in Andrew Porter (ed.) *Oxford History of the British Empire*, Volume III: The Nineteenth Century (Oxford, 1999), pp. 395-421.

⁶⁸ Ronald Inden as quoted in Bernard S. Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India' in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 173.

⁶⁹ Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

of images is vital to the knowledge of how imperial relations that evolved through the British-Indian encounter as addressed by historians like Thomas Metcalf, Sudipta Sen, Robert Travers, Huw Bowen, and Jon Wilson, came to be seen, understood, and imagined. Images also responded to the imperial crisis as pointed out by Bayly and Marshall, and symbolized the transformed ethos of the British empire. Such an analysis facilitates an understanding of the sources of the Company state's sovereignty as intertwined with political institutions in eighteenth-century India, which adds to the complexities of the politics of representation and, in turn, problematizes the legitimacy of Britain's imperial power. My enquiries into the political legitimacy of the early British Indian empire through the vantage-point of visual imagery, thus establishes the importance of visuality in the shaping of the expectations of Britons as part of their rule in India, and Indians' understanding of, and their own existence under British governance.

In the recent years, South Asian history has begun to take a 'visual turn', whereby the importance of visual evidence is gradually being recognized in the pursuit of historical enquiries. Such studies, however, are largely focused on the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁷⁰ Although scholarly interest in British imperial art can be dated right back to the mid-nineteenth century,⁷¹ the relationship between art and empire in British India during the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries has not received adequate attention. Such a lacuna can be traced back to the traditionalist historical orthodoxy of eighteenth century in India being an age of decline. Until very recently, the period from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century was considered to be what art historian Natasha Eaton has referred to as an 'art historical blind spot' in India between the apogee of the Mughal empire and the rise of modern Indian art and photography, and a 'veritable vacuum' in Britain between polite art in the eighteenth century and the drive towards collections for world's fairs, museums and art schools later.⁷² Nonetheless, the revisionist understanding of the eighteenth century in Indian history as discussed above has now percolated into the reinterpretation of arts in the aftermath of emperor Aurangzeb's death in 1707. As Barbara Schmitz has suggested, court artists from Delhi who kept alive and nurtured Mughal artistic traditions, and introduced them to regional kingdoms where they migrated because of war and conflicts in northern India. Visual arts

⁷⁰ Sandria B. Freitag, *The Visual Turn. South Asia Across the Disciplines* (London, 2017); and Anna Maria Motrescu-Mayes and Marcus Banks (eds), *Visual Histories of South Asia* (Delhi, 2017).

⁷¹ Jeffrey Auerbach, 'Art and Empire' in Robert W. Winks (ed.) *The Oxford History of The British Empire: Volume V: Historiography* (Oxford, 1998), p. 571.

⁷² Natasha Eaton, *Mimesis Across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765-1860* (Durham, NC, 2013), p. 6.

became an important mode of sustaining the legacies of the Mughal empire even as its political power had begun to diminish.⁷³ This thesis is thus both a reconsideration of the eighteenth century through art and that of the prospects of arts for the study of politics of the British rise to power in eighteenth-century India.

When thinking about visual arts in terms of colonial encounter, the initial approach, however, was one of documentation. The task was ably shouldered by Mrs. Mildred Archer. Archer served at the India Office Library as the Curator of Prints and Drawings and played an important role in bringing the artistic treasure trove to light. Through her research on the works of both British and Indian artists, Archer suggested that they played an important role in recording the social and cultural environment of India in which the British lived.⁷⁴ Archer's undertaking of visual arts, however, was very much influenced by her former position within the British Raj, her husband W.G. Archer being a member of the Indian Civil Service.⁷⁵ Therefore, I suggest that it is the archiving of visual arts that inspires a probe into their role in the politics of British Indian empire in the first instance.

Whilst Mildred Archer's approach has largely influenced the study of art in India during the early years of British rule,⁷⁶ there are two important exceptions to her approach. Firstly, Pratapaditya Pal and Vidya Dahejia's extensive volume on the British artists in India, which placed the visual in the forefront of British imperialism in India.⁷⁷ The second is the catalogue for the exhibition on the British Raj in India held at the National Portrait Gallery, London, during 1990-1991, edited by C.A. Bayly. Consisting of essays by specialist historians and art historians, this monumental publication presents artworks as both recording and constituting historical realities in colonial

⁷³ Barbara Schmitz (ed.), *After the Great Mughals. Painting in Delhi and the Regional Courts in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Mumbai, 2002).

⁷⁴ Archer, *India and British Portraiture; and Company Drawings*.

⁷⁵ This attitude comes through the most in Mildred Archer, *Patna Painting* (London, 1947). For a critique, see Geoff Quilley, Tim Barringer and Douglas Fordham (eds), *Art and the British Empire* (Manchester, 2007), p. 9.

⁷⁶ Jagmohan Mahajan, *Picturesque India: Sketches and Travels of Thomas and William Daniell* (Delhi, 1983); Pauline Rohatgi and Pheroza Godrej (eds), *Under the Indian Sun. British Landscape Artists* (Bombay, 1995); and more recently, John McAleer, *Picturing India: People, Places and the World of the East India Company* (London, 2017).

⁷⁷ Pratapaditya Pal and Vidya Dahejia, *From Merchants to Emperors: British Artists in India, 1757-1930* (Ithaca, 1986).

India. It has thus become a point of reference not only for exhibition catalogues, but also for pictorial accounts of the British Indian empire.⁷⁸

In the meantime, imperial nostalgia associated with visual arts has given way to their more critical appraisal as an important constituent of colonialism. At the heart of this reassessment was postcolonial engagement with the idea of culture of differentiation, something which, as already discussed above, was vital to the ideologies of British Indian empire. Thus, as Edward Said has stipulated, cultural representations were central to subjugation of the world by the West, which had continued to resurface even after the process of decolonization had set in.⁷⁹ Saidian analysis, however, is viewed as the simplification of the complex realities of imperialism into the binaries of the colonizer and the colonized, thereby calling for an acknowledgement of their close proximity within the colonial context and questioning the undifferentiated omnipotence of the West.⁸⁰ Notwithstanding the introduction of culture to the domain of imperial history through postcolonial studies, which itself is not straightforward, postcolonialism has also been criticized for losing sight of nuanced inequalities and discriminations in colonial societies.⁸¹ The agency of the indigene in resisting colonial domination thus should not only be seen in terms of them forging alternatives to the British power,⁸² but also as a testimonial to their own transformation through colonial experience and their unique capacities to respond based on the context. The role of culture, in this regard, needs to be viewed as defining and also as giving expression to material differences in the colonies, making colonialism, in the words of Nicholas Dirks, 'a cultural project of control'.⁸³

⁷⁸ C. A. Bayly (ed.), *The Raj, The: India and the British, 1600-1947* (National Portrait Gallery Publications, London, 1990). See also, Holly Schaffer, *Adapting the Eye. An Archive of the British in India, 1770-1830* (New Haven, 2012); and Alison Smith, *Artists and Empire: Facing Britain's Imperial Past* (London, 2018).

⁷⁹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, 1993).

⁸⁰ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York, 1994); and Dane Kennedy, 'Imperial history and post-colonial theory' *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 24.3 (1996), pp. 345-363

⁸¹ Benita Parry, 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse', *Oxford Literary Review*, 9.1/2 (1987), pp. 27-58; and Bart-Moore Gilbert, 'Postcolonial Cultural Studies and Imperial Historiography: Problems of Interdisciplinarity', *Interventions*, 1.3 (1999), pp. 397-411.

⁸² Benita Parry, 'The Postcolonial: Conceptual Category or Chimera?' *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 27 (1997), pp. 3-21; and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies. Deconstructing Historiography' in Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 9-15.

⁸³ Nicholas B. Dirks, 'Introduction' in *Colonialism and Culture* (Michigan, 1992), p. 3. See also, Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather : Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London, 1995); and Stuart Hall (ed.), *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London, 1997).

The first postcolonial account of British art and empire came from the literary theorist Beth Fowkes Tobin. In her study of eighteenth-century paintings in the British empire, Tobin uses the term ‘colonial subjects’ to designate not only the flora, fauna or the indigenous people that was under British control, but also the British themselves in a colonial context. Fowkes Tobin’s geographical horizon is broad, ranging from North America and the Caribbean to India. Inspired by an array of theoretical approaches, including those from cultural anthropology, post-colonialism, and also subaltern and cultural studies, she presents these paintings as embodying appropriation and dominance of, as well as accommodation and resistance to, colonial rule. As a result, considerable agency is vested in indigenous people in the understanding of colonialism.⁸⁴ Whilst Tobin’s idea of colonial subjects is useful here, her treatment of India is limited to those of family portraiture depicting colonial officials, and botanical illustrations. Furthermore, Tobin does not define her criteria for the selection of images or explain how representative her sample was of the vast corpus of colonial visual arts. As my analysis of political legitimacy through imagery suggests, the processes of dominance, accommodation, and resistance were full of complexities, which in turn, were amplified by images themselves.⁸⁵

A brief rupture in the interaction of art and post-coloniality, however, came with the work of Hermione de Almeida and George H. Gilpin. According to de Almeida and Gilpin, the Picturesque views of India as portrayed by British professional artists who travelled to the subcontinent during the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries contributed to Romanticism. They suggest that Indian life and environment opened up possibilities for new artistic categories that came to influence the art and aesthetics in Great Britain. This romantic prospect of India, however, received a setback with the strengthening of British imperial authority over the course of the nineteenth century.⁸⁶ In their work, de Almeida and Gilpin have provided a teleological narrative that culminates in the rise of a confident British imperial power in India. As a result, they have tended to ignore both the complicated character of power relations in British imperialism and the indigenous responses to it.

⁸⁴ Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power. Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth Century British Painting* (Durham, 1999).

⁸⁵ Michael S. Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire, and National Culture India, 1770–1880* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 11.

⁸⁶ de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance. British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (Aldershot, 2005).

This thesis more generally identifies with an ‘imperial turn’⁸⁷ in the study of British art, which is almost contemporaneous with the rise of new imperial history. Art historians Geoff Quilley, Tim Barringer and Douglas Fordham have argued that empire was not at the periphery, but at the centre, of British culture. According to them, art made the British empire visible. This visualization of imperial power, however, was fraught with contradictions, and was contingent on the positionalities of artists and patrons within the British world.⁸⁸ Such an approach has also facilitated the post-colonial understanding of art in an imperial context. Art historian Julie Codell has brought the colonizer and the colonized together in the same frame through the idea of ‘transculturation’ – that is the dialectic process of cultural interactions – as a viable concept to study colonial encounters in the British empire in terms of art and representation. According to Codell, though primarily meant for a British audience, the paintings could be seen by a wide array of people in the colonies, and thus imperialism reshaped, and resulted in the reinterpretation of British art.⁸⁹

John E. Crowley follows up this connection between images and British imperialism, and suggests that the British interest in landscape art dated back to the aftermath of the Seven Years’ War— at a time when territorial gains generated a wider interest in empire and hence resulted in the need to appropriate new imperial spaces within the nation’s political imagination. Crowley further argues that landscape art functioned as a form of cultural power that helped to link the colonial topographies visually with metropolitan Britain in a way that made the social and cultural constructions of imperialism appear just, natural, and superior to that of the colonized. Crowley, however, deals only with depictions of Indian landscapes by British artists. His work does not sufficiently engage with the larger political and cultural debates of the age, which to a great extent helped shape the artistic representations of the British empire.⁹⁰

Britain’s imperial pursuits were paralleled by the emergence of an influential aesthetic movement in the latter half of the eighteenth century known as the ‘Picturesque’. It was characterized by a

87 For more on the ‘Imperial Turn’ in art history, see Natasha Eaton, ‘“Enchanted Traps?” The Historiography of Art and Colonialism in Eighteenth-century India’, *Literature Compass*, 9.1 (2012), pp. 15–33.

88 Geoff Quilley, Tim Barringer and Douglas Fordham (eds), *Art and the British Empire* (Manchester, 2007).

89 Julie F. Codell (ed.), *Transculturation in British Art, 1770-1930* (Farnham, Surrey, 2011). See also Julie F. Codell and Dianne Sachko Macleod, ‘Orientalism Transposed: the ‘Easternization’ of Britain and interventions to colonial discourse’ in Julie F. Codell and Diane Sachko Macleod (eds), *Orientalism Transposed: The Impact of the Colonies on British Culture* (Aldershot, 1998).

90 John E. Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes. Britain’s Global Visual Culture, 1745-1820* (New Haven, 2011).

shift away from the formalism of classical art in order to appreciate the irregularity and disorder in landscape and nature that formed the basis of Romanticism.⁹¹ In recent years, scholarship on art and aesthetics in early British India has viewed the idea of the Picturesque as the motivational force in naturalizing, and thereby comprehending, the ‘exotic’.⁹² Working primarily on British paintings and photographs based on India, art historian Romita Ray argues that the people, biota, nature and landscape when viewed through the lens of the Picturesque helped strengthen notions of cultural differentiation, and of Englishness as the ideology of colonial rule. On the other hand, the English aesthetic itself tended to be altered by colonial experiences as ‘when the “settler” envisioned him/ herself as unmistakably British... the Briton became colonial’. According to Ray, the Picturesque generated, and fed into wider imaginings of the British empire to make India palpable to a global audience.⁹³ The strength of Romita Ray’s approach is her recognition of the equivocality of the Picturesque as a concept of aestheticizing India. In her work, it is both a personal and a public engagement, a matter of admiration and disapproval, and of pleasure as well as logistics.⁹⁴ Whilst Ray’s interest lies in the British concerns regarding the upholding of their national identity in India, my thesis emphasizes the centrality of political legitimacy to the questions of colonial difference and identity formation, and thus the viability of imperial power.

Art historian Natasha Eaton takes the idea of interaction between the colonizer and the colonized further in her study of art market and aesthetics in the early days of British rule as she highlights the deeply entangled nature of the Mughal and the British visual traditions, each informing and also depending on the other. Taking into account artworks produced both for and by the British and Indians, she argues that they gave rise to a ‘visual economy’ that provides insight into the ‘intimacy and hostility of British-Indian visual encounters and their shifting contours’.⁹⁵ Her understanding of visual arts in India is based on the idea of ‘mimesis’. Inspired by scholars like Michael Taussig, Homi Bhabha and René Girard, she views mimesis not merely as artistic imitation, but as an important tool to gauge the tensions within colonialism.⁹⁶ She views art objects

91 Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Oxford, 1977) p. 122

92 Romita Ray, ‘The Memsahib’s Brush: Anglo Indian Women and the Art of the Picturesque’ in Julie F. Codell and Diane Sachko Macleod (eds) *Orientalism Transposed: The Impact of the colonies on British Culture* (Aldershot, 1998), p. 107.

93 Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree: Relocating the Picturesque in British India* (New Haven, 2013), pp. 11-17.

94 *Ibid.*, p. 7, 8, 10 and 16.

95 Eaton, *Mimesis Across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765-1860* (Durham, 2013), pp. 4 and 14.

96 *Ibid.*, pp. 3 and 9-12.

both as a part of broad Anglo-Mughal visual networks, and in their singularities where they become invested with meanings which are beyond the individuals' capacities to control. Not only does the idea of mimesis problematize the hegemony of British art, but according to Eaton, it also empowers the subaltern. Accordingly, Indian artists who were viewed as copyists by their colonial masters and thus in her words, 'mimic men' subverted British aesthetics and culture.⁹⁷ Eaton succeeds in placing her account of visual encounters within the larger context of colonialism in India, but her account often tends to ignore the fundamental inequalities of power between the British and Indians which, as this thesis shows, is vital to the understanding of the relationship between visual arts and imperial politics. Nevertheless, her approach is influential in bringing to the fore the interactive processes of creation and critique of British rule through art and artistic display. Although I draw upon Eaton's emphasis on the importance of Indian artists, here I show how their artworks themselves were conditioned and shaped by imperial hierarchization. Such an approach would bear fruit as we think about the question of political legitimacy through the juxtaposition of British and Indian art.

Following Michael Walzer, it can be thus stated that the imperial state in itself was abstract, and it needed to be configured into a perceptible entity through symbolism so that it could be known, understood, and thus revered.⁹⁸ Art made imperial power come alive. It thereby expressed the mystique of the British authority and illustrated its control over Indian life and nature.⁹⁹ The histories of imperial politics as discussed above need, then, to be integrated into the studies of iconographies of imperial power and its artistic representations, an issue that is central to this thesis. Therefore, drawing upon Sumathi Ramaswamy and Martin Jay, I argue that the history of British imperialism in India is also a history of visibility whereby images themselves are documents of the complexities of colonial experience.¹⁰⁰ Recent research has broadened the scope of enquiry in this direction by bringing Britain and India closer within the burgeoning field of new imperial history, and by introducing new methods that facilitate studies beyond the military and administrative changes in the colonies as a result of British imperialism. Visual arts in the empire

97 *Ibid.*, p. 148. This idea had been anticipated by Beth Fowkes Tobin. See Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, p.17-18.

98 Michael Walzer, 'On the Role of Symbolism in Political Thought', *Political Science Quarterly*, 82.2 (1967), p. 194.

99 John Mackenzie, 'Art and the Empire' in P. J. Marshall (ed.) *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 296.

100 Martin Jay and Sumathi Ramaswamy, *Empires of Vision. A Reader* (London, 2014), pp. 11-12.

promise to be one such vista that can provide a common frame of reference with which to bring both the British and Indians together in the history of British Indian empire. Art helped to mediate strategies of colonial domination, appropriation, and resistance as Tobin has shown, but central to these strategies was political legitimacy that lay at the core of imperial politics. Although scholars have acknowledged the importance of images in generating and undermining the legitimacy of British imperial authority, political legitimacy has not been the focus of their investigations. As a result, the idea of political legitimacy through imagery and the process of its creation as such remain unexplored. This thesis thus puts the problem of political legitimacy as central to the understanding of visual arts in India.

Whilst to date scholars focusing on the political legitimacy of the British Indian empire have largely focused on the Raj after 1857, recent research by Philip Stern and James Vaughn has revised the idea of transition from trade to empire as suggested by Marshall and Bayly, and thus facilitate a considerable rethinking of this approach.¹⁰¹ Through the study of visual images, this thesis contributes to the reconsideration of the British empire in eighteenth-century India. Whilst accepting the revisionist understanding of Mughal decline, I bring out the intricacies of the politics of representation as it manifested in the early British Indian empire. Although indigenous politics in eighteenth-century India provided a ground for the EIC's colonial pursuits, the roots of the latter can be traced within the institutional basis of the Company, the ambitions of individual men on the spot, and in the motivations of the British state at large. In order to write an imperial history, I thus consider how art functioned at the interstice of the two different but closely interconnected worlds of India and Britain in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, and helped to create the visual apparatus upon which the British authority in India was to rest. Through its focus on visual imagery, this thesis achieves a greater understanding of the wider reconfigurations of political power in the British Indian empire.

Images of Empire

The chief sources for this thesis are visual arts. I work with various genres of paintings, namely portraits, history paintings, conversation pieces, landscapes, depictions of natural history subjects,

¹⁰¹ Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas* (New York, 2010), pp. 39-84.

that is flora and fauna, and images commissioned by the EIC officials from Indian artists commonly known as the Company style and more recently as Indian export art, on different media including oils, watercolour and gouache on paper. For the sake of convenience, throughout this thesis, Company paintings or Indian export art would be referred to as Indian art for the British. The eighteenth century also witnessed developments in the production of prints. Many of the paintings that I analyze in my thesis were reproduced as prints and thus, having potentially a broader audience.¹⁰² In this context, I will use reproductions of paintings as prints only in cases where they are not accessible in their original form. Apart from this, I also use books of illustrations of landscape views, and subjects like people, flora and fauna of India produced in aquatint. The underlying common feature of the images in my thesis is: they were directly or indirectly related to the EIC. I look at the ‘official’ image of empire, thereby excluding satirical prints, or popular prints other than the reproductions of paintings as mentioned above. In other words, images used here include:

1. Images commissioned by the EIC itself and by the officials of the Company in order to commemorate their achievements in India in course of their official career, from British artists who in many cases had not travelled to India in person.
2. Images commissioned by the officials of the EIC from professional British artists who travelled to India in the latter half of the eighteenth century with the official permission of the EIC.
3. As already mentioned above, civil officials and military officers of the Company, both civil and military, were avid painters. Mildred Archer refers to these men as ‘amateur artists’. Works by these officials were often published and dedicated to the EIC or an important Company official in question.
4. Finally, images by Indian artists as commissioned by, and catering to the officials of the EIC. In my thesis, I have taken into consideration this art from some of its core areas like Calcutta, Murshidabad, Patna, Awadh, Delhi, and Tanjore.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Timothy Clayton, *The English Print, 1688-1802* (London, 1997), p. 129.

¹⁰³ Archer, *Company Drawings*.

If, as Miles Ogborn has argued, textual documentation was central to the operation of the EIC, I suggest that visual record was no less important.¹⁰⁴ For British artists, the chief task was that of understanding India and its aesthetic practices alongside registering and also validating the political system promulgated by the EIC, which was ultimately connected to the British Crown. Indian artists were confronted with the task of interpreting the British political ascendancy in terms of both the cultural modes at their disposal and the ones introduced by their colonial masters. The colonial archive of images is extensive, and the distribution and relocation of artworks through acquisition, circulation, auction, and also donation reflects, as Ann Laura Stoler has stipulated, the idiosyncrasies and legacies of imperial power and governance.¹⁰⁵

I have consulted images both on site and online. The chief repositories of images for this thesis are the British Library, National Portrait Gallery in London, National Army Museum, Tate Britain, King George III's personal coloured views collection, Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, British Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, Yale Center for British Art, Victoria Memorial Hall and Museum, and Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. Apart from the websites of the above-mentioned museums and art galleries, three important websites that I use are: www.artuk.org, www.bridgemanimages.com and www.archive.org. Artworks by both British and Indian artists were seen by audiences ranging from Britons in Britain in their homes and at art exhibitions, and in India by Indian royalty, elites, and even ordinary people, for instance servants. Visual language has recently been recognized as being on a par with verbal communication, and it should be added that images can appeal more widely than writing and, as a result, can be imbued with various aspirations and worldviews.¹⁰⁶ Due to the vastness of colonial archive, it has been necessary to implement a degree of selectivity. I have chosen images for this thesis on the basis of two factors: firstly, the subject-matter of the images; and, secondly, the particularities of their artistic production and display that make them representative of the ideological spectra of British imperialism in India. Visual culture in the

¹⁰⁴ Miles Ogborn, *Indian Ink : Script and Print in the Making of the English East India Company* (Chicago, 2007).

¹⁰⁵ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, 2008).

¹⁰⁶ David Novitz, *Pictures and their use in communication: A Philosophical Essay* (The Hague, 1977), p. 71-80.

British Indian empire, in this regard, can be understood as a social experience whereby political realities were understood through their selection, interpretation and representation.¹⁰⁷

This thesis understands images as cultural imaginaries of the British Indian empire that bring to the fore colonial discourses of power.¹⁰⁸ Ranging between the mid-1750s and 1820, they are a product of both the Enlightenment and early Romanticism, situated at the convergence of the celebration of western rationality, the principles of improvement, and the anxieties of imperial power.¹⁰⁹ The eighteenth century has more often been viewed as an age of cultural fluidity and tolerance. Whilst Prasannan Parthasarathi has pointed towards a remarkable similitude between Europe and Asia in terms of economic development, scholars have also suggested that this period was marked by an appreciation of difference and concern regarding imperial domination and was a far cry from the notions of inherent western superiority in the late nineteenth century.¹¹⁰ Although my thesis does not deny the validity of this idea, what I suggest here is that it is important to nuance our understanding of the eighteenth century. As it has already been mentioned above, a teleological narrative of the British empire in India misses out on the complexities of colonial experience. Such an approach draws inspiration from Michael Dodson's study of Orientalism in India where he argues that separating an earlier times of supposed respect for Indian culture and civilization from the later era of its disparagement prevents the consideration of the ambitions and exigencies of British imperialism.¹¹¹ As discussed above, Robert Travers has argued that it is necessary to consider how eighteenth-century colonial encounters came to be regulated by the British government in India. The vilification of nabobery as addressed by Tillman W. Nechtman has to be located within such a tendency, in order to valorize British national identity.¹¹² This is, however, not to suggest that British Indian empire was uniform in character; British officials came

¹⁰⁷ Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to the Visual Culture* (London, 1999), pp. 3, 5 and 36-37.

¹⁰⁸ Pramod K Nayar, *Colonial Voices: The Discourses of Empire* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 5.

¹⁰⁹ P. J. Marshall, 'Taming the Exotic: the British and India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' in G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (eds), *Exoticism in the Enlightenment* (Manchester, 1990), pp. 46-65. See also, Nigel Leask, *British romantic writers and the East: anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge, 2004).

¹¹⁰ Shankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton, 2003); Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, 2005), pp. 25-100; and Prasannan Parthasarathi, *Why Europe Grew Rich and Asia Did Not: Global Economic Divergence, 1600–1850* (Cambridge, 2011).

¹¹¹ Dodson, *Orientalism*, p. 4.

¹¹² Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York, 2010).

from diverse backgrounds with varied aims and aspirations.¹¹³ As I show here, visual arts not only highlighted the ambiguities of imperial governance, but could also potentially settled and counterpoised them.

When thinking about artistic intentions and viewership as a part of their contemporary socio-cultural setting, it should be remembered that visual representations were not simply a deprecation of India.¹¹⁴ As a result, there emerges an idea of disinterestedness on the part of the colonizer, which although assuming a virtuous, innocent stance, potentially re-made India into a curiosity to be known and exploited, that could largely avoid any sense of emotional attachment or guilt per se.¹¹⁵ However, whilst artistic categories in Britain, such as the Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque, were centred on the relationship between artworks and the mental and psychological responses that they generated, such connections were complicated by what Homi Bhabha calls the 'colonial uncanny' in early British India.¹¹⁶

In thinking about images as historical evidence, my methodology combines an art historical approach with that of conceptual history, an approach that I have previously developed in my exploration of the royal image of King George III through his portrait and caricature.¹¹⁷ In doing so, I have transformed Erwin Panofsky's three-stage analysis in terms of pre-iconography, iconography and iconology of the image into forms, contents and functions.¹¹⁸ The first stage, that is, forms is concerned with how the image generally appears. At this level, in the case of portraits and history paintings, I have closely looked at the sitters' dresses, together with the accompanying

¹¹³ See, for example, Martha McLaren, *British India and British Scotland, 1780-1830: Career Building, Empire Building, & a Scottish School of Thought on Indian Governance* (Akron, OH, 2001); and Andrew Mackillop, 'A Union for Empire? Scotland, the English East India Company and the British Union' *Scottish Historical Review*, 87. 2 (2008), pp. 116-134. See also, Vicky Coltman, 'Sojourning Scots and the Portrait Miniature in Colonial India, 1770s-1780s' *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, 40.3 (2017), pp. 421-441.

¹¹⁴ Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of intention: on the historical explanation of pictures* (New Haven, 1985). See also, John Mackenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 43-70; and Cf. Linda Nochlin (ed.), *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York, 1989).

¹¹⁵ Ananda Coomaraswamy, 'The Significance of Oriental Art' in *The Art Bulletin*, 2.1 (1919), p.17-22. See also, Norman Bryson, 'Gaze in the Expanded Field' in Hal Foster (ed.), *Vision and Visuality* (Seattle, 1988), pp. 87-114; and Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 1992), pp. 7 and 33-34.

¹¹⁶ Walter John Hipple, Jr., *The Beautiful The Sublime And The Picturesque In Eighteenth Century British Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale, 1957); and Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 77-80.

¹¹⁷ Apurba Chatterjee, *Imaging Royalty: A Study of the Representation of George III of Great Britain in his Portraits and Caricatures* (Master's Thesis, Uppsala University, 2015).

¹¹⁸ Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in iconology: Humanistic themes in the art of the Renaissance* (New York, 1939) pp. 1-15. See also, Apurba Chatterjee, *Imaging Royalty*, p. 12.

accoutrements and the layout of the surroundings. The second stage, analysis of the contents goes deeper and further than the first step in treating the image. Here, I address and contextualize the symbolism in the images to understand the meanings that they generate. The final stage is that of functions, whereby the meanings that emanated from investigation of the contents of the images, are placed within the politics of British imperialism in India.¹¹⁹

Before turning to the question of political legitimacy through images, a reflection on British Indian government by Sir James Mackintosh is in order here,

[T]he English power really seems to me to be a blessing to the inhabitants of India. Yet the English government, without a community of interest or of feelings with the governed, is undoubtedly very bad, if it be compared with the second rate governments of Europe. But, compared with an Indian government, it is angelic; and I conscientiously affirm that the most impartial philanthropist ought to desire its preservation.¹²⁰

Mackintosh's conflicted, yet confident utterance redirects to the question of imperial self-image in India, which, as this thesis shows, was central to the British regime's creation of legitimacy. In his analysis of the mid-nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial state, Sudipta Kaviraj argues that British imperial power in India was surrounded by three very different publics so that, '[i]n its dialogue with British public opinion it adopted a tone of reasonableness; with the indigenous middle class it carried on a dialogue through education and legislation; while vis-à-vis the sullenly distant popular masses it adopted primarily a monologue of force.'¹²¹ Thus, Kaviraj echoes Ranajit Guha's classic formulation of British rule being a 'dominance without hegemony' — as its reliance on coercion ultimately led to a failure to integrate the subaltern. Due to the emphasis on coercion, the British claims like social reform, liberal education, and protection for achieving the consent of their Indian subjects ultimately proved to be a pretence. This is because these claims were inscribed in the imperial power's sense of superiority, predicated by history and culture.¹²² As the following chapters suggest, this sense of superiority informed colonial governance in India and its approach

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Sir James Mackintosh, *Memoirs of the life of Sir James Mackintosh*, Vol. 1 (London, 1836), p. 226.

¹²¹ Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution of India*, p. 43.

¹²² Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony. History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge, MA, 1997).

to Indian life and surroundings, and has had a continued effect on the world even in the present times.¹²³

Such an issue calls for a consideration of how far the British in India were invested in integrating the voice of the ruled in their governance. The recent scholarly interest in petitions in colonial India speaks to this issue. Under British rule, the importance of petitioning as a ‘mediated form of political conduct’ was widely recognized.¹²⁴ The culture of petitioning had drawn widely upon precolonial precedents as Rosalind O’Hanlon has argued,¹²⁵ but it had largely come to be adapted to the preferences of the colonial government. According to Bhavani Raman, petitioning was an affirmation of the idea of the British as a legitimate sovereign in India through the creation of a consenting subject. As a result, the forms of civil address written by the petitioners had to display ‘respectable behaviour’ in conformity with the British Indian government’s corporate-bureaucratic order.¹²⁶ More importantly, however, the colonial state failed to redress the grievances of the subjects, not only due to the large number of petitions that were received, but also because of its layered sense of equity, thus suggestive of a breach between the realities and expectations of British rule.¹²⁷ Whilst colonial government confronted its anxieties regarding petitions by regulating and also complicating Indians’ accessibility to justice, petitioning helped shape the modern Indian subject, both elite and subaltern, and their understanding of the conduct of their

¹²³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. . Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (New Edition, Princeton, 2008), pp. 27-46; and James Tully, *Public Philosophy in a New Key. Vol. II Imperialism and Civic Freedom* (Cambridge, 2008).

¹²⁴ Rohit De and Robert Travers, ‘Petitioning and Political Cultures in South Asia: Introduction’ *Modern Asian Studies* 53.1 (2019), p. 10.

¹²⁵ Rosalind O’ Hanlon, ‘In the Presence of Witnesses: Petitioning and judicial ‘publics’ in western India, circa 1600–1820’ *Modern Asian Studies* 53.1 (2019), pp. 52-61. On precolonial petitions, see Abhishek Kaickar, ‘Petitions and Local Politics in the Late Mughal Empire: The view from Kol, 1741’ *Modern Asian Studies* 53.1 (2019), pp. 21-51.

¹²⁶ Bhavani Raman, ‘Civil Address and the Colonial Petition’ *Modern Asian Studies* 53.1 (2019), pp. 133, 138, and 141.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 147-149; and Julia Stephens, ‘A Bureaucracy of Rejection: Petitioning and the impoverished paternalism of the British-Indian Raj’ *Modern Asian Studies* 53.1 (2019), pp. 177-202. Cf. Mithi Mukherjee, *India in the Shadows of Empire: A Legal and Political History 1774–1950* (New Delhi, 2009).

rulers.¹²⁸ As a study of political legitimacy in early British India through imagery, my thesis intervenes in this discussion by suggesting that images give insight into how the visual representations of interactions between British and Indians came to define their roles and positionalities within British governance.

In this regard, following David Beetham, my understanding of political legitimacy is based on duality of the ideas of legitimation and that of a legitimate relationship where the subjects consent to the ruler. Whilst legitimation refers to the principles that rationalize state power, legitimate relationship pertains to the consent of the subject populations to the state.¹²⁹ Images studied in this thesis not only represent the celebratory expressions of imperial legitimation like conquest, power, domination, differentiation, ownership, and knowledge that reaffirmed the racial and civilizational hierarchies at the heart of British rule in India, but also their deficiencies.¹³⁰ Although coercion overruled consent, images, as will be seen, could also become instruments to represent a compliance to British governance which it hardly enjoyed in reality. Nor were representations of consent always convincing, since they necessitated either a flattening out of Indians' subjectivities, or subverted imperial ideology if they did not do so. Images, thus, highlight the complexities of political legitimacy of British imperialism.

Turning to the relationship between images and political legitimacy, I draw upon Mikael Alm's understanding of relationship between 'imagery of rule and legitimacy of rule'. Alm's study addresses crisis of legitimacy and regicide in Gustavian Sweden in the late eighteenth century.¹³¹ Although based on and previously applied within a national context, I argue that this model is applicable to the British Indian empire since empires are, as noted above, ultimately national expansions. Following Terrence Ball, Alm acknowledges the potency of concepts in political culture to give expression to rival claims and aspirations. Concepts are thus, susceptible to their appropriation by various political actors.¹³² Conceptual change, in such a context, becomes the key

¹²⁸ Robert Travers, 'Indian Petitioning and Colonial State-Formation in Eighteenth-Century Bengal' *Modern Asian Studies*, 53.1 (2019), pp. 106-111 and 117-121; and Aparna Balachandran, 'Petitions, the City, and the Early Colonial State in South India' *Modern Asian Studies* 53.1 (2019), pp. 150-176.

¹²⁹ David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (Basingstoke, 1991), p. 31.

¹³⁰ For forms of imperial legitimation, see David Armitage, 'Introduction' in David Armitage (ed.), *Theories of Empire, 1450-1800* (London, 2016), pp. 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, and 28.

¹³¹ Mikael Alm, 'Royalty, Legitimacy and Imagery' *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 28.1 (2003), pp. 19-36. See also, Apurba Chatterjee, *Imaging Royalty*, p. 13.

¹³² Mikael Alm, *ibid.*, pp. 21-22; and Apurba Chatterjee, *ibid.*

to understand political change.¹³³ Thus, as Alm suggests, political legitimacy is not ‘given’, nor can any single image automatically generate legitimacy for the British Indian empire. Following Alm, I argue that British imperial self-image in India also needed to be represented and reshaped in terms of the contemporary politics.¹³⁴ In this regard, I read visual sources in conjunction with various non-visual, textual sources both published and unpublished, by means of a two-fold approach: firstly, I analyze images of British imperial power as represented in paintings (and their reproductions as prints in cases where the original painting is not accessible) and books of illustrations; and, secondly, I relate the images of imperial authority to the larger political and discursive settings within which they were created.

In order to study the semiotics of power in the fabrication of imperial self-image, I analyze various representations of the British Indian empire. In doing so, I argue that the concepts of political power that the EIC created through its conquests, diplomacy and governance informed, and were in turn informed by the visual representation of India. As Late Sabyasachi Bhattacharya had suggested regarding legitimacy in colonial India, the British presence needed to be reproduced in everyday life of Indians, and the relations of power and hierarchies had to be instantiated so that people could accept the British as rulers.¹³⁵ The various genres of visual material, as I have mentioned above, that is, portraits, history paintings, conversation pieces, landscapes, and natural history art, thus facilitated the visualization of imperial power by British artists through the artistic representations of its peoples, landscapes and nature. An ‘indigenous’ parallel can be found in the paintings of Indian artists working for the British who also depicted similar subject-matter. Whilst exploring the intricacies of visual representations by British artists, following Natasha Eaton, I also recognize the ability of Indian artists or mimic men (as she calls them) in reworking British art. Within such reworkings, I suggest, can be traced both the impact of colonial dislocation as well as aspirations for a more sentient, affective political power, that is significant to the idea of political legitimacy. Colonial artistic experience generates a hybridity, thus resulting in an ambivalence that complicated the representation of a British imperial self-image.¹³⁶ At the same

¹³³ James Farr, ‘Understanding conceptual change politically’ in Terence Ball, James Farr and Russel L. Hanson (eds) *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change* (Cambridge, 1989) pp. 24-25.

¹³⁴ Mikael Alm, ‘Royalty, Legitimacy and Imagery’, p. 22.

¹³⁵ Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *The Colonial State: Theory and Practice* (New Delhi, 2016), pp. 54-55.

¹³⁶ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

time, it is important to nuance the idea of hybridity, in order to recognize the violence and inequalities of colonial relations, and how culture not only reflected or upheld those, but also came to be transformed in itself.

Visual arts, as this thesis reveals, brings to the fore the uncertainties and hesitations of British Indian empire amidst the exercise of force. If British artists tried to manage such discrepancies by highlighting the virtuosity and pre-eminence of both the British political presence and its concomitant artistic techniques (though not always very successfully), artworks by Indian artists that the British commissioned and collected attempted to stall the artistic and thereby the political occupation of India, even while acknowledging its reality. My three chapters take three cardinal concepts – political authority, dominion, and command, respectively in order to understand different forms of British power, which in themselves are expressive of the imperial ideologies of hierarchy and differentiation. The first chapter accordingly looks at images of Britons in India in military and administrative roles and the British life in India besides their encounter with the Indian populace and its customs. My second chapter looks at the portrayals of Indian landscapes, and my third chapter takes into consideration the depiction of the nature in India. Images produced by both British and Indian artists thus hint at varied ideals of political power which complicate the representation of early British Indian rule.

Chapter Outline

The following chapters juxtapose the images of peoples, landscapes, and flora and fauna in India by British and Indian artists, and thus present both the expressions and contingencies of British imperial self-image in India. Although the images of British artists show an urge to represent British pre-eminence by registering hierarchies between the colonizer and the colonized and representing the British prowess over India, their artworks are often mired in the anxieties that arose, often as a by-product of increasing political power. On the other hand, Indian artists subverted British artistic modes and aesthetics, to deflect and resist colonial domination by exposing its fault lines— something which itself was complicated. In this manner, images both give expression to the bases of political legitimacy and present challenges to the same.

The first chapter is a study of images of British officials in India, both in their public and domestic milieux. Here, I deal with the political significance of depictions of Britons and their connections with pre-British political culture. Whilst in their public life the British were keen to define their position in relation to Indian rulers so as to exalt their own status, at home it was necessary to maintain imperial hierarchies of race. Consequently, images reflect the anxiety of Britons to set aside the hybridity of colonial culture and idealize themselves as rulers of India. An important aspect here is race. With its focus on the concept of political authority, this chapter brings to the fore the Britons' zeal to project themselves as benevolent rulers, an effort that they articulated through the formulation of the idea of oriental despotism. As the chapter shows, the idea of oriental despotism was not simply confined to public life but also entered the domestic sphere. Another way of representing British benevolence was to present Indians as victims of their political and socio-religious order. The chapter reveals that such measures were less than successful. The sources used here are portraits, history paintings, and conversation pieces, all of which share a preoccupation with human figures.

The second chapter is a study of landscapes in the early British Indian empire. Here, I take into consideration portrayals of Indian sites and monuments alongside those of the settlements founded by Britons in India. This chapter addresses how representations of Indian sites as ruins were part of the Picturesque tradition, and played an important part in denuding Indian buildings of their cultural and emotive values. Taking this forward with the concept of dominion, I examine how British possession of and control over land came to be visually represented. As I show, British attempts to visually appropriate India's land were never straightforward, and sometimes even undermining the spoils of actual armed victories. As a result, the questions of history and heritage become important.

The third chapter of this thesis is based on the concept of command. This chapter addresses visual representations of flora and fauna in India. The colonial curiosity and zest to understand the natural environment of India was accompanied by a tendency to tame and thereby exert control over the wilderness of Indian exotica. Illustrations of Indian flora and fauna, as this chapter reveals, were part of the complex entanglements of scientific knowledge and those political imperatives that arose from British rule in India. Here, I show colonialism as a condition of natural displacement and images as a means for achieving this. The sources used in this chapter are the illustrations of

flora and fauna by Shaikh Zain-al-Din, among other Indian artists, and those by the British artist James Forbes.

Chapter 1 – Figures of Rulership and Subordination: The Colonial Art of Depicting People

One goes out, and another comes in in his place,
The world is never without a master.¹³⁷

These words by Ghulam Husain Salim Zaidpuri, written as part of his history of Bengal in the mid-1780s, give insight into his understanding of Bengal's past and present as a saga of political transformations. Charting Muslim rule in Bengal from its foundation in the thirteenth century to his own lifetime, the author was in fact a witness to the changing trajectories of Indian politics as British power was on the rise. What the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in the latter half of the seventeenth century had referred to as 'Subah Jannat-e-Bilad-Bangla' (Paradise on Earth, the Land of Bengal) had, by the last decades of the eighteenth century, become the 'British Bridgehead'.¹³⁸ Bengal, in turn, provided the British with a strong foothold to develop their political influence over the rest of India. Whilst British political intervention into Indian kingdoms had begun in the Carnatic in the 1740s, Bengal became their training ground for experiments regarding civil and military administration at the cost of local rulers. By the early nineteenth century, we find the majority of Indian royalty coming under the sway of the Britons. It was not long after Napoleon Bonaparte's downfall in 1815 that the British defeated the Marathas and achieved paramountcy in India. At the core of such developments was the reshaping of the concept of political authority, as the British increasingly superseded the Indian royalty who remained heads of their kingdoms only in name. Taking the concept of political authority as my chief focus, this chapter contends that images were important not only in the construction of British authority, but also show the limits

¹³⁷ Ghulam Hussain Salim Zaidpuri, *Riyaz-us-salatin; a history of Bengal*, trans. Maulavi Abdus Salam (Calcutta, 1902), p. 112.

¹³⁸ P. J. Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead* (Cambridge, 1988).

of that authority and some of the ways in which it was contested. In doing so, a study of images help in navigating the complexities of visualizing the idea of rulership in early British India.

The establishment of political authority is usually predicated upon the creation of a moral right to rule, based on the good that it can facilitate and ensure.¹³⁹ In the case of British administration in India, however, the need for the maximization of land revenues and trade was prioritized over any reflective engagement and interaction with Indian society.¹⁴⁰ As a result, colonial governmentality came to be characterized by an uneasiness among the British arising from their misinterpretation of India, and in the words of Jon Wilson, ‘never quite certain what it was doing’, and in fact, much of its power was based on dealing with its ambivalence.¹⁴¹ As noted in the introduction, indigenous voices, though existent, were often confronted with their appropriation and decimation by means of coercion, oppression, and alienation in the hands of British political authority.¹⁴² What was the importance of imagery in such a scenario? During the late eighteenth century, the ‘change over’ of ‘masters’ in the words of Ghulam Hussain Salim, set in motion various debates surrounding governance and the management of public affairs. Such debates were an expression of, and were ultimately a part of the constructions of colonial knowledge on India’s political order where the questions of sovereignty and nature of rule became prominent.

Writing in 1826, Sir John Malcolm suggested that, as the rulers of India, the British should neither opt for an overt display of confident arrogance, nor should they be too humble.¹⁴³ The visual representations of the British, in this respect, can be understood as registering the tensions arising from the need to interpret Indian politics in a manner that suited their imperial interests. The subject of this chapter is the images of the British personages in their official capacities as well as in their private lives. In order to consider the political authority of the British rule in India further, the chapter also turns to images of Indian rulers, elite, and ordinary people. The images examined here

¹³⁹ George Duke, ‘Political Authority and the Common Good’ *Political Studies*, 65.4 (2017), pp. 880-881.

¹⁴⁰ Nicholas Hoover Wilson, ‘From Reflection to Refraction: State Administration in British India, circa 1770–1855’ *American Journal of Sociology*, 116.5 (2011), pp.1437-77. See also Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, Online Edition (Cambridge, 2008).

¹⁴¹ Jon E. Wilson, *The Domination of Strangers*, p. 8-9.

¹⁴² See, for example, Radhika Singha, *A Despotism of Law. Crime and Justice in Early Colonial India* (Delhi, 1998); Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India. The British in Bengal* (Cambridge, 2007); and Jon Wilson, ‘The Domination of Strangers: Time, Emotion and the Making of the Modern State in Colonial India’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, 46.30 (2011), pp. 45-52.

¹⁴³ John Malcolm, *Political History of British India*, Vol. 1 (London, 1826), pp. 6-7.

are both a product of, and a reflection upon, the dynamics of the development of British political authority, demonstrating how artistic representations met the expectations of imperial politics. This is, however, not to say that I view visual arts as merely subordinated to political power. Rather, as this chapter shows, images were an important part of the formation of standards through which the British imperial authority came to be manifested.

My chapter draws upon a rich body of research that has taken into account questions of identity, political power, racial hierarchies, and nationalism in the fabrication of the image of the British ruling India.¹⁴⁴ As Beth Fowkes Tobin has pointed out, even domestic spaces were not separate from these wider issues.¹⁴⁵ The idea of an evolution to a more assertive British imperial image by the end of the eighteenth century in the representations of figures like Lord Cornwallis and Lord Wellesley, as espoused by Hermione de Almeida and George H. Gilpin,¹⁴⁶ has given way to a more nuanced approach that interrogates the notion of this transition. Analysis has shifted towards exploring the uncertainties and ambivalences of British Indian empire. Even the depictions of moments of apparent British political successes and imperial glory are now seen as bearing undercurrents of anxieties and scepticism.¹⁴⁷ Also important, in this regard, is the study of images of Indian rulers, who, with the arrival of British painters at their courts, refabricated their royal image in a manner that sustained their symbolic power in a situation of ostensible political ascendancy by the British. Whilst the ornate, bejewelled bodies of Indian rulers came to be appropriated as part of Britain's imperial pageantry, as Romita Ray has shown in the case of the exiled ruler of the Punjab Maharaja Duleep Singh,¹⁴⁸ a different kind of picture was not altogether impossible. Natasha Eaton, in her examination of the portrait of the nawab of Arcot Muhammad Ali 'Wallajah' by British artist George Willison, which was sent to George III in England, points

¹⁴⁴ See, for example, Romita Ray, 'Baron of Bengal: Robert Clive and the birth of an imperial image' in Julie F. Codell, *Transculturation in British art, 1770-1930* (Burlington, VT, 2012), pp. 21-38; and Vicky Coltman, 'The Aesthetics of Colonialism: George Chinnery's Portrait of Gilbert Elliot, 1st Earl of Minto, 1812' *Visual Culture in Britain*, 17.2 (2016), pp.137-162.

¹⁴⁵ Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, pp. 110-138.

¹⁴⁶ de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance. British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (London, 2005), pp. 114 and 167-174.

¹⁴⁷ Douglas Fordham, 'Costume dramas: British art at the court of the Marathas' *Representations*, 101 (2008), pp. 57-85, and Sean Willcock, 'A Neutered Beast? Representations of the Sons of Tipu Sultan— 'The Tiger of Mysore'— as Hostages in the 1790s' in *Journal of Eighteenth Century Studies*, 36.1 (2012), pp. 121-147.

¹⁴⁸ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, pp. 153-173.

out that the nawab's 'mimicry' of the posture of rulers in European royal portraiture in his image 'empowered' him even as he lost his real political power to the British.¹⁴⁹

Previous scholarship, however, tended to largely neglect artworks by Indian artists for the British, which prevents the consideration of the indigenous artistic interpretation of British political presence as rulers of India. Taking the previous scholarship forward, my aim in this chapter is to explore how the changes in political authority under the British Indian empire came to be visually reconfigured. In doing so, I address the entanglements of the visual imageries of Britons and Indians, and the ideals of rulership and subjectivity in the larger transformations of imperial politics in India.

This chapter analyzes portraits, history paintings, and family conversation pieces, and their equivalents in the images produced by Indian artists for their British clientele. Eighteenth-century Britain was characterized by the growing popularity of portraiture. Portraiture gave face to individual honour and dignity and civic and social responsibility in the wake of the rising importance of commercial enterprise and the wealth accrued from it.¹⁵⁰ The growing demand for portraiture, however, was at the cost of history-painting which, though considered to be the highest form of art, came to largely lag behind because of the expensive nature of its production, and its supposed connotations of commercial depravity and monarchical absolutism that ran contrary to the Protestant state of Great Britain with its parliamentary form of government.¹⁵¹ Given such a scenario, history painting could only survive through its reproduction in print, often displayed in exhibition galleries like John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery.¹⁵² Whilst history painting, designated as the highest genre of art since the seventeenth century, seemed to be losing out to portraiture, portraiture itself sought to emulate the idealizing elements of history painting. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his advocacy of the recognition of portraiture as the best artistic form above history painting, pointed out that for a portrait painter to excel at his art, he was required to rise

¹⁴⁹ Natasha Eaton, 'The Art of Colonial Despotism: Portraits, Politics and Empire in South India, 1750-1795' *Cultural Critique*, 70 (2008), pp. 69.

¹⁵⁰ John Barrell, 'Sir Joshua Reynolds and the Political Theory of Painting' in *Oxford Art Journal*, 9.2 (1986), pp. 38-40.

¹⁵¹ Louise Lippincott, 'Expanding on portraiture. The market, the public, and the hierarchy of genres in eighteenth-century Britain' in Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (eds), *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800. Image, Object, Text* (New York, 1995), pp. 75-77.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

above the flaws of dress and appearance of a particular individual. In order to achieve this, according to Reynolds, the portraitist must aspire for the general, universal qualities that characterized history painting.¹⁵³

For its part, however, history painting did not continue unchanged. In the case of nineteenth-century France, Paul Duro has convincingly shown that, when history painting lost out on monarchical and institutional patronage due to the decline of the *ancien régime*, it needed to adapt itself with the changing needs of time. With the prominence of genre paintings depicting historical subjects, history-painting evolved as ‘an historical art of the present’, thereby taking up its themes from contemporary life and history.¹⁵⁴ The situation in eighteenth-century Britain was similar. Whilst portraiture celebrated individual achievements, history-painting too sought to come to terms with the present by making the present itself the central focus. History-painting had begun to record and idealize moments of importance in public life, foremost among these being Britain’s imperial achievements that provided topics of interest in the metropolitan world.¹⁵⁵

By the latter half of the eighteenth century, the Royal Academy of Arts had developed artistic standards of portraying Britain’s imperial heroes, especially those associated with the EIC who helped acquire and secure India for Britain.¹⁵⁶ Alongside, the imperial heroes of Britain replaced classical Gods and heroes in the images,¹⁵⁷ very often replicating the latter’s postures and demeanour. In this way, a correlation of portraiture and history painting increasingly developed in the context of early British India. Together with portraiture and history paintings, there were family conversation pieces that brought British households into the frame of contemporary politics and became a part of celebrating Britain’s commercial and imperial gains worldwide.¹⁵⁸

In pre-British India, visual arts had already attained great heights under the Mughal empire. According to the famous Mughal chronicler Abul Fazl, emperor Akbar held the art of painting in high esteem. Emperor Akbar considered likenesses created through painting as playing a major

¹⁵³ Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art* (edited by Edward Gilpin Johnson) (Chicago, 1891) Fourth Discourse, pp. 117-119.

¹⁵⁴ Paul Duro, ‘Giving up on History? Challenges to the Hierarchy of Genres in Early Nineteenth-Century France’ *Art History*, 28.5 (2005), pp. 695, 698, 700 and 709.

¹⁵⁵ Hooock, *Empires of the Imagination*, p. 45.

¹⁵⁶ C.A. Bayly, *The Raj* (London, 1990), pp. 102-103.

¹⁵⁷ Hooock, *Empires of the Imagination*, p. 45.

¹⁵⁸ Marcia Pointon, *Portrayal and the Search for Identity* (London, 2013), Chapter 2.

part in the elimination of ignorance, and the painter through his art displaying the acumen of recognizing divinity.¹⁵⁹ The Mughals were aware of, and admired the naturalistic styles of European art,¹⁶⁰ and were keen to adopt European symbolism in their own painting. It is in this regard that European elements like globes and orbs came to feature in the paintings representing Mughal emperors as signifiers of their worldly kingdom and royal dignity.¹⁶¹ Such elements, however, were adjusted according to the sensibilities and political requirements of the Mughal empire. For example, the portraits of Mughal emperors were always in profile, and were not made ‘realistic’ in the European sense of the term due to the danger of opposition from the orthodox,¹⁶² nor was there any large-scale display or gifting of painted images which posed the danger of deflating the aura of the emperors, except the occasional distribution of his images by the emperor himself to his limited and selected coterie of nobles and foreign visitors.¹⁶³ Free from royal formalism, the Mughal artists’ depictions of ordinary people are characterized by a sensitive treatment of their temperament and disposition.¹⁶⁴ Working for the British around the mid-eighteenth century, Indian artists continued some of their earlier traditions such as that of profile portraiture, whilst scenes from historic battles, combats, and signing of treaties gradually tended to become far less detailed and complex than those that featured in traditional Mughal painting.

Before turning to the study of visual representations of people, it is necessary to consider ideas about physical appearance in the eighteenth century, as images were both informed by and gave expression to pre-existing stereotypes. By the latter half of the century, as Shruti Kapila has suggested, British enquiries into Indian civilization and its manners, customs, and languages were

¹⁵⁹ Abul Fazl, *Ain e Akbari*, Vol.1, trans. H. Blochmann (Calcutta, 1878), pp. 107-108.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

¹⁶¹ Ebba Koch, ‘The Symbolic Possession of the World: European Cartography in Mughal Allegory and History Painting’ *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 55.2-3 (2012), pp.547-580. See also, Mika Natif, *Mughal Occidentalism: artistic encounters between Europe and Asia at the courts of India, 1580-1630* (Leiden, 2018), Chapters 2 and 3.

¹⁶² J. P. Losty, ‘Towards a New Naturalism. Portraiture in Murshidabad and Avadh, 1750-80’ in Barbara Schmitz (ed.) *After the Great Mughals*, p. 47.

¹⁶³ John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 58-78. My use of the term ‘aura’ is influenced by Walter Benjamin’s seminal work, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ in Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations* (New York, 1968) pp. 217-251. For Benjamin, aura is the authenticity of an artwork which gets sacrificed when it is reproduced and thus ‘removed’ from its original settings.

¹⁶⁴ Som Prakash Verma, *Painting the Mughal Experience* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 60-61.

fashioned by ideas of race.¹⁶⁵ Race, together with a burgeoning perception of complexion as its determinant, became central to the understanding of national character.¹⁶⁶ Another important factor was dress, which not only helped distinguish between people, but was also reflective of their socio-religious and political status.¹⁶⁷ When these connotations were incorporated into the intellectual domain of aesthetics, their cultural significance became even more profound. For Edmund Burke, who disparaged dark colours, blackness was the epitome of darkness and thus lacked beauty altogether.¹⁶⁸ The supposed cultural poverty of peoples of darker complexions was expressed in explicit in the words of David Hume,

I am apt to suspect the Negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the Whites. *There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation.* No ingenious manufacturer amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the Whites, such as the ancient German, the present Tartars, still have something eminent about them, in their valor, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men.¹⁶⁹

The growing importance of race in defining physical beauty, in this regard, was ultimately morally charged as beauty itself came to be associated with morality and virtue.¹⁷⁰ In his exploration of physiognomy, Lavater thus suggested that artists should strive to bring out the inner goodness of their sitters through portraiture.¹⁷¹

Coming to India, British newcomers (not just artists) were intrigued by Indians' physicality and physiognomy. For example, after meeting the Nawab Muhammad Ali Walajah of Arcot in 1755, Dr. Ives wrote that he was fairer than the average Indian, wore a plain turban, and presented 'no

¹⁶⁵ Shruti Kapila, 'Race Matters: Orientalism and Religion, India and Beyond c.1770–1880' *Modern Asian Studies*, 41.3 (2007), pp. 471–513.

¹⁶⁶ Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia, 2000); David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the 18th Century* (London, 2002); and Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-century England* (New Haven, 2004).

¹⁶⁷ The best study on dress is Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and fashion in the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge, 1994). See also, Philip Mansel, *Dressed to Rule: Royal and Court Costume from Louis XIV to Elizabeth II* (New Haven, 2005).

¹⁶⁸ Edmund Burke, *A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful* (London, 1757), pp. 142–149.

¹⁶⁹ David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, Vol. 1 (London, 1889), p. 252.

¹⁷⁰ Ian Pears, *The Discovery of Painting. The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680–1768* (London, 1988), pp. 29–36; and David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, Chapter 3.

¹⁷¹ Johann Casper Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, trans. Thomas Holcroft (London, 1878), pp. 170–176.

other marks of distinction about him than that of a truly majestic countenance tempered with a great deal of pleasantness and good nature'.¹⁷² British attitudes towards other Indian rulers, however, were different. When British artist Robert Mabon visited the court of the Maratha Peshwa Madhavrao II, he noted,

In surveying the Peshwa seated on the musnud, the eye is dazzled with the immense riches about him ; but his effeminate dress and unmanly like attitude which the customs of the people make him under the necessity of observing, takes away from that dignity in appearance, which an European might expect to see in a Prince seated on a throne.¹⁷³

Physicality also prefigures ironically in an otherwise context of admiration. Thus, speaking of the Maratha chief Mahadaji Sindhia, the British artist James Wales reported, 'Although a chief of great powers, [Sindhia is] nonetheless a person of mean appearance and rather low stature; fat and lame of one leg'.¹⁷⁴ Britons were not only curious about Indian royalty and elite, but also about the ordinary populace. To the artist William Hodges, who was an admirer of the beauty of Indian women, dark-complexioned Hindu men appeared as 'delicately framed, their hands in particular are more like those of tender females; and do not appear to be, what is considered a proper proportion to the rest of the person, which is usually above the middle size'.¹⁷⁵ Curiosity often turned to ridicule and derision, as evident from the account of William Hickey's first visit to India – apparently he, along with the friends he was travelling with, laughed at 'ludicrous figures and postures black people put themselves into'.¹⁷⁶

Part of the visual representations of Britons in India, in this context, was to depict the peoples whom they ruled. Formulating the British self-image as rulers necessitated the delineation of their subjects and, as will be seen, often colonial subjecthood needed to be created as part of projecting Britons' own importance, and their capacity in ruling India. In addition, images of Indian people also became part of emerging racial studies that increasingly highlighted the superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans. Whilst the contributions of British artists in India in this direction

¹⁷² H. D. Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, Vol. 3 (London, 1913), p. 527.

¹⁷³ D.B. Parasnis, *Poona in the Bygone Days* (Bombay, 1921), p. 13.

¹⁷⁴ James Wales' diaries and papers, Vol. 1, f. 11 (Yale Center for British Art).

¹⁷⁵ William Hodges, *Travels in India* (London, 1793), pp. 2-3 and 33. See also,

¹⁷⁶ William Hickey, *Memoirs Of William Hickey*, Vol. 2 (London, 1913-25), p. 120.

is well-known, artworks by Indian artists also came to be used as evinced from the famous German physiologist Blumenbach's use of their paintings to denote the 'Caucasian' variety.¹⁷⁷

This chapter analyzes thirty images and is divided into three sections. The first section approaches the images of the British in their public character as they sought to present an idea of themselves as ruling India, and how they interacted with the indigenous political culture. The images examined in this section give an insight how Britons sought to define themselves in terms of Indian royalty and elite. The section ultimately suggests that the British navigation of Indian politics often put them in the danger of being overwhelmed. An important issue, in this regard, was the idea of oriental despotism, which the British continued to indicate in an attempt to perpetuate the idea of efficacy and benevolence as the 'master-fictions' of their political authority in India.¹⁷⁸ This is the longest section of not only this chapter but of the entire thesis, as it presents ideas of political power and the means of its legitimization through imageries that are central to my approach.

Whilst the first section focusses specifically on public manifestations of political authority, its mundane and everyday aspects are the point of departure for the next two sections. The second section is about the visual representations of British family life in India, and shows how the familial domain itself was a part of imperial power and politics. Notable, in this regard, is the politics of race as the depictions inter-racial relationships bring to the fore, and how those are managed towards the aspiration for an imperial household adhering to the hierarchies of British Indian empire. The third, and the final section begins where the second section ends, literally. Taking cues from the last painting analyzed in the second section, the third section turns to the Indian life surrounding the British. It tries to understand how colonial subjectivities tended to be created through images as a ground for British benevolence. This, however, was less than successful, and thus signalled the limits of political legitimacy of British Indian rule.

¹⁷⁷ Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, *The anthropological treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, translated and edited by Thomas Bendshye* (London, 1865), p. 160; and C.A. Bayly, *The Raj*, pp. 108-9.

¹⁷⁸ The term 'master-fictions' comes from Clifford Geertz. See Clifford Geertz, 'Centers, Kings and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power' in Sean Wilentz (ed.), *Rites of Power. Symbolism, Ritual and Politics Since the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1995), p. 33.

The British as rulers of India

The sovereignty of the EIC in India depended on the efficacy of its administration, its chief objective being the service to the cause of the British nation. This is, however, not to say that the Indian populace and their well-being did not concern the EIC, but they were only of secondary importance when compared to Britain's self-interests regarding the maximization of revenues and commercial benefits.¹⁷⁹ Yet the show of benevolence was key— not least because without that the EIC's Indian acquisitions would be entirely lost or become less profitable.¹⁸⁰ In 1853, just a few years before the Indian Rebellion of 1857, writing about the nature and character of British rule in India, Sir John Kay optimistically credited the EIC with 'the better government of India'. This could be seen in 'the development of the industrial resources, the purification of justice, the civilization of savage tribes, the suppression of unholy rites and cruel abominations, and the general diffusion of enlightenment and truth'.¹⁸¹ Such sentiments were not new. To Thomas Pownall in 1781, as the sovereign, it was the Company's duty to alleviate the condition of Indian people,

But if, ... according to the true intent and meaning of the British legislature; according to the spirit of the Roman precedent; the law establishing an ascendant government in Bengal, Bahar and Orissa, shall be so explained and amended, That while this government holds the sword, it exercises only by internal exertion in aid of the national government, or by protection against external violence. If, while as a real protector and judge, it gives remedy and relieves by equity the unavoidable hardships which strict law occasions; if while it exercises this superseding, it leaves undisturbed and uninterrupted the national and custom and civil morality consequent thereupon... Nor is it of last consideration to consider, that where justice and benevolence become the best policy, as it evidently does in case of our Indian dependencies, there is nothing in which actions of a great nation can approach so near to an all-Gracious Providence, as in giving and dispensing such powers of government to a nation under its protection, as to make that people happy, from whom in wealth and power it derives all fruits of that happiness.¹⁸²

Pownall's statement here calls for the protection of existing political order in India by the British. Since the early British administration in India was required to navigate local politics and various systems of government, the visibility and visibility of the British as rulers was, as will be seen, based on their consonance with, as well as standing above and apart from the indigenous political

¹⁷⁹ Huw Bowen, *The Business of Empire*, pp. 182-185.

¹⁸⁰ William Bolts, *Considerations On India Affairs*, Vols. 1-2 (London, 1772), pp. iii-xiii.

¹⁸¹ Sir John Kay, *The administration of the East India company; a history of Indian progress* (London, 1853), p. 16.

¹⁸² Thomas Pownall, *The right, interest, and duty, of government, as concerned in the affairs of the East Indies : the case as stated and argument upon it as first written* (London, 1781), pp. 37-38.

culture. This imperative has a long genealogy that is visible today in the archives of the EIC housed at the British Library. Here one cannot help but notice the array of portraits depicting various eastern rulers and potentates with whom the British came in contact. The images are unified in their dazzling magnificence, as reflected in the turbans and flowing, colourful dresses of the sitters, the richness of their jewellery, and the presence of particular weaponry consisting of swords, scimitars, and ceremonial daggers. Displays such as these are both instrumental in the codification of, and are encoded in western impressions of oriental heads of state. These resonances date back to the times of the rivalries between the Ottoman empire and European states. Writing on the portrait of Ahmed I in the frontispiece of Englishman George Sandys' *Relations of a Journey* (1610), Nehabat Avcioglu traces the development of iconography of the images of the Ottoman emperors in European visual culture: turbaned men lavishly attired in fineries as embodiments of destruction. As she has shown, drawing deeply upon the allegories of tyranny in contemporary books of emblems, such images of the Sultans had contributed to the redefinition of the classical notion of tyranny in relation to the Ottoman empire.¹⁸³

Having its origin in the rivalries between European states and the Ottoman empire, the 'spectre' of oriental despotism haunted Europe throughout the early modern period. With the improvement of relations between France and the Ottoman empire towards the end of the seventeenth century, and the fresh diplomatic contacts of Britain with the Ottoman Sultans, the negative connotations of the Ottoman world came to be mellowed in favour of its positive reassessment. Whilst *Turquerie* became a statement of fashionable living among European elite and royalty, Lady Mary Wortley Montague's first-hand account of the travels in the Ottoman empire generated an admiration of its life and culture. This change in European attitude towards the Ottoman empire, however, was paralleled by the weakening of the Ottoman polity and the authority of the Sultans that gave western powers like France the opportunity to project its power in eastern Europe as opposed to Russia.¹⁸⁴ Despite these transformations, the notion of oriental despotism remained an important (if not the only) tool in the European understanding of the non-western worlds of Persia, Egypt, Asia, and Ottoman Turkey. It became the basis of appreciation and condemnation of the orient by

¹⁸³ Nehabat Avcioglu, 'Ahmed I and the Allegories of Tyranny in the Frontispiece to George Sandys's "Relation of a Journey"' *Muqarnas*, 18 (2001), pp.203-226. See also, See Richard Koebner, 'Despot and Despotism: Vicissitudes of a Political Term' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 15.1/4 (1951), pp.275-302.

¹⁸⁴ See, for example, Thomas Kaiser, 'The Evil Empire? The Debate on Turkish Despotism in Eighteenth-Century French Political Culture' in *The Journal of Modern History*, 72.1, (2000), p. 15.

European scholars and philosophers which, to a great extent was determined by the political realities of the European states themselves.¹⁸⁵

In the case of the British in India during the latter half of the eighteenth century, as Robert Travers has suggested, oriental despotism became a vital part of what they understood as India's ancient constitution. In this context, the idea of oriental despotism had a mutually conflicting dimension. Whilst it helped them evaluate and, most of all, disparage Indian rulers and their polities, it was important in the casting of British rule in India according to what they understood as an 'Indian' idiom.¹⁸⁶ The image of Indian royalty in the British mind, as will be seen in course of the discussion, was not constant but largely depended on the political context.¹⁸⁷ Over time there had emerged a multifarious stereotypical understanding of Indian rulers. Indeed, as Robert Clive had put forward, 'Indostan was always an absolute despotic government....in superior stations, they [i.e., inhabitants of India] are luxurious, effeminate, tyrannical, treacherous, venal, cruel'.¹⁸⁸

In their portrayal of Indian royalty, British artists, I argue, tended to confine their sitters to such familiar stereotypes. Foremost, in this regard, was the image of the 'Great Mogul'. Although the central authority in Delhi had been much weakened, the house of Timur had for a long time continued to be the source of political legitimacy in India. Thus, when Robert Clive commissioned from Benjamin West a historical painting to commemorate the Grant of Diwani in 1769 (Figure 2),¹⁸⁹ the centrality of the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II was made conspicuous. Although the event itself had been conducted in the most unostentatious manner in Clive's tent,¹⁹⁰ West's canvas has represented it in the grandest light. The painting depicts Shah Alam II as seated on a throne at the centre, topped by an umbrella (*chatr*). Both English and Indian representatives are present on his both sides in an ornate pavilion. On the right-hand side there is a flourish of the flags,

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 18-20.

¹⁸⁶ Robert Travers, 'Ideology and British expansion in Bengal, 1757-72' in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 33.1 (2005), pp. 7-27. See also, Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, p. 59.

¹⁸⁷ This finding is similar to the understanding of Indian rulers in the Dutch context, see Manjusha Kuruppath, 'Casting despots in Dutch drama: The case of Nadir Shah in Van Steenwyk's *Thamas Koelikan*' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 48. 2 (2011), pp. 241-86.

¹⁸⁸ Robert Clive, *Lord Clive's Speech in the House of commons, on the motion made for an inquiry into the nature, state, and condition, of the East India company, and of the British affairs in the East Indies, in the fifth session of the present Parliament. 1772* (London, 1772), p. 42.

¹⁸⁹ F29 (British Library).

¹⁹⁰ Mark Bence-Jones, *Clive of India* (London, 1975), p. 297.

caparisoned elephants, and emblems of native kingdoms and on the left is visible the British flag and the colours of the EIC. As the representative of the Company and the British nation, Clive accepts the document entitling the British with Diwani from the Mughal emperor. Whilst the actual event lacked any pompous display, the grandeur of the surroundings in the painting is evocative of European visions of oriental luxury. Such an image, however, has been deployed here to highlight the momentousness of ‘the great act of constitutional entrance of the Company into the body politic of India’,¹⁹¹ thus attesting to its significance for the British political authority.

If the figure of the Mughal emperor gave political legitimacy to British power in India, very soon his presence itself came to be appropriated as a show of British beneficence. British proximity to the emperor gradually became an indication of his weakness— not only his personal weakness as a ruler, but also of the polity that he headed.¹⁹² To the British Indian administration, the Mughal emperor was nothing but a mere cipher.¹⁹³ By the time General Robert Barker completed his service to return home in Britain and commissioned a large-scale oil painting titled, *Shah Alam, Mughal Emperor, reviewing the third Brigade of the East India Company troops at Allahabad* (Figure 3),¹⁹⁴ the British had already begun to circumvent the authority of the emperor. In 1766, Lord Clive had withheld Shah Alam II’s letter to king George III, presenting the gifts sent by him to the queen in his own name, and later, the Governor-General Warren Hastings had arranged for the provinces of Kara and Allahabad to be taken away from the Mughal emperor.¹⁹⁵ Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1781, the artist of this painting was Tilly Kettle. When in India, Kettle had been a witness to General Barker’s political and military role, having painted him in the company of the Nawab of Awadh Shujauddaulah and his sons.¹⁹⁶ To the metropolitan audience, this painting had been satisfactory. As one reviewer wrote,

¹⁹¹ Edmund Burke as quoted in K. D. Bhargava (ed.), *Fort William-India House Correspondence, 1764-1766*, Vol. 4 (New Delhi, 1962), p. xxiv.

¹⁹² William Bolts, *Considerations on India affairs*, pp. 48-49.

¹⁹³ Bence-Jones, *Clive of India*, p. 9.

¹⁹⁴ XLF3781583 (Bridgeman Art Library). I am using a mezzotint of the group portrait which is now in Victoria Memorial Hall and Museum, Kolkata. Accession Number: R5639.

¹⁹⁵ I’tisām al-Dīn, *Shigurf Namah i Velaët, Or, Excellent Intelligence Concerning Europe: Being the Travels of Mirza Itesa Modeen in Great Britain and France*, Trans. by James Edward Alexander (London, 1827), p. 217-220; and John F. Riddick, *The History of British India: A Chronology* (London, 2006), p. 21.

¹⁹⁶ See Tilly Kettle, *Shuja-ud-daula, Nawab of Oudh, with his son Asaf-ud-daula*, Faizabad, 1772. Accession Number: R5637.

Mr. Kettle is so improved as artist since his return from India, that there is no doubt but he will soon be able to make the *pot* boil handsomely. His oriental review is thrown finely into perspective, and the Mughal and other characters in the fore ground, from a group of very capital portraits.¹⁹⁷

Here, Tilly Kettle depicts General Robert Barker in his military uniform, facing the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II seated in a tent with a *huqqa* (hubble-bubble) in the company of Nawab Shujauddaulah with a few men waiting on them. General Barker is in conversation with the emperor as he directs the latter's attention to the exercises of the troops. To another contemporary reviewer of the painting, 'The first shows Magnificence, Indolence and Fierceness without strength. The other conscious of his power, is bold yet respectful'.¹⁹⁸ Thus, the display of munificence became synonymous with the lack of the emperor's real power, exemplifying what Montesquieu had considered to be the characteristic feature of oriental despotism.¹⁹⁹ The painting celebrates the times spent by Barker as the Colonel of Infantry in Allahabad from 1765 to 1770. General Barker's gesture of attending to the emperor stands as the testimony of the British as preserving the veneer of Mughal rule. Since the deplorable condition of politics in India was seen as an outcome of 'the lack of friendship between indigenous chiefs and lack of their loyalty towards the Mughal emperor', British support for the Mughals made 'the English nation appear like a great, solid political state as they are, not petty economical self-interests having factory as they were'.²⁰⁰ In presenting General Barker as respecting and maintaining the status of the Mughal emperor, Kettle's portrayal here feeds into the British representation of themselves as a faithful ally and an exemplar of kindness and moderation to the rulers of India, who were otherwise engaged in wars and bloodshed.²⁰¹ The painting thus brings to the fore an image of reassurance as part of British Indian rule.

In the meantime, visual arts in Britain catered to the representations of imperial heroes, especially those associated with the EIC, who helped to acquire and secure the nation's Indian empire. At the centre of these developments was Robert Clive, who came to the forefront with the infamous British victory at the Battle of Plassey (1757) against the Nawab of Bengal Sirajuddaulah. His

¹⁹⁷ *The Morning Herald, and The Daily Advertiser*, May 8, 1781, p. 3 (Paul Mellon Centre press cuttings).

¹⁹⁸ *St. James Chronicle or British Evening Post*, May 3-5, 1781, p. 2 (PMC press cuttings).

¹⁹⁹ Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, Vol. 1, trans. Thomas Nugent (London, 1794), p. 34.

²⁰⁰ *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, Vol. 3, 1770-72 (Calcutta, 1911), p. 70; and Extract of Bengal Secret Consultations, 20 January 1784 (National Archives of India, New Delhi).

²⁰¹ *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, Vol. 3, *ibid.*, pp. 127-128.

political achievements in India had made him a favourite with the British royalty, leading to his appointment to the Order of the Bath in 1764.²⁰² Whilst the British victory at Plassey was one of diplomatic negotiations and intrigue, Clive generated his own image as a military hero and ultimately, became a national celebrity. In the hands of the Company's historiographer Robert Orme, Clive was made into a genius whose intrepidity and bravery in the battlefield ensured British success in India.²⁰³ In his portrait by Thomas Gainsborough (Figure 4), dated c. 1764,²⁰⁴ Clive stands confidently, displaying the insignia of the Order of the Bath. In his right hand, he holds out a map as a manifestation of his successful military career. Standing next to him is a black horse, performing a levade. The darkness of the background is contrasted with the brightness of Clive's red attire, emanating an image of glory. At a time when Clive was striving towards securing his position in the British Parliament based on his Indian victories, this painting symbolized a future of hope and progress. Lord Clive's parliamentary ambitions, however, redirected the Britons at home towards the repercussions of growing British political power in India. The latter half of the eighteenth century saw the rise of the scourge of nabobery. In British parlance, the title for Mughal Indian aristocracy, *Nawab* was transformed into Nabob, as a pejorative term used for people returning home with enormous amounts of wealth after their service in India. Back in Britain, they led profligate and luxurious lives like Indian rulers, and bought up estates and seats in the parliament, thus threatening the status of traditional British aristocracy.²⁰⁵ Eastern wealth and its corruptive influence were deemed to be destructive for British national identity and the body politic, bordering on the danger of reproducing the tyrannical 'Asiatic principles of Government' on British soil.²⁰⁶ Clive's extravagant lifestyle in Britain in the backdrop of misgovernment in Bengal and the famine of 1770 resulted in his being charged in the Parliament for amassing huge

²⁰² Bence-Jones, *Clive of India* (New York, 1975), pp. 169 and 193.

²⁰³ Robert Orme, *A history of the military transactions of the British nation in Indostan : from the year MDCCXLV; to which is prefixed A dissertation on the establishments made by Mahomedan conquerors in Indostan*, in Two Volumes (London, 1775-78). For the history of the British in Bengal, see volume two. Orme first published the first volume of his book in 1763, and there he has detailed Clive's military successes in the Carnatic. Also, for a historical interpretation of the British involvement in Plassey, see Rajat Kanta Ray, *The felt community: commonalty and mentality before the emergence of Indian nationalism* (Oxford, 2003).

²⁰⁴ NAM. 1963-05-12-1 (National Army Museum).

²⁰⁵ Tillman W. Nechtman, 'Nabobs Revisited: A Cultural History of British Imperialism and the Indian Question in Late-Eighteenth-Century Britain' in *History Compass*, 4.4 (2006), pp. 645-667. See also, Nechtman, *Nabobs*, Chapters 3 and 4.

²⁰⁶ Samuel Foote, *The Nabob; a comedy, in three acts. As it is performed at the Theatre-Royal in the Haymarket* (London, 1778) p. 7; and William Pitt the Elder as quoted in Tillman W. Nechtman, 'A Jewel in the Crown? Indian Wealth in Domestic Britain in the Late Eighteenth Century' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 4.1 (2007), p. 77.

fortunes at the cost of immense suffering of the people of India.²⁰⁷ As Horace Walpole wrote, ‘Such a scene of tyranny and plunder have been opened as makes one shudder! The heaven-born hero, Lord Clive, seems to be Plutus, the daemon who does not give, but engrosses riches’.²⁰⁸

As Clive was being charged in the Parliament, the EIC came to his cause. The Company commissioned from Edward Penny, Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy, a full-length painting (Figure 5) of Clive receiving a sum of money from the Nawab of Bengal, Najim-ud-daulah, which was used for the purpose of establishing a charity known as the ‘Lord Clive Fund’ for soldiers who had been disabled and the widows of those had died in the service of the Company.²⁰⁹ This painting was to be displayed in the Military Fund Office. Here, Clive is presented as wearing a scarlet coat with cuffs and facings of black velvet which are embellished with gold braid. He is also shown as wearing a buff waistcoat and scarlet breeches, and the insignia of the prestigious Order of the Bath. Standing to his right is Nawab Najim-ud-daulah who is depicted as wearing a lavish long silk *jama*, followed by his entourage. In his right hand, Clive is holding a folded paper, and with his left hand, he is pointing at a group of soldiers, one of them an Indian, from Bengal Artillery and other branches of the Company's army as evident from their uniform. In the background is an English widow with an infant on her lap. She clasps a boy by her right hand, and two other children stand by her side.

When exhibited at the Royal Academy, one reviewer produced an elaborate yet sarcastic commentary suggesting a companion piece for the painting. To him, another painting was necessary to bring to the fore what according to him was the true character of Clive,

The air of this Great General's head, the elegance of his deportment, together with that humanity so expressive in his countenance, not only communicated to my mind that fine sympathy which one would always wish to feel on such occasions, but prompted me to hope some more of the celebrated actions of this great man may be given to the world. Animated with this hint, Mr. Printer, I have sketched from my imagination, the following historical subject, which I would propose to Mr. Penny's consideration as a counterpart to this for next year.

On one side of the foreground I would have Serajah al-Dawla Nabob of Bengal, draperied in all the pride of Asiatic Sovereignty, supported by a long train of his principal officers, domestics and palanquin bearers, all vying with each other in magnificence and grandeur: On the other side should stand Lord Clive dressed in the uniform of the East India Company and supported by the President

²⁰⁷ For the details of charges against Clive, see Robert Clive, *Lord Clive's Speech in the House of commons*.

²⁰⁸ Horace Walpole to Horace Mann, 12 February 1772 in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence* (New Haven, 1937-1983).

²⁰⁹ F91 (British Library).

and council of Bengal: he should be represented with a Bible in one hand and the other on his heart calling God and Our Saviour to witness faithfully to observe a treaty of peace and amity, whilst the nabob was pledging him on the Koran at the same time, and to the same effect. To give every heightening to the piece, an awful silence should be marked in each countenance; and the stillness of the air should correspond with the solemnity of the occasion...

In the back ground of this, I would have Lord Clive in chiaro oscuro, concluding articles of private agreement (subversive of those entered in the foreground)...and in perspective on the hills, I would have the unfortunate Serajah al-Dawla (Lord Clive's late sworn friend) murdered as he is flying, by order of the then Nabob, Lord Clive's new friend.

The grouping of so many respectable characters together, the magnificence of the eastern dresses, the expression of the passions, and above all the massacre of Serajah al-Dawla, cannot, I think, fail to a person of Mr. Penny's well known execution, to gain him as much credit, and his piece as much fidelity, as the one he is now so much admired for.²¹⁰

The reviewer reveals everything that the painting aims to conceal: the violence and betrayal at Plassey, Clive's underhand dealings with Mir Jafar, and his sinister political motives in Bengal.²¹¹

The presence of the Bible in the description can be understood as drawing the audience's attention to the eighteenth-century notion of the Protestant soldier, who was to be fearless and courageous in his confrontation with the enemy, but at the same time honest, kind and magnanimous. Through his two-faced, corrupt politics, as seen here, Robert Clive had tainted such an image, thus proving detrimental to the idea of Britishness.²¹²

On the other hand, the painting shows Clive in the spirit of self-sacrifice as he rises above personal emolument, akin to his own declaration in the Parliament that at the very sight of the wealth of India, 'I stand astonished at my own moderation'.²¹³ Whilst the Company itself grappled with the problems of limiting Clive's 'black jagir', it had acknowledged the 'good effects of his [Lord Clive's] government'.²¹⁴ In Penny's painting, extraction of monies and presents from the Bengal Nawabs in the aftermath of Plassey are transformed into voluntary gifts which, even though Clive receives, does not put to his own use. Instead, he turns those to the benefit of the soldiers who had fought for the British in India. In an era of constant warfare, maimed soldiers and the families of those who had died in wars became some of Britain's greatest liabilities.²¹⁵ The potential of Indian

²¹⁰ *London Evening Post*, May 14-16, 1772, p. 4 (PMC press cuttings).

²¹¹ What paintings would hide, could be laid bare in graphic satire, see Christina Smylitopoulos, 'Portrait of a Nabob'.

²¹² Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London, 2003), pp. 42-43; and Hannah Smith, *Georgian Monarchy: Politics and Culture, 1714-1760* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 20.

²¹³ Clive as quoted in Antony Wild, *The East India Company. Trade and Conquest from 1600* (London, 1999) p. 98.

²¹⁴ Court Minutes IOR/B/257 f. 5 (Asia, Pacific, and Africa Collections, British Library).

²¹⁵ See, for example, Linda Colley, *Britons*, chapter 7.

conquests to be burdensome to the British is thus mitigated by Clive as the money from India is shown to be used to take care of soldiers in the Company's service under distress. In this context, the painting becomes a celebration of Clive's virtue and his worth to the British nation, and represents the colonial project's efficiency and importance in national well-being thereby deeming it as a legitimate enterprise.²¹⁶ However, though the presence of an Indian soldier standing among Europeans may suggest that Indians in the British army also benefitted from Clive's generosity, it is interesting to note that Lord Clive's Fund did not have a single Indian beneficiary.²¹⁷ The robustness of Clive's figure as wearing military uniform in the painting sheds off the liminality associated with the figure of the Nabob.²¹⁸ He is purely a British soldier standing boldly in clear contrast to the Nawab who is visibly perplexed at the sight of the sufferings. Alongside the long *jama* of the Nawab, his unusually pale skin, as represented in the painting, both produces and exaggerates the effect of what Angela Rosenthal has understood as 'blush', having wider connotations in terms of race, nationhood and English femininity.²¹⁹ The idea of blush here represents the Nawab as weak and effeminate, and his portrayal by Penny presents him as ally who is less than equal, whilst feeding into the stereotypes of oriental despotism.

Turning the attention from affairs in Britain to Indian concerns, what was British political authority supposed to look like? Since the latter half of the seventeenth century, the governors of the Company's factories in India had started to adopt the pageantry and trappings of Indian royalty.²²⁰ These associations grew stronger as the British political influence tended to increase, and by the late eighteenth century, men like Robert Clive and Warren Hastings came to hold laudatory Persian titles conferred by the Mughal emperor.²²¹ Clive himself owned 'an Indian dress, gold coat, gold turban, and silk pantaloons'. Whilst not taking any interest in Indian life and culture, he was in

²¹⁶ *London Evening post*, Tuesday May 26 to Thursday May 28, 1772, p. 1 (PMC Press Cuttings) ; and Nicholas B. Dirks, *Scandal of Empire. India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (London, 2006), pp. 15-16.

²¹⁷ Lord Clive's Fund IOR/L/AG/23, p. 40 (Asia, Pacific, and Africa Collections, British Library).

²¹⁸ Christina Smylitopoulos, 'Portrait of a Nabob', p. 13.

²¹⁹ Angela Rosenthal, 'Visceral culture: blushing and the legibility of whiteness in eighteenth-century British portraiture' in *Art History*, 27.4 (2004), pp. 563-592.

²²⁰ Percival Spear, *The Nabobs: a study of the social life of the English in eighteenth-century India* (London, 1932), p. 6; and Philip J. Stern, *The company-state*, pp. 29, 30, 130, 135, 201, 202, and 203.

²²¹ Clive's titles were: *Saif Jang* (The Sword in War), *Sabit Jang* (Firm in War), *Amirul Mamalik* (The Grandee of the Empire); and Hastings' title was *Jaladat Jang* (Daring in War) and *Umadat-ul-Mulk* (The Support of the Empire). Other British officials to hold Persianate titles included Colonel Coote, General Carnac, Henry Vansittart, and Harry Verelst.

favour of keeping outward appearances of himself as living within an Indian idiom. Thus he took up practices such as chewing *paan* (betel leaves) and smoking *huqqa*.²²²

The idea of British self-presentation in the framework of Indian courtly lifestyle is evident in Dip Chand's portrait (Figure 6) of the Scottish surgeon, Dr. William Fullerton of Rosemount.²²³ The artist depicts Dr. Fullerton in European dress, complete with a hat and a wig. He is seated on a rich floral carpet, resting on an ornate bolster in a balcony. On his carpet is present a sheathed sword, and a spittoon, two rosewater sprinklers, and a box for betel nuts can also be seen nearby. Fullerton is smoking a *huqqa*, and is being attended by two men wearing bearing flywhisks (*chauri*) as he receives a visitor. The presence of princely accoutrements in the image hints at Fullerton's aspiration to assimilate himself within the cultural life of Indian royal courts. Dip Chand's style here is itself a reminder of the Mughal legacy of Murshidabad painting that he had inherited and practised. The painting re-directs the audience to the artistic representations of the Mughal emperors and the Bengal Nawabs. Perspectival aspects of European painting are absent, even though the artist has carefully delineated Fullerton's European dress. Too great a degree of involvement in Indian culture could lead to anxieties of 'going native', against which William Fullerton can be viewed as forestalling by maintaining his European attire in the painting,²²⁴ and thus presenting himself as confident in his understanding and appropriation of 'native' lifestyle without necessarily digressing from his British identity. However, the artist reveals that Fullerton's assimilation is incomplete, and at best awkward as he lacks the poise and elegance of demeanour expected of the sitters of paintings such as these. Fullerton's appropriation of the trappings of Indian royalty as seen in the painting has fallen flat, and as a result, this depiction neither presents him as a sophisticated Indian courtier nor as a polite and respectable Scotsman shouldering official duties in India.

The problems of transcultural appropriation in visual representation were avoided in depictions like that of the portrait of *A military officer of the East India Company*, 1765-70 (Figure 7), by an unknown Indian artist.²²⁵ The painting represents the EIC officer in his military uniform surveying the land as he is attended by his boy servant. The officer wears a sword, testifying to the spirit of

²²² Bence-Jones, *Clive of India*, pp. 17 and 69.

²²³ IM.33-1912 (V and A).

²²⁴ Elizabeth Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: Physical Experience of the Raj* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 36-43.

²²⁵ WNF632616 (Bridgeman Art Library).

British conquests in India and at his feet is a dog that symbolizes his masculinity.²²⁶ Lying ahead of him is a vast expanse of land subjected to his observation. Standing amidst Indian terrains, the officer validates his presence as a representative of British political power. The translucent effect of western-style watercolour created by the artist in the portrayal of the land and sky, and the adaptation of artistic formulae of European portraiture are combined to produce an image of the Company's official in India as a conquering force at a time when the British had started to grow as a territorial power – something that we will explore in the next chapter – and had begun to consolidate their acquisitions by means of surveys.

Between the positionalities as discussed above, were a variety of politico-cultural reorientations at work. In an unknown Indian artist's portrait of Sir David Ochterlony in his house (Figure 8), dated c. 1820,²²⁷ Ochterlony is shown smoking huqqa and enjoying a nautch, performed by Indian dancers and musicians. Unlike Dr. Fullerton and the EIC's military officer, Ochterlony here is in Indian dress. As he is gracefully seated, his attendants wait on him at the back. Though on the floor is present a Persian turquoise carpet, the room is largely in European style as can be inferred from the door and windows. On the wall are present a number of western portraits, including those of a light dragoon and a light cavalry man, whose visibility is highlighted by the presence of candleholders near each of them. Ochterlony's self-assured manner in his Indian lifestyle and his identification with India are here 'watched over' by the portraits in the room, firmly reminiscent of who he really is. The settings of the painting engage with both the cultural worlds that Ochterlony is a part of. However, dualities such as these are problematic for the political legitimacy of the British empire in India. Whilst the British could be confident and skilful at playing the Indian rulers on whom they had extended their power, their oblivion of Britain's national difference from India could weaken the imperial authority.²²⁸ The painting thus exposes the challenges of British imperialism even as it had started to become formidable, and the portraits of the military

²²⁶ J. A. Mangan and Callum McKenzie, 'Privileged Education, Hunting and the Making of Martial Masculinity' *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 25.9 (2008), pp. 1106-1131.

²²⁷ Add. Or. 2 (British Library).

²²⁸ For cultural cross-dressing as symbolizing power, see Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth Century British Painting* (Durham, 1999), p. 110; and see also Barbara Fuchs, *Mimesis and empire: the new world, Islam, and European identities* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 2-3. Also, for dilemmas regarding the duality of colonial and British identities, see Sophia Plowden Papers Mss. Eur. B 187 (British Library), p. 10.

figures as indicative of the political successes of the British were models that the British officials in India like Ochterlony should never lose sight of.

Increasing British political presence in India during the eighteenth century also manifested itself in the development of various institutions as an apparatus of imperial power. Foremost among them was the Supreme Court of Judicature in Calcutta. Founded in 1774 in accordance with the recommendation of the Regulating Act of 1773, the Supreme Court was given ‘full power and authority’ over criminal and civil matters within Calcutta and enjoyed a more restricted jurisdiction when it came to the cases related to residents of the *mufussil* (suburbs).²²⁹ Judges of the Supreme Court- one Chief Justice and three Puisne Judges - were appointed by the British monarch, and the court was thus intended as a measure to guarantee the supremacy of the administration of justice for the British crown and as an effective check on the Company’s Indian affairs.²³⁰ The Supreme Court of Judicature, however, hardly lived up to the expectations of its establishment. The greatest criticism lined against the court was that it applied English laws in India that were incompatible with the religious principles and customs of the natives who were largely unfamiliar with the English legal system and its forms, thus resulting in discontent and agitation both among the British and native inhabitants under the court’s jurisdiction. When brought up in the House of Commons in 1781, the measures of the Supreme Court were deemed as a gross contravention of the idea of ‘good government’ in India.²³¹

Central to this criticism against the Supreme Court of Judicature was the role of the first Chief Justice, Sir Elijah Impey. Although not opposed to Hindu and Muslim law, Impey’s proud assertion, ‘I shall always believe, till I am convinced to the contrary, that Principles of Justice are deeper rooted in the minds of my own Countrymen, than in the corrupt Natives of this Country, and especially that such Natives as are generally attendant as Officers on Courts of Justice’, hints at his deep-seated prejudices against indigenous legislators. For Elijah Impey, Indian legal system needed to be disciplined by English judges.²³² Returning from India following his recall in 1782,

²²⁹ Samuel Schmitthener, ‘A Sketch of the Development of the Legal Profession in India’ in *Law & Society Review*, 3.2/3 (1968-1969), p. 342; and ‘East India Company Act of 1773’, published in Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter (eds), *Archives of Empire*, Vol. 1 (London, 2003), p. 34.

²³⁰ Panchanandas Mukerji (ed.), *Indian constitutional documents, 1773-1915* (Calcutta, 1915), pp. xxiv-xxv.

²³¹ *The New annual register, or, General repository of history, politics, and literature*, Jan. 1781 [Accessed online from Burney Collection of Newspapers] pp. 72-88.

²³² Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India*, pp. 198-201, quote on pp.198-199.

Impey was to be subjected to impeachment for ‘high crimes and misdemeanors’, the most prominent of those was the passing of the death sentence upon Maharaja Nandakumar, which were deemed instances of his ‘Injustice, Partiality, Corruption, and an outrageous Lust for Power and Authority’.²³³

Just before his departure in 1783, the portrait of Sir Elijah Impey (Figure 9) was painted by Johan Zoffany to be displayed in the New Court House.²³⁴ As in his previous paintings in official capacity by Tilly Kettle, Sir Elijah is also presented here as wearing a wig and the scarlet and ermine judicial robes.²³⁵ However, unlike his previous representations, in this painting Sir Elijah is larger-than-life, and is shown as assuming a more ceremonial stance as his posture invokes the features of that classical model of manly perfection, Apollo Belvedere. His elevated status is evinced from his standing on a dais. The dignity of his office is further enhanced by the presence of a sword along his chair at the back and the mace on the floor. Sir Elijah’s left hand resting on a table directs the viewers’ attention to a pile of books, perhaps legal literature. His sombre expressions are matched with the ostentatiousness of the tapestry. This grandiose depiction just before he left for England was a tribute to Sir Elijah’s contributions to the British Indian rule. As he was to defend the charges against him in the parliament in 1787,²³⁶ the invocation of Apollo Belvedere in his portrait highlights his imperial character: Sir Elijah Impey is not simply an English judge, but an English judge in India, an important site of British empire. Although dealing with law and administration, the image here represents him as nothing less than a warrior in the defence of British imperial power,²³⁷ especially at a time when America had already thrown off its yoke of subordination.

Impey’s alleged misconduct redirects to the question of how the British could fabricate their self-image as the responsible political authority in India. Whilst the idea of the EIC as sovereign was one of pride and achievement, anxieties of power came to be entrenched within the British Indian

²³³ *The Gentleman’s magazine*, Dec. 1787; and Sir Gilbert Elliott, *Articles of charge of high crimes and misdemeanors, against Sir Elijah Impey, ... Presented to the House of Commons, upon the 12th day of December 1787* (London, 1787), p. 31.

²³⁴ NPG D36440 (National Portrait Gallery, London). I am here using a platinotype reproduction of the painting, which was presented as a photograph to NPG. The original portrait is in High Court, Kolkata.

²³⁵ For the portraits of Sir Elijah Impey, see C1034 (Victoria Memorial Hall and Museum, Calcutta); and Figure 45 in Mildred Archer, *India and British Portraiture*, p. 89.

²³⁶ Sir Elijah Impey, *The speech of Sir Elijah Impey ...: Delivered by him at the bar of the House of commons, on the fourth day of February 1788. Being the matter of his defence to the first article of charge, &c. exhibited to that House* (London, 1788).

²³⁷ Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, pp. 223-224.

administration. As early as 1766, Muhammad Reza Khan, then *Naib Nazim* and *Naib Diwan* of Bengal, had demanded that it was the duty of the Company to be just, and to address the complaints and grievances of those from whom it derived land revenues.²³⁸ The greatest problem facing the Company's government in India was that of the corrupting character of private trading interests among its servants.²³⁹ In the wake of increasing tensions with private trade, overarching concern to separate the EIC's commercial activities from its territorial power was itself an expression of the need to reform commerce in order to make it more advantageous for the British state. Such interests, in turn, converged on the perpetuation of British political presence in India.²⁴⁰

During his time as the Governor of Bengal, Lord Clive had warned against private trade in the following words:

Where such immense revenues are concerned, where power and authority are also enlarged, and where the eye of justice and equity should be ever watchful, a Governor ought not to be embarrassed by private business: he ought to be free from every occupation in which his judgement can possibly be biased by his interest — The extensive commercial affairs, the study of the finances, the politics of the country, the epistolary correspondence, the proceedings of the [Calcutta] Council and [Select] Committee, these are sufficient to employ every moment of his time, and I am confident that they cannot be conducted with the requisite interest to the Company if the mind of the Governor be divested by complicated mercantile affairs of his own.²⁴¹

For the efficient management of the Governor's tasks, as delineated above, it was necessary that he acquired knowledge of the territories under him. According to Clive, the Governor of Bengal should, 'in every vacant season...take a tour up the country in the quality of a supervisor; general

²³⁸ *Proceedings of the Select Committee*, Vol. 1. 9 January to 31 December 1766 (WBSA), p. 42. See also, Travers, 'Indian Petitioning and Colonial State-Formation in Eighteenth-Century Bengal', p. 100. On the other hand, the increasing concern was to give Indians a taste of better government, which of course, the British were expected to bring. See Walter K Firminger, *The Fifth Report From The Select Committee Of The House Of Commons On The Affairs Of The East India Company*, Vol. 1 (London, 1917), pp. 1-2.

²³⁹ Adam Smith, the most vociferous critic of the EIC, suggested that the role of the trader was incompatible with that of the sovereign. See Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Vol. 2 (London, 1904 [1776]), pp. 150-254. For the impact of private trade of the EIC servants on the economy of Bengal, see N. K. Sinha, *The Economic History Of Bengal*, Vol. 1 (Calcutta, 1965), pp. 75-108.

²⁴⁰ 'The Nature and Defects of the Constitution of the English East India' in *London magazine, or, Gentleman's monthly intelligencer*, May 1772 [Accessed online from Proquest British Periodicals] ; 41, pp. 220-225; and Sudipta Sen, *Empire of Free Trade. The East India Company and the Making of the Colonial Marketplace* (Philadelphia, 1998), pp. 126-130.

²⁴¹ *Proceedings of the Select Committee*, p. 234, insertions mine.

frauds and oppressions of every sort being by this means laid open to his view, in great measure be prevented'.²⁴² Ascending to the position of the Governor, and later that of the Governor-General of Bengal, Warren Hastings thus made the procurement of knowledge the cornerstone of his Indian governance. As Joshua Ehrlich has recently pointed out, Hastings' commitment to knowledge became a practical necessity. His patronage towards the production of Indian legal and cultural knowledge was a means of conciliating the commercial and territorial interests of the Company, as well as that of his negotiations with both the EIC authorities in Britain, and the local Indian elite.²⁴³ Such commitment to knowledge— not to forget Hastings, as a patron to artists, was vital in forging links with the ancient Mughal constitution just as he sought to develop the EIC's unitary sovereignty in India.²⁴⁴ In addition to this, Hastings was himself a scholar, devoted to the learning of Indian languages and culture. In 1776, when the Company had proposed to remove him from his position, Hastings' supporters banked on his knowledge of India.²⁴⁵ Hastings was proud of his own knowledge of India, and for him the promotion of oriental scholarship was part of his agenda to make British rule more responsible to Indian life and society.²⁴⁶ In keeping with this idea, amidst the clamour and tirades of criticism against his government, Hastings cultivated the image of himself as a knowledgeable, diligent and dedicated administrator.²⁴⁷

As he was preparing to leave India, Hastings commissioned his portrait (Figure 10) from Arthur William Devis. In his painting by Devis, Hastings is presented as seated on a chair with his right

²⁴² Clive Papers: Mss Eur. G37/ 44/1, f. 44 (British Library).

²⁴³ Joshua Ehrlich, *East India Company and the Politics of Knowledge* (unpublished PhD Thesis, Harvard University, 2018), pp. 22-75.

²⁴⁴ Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India*, pp. 23, 45, and 140. In Hastings' era, the patronage towards Orientalist scholarship was based on the fact that India had a well-established legal system, but its vestiges had been lost. It is this lost wisdom that Orientalists sought to recover. See, Rosane Rocher, 'British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century: The Dialectics of Knowledge and Government' in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (eds), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament. Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia, 1993), pp. 215-249. The impact of Orientalist scholarship was long-lasting and provided a framework for the British rule in India in the later period, see Javed Majed, *Ungoverned imaginings: James Mill's The history of British India and Orientalism* (Oxford, 1992).

²⁴⁵ *Public Advertiser*, 10 June 1776.

²⁴⁶ Letter to Samuel Johnson, dated 7 August 1775; and letter to Laurence Sullivan, dated 23 August 1778 published in G. R. Gleig, *Memoirs Of The Life Of The Right Hon. Warren Hastings*, Vol. 2 (London, 1841), p. 22 and 210, respectively; and for a detailed treatment of the nature of Hastings' Indian administration, see Neil Sen, 'Warren Hastings and British sovereign authority in Bengal, 1774–80' *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 25.1 (1997), pp. 59-81.

²⁴⁷ See, for example, *Hickey's Bengal Gazette*, 2 December to 9 December 1780; and 24 Feb. to 3 March 1781.

hand resting on a book on the table next to him.²⁴⁸ His chintz waistcoat is illustrative of his Indian connection, yet Hastings remains aloof and distant as evinced from his dignified and contemplative demeanour. Behind him is visible a marble bust of Lord Clive, and the tapestry adds to the theatricality of the depicted moment, functioning as the connecting link between Hastings' seated figure and Clive's statue. By positioning himself in relation to Clive, Hastings acknowledged his 'inheritance' of India from him. Clive had a voice in the appointment of Hastings as the Governor of Bengal, and Hastings himself held him in high esteem.²⁴⁹ Such an imagery was crucial to bolstering Britain's imperial power in India since it was the hour of need following the loss of America. As Lord Mansfield had written to Hastings, 'had it not been for you, we should have lost the East'.²⁵⁰ Whilst Clive was the warrior who won India for Britain, Hastings' administrative talents helped consolidate the former's conquests. Hastings had thus shouldered the responsibilities bequeathed to him and had proven himself to be Clive's worthy successor in India. The painting also gives expression to the idea of knowledge as the basis of Hastings' political authority as evident from his proximity to books. In the long run, not only did knowledge prove to be his defence during his impeachment trial, but also his lasting legacy in the British governance of India.²⁵¹ In 1796, when this painting faced that of Lord Cornwallis in the Government House, Hastings' place within the genealogy of early British Indian rule had been firmly established.²⁵²

As the British developed their knowledge of indigenous forms of government and came to adapt to the practices of Indian courtly culture, they simultaneously imposed injunctions on Indian rulers. Not only had the timely payment of their stipends tended to become a secondary issue to the larger

²⁴⁸ The original portrait at present is in the official residence of the President of India, Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi. I am here using a mezzotint version available at National Portrait Gallery, London: NPG D35565.

²⁴⁹ The difference in approach between Clive and Hastings and their later distancing from each other should not deter us from appreciating the connections between them. See letter from Warren Hastings to Lord Clive, dated 12 November 1772 from Hastings Papers: Add. Ms. 29, 127, published in M. E. Monckton Jones, *Warren Hastings in Bengal: 1772-1774* (Oxford, 1918), pp. 182-183; and Bence-Jones, *Clive of India*, p. 263.

²⁵⁰ Lord Mansfield's letter to Hastings as quoted in Michael J. Franklin, *Orientalist Jones*, p. 14.

²⁵¹ Warren Hastings to David Anderson, dated 13 September 1786, published in G. R. Gleig, *Memoirs Of The Life Of The Right Hon. Warren Hastings*, Vol. 3 (London, 1841), p. 303. See also, *Copies of Several Testimonials transmitted from Bengal by the Governor-General and Council relating to Warren Hastings Esquire* (London, 1789); and Hastings Papers: Add. Ms. 29, 234, Letter to Lord Moira, 12 Nov. 1812, ff. 1-42. See also, Warren Hastings, 'Hastings' Memoirs Relative to the State of India' in Sir George Forrest (ed.), *Selections from the state papers of the governors-general of India*, Vol. 2 (London, 1910), pp. 75-85. Even, Hastings' critic, Thomas Babington Macaulay recognized his knowledge, see Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Warren Hastings* (London, 1866), p. 285.

²⁵² S. C. Grier (ed.), *The letters of Warren Hastings to his Wife* (Edinburgh, 1905), p. 421.

concerns of the British Indian government,²⁵³ Indian royalty often came to be prevented from undertaking activities like hunting that defined their masculinity and symbolic claims to political power.²⁵⁴ Although Indian rulers continued to voice their concerns for and tried to promote the well-being of their subjects, the British administration presented Indian kingdoms as regimes of fear and tyranny.²⁵⁵ Whilst the Indian literati criticized the British for their lack of empathy with their subjects and a failure to appreciate their customary observances, the British, on their part, came to pride themselves as heralding a milder, paternalistic government in India.²⁵⁶

An important dimension of the British regulation of Indian royalty was the interruption of their traditional forms of patronage. For example, in 1772, whilst the British government approved of the subscription for the Town Hall in Calcutta by the Nawab of Murshidabad, the expenses of the Nawabi household towards charity, presents to servants, and festivities were found to be objectionable on the ground of ‘the effect of prejudice and custom; or to the veil of secrecy with which all the natives of this country over this domestic concern particularly such as relate to their religious ceremonies’.²⁵⁷ Whilst British officials justified such curtailments as an effect towards the reduction of the expenses of administration, to Indian rulers such acts of patronage were vital to forging and maintaining connections with their subject populace.²⁵⁸ The British administration, in this context, was obstructive towards the Indian royalty’s conduct of their *Rajadharma* (literally, the duty of the ruler to his subjects),²⁵⁹ which challenged their legitimacy as rulers— especially in an age when European monarchies were increasingly keen on projecting a royal image that was

²⁵³ Original Correspondence, No. 17, dated 17 Jan. 1780 (NAI, New Delhi).

²⁵⁴ ‘Proceedings of the Secret Department, 6 March 1776’ from *Descriptive list of Secret Department records, 1776-1780* at NAI (New Delhi, 1960).

²⁵⁵ *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, Vol. VI, 1781-85, p. 166; and Charles Grant, *Observations on the state of society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain* (London, 1792), p. 82. See also, Robert Orme, *Historical fragments of the Mogul empire* (London, 1805), pp. 391-455.

²⁵⁶ Ghulam Husain Khan, *Siyar-al-Mutakherin, or The Review of Modern Times*, trans. Haji Mustapha, Vol. 3 (Delhi, 1926), pp. 55-160. George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol. 1 (London, 1808), pp. 17 and 27-28. For the attitudes of Indian Muslims to the British, see Gulfishan Khan, *Indian Muslim perceptions of the West during the eighteenth century* (Karachi, 1998).

²⁵⁷ *Letter Copybook of the Resident at the Durbar*, 28 September 1772 to 2 March 1774 (West Bengal State Archives), p. 135.

²⁵⁸ This might also be seen as a growing influence of Utilitarianism. See Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1959).

²⁵⁹ Barbara Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and their States* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 3-4.

attentive to the needs of their subjects and capable of the betterment of their lot.²⁶⁰ Whilst religio-cultural patronage by Indian rulers affirmed British ideas of oriental luxury, the limiting of it helped perpetuate the idea of efficiency of their rule in eradicating decadence in India. Thus, when in 1788, the British artist George Farrington depicted the lively scenes of festivities and celebrations at Murshidabad (which are now preserved as copies made by Indian artists) with the Nawab Mubarak-ud-daulah at their centre as the patron,²⁶¹ such representations must have alarmed Britons largely in the light of the Nawab's repeated pleas regarding his limited allowances and the British attempts to reduce and discipline his expenditure.²⁶²

To Indian artists, however, such representations were a staple. In spite of the significant loss of political power, Indian artists depicted Indian royalty as guardians of their realm, wielding a great deal of moral authority and social prestige. This is evident from the painting by an unknown Murshidabad artist, titled *Procession scene headed by a figure on horseback, perhaps Nawab Babar Ali (1793-1810) of Murshidabad, proceeding to prayers at the Chauk Masjid* (Figure 11), dated c. 1800 (Figure 11).²⁶³ In this painting, Nawab Babar Ali is depicted as proceeding to the Chauk Masjid, perhaps on the occasion of Id-al-Fitr, in the company of his entourage that comprises of his attendants marching by his side and his courtiers riding on the back of horses and elephants. All around the *Masjid* stand various people in attendance on their 'sovereign'. Although, by the end of the eighteenth century, the political authority of the Murshidabad Nawabs had all but disappeared, their ceremonial authority remained important and continues to be so to this day. As Pamela Price has argued, royal patronage to religious and social functions was an important means through which Indian rulers upheld their royal status under British rule, inspiring feelings of loyalty from their subjects at large.²⁶⁴ Popular participation in such occasions provided a way to incorporate the public within the body politic, which in the late nineteenth century became the ground for nationalist activism that often sought the leadership of Indian rulers.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁰ T.C.W. Blanning, 'Introduction: the beneficiaries and casualties of expansion' in T.C.W. Blanning (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century Europe 1688-1815* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 344-346.

²⁶¹ See, for example, Museum Numbers: IS.11:3-1887; IS.11:7-1887; IS.11:10-1887; and IS.11:12-1887 (V and A).

²⁶² *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, Vol. VI, 1781-85, pp. 239-40 and 373.

²⁶³ Add. Or. 745 (British Library).

²⁶⁴ Pamela G. Price, *Kingship and Political Practice in Colonial India* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 190.

²⁶⁵ Sandria Freitag, 'Enactments of Ram's Story and the Changing Nature of 'the Public' in British India' *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 14.1 (1991), pp. 65-90; and Milinda Banerjee, 'The Royal Nation and Global

In the mid-1780s, imperial responsibility as a part of the efficacy of early British Indian administration had become prominent. According to Edmund Burke, the British should

Shew them [natives of India] that you are determined to become the protectors, not the oppressors of the country. That you wish to hold your authority on the solid rock of their happiness. Consider that there are thirty millions of souls involved in this affair; and as you cannot maintain your government by mere power, study to preserve it by policy... This is the true duty as well as the virtue of government; and it is in the exercise of this salutary wisdom that it is able to give security and happiness to the governed.²⁶⁶

Such ideological outpourings, however, were the product of a growing, confident imperial regime as unfurled during the Hastings' impeachment trials, which, in turn, blurred the realms of the moral obligations of rulership and that of the British clemency in India.²⁶⁷ According to Kate Teltscher, Hastings' trial became less about India rather than about the cultural reworkings of imperial gains in British national life.²⁶⁸ As Sir William Jones declared in 1793, 'In these *Indian* territories, which providence has thrown into the arms of *Britain* for their protection and welfare, the religion, manners, and laws of the natives preclude even the idea of political freedom... our country derives essential benefit from the diligence of a placid and submissive people'.²⁶⁹ Thus, as Uday Mehta has shown, the British excluded the ideas of liberty from India altogether.²⁷⁰

The immediate context for British imperial confidence in the closing decades of the eighteenth century was their success against Tipu Sultan. Military victories in India in course of this period fed into a burgeoning national culture in Britain surrounding King George III.²⁷¹ As much as triumphant glory, British identity came to be shaped by the spirit of sacrifice for the cause of the nation abroad. Robert Home's painting, *The Death of Colonel Moorehouse at the Storming of the*

Intellectual History: Monarchic Routes to Conceptualizing National Unity' in Milinda Banerjee, Charlotte Backerra, Cathleen Sarti (eds.), *Transnational Histories of the 'Royal Nation'* (Cham, 2017), pp. 21-44.

²⁶⁶ Edmund Burke, 'Speech on Secret Committee, 30 April 1781' in P. J. Marshall (ed.), *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, Vol. 5 (Oxford, 1981); India: Madras and Bengal, 1774-1785, p. 137. See also, P. J. Marshall, *Problems of Empire. Britain and India, 1757-1813* (London, 1968), pp. 52-77.

²⁶⁷ Sara Suleri Goodyear, *The Rhetoric of English India* (London, 1992), pp. 49-74.

²⁶⁸ Kate Teltscher, *India Inscribed: European and British Writing on India, 1600-1800* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 157-186.

²⁶⁹ Tenth Anniversary Discourse of the Asiatic Society by Sir William Jones
http://www.eliohs.unifi.it/testi/700/jones/Jones_Discourse_10.html [Accessed on 8 March 2017].

²⁷⁰ Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire. A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago, 1999).

²⁷¹ Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820' in *Past & Present*, 102 (1984), pp. 94-129. For British concerns regarding conflict with Tipu, see *Fort William India House Correspondence*, Vol. 11 (New Delhi, 1970), pp. 137, 166, 199, and 475.

Pettah Gate of Bangalore, 7 March 1791 (Figure 12), dated 1793,²⁷² features Moorehouse, attended by his compatriots, valiantly embracing death in Britain's struggle in the Third Anglo-Mysore War. Amidst the chaos and destruction around him, the figure of Moorehouse in his death throes brings a sense of both calm and fortitude. The official artist of the Mysore campaign, Home, who himself was injured whilst witnessing the battle scene,²⁷³ invests in this image a high degree of sensitivity—although awaiting his impending death, Moorehouse's face is resplendent in the pride of his devotion to his nation, and the whiteness of his uniform with tinges of red turns him into a martyr for the Christian faith. In its settings and the arrangement of figures, Home's canvas closely resembles Benjamin West's *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770) (Figure a). Just as General Wolfe had defended British interests against France in Canada during the Seven Years' War, so did Colonel Moorehouse rise against Tipu Sultan, France's staunch ally in India. Similar to the presence of a mourning Amerindian in West's painting, here Home has also presented an Indian sepoy witnessing the death of Moorehouse with sorrow.²⁷⁴ Home's painting of the dying Colonel connects India with the British Empire in another part of the world, and thus redeploys the global artistic vocabulary of imperial martyrdom on the Indian stage.

The height of imperial confidence was, however, reached with the defeat and death of Tipu Sultan in the Battle of Seringapatam on 4 May 1799. In contrast to Home's depiction of Colonel Moorehouse's glorious, Christ-like embodiment, Arthur William Devis' representation (Figure 13) of the body of Tipu Sultan, as discovered by General David Baird and Colonel Arthur Wellesley, was as a 'lump of clay'.²⁷⁵ Devis' painting presents the 'Tiger of Mysore', Tipu Sultan

²⁷² NAM. 1971-07-5-1 (National Army Museum).

²⁷³ E. B. Day, 'Without Permit', Mss Eur Photo Eur 331, p. 160.

²⁷⁴ The presence of the native in Home's painting also echoes the contemporary account of an officer who witnessed Colonel Moorehouse's death, published in *Star*, Friday, February 17, 1792 [Accessed online from Burney Collection of Newspapers]:

I saw natives of his train bestrew,
With fragrant blooming flowers his honour'd grave;
This offering was to simple nature true,
Nor pomp could give a richer to the brave.

²⁷⁵ Arthur William Devis' painting has been sourced from the website of National Museums Scotland <https://www.nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/stories/scottish-history-and-archaeology/seringapatam-sword>. The expression 'lump of clay' is taken from 'The following interesting account of the conduct of the late Sultaun of the Mysore, pending the assault of his capital, and of the particulars of his death, is collected from the testimony of the Killadar of Seringapatam, and some of the immediate attendants of his person' in *Edinburgh Magazine, or Literary Miscellany*, 1800 [Accessed online from Proquest British Periodicals], p. 299. The same article also reports that even in death, Tipu Sultan maintained his stern countenance, p. 298.

as lying dead whilst the British officials attempt to confirm his identity. His lifeless, mangled body was a proof that ‘our [British] success has been complete’.²⁷⁶ Just as Tipu Sultan throughout his reign had killed, tortured, and circumcised his British captives and disorientated their identities,²⁷⁷ at death he himself was depicted as divested of all symbols of his power, including his turban and sword. By removing his sword and turban, Tipu Sultan had been delegitimated as a ruler. The sword and war turban were designated to be presented to Lord Cornwallis as a mark of respect for his contribution in struggles against the kingdom of Mysore.²⁷⁸ When the Standards of State formerly used by Tipu Sultan and his father, Hyder Ali were received at Fort William in 1803,²⁷⁹ it signified the end of their dynasty.

The delegitimization of Tipu Sultan’s rule continued even after his death. Whereas Tipu Sultan was represented as a bigot and vicious tyrant,²⁸⁰ the British presented themselves as the epitome of morality. Crucial, in this regard, was the resurgence of the rhetoric of despotism in British Indian administration in the final decades of the eighteenth century.²⁸¹ An expression of the British morality was the restoration of the Wodeyar dynasty who had ruled Mysore before Hyder Ali. Although the Wodeyars had been brought back, in reality political power was in the hands of the British. The person appointed to establish and perpetuate British influence over Mysore, however, was Purnaiah, the former *Dewan* of Mysore under Tipu Sultan. The native advisors of the latter became the greatest question of concern. Indian rulers’ native advisors were detested, distrusted, and their vices were considered to be at the heart of the evils in Indian kingdoms.²⁸² This can be related to the traditional fear of the king’s advisors in Georgian England, which had been prominent throughout the eighteenth century.²⁸³ Though the British officials sought to distance Indian rulers from their native advisors, they could not be done away with altogether. Wherever native advisors defected to the British side or came to be employed by the Britons, there was a

²⁷⁶ *Bombay Courier*, 25 May 1799 [Accessed online from Burney Collection of Newspapers]. Insertion mine.

²⁷⁷ James Bristow, *A Narrative Of The Sufferings Of James Bristow* (London, 1793); and Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600-1850* (London, 2010), pp. 288-289.

²⁷⁸ *Madras Courier*, 26 July 1799 [Accessed online from Burney Collection of Newspapers].

²⁷⁹ W.S. Seton-Karr (ed.), *Selections From Calcutta Gazettes*, Vol. 3 (Calcutta, 1868), p. 376.

²⁸⁰ The best example of this is William Kirkpatrick’s translation of *Select letters of Tippoo Sultan to various public functionaries...* (London, 1811).

²⁸¹ Wilson, *The Domination of Strangers*, p. 64.

²⁸² See, for example, IOR/R/2/1/246 Letter to A.H. Cole, the Resident of Mysore by George Strachey, Chief Secretary, 3 June 1814 (APAC: BL).

²⁸³ John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 39-76.

tendency to convert them into salaried officials alongside maintaining the dignity of their stature, so as to present them as able servants of the British imperial authority.²⁸⁴

In his half-length portrait (Figure 14) by Thomas Hickey, dated c. 1801,²⁸⁵ Purnaiah is depicted as resplendently dressed in a long golden *jama* and a red shawl that is draped over his right shoulder and left hand. The *tilak* (sacred mark among the Hindus) appears on his forehead and he is wearing a rich turban on his head. In his left hand, Purnaiah is shown as holding a piece of paper and his right hand is placed on a few documents on a table beside a book. Behind him is a couch beyond which can be seen a neo-Classical column. On his right-hand side, there is a statue of Justice holding a baton and scales. It seems, therefore, that whereas Tipu Sultan had been denuded of the symbols of his power, Purnaiah was vested with neo-Classical symbolism to suggest that the British believe him to have lived up to, or was expected to meet, their expectations of prudence and efficiency in administration.

Although Purnaiah's caste mark and his Indian attire have been kept intact, his connections with Indian society are omitted by the lack of anything 'Indian' in the background. The absence of the 'local' in the portrait can perhaps be explained in terms of the initial British anxiety to maintain his loyalty to them.²⁸⁶ Another important element in the image is Purnaiah's turban. The colour of the turban matches that of the seat behind Purnaiah, and can be viewed as illustrative of him deriving his prestige from his official position. The colour is green, a symbol of rebirth and regeneration. The trope of matching the sitter's attire with the accoutrement of his office is well-known.²⁸⁷ However, in this context, this depiction signifies that his official position as well as its associated privileges, were derived from the British. As the British capitalized on Purnaiah's local knowledge, this representation became a means of assimilating him to the cause of the British Indian empire. The presence of the statue of Justice is also a firm reminder that Britons were keen on exhibiting their Mysorean project as just, and the involvement of Purnaiah in particular was an avowal of its justness.

²⁸⁴ See, for example, the case of Reza Khan, the Naib Nazim of Bengal in *Select Committee Proceedings*, p. 366.

²⁸⁵ B1973.1.22 (Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection).

²⁸⁶ For British discussions on Purnaiah, and the ideas of both emoluments and checks on his power, see IOR/F/4/4708 (APAC: BL).

²⁸⁷ This can be seen more prominently in the case of royal portraiture. The most telling example is probably Hyacinth-Rigaud's portrait of Louis XIV.

Sacrifices for the defence of British authority in India and its continued successes, nevertheless, made the celebration of imperial power even more grandiloquent. No one exemplified this temperament more than the Governor-General Marquess of Wellesley (previously known as the Earl of Mornington). In Robert Home's portrait (Figure 15) dated c. 1800, Wellesley is depicted as looking directly at the viewer and standing with a relaxed confidence.²⁸⁸ He is dressed in officer's uniform and holds a black hat in his right hand. He rests his left hand on the hilt of a sword which is exposed in its entirety except for the tip, drawn inwards. The portrait assumes even more formality as it features Wellesley as wearing the collar of the Order of St. Patrick. Next to him is a table with a host of administrative papers and documents together with writing equipment that signify his official position in the British Indian government. Such an image is further enhanced by the presence of a statue of Athena, the Greek goddess of war, strategy, and wisdom. The tapestry in the background suggests to the viewer an outside world of British prowess in India. St. Mary's Church at Fort St. George is seen in this portrait and the foreground of the church is bustling with the presence of the EIC's armed forces. Two Indian noblemen (whose identity is unknown) appear to be mounting stairs leading up to the hall where Wellesley is standing. Whilst one of them looks up to Wellesley in awe and reverence, the other points to the soldiers in the scene.

Wellesley's portrait here provides a glimpse into the transforming ethos of British rule in India. Not only did he embody a more authoritative British imperial power, but also carved a role for himself as heralding its success and prosperity. Wellesley envisaged the formation of an imperial ruling class in India—he advocated a closer connection between the British royalty and the Governor-General as he believed that the official head of British Indian administration should be a part of the ruling classes at home.²⁸⁹ As keen as he was to set high standards of dignity and integrity of his public character, so did he endeavour to project an idealized image of the British as powerful yet beneficent rulers.²⁹⁰ The armed forces and the British victories were not to simply

²⁸⁸ I have dated the portrait based on Foster's account of Robert Home's Indian career. See William Foster, 'British Artists in India' *The Volume of the Walpole Society*, 19 (1930), p. 45. I am here using a mezzotint version published in 1807 and currently housed at National Galleries Scotland, accession number: EPL 77.1.

²⁸⁹ W. H. Hutton, 'An unpublished paper of Wellesley on the government of India' in *Imperial And Asiatic Quarterly Review And Oriental And Colonial Record*, 3.7 (1899), p. 296. Prior to becoming the Governor-General, the Earl of Minto also expressed a similar attitude,

²⁹⁰ Letter from the Earl of Mornington to Lord Grenville, dated 18 November 1798, from Fortescue MSS. iv. p. 381, as published in *The Wellesley papers; the life and correspondence of Richard Colley Wellesley* (London, 1914), pp.

become a conduit for brutality and ruthlessness, as evident from the statue of Athena and the angle of Wellesley's sword in the portrait. This is reflected in actual policies, as Wellesley inaugurated the policy of subsidiary alliance whereby Indian states were to come under the indirect control of the British government without war and bloodshed.²⁹¹ Dressed for the 'collar day' of the Order, Wellesley projects an image of himself as the beacon of a powerful British presence as the kingdom of Mysore now lay prostrate at their feet. The forty years-old Governor-General at the prime of his Indian career stands as an exemplar of excellence – rather than combining military prowess with a genuine interest in the care of Indians as testified by the presence of two Indian noblemen with expressions of compliance and gratification. Such idealized repertoires, however, did not go unquestioned. If Wellesley's visions of the Governor-General's elevated stature struck the Court of Directors as overambitious and superseding their authority, commercial interests in the Parliament made the deplorable state of Indians a vital point of criticism against him.²⁹²

The exalted position of the Governor-General as the representative of the British Crown in the portrait of Wellesley was instrumental in increasing the British self-consciousness as superseding the political authority of the Mughal emperor himself. Thus when, on his accession, the Mughal emperor Akbar II intended to gift a *khelat* (ceremonial cloak) to the Governor-General following imperial tradition, the proposal was vehemently opposed as it would be the 'public acknowledgement of vassalage and submission to the throne of Dehli on the part of the British government'.²⁹³ To Indian artists, however, the Mughal emperor continued to be the pivot of the realm. In his portrait (Figure 16) by an anonymous Delhi artist, dated c. 1820, emperor Akbar II is represented as seated on his throne in the *Diwan-e-Khas* (Hall of Private Audiences). Despite being merely a titular head of India in the aftermath of the Battle of Delhi (1803), the emperor is depicted

83-86; Letter from the Earl of Mornington to the Honourable Court of Directors, 3 August 1799, as published in Robert Montgomery Martin (ed.), *The Despatches, Minutes, And Correspondence Marquess Wellesley, K.G. During His Administration In India*, vol. 2 (London, 1836), pp. 72-103; and IOR/F/74/1616 (APAC: BL).

²⁹¹ For a contemporary reappraisal of the subsidiary alliance, see Sir Arthur Wellesley, 'Memorandum on Marquess Wellesley's Government of India' (1806), published in Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter (eds), *Archives of Empire*, Vol. 1, pp. 81-87.

²⁹² HC Deb, 05 April 1805, vol 4, cc. 225-53 [Hansard Parliamentary Debates Online].

²⁹³ IOR/F/4/237/5454 (APAC: BL). For the general policy of the British with Khilats, see Gail Minault, *The Emperor's old clothes: robing and sovereignty in late Mughal and early British India* in Stewart Gordon ed. *Robes of Honour: Khil'at in Pre-Colonial and Colonial India* (New Delhi, 2003), pp. 125-39.

with a halo behind his head, following the conventions of representing the emperor in Mughal artistic tradition, conventionally associated with the ruler's divinity.

The members of the royal family together with the courtiers are found standing on both sides of the throne in the image. Also prominent in the portrait is the presence of Sir David Ochterlony who was the Resident of Delhi. The grandeur of the surroundings enhances the majesty of Akbar II's royalty. Thus, the presence of the British Resident has been integrated within the display of Akbar II's political authority, even if it only existed in name. As the postures of Ochterlony are similar to that of the other courtiers standing in attendance for the emperor, the artist here represents the British Resident as acknowledging, and also subtly submitting to, the Mughal imperial authority.²⁹⁴

This section has engaged with the visual definitions of the British as the rulers of India. It has laid its particular focus on British self-representation in the images by both British and Indian artists. Throughout the section, there has emerged a tendency to vest the British with human qualities and administrative efficacy which, they thought, was lacking in Indians. Simultaneously, the representations of British political authority also brought forward the anxieties of upholding their political achievements. If Wellesley represented the face of a confident imperial power, there also remained the concerns for proving his project as just. The imagery of Oriental despotism, as seen here, was to both justify the British presence, and to prove them as being better than Indians. The works by Indian artists, though recognizing the growing British power as seen in the painting by Dip Chand, problematize the latter's image by exposing not only the problems of British interactions with Indian politics, but also representing images of Indian rulers as religio-cultural authorities as evident in the anonymous artist's painting of Babar Ali.

²⁹⁴ Indian rulers often considered the presence of the British residents in their kingdoms as adding to their royal dignity, see Michael H. Fisher, *Indirect rule in India: residents and the residency system 1764-1858* (Oxford, 1998). On the power of royal rituals and their pictorial representations, see Joanne Punzo Waghorne, *The Raja's Magic Clothes. Re-visioning Kingship and Divinity in England's India* (Pennsylvania, 1994), pp. 31-84. Cf. Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge, 1988).

Representing British homes in India

In Britain during the eighteenth century, the language of political authority embraced a more informal and prosaic dimension. This was largely based on familial intimacies and the growing significance of childhood, whereby the idea of home became central to social and cultural life. Through the management of the household and its material resources, and also in choices of décor, men and women imagined and forged links with the world outside. In other words, home was both the foundation for, and the expression of, people's relations with the times in which they lived.²⁹⁵ Through the genre of the conversation piece, such parlances of domesticity increasingly fed into visual arts. With the sitters reduced in scale, conversation pieces directed the viewers' attention to the surroundings, thus allowing an understanding of the sitters' tastes and sensibilities. Conversation piece paintings became popular with British royalty who, besides the representation of their formal grandeur, favoured images of themselves as doting parents and faithful conjugal partners. Whilst seemingly relaxed in their presentation, conversation pieces were politically powerful. Such images enhanced the theatricality of the domestic milieu as sitters celebrated, as well as exhibited, their aspirations of socio-political status and mobility.²⁹⁶

The importance of home and family is also visible in the colonial context. The rapid development of colonialism in the mid-seventeenth century resulted in rising ambitions on the part of the European patriarchal elite to secure the profits of colonial enterprises for intergenerational gain and succession by means of marital and political networks.²⁹⁷ Situated at the confluence of the colonial state and its subjects, home in early British India became an important site for thinking about issues of racial boundaries, spousal and filial attachments, and social influence and inclusion that ultimately hinged on the changing dynamics of political power.²⁹⁸ In this context, the role of

²⁹⁵ Margaret Hunt, *The middling sort: commerce, gender, and the family in England, 1680-1780* (London, 1996); and Karen Harvey, *The Little Republic: Masculinity and Domestic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2012).

²⁹⁶ Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the head: portraiture and social formation in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven, 1993), pp. 159-163.

²⁹⁷ Julia Adams, *The Familial State. Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), especially Chapter 3. For the case of British India, see Margot Finn, 'Anglo-Indian Lives in the Later Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries' *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 3.1 (2010), pp. 49-65.

²⁹⁸ Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the family in colonial India: The making of empire* (Cambridge, 2008); Margot Finn, 'Anglo-Indian Lives', *ibid.*, pp. 60-63; Margot Finn, 'Family Formations: Anglo India and the familial proto-state' in David Feldman and Jon Lawrence (eds), *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge, 2011); pp. 100-117; and Kate Smith, 'Imperial Families: Women Writing Home in Georgian Britain' in *Women's*

conversation pieces was, as we shall explore here, to provide a framework wherein the British home abroad and its imperial connections could be imagined and represented. Conversation pieces brought hierarchies of race and power into the settings of the home. As home became entangled within the complexities of empire, it was where British political authority could be staged and potentially upheld, yet leaving room for its crises and vacillations.

Away from their homeland, separated from friends, families and often children, and surviving through illness and amidst death, the idea of home was important for the Britons in India in the eighteenth century.²⁹⁹ However, in the early years of their political presence, creating a family was the preserve of a privileged few. The number of Englishwomen in India remained low, and also maintaining a household with an English wife was expensive.³⁰⁰ The European model of domesticity was thus inapplicable and had to be set aside. As Thomas Williamson wrote,

[M]atrimony is not so practicable in India as in Europe; and that, (unless indeed, among those platonic few whose passions are unnaturally obedient,) it is impossible for the generality of European inhabitants to act in exact conformity with those excellent doctrines, which teach us to avoid 'fornication, and all other deadly sins'. There are certain situations, and times, in which the law must be suffered to sleep; since its enforcement would neither be easy nor wise; such is the instance now before us.³⁰¹

The solution was to take Indian women as concubines. Not officially married to Englishmen, the native quasi-wives or *bibis* gave Englishmen a foundation in Indian society, helped develop their language skills, and also facilitated intelligence-gathering and diplomatic relations, besides their taking care of their household, and providing them with sexual and emotional companionship.³⁰² However, such relationships largely remained open secrets. From the very outset, the Court of Directors had been largely against marital unions between native women and the employees of the EIC.³⁰³ The official bias against the Indian female companions of the Company's servants was

History Review, 11 December 2014, pp.1-18. For a reappraisal of the importance of family in British imperial history, see Esme Cleall and Laura Ishiguro and Emily J. Manktelow, 'Imperial Relations: Histories of family in the British Empire' *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 14.1 (2013).

²⁹⁹ For longings of home in empire, see Anonymous, *Hartley House*, 3 Vols. (London, 1789).

³⁰⁰ Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the family in colonial India*, pp. 44-45.

³⁰¹ Thomas Williamson, *East India Vade-Mecum* (London, 1810), Vol. 1, pp. 456-457.

³⁰² C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 91; Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the family in colonial India*, specifically, Chapter 1; and for the latest treatment of conflation of concubinage with domestic slavery and its complexities in colonial India, see Margot Finn, 'Slaves out of Context: Domestic Slavery and the Anglo-Indian Family, c. 1780-1830' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 1.19 (2009), pp. 181-203.

³⁰³ Thomas Williamson, *East India Vade-Mecum*, Vol. 1, p. 457.

reflected in the social life of the British in eighteenth-century India. Although the practice of having Indian *bibis* was well-known, Britons met their companions only in private. Native ladies were never invited to take part in the balls, parties, public entertainments and assemblies in the British presidencies.³⁰⁴ Through such exclusionary practices, native companions were often reduced to the status of being meant for their ‘use’ by the Britons.³⁰⁵

But what happens when such relationships are depicted on the canvas? In Francesco Renaldi’s conversation piece (Figure 17), *The Palmer Family* dated 1786, Major William Palmer is depicted as ‘at home in India’ with coconut and plantain trees in the background.³⁰⁶ He is wearing a red coat, and appears to be comfortably seated. The apparent tranquillity of the scene of an Englishman at home is immediately problematized as the artist draws the viewers’ attention towards how Palmer casts his gaze downwards. Palmer is at the centre of the canvas, where he is flanked on both sides by his two Indian female companions. On the right is Bibi Faiz Baksh, and on the left is seated his junior *bibi* from Lucknow. Whilst the artist has placed both of Palmer’s *bibis* beneath him, the scene is far from what English family conversation pieces were conventionally all about: unlike the representation of an Englishwoman’s restrained and dignified intimacy with her husband (as mostly seen in them holding hands), Renaldi presents Palmer’s Lucknow *bibi* as holding on to his lap—a gesture that he fondly reciprocates by holding her arm. Palmer in turn is looking at Faiz Baksh who is seated on the floor cross-legged. Three *ayahs* (nurse-maids), two standing on both sides and one sat at Palmer’s feet between the two *bibis*, complete the picture.

Over the course of his career in India, Palmer held many important official posts. He entered the Company’s army in 1766, and had served as the Governor-General Warren Hastings’ A.D.C. and as Military Secretary. During the period when this portrait was painted, he was at the command of the Seventh Battalion of Sepoys in Calcutta, and soon after he was to serve as the Resident to the Mahadaji Sindhia, and later with the Maratha Peshwa from 1798 to 1801. In 1801, he was demoted to the rank of a General and became in-charge of the command in Monghyr in eastern India.³⁰⁷ As Durba Ghosh has further elaborated, Palmer’s demotion came about as a result of his failure to secure a treaty with the Marathas favourable to the British, due to his alleged sympathies with

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ William Hickey, *Memoirs*, Vol. 3, p. 276.

³⁰⁶ F597 (BL).

³⁰⁷ Mildred Archer, *India and British Portraiture*, p. 282, and Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the family*, p. 82.

Indian rule.³⁰⁸ Official anxieties regarding Palmer's increasing involvement with Indian life are reflected in Renaldi's image. Although Palmer is in European dress, his steadiness is sacrificed for a relaxed presence that becomes troubling as there lie dangers of transgressing boundaries with the native. Such dangers are exacerbated by the presence of children. Renaldi's portrait offers us the images of three children of Palmer with his *bibi* Faiz Baksh, William, Mary, and the baby Hastings in the arms of his mother. Remarkable here is the artist's emphasis on the general 'whiteness' of the children. They are all dressed in white European garments, and the whiteness of their complexion and angelic faces stand as firm reminders of their European identity.³⁰⁹ Palmer's children in this painting were all baptized, and had European names. As they grew up, Mary married an Englishman, Captain James Arrow, and Hastings joined his older brother William in his firm, Palmer and Co. in Hyderabad.³¹⁰

For Major Palmer's son William, his mixed parentage provided him with possibilities of navigating the courtly cultures of Hyderabad and developing a close relationship with the Nizam.³¹¹ However, the life of his mother, Faiz Baksh, became obscure as her progeny became European.³¹² She in fact shared the fate of many of her contemporaries in the same position, native *bibis* being anathema to Britain's political authority in India. In official circles, they were often considered to be enchantresses who lured Britons away from their sense of duty and dedication to the service of the EIC.³¹³ Turning to the visual representation of Major Palmer's Indian *bibis* on Renaldi's canvas, we find them depicted as beautiful, attractive and sensuous figures, bedecked in jewels and wearing diaphanous attire. Behind the depiction of Indian women as charming and pretty, lay their connotations of being both products and expressions of despotism. When Mirza Abu Taleb visited England in the early 1800s, he was confronted with the question of the liberty of Asian women by an English lady. The lady, as Taleb writes, commented that, 'the women of

³⁰⁸ Durba Ghosh, *ibid.*

³⁰⁹ The 'degree' of whiteness in visual arts as a determinant of racial admixtures through marriage and sexual liaisons was the subject of *casta* paintings in mid-eighteenth century Mexico. See, for example, Magali M. Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin, 2003).

³¹⁰ Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the family*, p. 86.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³¹² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

³¹³ See, for example, the official British anxiety as revealed in the discussions of witnesses in the case of James Achilles Kirkpatrick's love affair with the Hyderabad noblewoman Khair-un-Nissa in William Dalrymple, *White Mughals* (London, 2002), p. 8.

Asia have no liberty at all, but live like slaves, without honour and authority in the houses of their husbands'. She further added that, while the men were wrong in their mistreatment of women, the women themselves should not have submitted to the menfolk to become 'undervalued'.³¹⁴ Such ideas of the depravity of Asiatic women were also derived from eighteenth-century feminist discourse that viewed the sole pursuit of beauty and sensuality on the part of women as a mark of weakness. This weakness was the outcome of complete submission to men and lack of reason which, in turn, had deeper political meanings. As Mary Wollstonecraft writes,

Obedience, unconditional obedience, is the catch-word of the tyrants of every description, and to render "assurance doubly sure," one kind of despotism supports another. Tyrants would have cause to tremble if reason were to become the rule of duty in any of the relations of life, for the light might spread till the perfect day arrived.³¹⁵

The idea of Indian women being entirely at the mercy of their menfolk was at the heart of the early British administration in India, where it was understood that 'private species of despotism is, in miniature, the counterpart of what prevails in the state'.³¹⁶ In light of the discussion above, the exaggeration of native women's sensual charm in Renaldi's painting becomes a denial of the agency of indigenous female rulers and stateswomen in negotiating political power with the EIC.³¹⁷ The supposed weakness of Indian women also reduced their credibility as able mothers of the future rulers of British India. This belief justified the widespread practice of the removal of the children of Britons from their Indian mothers, so that they could be sent to Britain for their upbringing and education. Moreover, to return to Thomas Williamson, 'the issue of an European father by a native woman, is usually of an effeminate, weakly constitution, and of a disposition by

³¹⁴ Mirza Abu Taleb Khan, *Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan in Asia, Africa, and Europe, during the years 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802, and 1803*, Trans. Charles Stuart (London, 1814), p. 402. For the full-text of Abu Taleb's *Vindication of the Liberties of Asiatic Women*, see pp. 401-417 (Appendix B) in the same volume. For a scholarly appraisal of Abu Taleb's encounter with and understanding of British women, see Michael H. Fisher, 'Representing 'his' women: Mirza Abu Talib Khan's 1801 'Vindication of the liberties of Asiatic women' *Indian economic and social history review*, 37.2 (2000), pp. 215-238.

³¹⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication Of The Rights Of Woman* (London, 1792), p. 163. See also, pp. 36-37, 46, and 58.

³¹⁶ Alexander Dow, *The History of Hindostan*, Vol. 1 (London, 1772), p. xiv.

³¹⁷ For some examples of voices of Indian female rulers and statesmen as negotiating political power with the EIC, see Betty Joseph, 'Proxies of Power: Women in the Colonial Archive' in Felicity A. Nussbaum (ed.), *The Global Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, 2003), pp. 123-137, and IOR/F/4/440/10620 (APAC: BL)

no means entitled to commendation'.³¹⁸ Such prejudices led to the deprivation of European soldiers' native wives from the EIC pension scheme as stipulated under the Lord Clive Fund.³¹⁹

Contrary to the representation of native *bibis*, the presence of English women on family conversation pieces exhibited familiarity. For many an Englishman in India, having an English wife meant that they could lead a normal life, having a regular life with proper hours of work and rest, rather than reckless sociability characterized by the excesses of eating and drinking.³²⁰ In fact, the EIC itself was active in sending English women to India. As early as in 1671, the Company paid for the passage for twenty women to Bombay. Alongside the payment for the passage, it was also arranged that £300 per annum would be paid to women who managed to secure a husband that the Company would approve of. The payment would continue for life, even in the event of widowhood.³²¹ In recent years, Pamela Sharpe has also pointed out that women were directly involved with the Company in their capacities as stockholders, pensioners, rentiers, and workers. When they were allowed to travel, apart from being marriage partners, women were also treated as the EIC's servants and employees and thus became vital to the foundation of 'an English Collony'.³²²

In the early years of the EIC's presence in India when the number of women remained low, they still took an active part in the life in the English settlements, steadfast in the observance of the hierarchies of official rank and designation.³²³ As British societies in the presidencies continued to thrive in course of the eighteenth century, Englishwomen graced various public occasions. Given that finding a husband in India was easier for Englishwomen as compared to their prospects in London since there were fewer of them,³²⁴ expectations were high. According to Rosemary Marangoly George, colonial occupation became cardinal to the evolution of the domestic female

³¹⁸ Thomas Williamson, *East India Vade-Mecum*, Vol. 1, p. 458.

³¹⁹ IOR/F/4/360/8774.

³²⁰ Anne de Courcy, 'Prologue' in *The Fishing Fleet. Husband Hunting in the Raj* (London, 2012).

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² Pamela Sharpe, 'Gender at sea: women and the East India Company in seventeenth-century London' in Penelope Lane, Neil Raven and K.D.M. Snell (eds), *Women, Work and Wages in England, 1600-1850* (London, 2004), pp. 47-67, particularly, pp. 64-65.

³²³ Percival Spear, *The Nabobs: a study of the social life of the English in eighteenth-century India* (London, 1980), p. 13.

³²⁴ *Anglo-India, social, moral, and political; being a collection of papers from the Asiatic journal in three volumes*, 1 (1837-38), pp. 14-18.

British subject. She noted that ‘In India, one need not be an aristocrat or be married to one, nor have an estate— a husband with an official post, servants, and a modest compound around one's house are the only prerequisites for playing the grand lady’.³²⁵ Home was thus the microcosm of the empire, whereby through effective household management and the fulfilment of duties as wives and mothers, women contributed to the imperial project.³²⁶

In Robert Home's *Portrait of William Fairlie and his Family* (1802) (Figure 18),³²⁷ at the centre are present Fairlie's three eldest children William, John, and Agnes Maria with his wife Margaret Ogilvie. Margaret is seated, holding her child, and looking up at her husband in an adoring yet reserved manner. On his part, William, who worked as a supplier of provisions and animals to the Bengal army, affectionately places his left palm on his daughter's head, resting his right arm on the couch. Whilst Margaret holds up John who spreads out his both hands, two other children hold musical instruments. Agnes Maria is about to blow a trumpet, and William is playing a drum. All dressed in white, mother and children symbolize purity. Margaret, with John in her arms, becomes the personification of the Virgin and the Child, whilst Agnes Maria and William celebrate their presence. William Fairlie savours the moment as the head of a growing and loving family. His wife is here pictured as an embodiment of virtue, conjugal fidelity, and motherhood. Unlike the Palmer ladies' approach to Major Palmer, her glances meet with those of William Fairlie. Her relationship with Fairlie as seen in the painting is thus that of domestic partnership, rather than complete subordination to the husband, something that was to become the fulcrum of Victorian morality.³²⁸ As depicted here, William Fairlie and his family idealize Lord Cornwallis' vision of British domesticity in India, as he banned mixed-race children from government posts. The monumentality of the scene is enhanced by the presence of tapestries and neoclassical columns, alluding to the British empire as ruling India, represented by the palm tree. Fairlies are thus a pious

³²⁵ Rosemary Marangoly George, ‘Homes in the Empire, Empires in the Home’ in *Cultural Critique*, 26 (1993-1994), p 104.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-115.

³²⁷ MOU275470 (Bridgeman Art Library).

³²⁸ For the tensions of the Victorian idea of domestic companionship in Bengali households, see Dipesh Chakraborty, ‘The Difference-Deferral of a Colonial Modernity: Public Debates on Domesticity in British Bengal’ in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, 1997), pp. 373-405.

family, and the children would follow the suit of the parents in their service to the cause of British empire both at home and outside.

Alongside the care and upbringing of children, another important task of the *memsahibs* in India was the supervision of servants. According to Mrs. Eliza Fay, who lived in India in the early 1780s, it was very hard to get any housework properly done by native servants because of their reluctance, dishonesty, and prejudices, and because ‘these wretches have no sense of shame’.³²⁹ Having servants, nevertheless, was a mark of respectability. As Beth Fowkes Tobin has pointed out, traditional conversation pieces painted in Britain did not depict English servants, but often represented ‘black’ servants from India, Africa, and the Caribbean.³³⁰ The visual representations of servants in British households in India was an important part of neutralizing the troubles faced by Englishwomen in their everyday life in dealing with servants. These dissonances are set aside as servants are carefully placed in the canvas so as to meet the representational needs of their masters,³³¹ both belonging to and making their way up as parts of the British bourgeoisie and aristocracy. In managing their various servants, the *memsahibs* got a taste of what ruling India was like.³³²

Arthur William Devis’ painting, *Portrait of Judge Suetonius Grant Heatley and Temperance Heatley with their Indian servants, in an interior in Calcutta* (Figure 19),³³³ dated around 1786, presents the Suetonius Grant Heatley with his sister as seated in a relaxed manner. Temperance is dressed in white, holding a book open in her hands. Suetonius places his left hand on a table where two books can also be seen. He, however, is not reading, but smoking a *huqqa*, attended by his *huqqabardar* (servant managing the hubble-bubble or *huqqa*). Both brother and sister look up as their *chobdar* (mace-bearer) bows to them with folded hands, as if delivering some message. The floor of the room in which they sit with their servants features a richly designed Persian carpet.

³²⁹ Eliza Fay, *The Original Letters from India of Mrs. Eliza Fay* (London, 1908), pp. 137, 139, and 145. In order to get a generic idea of various kinds servants working for the British in India, see Charles D’Oyly and Thomas Williamson, *The European in India* (London, 1813).

³³⁰ Beth Fowkes Tobin, ‘The English Garden Conversation Piece in India’ in Felicity A. Nussbaum (ed.), *The Global Eighteenth Century*, p. 174.

³³¹ Though using different visual images, Prasannajit de Silva has a similar finding. See Prasannajit de Silva, ‘Representing Home Life Abroad: British Domestic Life in Early-Nineteenth-Century India’ *Visual Culture in Britain*, 12.3 (2011), pp. 313-331. He, however, does not address the role of British women.

³³² George, ‘Homes in the Empire, Empires in the Home’, pp. 109-113.

³³³ CH451499 (Bridgeman Art Library).

The image shows the Heatleys as comfortable with their Indian lifestyle. Their servants are obedient, as if present in the image only to enhance the status of their masters. The Heatley siblings, on their part, revel in the moment as they enjoy being served by Indians in their service. *Huqqa* was one of the first Indian items to be seen in the English inventories in India, and its inclusion within this image attests to its growing popularity among Britons in the late eighteenth century.³³⁴ The painting is, thus, a token of the Heatleys' luxurious and tranquil lifestyle in India.

If enjoying the life in India was important, it was even more pertinent to keep up an essentially British lifestyle. The latter half of the eighteenth century witnessed a vortex of criticism against Indian luxuries, that supposedly corrupted a British life which was otherwise simple and unostentatious. British women both in Britain and in India were often the focus of such criticisms because of their love of fineries and splendour.³³⁵ At a time when British officials increasingly abjured the practice of accepting gifts from Indian royalty and elites and cultivated a powerful, yet restrained image of themselves, the feminine desire for the riches of India was seen as detrimental to its governance by British officials.³³⁶ These anxieties continued to grow to the extent that British women in India during the Victorian period, as Nupur Chaudhuri has shown, completely distanced themselves from the consumption of Indian goods and food during their stay in India, whilst introducing Indian jewellery, fabrics, and food items back home in Britain.³³⁷

When studied in terms of such extremes, Johan Zoffany's painting of the *Auriol and Dashwood Families* (1783-87) (Figure 20)³³⁸ presents a fascinating set of concurrences. The painting depicts a large group of Englishmen and women who have assembled for a tea party under a jackfruit tree in James Peter Auriol's garden. At the centre are seated two ladies, Charlotte and Sophia, who

³³⁴ For the English association with *huqqa* in India, see Percival Spear, *Nabobs*, p. 36. Inventories collected across three presidencies in India also register a growing presence of *huqqa* in the early colonial households. For this, see Margot Finn and M. Adams, 'Inventories' in their *Colonial possession : personal property and social identity in British India, 1780-1848* [data collection]. UK Data Service. SN: 5254, <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-5254-1> [Accessed 24 June 2019].

³³⁵ Tillman W. Nechtman, 'Nabobinas: Luxury, Gender, and the Sexual Politics of British Imperialism in India in the Late Eighteenth Century' *Journal of Women's History* 18.4, (2006), pp. 8-30, 173; and Priya Shah, 'Barbaric pearl and gold': gendered desires and colonial governance in Emma Roberts's *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindostan*' *Studies in Travel Writing*, 16.1 (2012), pp. 31-46.

³³⁶ Priya Shah, 'Barbaric pearl and gold', *ibid.*, p. 34..

³³⁷ Nupur Chaudhuri, 'Shawls, Jewelry, Curry, and Rice in Victorian Britain' in Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (eds), *Western Women and Imperialism. Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington, 1992), pp. 231-246.

³³⁸ Museum Number: L2013.1 (On loan from a Private Collection at The Holburne Museum, Bath).

later got married to two of the sitters in the image. Charlotte wed Thomas Dashwood, who is shown as sitting at a table next to Sophia and playing chess. Sophia married John Princep who is seated next to Charlotte. Next to Thomas Dashwood stands James Auriol, and his two brothers, Charles (in red uniform) and John stand near John Princep. Friendly gatherings as this were an important part of the British life in India.³³⁹ As Thomas Dashwood and his future spouse join the Auriol brothers and James' wife-to-be in the cool shade of the jackfruit tree, they seem to have transplanted British sociability to a local context. In this they are served by servants of the Auriols playing various roles. Whilst a courier (*hirkarah*) standing next to an Indian accountant (*banian*) hands over a letter to James Auriol, a *huqqabardar* fills tobacco into Mr. John Princep's *huqqa*. As Charlotte and Sophia take tea, they are helped by a table-attendant (*khedmutgar*) who pours hot water into the silver teapot, which was their family heirloom,³⁴⁰ held up by James Auriol's black slave, Nabob, in a salver.

The importance of tea-drinking to the notion of Britishness is evinced by the presence of the various utensils related to tea services in British homes in India.³⁴¹ Back in Georgian Britain, tea parties were an important part of the culture of politeness, and their depiction in conversation pieces with careful rendering of tea equipage (which was often highly expensive) signified status-making for the sitters.³⁴² When served by black servants, their exoticism was conflated with the idea of tea as a product of the Orient.³⁴³ In the painting of the Auriol and Dashwood families, the Indian practice of *huqqa*-smoking is re-made into a constituent of Britishness when introduced in conjunction with tea-drinking. Servants in the image thus become theatrical properties in the performance of British socio-political power.

The idea of home being a prototype of British Indian empire also became visible in the work of the Patna artist, Zain-al-Din Shaykh, working for Sir Elijah Impey and his wife Mary. In his painting of *Lady Mary Impey giving instructions to her household staff* (Figure 21), Calcutta,

³³⁹ Anonymous, *Hartley House*, Vol. 1, pp. 11.

³⁴⁰ Mildred Archer, *India and British Portraiture*, p. 160.

³⁴¹ See, for example, Selection from the Inventory of Mrs. Anne Nowlan, taken 26 October 1775 (*Bengal Inventories*, Vol. XIV, No. 128). It included China teapots, China milk-pots and saucers, brown teapots, silver teapots, small salver, reproduced in Percival Spear, *Nabobs*, Appendix A, pp. 184-185.

³⁴² For the importance of tea parties in the conversation pieces in Britain, see Ching-Jung Chen, 'The Tea Party in Early Georgian Conversation Pieces', *British Art Journal*, 10 (2009), pp. 30-39.

³⁴³ Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, Chapter 1.

c.1775-1778,³⁴⁴ Lady Impey is depicted as seated on a low stool at the centre of the room. Although the style of painting might seem to evoke the idea of a Mughal *zenana* (female quarters) in the beginning, what we see in the image is the public arena of a British home. Lady Impey has left her bedchamber to attend to the tasks at hand and examines a basket of fruits which is meekly handed over to probably by her *mauly* (gardener). Awaiting in a line are her English butler and a native *hircarrah* (messenger). The *chobdars* (mace-bearers) and *Suntah-burdars* (silver baton bearer) stand on both sides of the painting, and in the foreground are visible various servants busy at housework assigned to them. Behind Lady Mary stand two figures, a boy fanning her, and a *dubash* (interpreter) assisting her.

Dressed in white, Mary Impey also wears a turban on her head. Whilst Mughal women wore veils, turbans became a part of female fashion in Britain as part of the Ottoman influence. By the late eighteenth century, turbans for British women symbolized their spirit of freedom and devotion to the cause of women's rights.³⁴⁵ When Lady Impey donned the turban in her household in India (a symbol of masculinity and royal honour, as well as Oriental despotism), the act is powerful in her assumption of the supervision of her Indian servants who, being involved in domestic service, have been largely feminized. If Zain-al-Din's image echoes the colonial idea of Indian men being effeminate, he simultaneously foregrounds the work done by them. Lady Mary might be their supervisor, but it is they who perform the necessary activities for the upkeep of her household.

Whilst servants were important to British life in India, their presence within the colonial household could be both stifling and dangerous to their masters. As architect Richard Blechynden exclaimed in 1799, 'we are always unarmed and surrounded by a host of servants'.³⁴⁶ For the British, it was necessary to maintain dignified behaviour and conduct before their servants.³⁴⁷ The most prominent among the servants in the British homes were *ayahs* (nursemaids). *Ayahs* mainly looked after children, but were also employed as attendants to the *memsahibs*.³⁴⁸ They were the only

³⁴⁴ Part of a private collection, courtesy of Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

³⁴⁵ Inal Onur, 'Women's Fashions in Transition: Ottoman Borderlands and the Anglo-Ottoman Exchange of Costumes' in *Journal of World History*, 22.2 (2011), pp. 243-72.

³⁴⁶ Richard Blechynden quoted in Peter Robb, *Sentiment and Self: Richard Blechynden's Calcutta Diaries, 1791-1822* (New Delhi, 2011), p. 35.

³⁴⁷ *Anglo-India*, p. 23.

³⁴⁸ Thomas Williamson, *East India Vademecum*, Vol. 1, pp. 340-342; *Ayahs* were mostly mixed-race women of Portuguese extraction, but Hindu and Muslim *ayahs* were also widely known.

female servants in Anglo-Indian families and, through their proximity to the children and the lady of the house, often became a focal point of discussions regarding the superiority of western femininity over its eastern counterpart, ultimately accentuating the idea of British supremacy in India. In *The Ayah and Lady. An Indian Story*, the author Mary Martha Sherwood portrays the conversations between her protagonists the lady and her Muslim *ayah* as a context wherein the former presents, instructs, and convinces the latter of the greatness of western virtues and Christian values.³⁴⁹ However, *ayahs* were by no means a simple expression of the validation of colonial order. The fact that they developed affectionate ties with the children they took care of often resulted in the proliferation of narratives depicting them as cruel and harmful.³⁵⁰ Apart from this, there were also allegations of laziness, dishonesty, moral laxity, and salaciousness.³⁵¹ In this regard, the *ayahs*' emotional attachment to the British children, brought up as the next generation of colonial rulers of India, exhibited risks of them becoming indigenized, lascivious, and undisciplined, and even alienated from their biological parents.³⁵²

In the undated painting attributed to Thomas Hickey titled *Portrait of a young boy on a bed, being attended by his ayah* (Figure 22),³⁵³ the locale of the scene could be either India or Britain.³⁵⁴ The

³⁴⁹ Mrs. Mary Martha Sherwood, *The Ayah and Lady. An Indian Story* (Boston, 1822). See also, Nupur Chaudhuri, 'Memsahibs and their servants in nineteenth-century India' in *Women's History Review*, 3, 1994, pp. 552, 553, 555, and 557-558.

³⁵⁰ Cf. Satyasikha Chakraborty, 'Mammies, Ayahs, Baboes: Postcards of Racialized Nursemaids from the Early Twentieth Century' *Visual Culture & Gender*, 13 (2018) p. 17; and Chakraborty's paper titled, 'Queer Labors, Immoral Attachments and Domestic Respectability: Early Colonial Invention of the Indian Ayah' on the panel 'Bibis and Ayahs' in the First International Conference, Servants' Pasts, 16-18 February 2017, Centre for Studies of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi, India <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cCUzMnazbQ> (as accessed on 25 June 2019). See also, Alice Perrin, 'Chunia, Ayah' (1926), reproduced in Ruskin Bond (ed.), *Ghost Stories from the Raj* (New Delhi, 2002); and the drawing titled, 'The ayah about to sacrifice the English child on an altar', c. 1825. WD1598 (APAC: BL).

³⁵¹ Indrani Sen, 'Colonial Domesticities, Contentious Interactions: Ayahs, Wet-Nurses and Memsahibs in Colonial India' in *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 16:3 (2009), p. 307. However, ayahs could also become important witnesses in the accusation of their memsahibs' sexual immorality in courts. For details, see Nitin Varma's blog, 'The Story of Ramonee or writing Servant histories through Divorce Trials' for the ESRC-funded project, *Servants Pasts* <https://servantspasts.wordpress.com/2017/06/21/first-blog-post/> 21 June 2017 (Accessed on 26 June 2019). Also Cf. Satyasikha Chakraborty, 'Mammies, Ayahs, Baboes: Postcards of Racialized Nursemaids from the Early Twentieth Century'.

³⁵² Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, 1995), pp. 137-164; and Indrani Sen, 'Colonial Domesticities, Contentious Interactions: Ayahs, Wet-Nurses and Memsahibs in Colonial India', pp. 299-328.

³⁵³ Thomas Hickey's Sitters' Box (National Portrait Gallery, London), from Lot 100 in Christie's Sale 8722, *The Brian Juho Collection From a Domaine in Southern France*, London, South Kensington |1 May 2013.

³⁵⁴ *Ayahs* were one of the most numerous among the South Asians to come to Britain during throughout the British rule in India. For *Ayahs* coming to work in Britain, see Olivia Robinson, 'Travelling Ayahs of the Nineteenth and

ayah faces away from the viewers as she is about to pull tassels to draw the drapes for putting the boy to bed. The boy's naked body is resplendent in moonlight, and the whiteness of his complexion marks a stark contrast to darkness of his *ayah*'s body. Although the *ayah* has been rendered 'faceless' in the image, she is far from being powerless as her gaze meets that of the boy. The painting sexualizes the *ayah* as can be understood from the draping of her saree. Such presentation of the *ayah*, together with the nakedness of the boy, makes the latter vulnerable to the indigene even within the sanctum of the British home.

Home, nevertheless, provided Britons with a safe avenue to think about Indian life. In Johan Zoffany's conversation piece, *Colonel Blair with his Family and an Indian Ayah* (1786) (Figure 23),³⁵⁵ Colonel William Blair is wearing his military coat and is seated next to his wife Jane. As the parents lovingly hold hands, the two daughters are busy in their own pursuits. Seated to the left of Colonel Blair is his eldest daughter Jane playing a pianoforte. On the right hand side of the painting can be seen two human figures. Next to Blair's wife Jane is the younger daughter Maria and the family's young *ayah*. The familial domesticity of the scene is enhanced by the presence of a dog and a cat. The *ayah* holds up the cat as Maria feeds it, whilst the dog looks up. Unlike the sensuous image of the *ayah* in Hickey's painting, the *ayah* here is a short, small, childlike figure and appears more as a playmate of the girls than their caregiver. Such representation of the *ayah* turns her into a subject less suited to the task delegated to her and feeds into the later colonial idea of Indian servants being like children. In this context, Mrs. Blair becomes the matron, a commanding presence who is in charge of both her children and her servant.³⁵⁶

This section has explored the idea of home as an imperial domain, and has examined how the hierarchies of power and status were reproduced in familial settings. The images represent home as a platform for showcasing British political authority. They, however, also expose the dangers and problems of upholding British imperial presence, and also try to resolve such issues as evident in the emphasis of 'whiteness' in the figures of Palmer's children with his *bibi*. Images also sought to manage what was often a problem in real life, that is, the question of servants. Images, as seen here, made British women identify with the imperial cause and, through their role within the

Twentieth Centuries: Global Networks and Mobilization of Agency' *History Workshop Journal*, 86 (2018), pp. 44-66.

³⁵⁵ Reference: T12610 (Tate Britain).

³⁵⁶ See, for example, Rosemary Marangoly George, 'Homes in the Empire, Empires in the Home', pp. 107-108.

household, allowed them to assume imperial stewardship as able domestic partners of British officials.

Indian ‘customs and manners’

Whilst witnessing the tranquillity of the Blair household, one cannot help but notice three paintings on the wall in the room. At the centre is a mountainous landscape scenery which is quintessentially Indian, as evident in the presence of a heavily caparisoned elephant. The serenity of the landscape as exhibited in the painting is, however, punctuated with two other images that signified the strangeness of Indian life for the British. On the left-hand side is a painting depicting the custom of *Sati*, that is, the self-immolation of Hindu widows, and on the right is a scene of hook-swinging. The visibility of these images within Zoffany’s larger canvas represents a duality— on the one hand, the home becomes a safe space to know and comprehend their surroundings as the paintings function as ‘neatly framed packages of interpreted and reproduced India’,³⁵⁷ while on the other the framed paintings at Blair’s home function as a ‘window’ to the prospects that lay ahead of the British as they forged their political authority. It is, thus, at home that Britons came to know their Indian empire; imagery, as will be shown below, became a means to visualize as well as address the seemingly strange and alien world that ultimately conformed to British ideas of their civilizational superiority that went hand-in-hand with their political ascendancy in India.

During the mid-eighteenth century, the notion that everyday life in India was governed by religion had become a commonplace within British views of Indian society. For them, the reliance on religion had led communities like the Hindus away from worldly affairs, drawing them towards the contemplation of an unforeseen afterlife, whilst for the Muslims, religious beliefs assumed a more aggressive, belligerent character.³⁵⁸ The most important aspect, however, was that Indians were known for inflicting pain onto themselves in the name of their faith.³⁵⁹ Colonial representations of *Sati* and hook-swinging have to be understood in this context. By the time

³⁵⁷ Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, p. 135.

³⁵⁸ Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley, 1998), p. 2; and Rebecca Brown, “Abject to Object: Colonialism Preserved through the Imagery of Muharram” in *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 43 (2003), pp. 203-17.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

British political ascendancy in India had begun to become a reality, *Sati* was already a staple of western travel writing. Just as the idea of a widow burning herself to death on her husband's funeral pyre informed the European canon of the heathenism of Indian life, the ritual of hook-swinging confirmed the colonial visions of the essential barbarity of human life.³⁶⁰ The stereotypical understanding of culture and religion in India as a realm of brutality was at the heart of the British constructions of victimization of the Indian populace. Ironically enough, the consideration of Indians as sufferers of evils of their own socio-religious conditions was ultimately a part of the exercise of colonial power as 'they were subjected to some form of custom that either threatened British rule or appeared to violate its moral foundations'.³⁶¹ Here, I highlight the importance of imagery in the articulation of the figure of the suffering Indian as a 'victim' that acted as a means to manage the ambivalence of colonial attitudes towards Indian society. Following Nicholas Dirks' assessment of the impact of colonialism on Indian traditions, I argue that visual representations of *Sati* and hook-swinging became an important component in generating the idea of colonial subjecthood. This was to be achieved at the cost of the individualities and subjectivities of Indian populace, and in turn, became an avenue for the British political authority in India.³⁶²

Just as Indian servants had their place in family portraiture to buttress the socio-political status of their British masters, the appearance of the Indian victim as a colonial 'subject' divested them of their subjectivities. Tilly Kettle's depiction of a *sati* scene (Figure 24), c. 1776 is representative of the artist's encounter with an India upon which he impressed the idea of difference.³⁶³ At the centre of the canvas is a widow who is about to become a *sati*. Bedecked in jewels and dressed in fineries, she is an elevated figure to whom others bow down in reverence. The surrounding riverside is lavished with the richness of tropical vegetation. Kettle's painting here echoes widely-held western views about the rite of *sati*. Andrea Major has shown that the European admiration of the *sati*'s courage often carried an undercurrent of criticism against Indian society for the sanction of the

³⁶⁰ Nicholas Dirks, 'The Policing of Tradition: Colonialism and Anthropology in Southern India' in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 39.1 (1997), p. 190.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 183. For a discussion on the theme of Indians as victims of their social and religious practices, see Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India*. See also, Ulrike Schröder, 'Hook-Swinging in South India. Negotiating the Subaltern Space Within a Colonial Society' in Ute Hüsken and Frank Neubert (eds), *Negotiating Rites* (New York, 2012), pp. 215-236.

³⁶² Nicholas Dirks, 'The Policing of Tradition', *ibid.*

³⁶³ Image has been sourced online.

brutal act in the first place.³⁶⁴ On her visit to India in the 1760s, Jemima Kindersley referred to *sati* as ‘a barbarous exertion of virtue’, and hoped that the British would help limit it.³⁶⁵

The beauty and softness of the widow’s figure stands in clear contrast to the heaviness of the task that she now undertakes— the relinquishment of her ties with the mortal world as she prepares to join her deceased husband in the eternal peace of heaven. Along with the group of men and women surrounding the widow, Kettle directs the viewer’s attention towards mourning children whose presence in the scene had its analogy in crying cherubim in western art, left behind to be taken care of by their relatives.³⁶⁶ Through such affectations, the artist sensationalizes the image: the heroic courage of the widow is celebrated whilst the dreadfulness of the event is at once accentuated. Falling between such appreciation and derogation, it is the widow herself who provides the ground for British political intervention. Kettle’s image may have lacked the urgency that became characteristic of nineteenth-century iconographies of *sati*.³⁶⁷ However, in representing the preparation for the event the artist, although avoiding direct advocacy for British intervention into India’s religious life, brings to the fore the prospect of persuasion as a means of averting *sati* which, in the last decades of the eighteenth century, came to be seen as an important instrument to prevent it.³⁶⁸

Although the EIC had constantly turned down proposals for ethnographic art, considering it an expensive undertaking, this did not lead to a diminution of British preoccupation with India’s religio-cultural life.³⁶⁹ In his aquatint (Figure 25) of the celebrations during Charak puja along the river Ganges dated 1806, James Moffat foregrounds two men conducting the ritual of hook-swinging, in which a devotee was suspended on a wooden frame by a rope and the hook piercing his back, as witnessed by a bustling crowd.³⁷⁰ In addition to Bengal, hook-swinging was also an

³⁶⁴ Andrea Major, ‘“Pious Flames”: European encounters with Sati before 1805’ *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 2 (2004), pp.153-181.

³⁶⁵ Jemima Kindersley, *Letters from the Island of Teneriffe, Brazil, the Cape of Good Hope, and the East Indies.*, Letter 31 (London, 1777) retrieved from The Travel Letters of Mrs. Kindersley <http://travel-letters.org/kindersley/> [Accessed on 27 August 2019]. Cf. Norbert Schürer, ‘The Impartial Spectator of Sati, 1757-1784’ in *Eighteenth - Century Studies*, 42.1 (2008), pp. 19-44

³⁶⁶ Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions*, p. 19.

³⁶⁷ Paul B. Courtright, ‘Iconographies of Sati’ in John Stratton Hawley (ed.), *Sati, the Blessing and the Curse: The Burning of Wives in India* (Oxford, 1994), p. 42.

³⁶⁸ Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions*, p. 17.

³⁶⁹ Mildred Archer, *India and British Portraiture*, pp. 229-30.

³⁷⁰ Shelfmark: P112 (British Library).

integral part of festivities in the honour of the south Indian goddess, Mariatele, and certain elements of the practice like piercing of the flesh were also to be noticed among the Indian diaspora in South Africa in the twentieth century.³⁷¹ Conducted as part of the fulfilment of vows and for ensuring agricultural prosperity, hook-swinging was viewed as a scourge by the British in India. The administration viewed the pain inflicted by people on themselves in the performance of the ritual as a subject of their judicial intervention.³⁷² Moffat's representation highlights the actions of the hook-swingers whose sufferings impose demands on the colonial government for redressal and reform.

The visibility of Indian customs is also enhanced by the works of Indian artists whose paintings also catered to the British understanding of Indian life. The paintings of hook-swinging, c. 1798 and sati, c. 1800 by unknown Indian artists (Figures 26 and 27)³⁷³ further the impression of torture and affliction as central to these rituals. The images of the burning widow on her husband's funeral pyre and the swinging men on the pole make them into victims of a backward, barbarous Indian culture—a nature of victimhood that empowered the British political authority because acts like these appeared to call out for their 'civilizing' and calming presence. Drawing upon the work of anthropologist Victor Turner, Alex Tickell has pointed out that it was not the ritualistic violence as such that perturbed the British. Rather, for them, it was necessary to suppress the renunciatory ideal of sacrifices in India as a means of achieving their monopoly of violence.³⁷⁴ Whilst the politics of social reform in British India was mired in controversies and the success of reforms themselves remained dubitable as they were often resisted by people who were seen as 'victims' awaiting to be rescued by the colonial government,³⁷⁵ images of these customs became 'gobbets' for British commentary on Indian society. These depictions enabled Britons to virtually observe Indian rituals which they mostly could not view themselves. As the British presence in India increased, imaging these so-called 'atrocities' not only legitimized the extension of their political

³⁷¹ W. C. MacLeod, 'The Nature, Origin, and Linkages of the Rite of Hookswinging: With Special Reference to North America' in *Anthropos*, 29.1/2 (1934), p. 10.

³⁷² Edgar Thurston, 'Hookswinging' in *Bulletin of Madras Government Museum*, 5.1 (1903), pp. 38-45.

³⁷³ Hook-Swinging: IS.11:37-1887; and Sati: AL.8805 (V and A).

³⁷⁴ Alex Tickell, *Terrorism, Insurgency and Indian-English Literature, 1830-1947* (London, 2012).

³⁷⁵ Ulrike Schröder, 'Hook-Swinging in South India. Negotiating the Subaltern Space Within a Colonial Society', pp. 225-227.

authority; at the same time, wherever they came to be successfully curbed, images also became signposts of British progress in India.³⁷⁶

Besides the portrayal of Indian customs, the creation of colonial subjecthood also finds expression in the representations of Indian people at work. Whilst recording the economic potential of their labour,³⁷⁷ I suggest that the depictions of various people in their occupational capacities presented the range of population groups coming under the British, while also representing the idea of British rule in India as a tranquil, harmonious entity. Whereas Indo-Persian ethnographies, as Sunil Kumar has shown, celebrated various groups of inhabitants as adding to the vitality of a city through their skills and expertise in commerce, trade, and craft,³⁷⁸ the colonial state's approach towards Indian people was to order them into totalities so as to comprehend the diversities that they encountered.³⁷⁹ As I examine the representations of working people, it will be revealed that the erasure of Indian subjectivities was more of a projection of the colonial imagination than a reality. My focus here is on two almost contemporaneous collections of the images of Indian occupations: one by the British artist, Arthur William Devis, and another by an unknown Indian artist from Tanjore, now at Victoria and Albert Museum. If visual representations facilitated in the creation of victimhood as a ground for British benevolence, the paintings by Devis and the Tanjore artist show how its character was inherently complicated.

When Devis announced his proposal in 1792 to publish a print series on 'the arts, manufactures and agriculture of Bengal', he had already made some of the drawings for paintings on which his prints were to be based. Working in Patna, Tamluk, Santipur and Calcutta, Devis intended his collection to be known as 'The Economy of Human Life', and was encouraged in this direction by Sir William Jones.³⁸⁰ In his Third Anniversary Discourse, Jones had pointed out that although Indian manufactures were highly praised, little was known of their histories and traditions.³⁸¹

³⁷⁶ Romita Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, pp. 251-254.

³⁷⁷ Natasha Eaton, 'Virtual witnessing? Balthazar Solvyns and the navigation of precision, c.1790–1840' *Journal of Historical Geography*, 43 (2014), p. 52.

³⁷⁸ Sunil Kumar, "'If There Is a Paradise on Earth, It Is Here": Urban Ethnography in Indo-Persian Poetic and Historical Texts' in Sheldon Pollock (ed.), *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500–1800* (London, 2011), pp. 240-45.

³⁷⁹ Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (New Jersey, 2001), Chapter 2.

³⁸⁰ Stephen Whittle, *Arthur William Devis: 1762-1822* (Lancaster, 2000), not paginated.

³⁸¹ Sir William Jones, *Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. 1 (London, 1799), pp. 31-2.

Devis' paintings, in this respect, can be understood as serving as a visual record of the same, thus adding to the British knowledge.

The format of Devis' representations is similar to that of Agostino Brunias' paintings of Caribbean slaves. In her analysis of Brunias' images, Beth Fowkes Tobin has suggested that his art was inspired by the format of the *Cries of London*, which had developed in the eighteenth century as a form of depicting the British urban poor.³⁸² Writing on the *Cries*, Sean Shesgreen argues that such publications helped generate the interest of the middle classes in the lives of the urban poor, who became objects of the former's interest and sympathy through their stereotypification.³⁸³ Tobin's findings in case of Brunias' approach indicate that the colonial endeavours of effacing the agency and individuality of the Caribs was not entirely successful.³⁸⁴ Their manifestation in the depiction of the subjects' interactions in everyday life, especially those involving liberated former slaves, thus exposed the contradictions at the heart of slave society in the West Indies. Whereas Brunias' paintings are illustrative of the anxieties of upholding the hierarchies of settler colonialism, Devis' artworks capture the complexities of redefining Indians as British subjects.

Writing on Devis' artistic career in India, Mildred Archer informs us that his reworking of drawings into paintings around 1792-95 coincided with his undertaking commissions celebrating recent British victories in Mysore.³⁸⁵ Devis' representations of Indian people busy at their crafts thus have to be understood in the light of rising British imperial confidence. Centuries of servitude, ignorance, and superstitious beliefs had supposedly deprived Indians of any pretensions to liberty, and the best that they could expect was that the 'light of civilization' be brought to them by the continuance of British political authority.³⁸⁶ Devis' *Economy* could thus be both an appreciation of the humaneness of British imperialism and the Indians' acceptance of it. Devis' paintings are marked by the absence of Britons, and largely depict Indian workers and craftsmen at work in their workshops. His individualized representations of Indians in their respective locales working peacefully have been valued for their sensitivity to Indian life and sensibilities.³⁸⁷ The *Economy*

³⁸² Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, p. 142.

³⁸³ Sean Shesgreen, *Images of the Outcast. The urban poor in the cries of London* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 2, 3, 8, 12, 17, and 24.

³⁸⁴ Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, pp. 172-173.

³⁸⁵ Mildred Archer, *India and the British Portraiture*, pp. 255-263.

³⁸⁶ Stephen Whittle, *Arthur William Devis*, not paginated.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

was never published, however, and what now survive are individual paintings and engravings that have found themselves in various art collections around the world.³⁸⁸ Two paintings from his proposed arts and manufactures series are analyzed here as illustrative of significant facets of his approach towards Indians under British rule.

Much of Devis' so-called sensitivity in the representations of Indian working groups comes across in his use of colour.³⁸⁹ In his *Scene in a Brazier's Shop in Bengal* (Figure 28), Devis depicts the brazier attending to the female figure of a customer enquiring after his wares.³⁹⁰ The interplay of sunlight and shadow in the dim, yet warmly lit shop brings into focus the brazier's face and hands, and the goods on display. Whilst the brazier interacts with the customer, his assistant is at work in the inner part of the shop. The lustre of the metallic statues and utensils in the painting attests to the brazier's skill and expertise, which are further highlighted in the presence of the woman as the potential buyer of his products. The contented smile on the brazier's face as he transacts business is reflective of the happy state of affairs which British political authority had made possible.

Happiness is also on the artist's agenda in the representations of two young girls *Grinding Corn* (Figure 29).³⁹¹ In this painting, Devis presents the girls as attentively grinding corn in a village. Whilst they are busy at work, their playmate tries to show them her pet parrot. The girls here, however, ignore any distraction posed by the presence of the other girl and her talking to the songbird. Both girls grinding corn have smile on their faces. As the girl on the right happily carries on with her work, the one on the left looks up to the viewer with an expression of gratitude without stopping the process of grinding. The general happiness within the scene is interspersed with an erotic charm. The presence of scantily clad, bejewelled girls in the painting, accompanied by that of a mother goat suckling her kid, allude to the fertile richness of Bengal – whose land and people were both under the British. The girls' smiles whilst at work and their avoidance of the parrot and its owner are illustrative of their devotion to the regime that had ushered in their happy and prosperous state, as indicated by their jewelleries. An interest in birds was properly part of the

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ Accession number: IS.41-1981 (V and A).

³⁹¹ Accession number: B1981.25.747 (Yale Center for British Art).

British pursuit of natural history, as I show in my third chapter, but not something that Indians could only take up at the cost of their work.³⁹²

Devis' representations of Indian occupations, as discussed above, generate various meanings. By placing Indians in their respective workplaces and highlighting their skills, the artist accords to them some recognition. The happiness on their faces represents them as partakers in the prosperity and peace that the British presence in India had ensured. The gratification of Indians is shown is evident from their privileging of work above everything else, their labour and assent and in turn, consent as indicated by their smiling faces, being contributions to a political regime that had supposedly benefitted them. Unlike the multitudinous gestures of slaves in Brunias' paintings as Tobin has shown, Devis' portfolio of happy people at work ultimately limits their range of roles of ordinary Indians to merely two actions, that is, working and being content. Devis' paintings, in this manner, can be said as compromising the subjectivities of his sitters whom he turns into grateful subjects of the British Indian empire. Nevertheless, the presence of the girl with the parrot in the second painting counterpoises the idea of Indians' limited repertoire of responses to British rule. Deriving happiness from her own avocation, she represents a powerful alternative to the idealization of work in the service of empire, that hints at her individuality.

Writing on the manifestation of agency in Brunias' paintings of slaves in the Caribbean, Tobin draws particular attention to their clothes. According to her, the choice of clothing was instrumental in the slaves' expression of their aspirations for upward mobility.³⁹³ Representing the life and culture of southern India in the early nineteenth century, Captain Charles Gold discusses the nature of work of indigenous artists (or *Moochys* as they were known as in Tanjore) for British patrons,

On the suggestion of Europeans, some of the country artists have been induced to draw series of the most ordinary casts or tribes, each picture representing a man and his wife, with the signs or marks of distinction on their foreheads, and *not in their common, but holiday clothes*.³⁹⁴

What comes to the fore is that Indian artists depicted people of various castes which, to a great extent, as determined by their occupations as wearing their choicest clothes. The visual

³⁹² Many Indian elites and royals, however, had built up collections of birds and animals, both alive and stuffed.

³⁹³ Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, pp. 139-176.

³⁹⁴ Charles Gold, *Oriental Drawings* (London, 1806), not paginated.

representations of occupational groups in ‘holiday clothes’ can be understood as illustrative of their agency—an indication of them as standing out. Here, I examine two paintings from the series, ‘Six Drawings of castes and occupations’ at the V & A by an unknown Tanjore artist, created around 1780-1790. Produced by Indian artists for a British market, painted series like these exhibit a greater tendency to ‘anatomize and particularize’³⁹⁵ the depicted people than that of the *Cries of London* and the works of Devis and Brunias, as inspired by them. This is evident from the fact that unlike the *Cries* or those following in their wake, these paintings are largely characterized by the presence of only the human figure under study, often projected against blank backgrounds, without any interaction with their surroundings. Such decontextualized images exoticized human figures, reducing their individualized selves into a set of attributes to be identified easily, thus making them into imperial subjects.³⁹⁶ What follows is thus an evaluation of the degree of colonial totalization of life in India as seen in the images of Indian working people.

The painting of *An Interpreter with his wife* (Figure 30) represents the graceful figures of a couple standing face to face.³⁹⁷ The image is marked by a stiffness, as if their conversation has been interrupted and their gestures fixed so that the interpreter and his wife could be studied and their bodies analyzed. Suggestive, however, is the interpreter’s clutching his embroidered scarf close to himself, as his important, individual possession. The stiffness of the former image is absent in the painting of *A Fortune-teller* (Figure 31).³⁹⁸ Not only is the fortune-teller represented as looking directly at the viewer, but in making forecasts for the woman standing next to him, he establishes his professional credibility. As the fortune-teller plays pellet drum as he affirms his prophecies, the woman’s gestures present an idea of her conceding to him. Dressed in his fineries, the man here is represented as giving his best impression as a professional. The attire of the fortune-teller together with his active labour brings about his individual persona.

Although costume was the first point of entry into the British knowledge of Indian people, as Nicholas Dirks has shown in the archives of Colin Mackenzie in the early nineteenth century, the British Indian administration had soon considered it to be insufficient, thereby looking for more

³⁹⁵ Shesgreen, *Images of the Outcast*, p. 3.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, and Christopher Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology* (London, 2011), p. 36.

³⁹⁷ 0927:5/(IS) (V and A).

³⁹⁸ 0927:6/(IS) (V and A).

reliable, inherent biological traits instead of mutable factors like dress.³⁹⁹ As seen in the paintings of the interpreter with his wife and that of the fortune-teller, whilst apparently meeting the demands of colonial classification, by representing them in choicest outfits the artist vests in them an agency to stand out at their best. Costume, in this regard, voices individuality, something that challenges the British political authority's imposition of identifiable totalities as a means of governance.

The images of Indian life and customs in the section have revealed how particular views of Indian society were created as part of making room for British intervention, and in turn, their benevolence. In doing so, Indians were often robbed off their subjectivities as they were being turned into colonial subjects. Images examined here have exposed the uneasiness of the process, and also that the colonial erasure of indigenous identities and subjectivities was not entirely successful. This, as a result, limited the grounds for British benevolence, and thus, questioned their political authority to be acquired and legitimated based on such benevolence and efficacy.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have first dealt with the images of the British as part of their self-presentation as rulers of India. In doing so, my focus was how they managed their gestures and attires in a manner that would highlight the efficiency and benevolence in governance that they projected themselves as bringing to India. They used Oriental despotism as a trope, and gaining from it whilst presenting themselves as destroying it. The idea of representing British political authority was not confined to public life, but also touched upon the familial domain. Here, British wives became able partners of their husbands as they sought to reproduce and uphold the imperial hierarchies of power and race. Like in public life, within the household as well the maintenance of imperial authority was not straightforward. Whilst in the public domain, troubles of proper governance and zesting of power away from Indian rulers and the justification of it posed problems, at home inter-racial relationships and issues with servants made the perpetuation of an image of a powerful, British political authority much difficult.

Whereas British artists in their artworks are compelled to recognize the anxieties of imperial authority and that of legitimizing it, Indian artists, as seen here, whilst being aware of the rise of

³⁹⁹ Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, pp. 31-34, and 92.

British political presence in India, expose its faultiness. The representation of the Mughal emperor Akbar II with a halo in the face of his otherwise loss of political authority and as David Ochterlony as paying his respects to the former, was a powerful statement in its way to recognize the all-pervasiveness of the Mughal empire, in spite of British political power. An important aspect of representing the idea of British benevolence as an extension of their political authority, was the creation of Indians as British subjects. This ranged from them being made into victims of a decadent, backward social order to them adhering to the dictates of an easily recognisable entities in through the colonial reordering of Indian society. The idea of Indians' victimhood even when successful, demanded a considerable degree of caution as evident from Tilly Kettle's image of the *sati* and the overall idea of the British as maintaining a distance, to present the veneer of a non-biased judgment. Furthermore, the idea of conforming Indians into choreographed presentations in the images as happily at work as in the case of Arthur William Devis' paintings, in the name of projecting a sentimentalized image under British benevolence withered from within. The fact that Indians chose to maintain their own subjectivities through costumes and gestures exposes the limits of British political authority and in turn, represents the emptiness of the rhetoric of benevolence and efficacy as part of legitimizing their Indian empire.

Chapter 2 – Place, Power and Early British Indian Landscapes

In 1796, as Britain fought endless wars within Europe and overseas, one of the most important theorists of the Picturesque, Uvedale Price, contemplated the ideal relationship between landscapes and the art of painting. According to him,

Every place, and every scene that are worth observing, must have something of the sublime, the beautiful, or the picturesque; and every man will allow that he would wish to *preserve and to heighten*, certainly *not to destroy*, their prevailing character. The most obvious method of succeeding in the one, and of avoiding the other, is by studying their causes and effects...and sure I am, that he who studies the various effects and characters of form, colour, and light and shadow, and examines and compares those characters and effects, the manner in which they are combined and disposed, both in pictures and in nature, —will be better qualified to *arrange, certainly to enjoy, his own and every scenery*, than he who has only thought of the most fashionable arrangement of objects; or has looked at nature alone, without having acquired any just *principles of selection*.⁴⁰⁰

Price's ideas here raise various important issues. Living through the tumultuous times of the French Revolution and its aftermath, maintaining and upholding the established order appears to provide the only semblance of stability as he advocates the preservation and heightening of the features of a given landscape. What arises is thus a blend of politics and aesthetic choices that renders the necessity of framing one correctly in order to enable the true appreciation of the other.⁴⁰¹ This consideration of politicized aesthetics was not just confined to one's 'own' native scenery, but also wherever one went. As Britons reached out to different parts of the world, such a schema was ready for them to apply to new lands and re-configure them through the 'selection' of scenes, hues, and contours to the best of their interest. Seen in this light, after a study of the

⁴⁰⁰ Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque, as compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful; and on the use of studying pictures, for the purpose of improving real landscape* (London, 1796), p. v-vi. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁰¹ On this subject, see Ann Bermingham, 'System, Order, and Abstraction: The Politics of English landscape Drawing around 1795' in W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power* (London, 2002), pp. 77-102.

representation of people in the previous chapter, it is the British contact with Indian landscapes that forms my subject here.

The rising popularity of landscape art in eighteenth-century Britain coincided with emerging concerns of territoriality. With the growth of towns due to industrialization, this period witnessed the reinforcement of enclosures alongside notions of landed property. Whilst both agrarian and industrial economies developed, there was also a ‘dark side’ to the British landscape as John Barrell has put it.⁴⁰² Alongside the economic prosperity there increasingly emerged social differences based on land ownership and displacement, with increasing numbers of rural inhabitants forced into migrancy and wage labour. The collective sense of loss and deprivation this entailed has been shown to be an important source of working-class consciousness.⁴⁰³ As Ann Bermingham has pointed out, it was these socio-economic inequalities to which rustic landscape painting gave cultural expression.⁴⁰⁴

At a time when proprietorial rights over land of a few came to be priced at the expense of physical labour and toil by many, the countryside became the perfect vision of Britishness. Indeed, love of rural arcadia escalated as industrialism gathered momentum, and the roughness and simplicity of English country life provided inspiration for the Picturesque aesthetic. The admiration of the Picturesque from the late 1780s onwards corresponded with a repudiation of Dutch landscape styles by the Royal Academy. What came to be promoted was, however, the idealization of British scenery by following the Mediterranean tradition, mainly Claude Lorrain’s treatment of Italian landscapes. Later during the early nineteenth century, however, Dutch landscape style came to be harmonized with Claudian idiom in order to localize British landscapes so as to highlight their inherent national character. On the part of Britons themselves, the growth of domestic tourism from the early eighteenth century helped develop their attachment to their native land. The appreciation of their nation’s landscapes steadily grew into a source of pride as the European continent became closed to them because of the Napoleonic wars.⁴⁰⁵ The admixture of the

⁴⁰² John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting, 1730-1840* (Cambridge, 1980).

⁴⁰³ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1964), pp. 314-349.

⁴⁰⁴ Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and ideology: The English rustic tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkeley, 1986).

⁴⁰⁵ Malcolm Andrews, *English Landscape: The Picturesque*, lecture delivered at Gresham College, 27 October 2017, and *English Landscape: Constable and Clare*, lecture delivered at Gresham College, 1 November 2017. Whilst the Dutch landscape tradition seemed more natural to British topography, this often fell short of the Claudian ideal. In

Mediterranean and Dutch artistic traditions in the depictions of British landscapes served a two-fold purpose. As the commemorative, idyllic aspects of the Mediterranean landscape painting were combined with the Dutch vogue for human land use and design, the veneration of the past came to be accompanied by an impetus towards transformation beneficial in the present times. In such a context, cultivated and improved land itself became part of the Picturesque ideal.⁴⁰⁶ British landscapes were made into sites for fostering commitments to the nation.⁴⁰⁷

If domestic scenery engendered feelings of patriotism among the British, such sentiments were strengthened by the fact that the British horizons increasingly widened in the eighteenth century. As James Thomson had pronounced, Britannia was to rule the waves.⁴⁰⁸ Paintings by British artists like Peter Monamy and Samuel Scott pictured Britain's growing maritime power. Scott's work will be discussed later in this chapter. The artists depicted British vessels in harbours and at sea, prepared to make their way around the world in an age of international trade and political rivalry.⁴⁰⁹ Beyond the seas lay lands where the Britons' had started to establish their foothold. Taking up the case of India, it is seen that the prospects of landscape art paralleled the range of British involvement in the region. From the existing British trading posts near the coastal lines in Madras, Calcutta, and later in Bombay, the representations of Indian landscapes widened to encompass areas in the mainland.

Scholarly work on British approaches to Indian landscapes is to a great extent a product of the general understanding of ideologies of British empire in India based on Thomas Metcalf's classic thesis on Indian similarity to and difference from the British.⁴¹⁰ Drawing on Metcalf's ideas,

such cases, artists and travellers used instruments like the Claude glasses in order to produce a tinted image based on the model of Claude Lorrain.

⁴⁰⁶ Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London, 1927), p. 129.

⁴⁰⁷ Simon Schama, *Landscape And Memory* (New York, 1996), p. 10. See also, Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape, Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Aldershot, 1989), Chapters 1 and 2.

⁴⁰⁸ James Thomson, *Rule Britannia*, published in 1740. Digital version: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45404/rule-britannia> [Accessed on 13 March 2019].

⁴⁰⁹ For an introduction to the works by Samuel Scott, see Luke Hermann, *British Landscape Painting of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1973), pp. 31-34. For Peter Monamy, see his various paintings at National Maritime Museum, Greenwich https://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections.html#!csearch;searchTerm=Peter_Monamy [Accessed on 13 March 2019]. The best work on maritime paintings in the late eighteenth century is Geoff Quilley, *Empire to Nation: Art, History, and the Visualization of Maritime Britain, 1768-1829* (London, 2011).

⁴¹⁰ Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, 1995). Such an idea is also at the core of postcolonial studies where the indigenous subject is desired to be made into the image of their white British master, but not quite achieves that status. Such a scenario is seen as one of resistance to colonialism, see Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994).

Pramod K. Nayar has suggested that between mid-eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, India was discussed both as a land of danger, and that of possibilities for renewal and improvement. The disorderliness of Indian landscapes thus generated a need for British political presence, and at the same time, the fact that it could be disciplined and reformed in a way that was suited to the British life in India fed into a celebration of British imperial power.⁴¹¹

When seen in the context of landscape art, the similarity-difference formulation also looms large. British aesthetics provided the primary framework to understand Indian landscapes, and as Jeffrey Auerbach has argued, the Picturesque facilitated the inclusion of distant lands into the Britons' imagination by depicting them in a manner similar to those of the British. landscapes. The emphasis on 'sameness', as Auerbach further suggests, helped conflate different parts of the world as they came under British political and economic influence through visual imagery. Thus, the ideas of the Picturesque developed as much outside Britain as from the inspiration of the English countryside.⁴¹² Auerbach's ideas are important to this chapter as they make it possible to think about two factors: firstly, the political meanings and implications of colonies being remade in the 'image of Britain', as seen as in the choices of architecture and town planning; and secondly, the cultural associations of colonies for the imperial power.

Auerbach's call for a wider exploration of imperial landscapes encompassing various parts of the British empire, and at the same time, awareness of local specificities has been taken up by John E. Crowley. Whilst Crowley's approach is successful in bringing forth the importance of visual culture in British imperialism, he misses out on a closer examination of the political and aesthetic symbolization of eighteenth-century British empire through imagery. Crowley's chapter on Indian landscapes, though richly illustrated, does not adequately engage with the interaction of images and their political milieux.⁴¹³ For scholars with a particular focus on India such as Hermione de Almeida and George H. Gilpin, the favourable vision of India's landscapes on the part of the British artists in the eighteenth century gave way to one of a more critical and differential stance

⁴¹¹ Pramod K. Nayar, 'The Imperial Sublime: English Travel Writing and India, 1750-1820' *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 2.2 (2002), pp. 57-99. See also, Pramod K Nayar, *English Writing and India, 1600-1920: Colonizing Aesthetics* (London, 2008).

⁴¹² Jeffrey Auerbach, 'The Picturesque and the homogenisation of empire' in *The British Art Journal*, 5.1 (2004), pp.47-54.

⁴¹³ Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes*.

as British rule in India became more authoritarian by the mid-nineteenth century.⁴¹⁴ More recently, art historian Romita Ray has also described the importance of creating and maintaining colonial difference in the depictions of Indian landscapes by British artists in order to foster the idea of ‘Britishness’ in a distant land coming under British rule. Unlike Almeida and Gilpin, Ray does not situate her work as an ‘evolutionary’ narrative of British evaluation of Indian landscapes, descending from approval to complete disavowal. Rather, Ray is interested in scrutinizing the works of both earlier and later British landscape artists as part of the discriminatory politics of empire.⁴¹⁵ The notion of creation of difference through the British representations of land in India as used by Ray is important to my analysis of landscape art. Here, I take the idea of colonial difference forward and recast it in terms of deference, given the Britons’ exalted status ruling India.

However, a major shortcoming of the scholarship that I have discussed above is its almost complete neglect of landscape art by Indian artists, produced for the British patrons. British landscape artists like Thomas Daniell had native assistants, and as Yuthika Sharma has recently pointed out, during their visit to Delhi, the Daniells had closely cooperated with Indian artist Ghulam Ali Khan as his draftsman. Ghulam Ali Khan was to later work directly for British patrons like William Fraser.⁴¹⁶ This example of collaboration between British and Indian artists, however, should not be allowed to gloss over the fact that British artists like Thomas Daniell himself considered works by Indian artists to be inherently inferior.⁴¹⁷

Indian interests in European landscape paintings can be dated back to the early Mughal period. Mika Natif has recently pointed out that in the Mughal miniatures during the reigns of the emperors Akbar and Jahangir, the representations of buildings and monuments were inspired by European art and had featured as part of the scenes and incidents depicted in the images. The buildings as such endowed authenticity to the subjects of the paintings.⁴¹⁸ Whilst Sharma has fruitfully traced the movements in-between British and Indian aesthetics, the most prominent scholar to compare

⁴¹⁴ de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 114-132, 154-167, 176-211, 234-257.

⁴¹⁵ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, pp. 1-52.

⁴¹⁶ Yuthika Sharma, *Art in Between: Visual Culture and Artistic Knowledge in Late Mughal Delhi, 1748-1857* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Columbia, 2013), pp. 153-213.

⁴¹⁷ Letter from Thomas Daniell to Ozias Humphrey, HU/4/118 (Ozias Humphry Correspondence, Royal Academy of Arts).

⁴¹⁸ Mika Natif, *Mughal Occidentalism*, pp. 152-204.

the works of British and Indian artists is Giles Tillotson. Although Tillotson's major focus is on the British landscape artist William Hodges during his times in India and in the subsequent period, he is attentive to the works of Indian artists who, according to him, often followed a different style and format in their architectural scenes even when working under or being trained by British artists. For Tillotson, paintings by Indian artists, though not as realistic by western standards, produced more complete and fuller views of monuments. Unlike British artists, Indian artists did not sacrifice the aesthetics of Indian architecture in order to meet the expectations of the Picturesque representations.⁴¹⁹ Thus, as Natasha Eaton suggests, Indian artists were more interested in the 'normative beauty of the sites they represented'.⁴²⁰ Such ideas of Indian artists' perceptive difference in the understanding of space and artistic effects from British artists when it came to depicting buildings within landscapes is useful for my study as I attempt to engage with the larger political connotations of such dissimilarities.

This chapter explores how the images of Indian landscapes represented the extent and expanse of British rule in India. This, I suggest, was based on two strategies: firstly, through repeated depictions of particular sites by various artists which rendered them as well-known, thereby leading to the development of a sense of identification of the British with their empire in India. As Indian royalty also became avid collectors of books of landscape illustrations by British artists, images can also be understood as engendering in them an idea of the changing political state. Although various kingdoms remained under their rulers in name, the British political influence over them was on a steady rise. Related to the idea of changing political state of India is my second point, that landscape art also embraced areas newly coming or about to pass under British influence. The presence of the artist often became the political power that the British held. Analysing landscape art both by British artists and the Indian artists working for the British (among the artists whose work is being dealt with in this chapter, only the name of Sita Ram is known), I contend that the visual representations of landscapes not only mirrored the British territorial possessions in India, but also complicated the processes through which such territories were acquired. In order to achieve this, I read landscape art in relation to the colonial surveys, travel literature, and artistic and scholarly accounts on India. If, as cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove

⁴¹⁹ Giles Tillotson, *The Artificial Empire: The Indian Landscapes of William Hodges* (Richmond, 2000), pp. 78-86.

⁴²⁰ Natasha Eaton, *Mimesis Across Empires*, p. 149.

has stated, European narratives of discovery of the New World from the sixteenth century onwards were accompanied by the reassessment of the old world and classical antiquity,⁴²¹ depictions of Indian landscapes became a significant benchmark of what Britain could, or could not achieve both as a nation and empire.

Whilst the previous chapter addressed the concept of political authority in the public and private spheres, the central concept in this chapter is that of dominion, which I understand as making and staking claims to establish control over land. Landscape painting functioned as an aesthetic visualization of land in the early British Indian empire as a strategy of appropriation. As encounters with new spaces are often shaped by the recording of them, I understand visual representations of Indian landscapes as both feeding into and helping shape artists' idea of India becoming a part of the British empire. If Indian landscapes presented the British artists with prospects very different from what they had known and experienced in their homeland, the politics of differentiation that was at the heart of landscape art in Britain helped re-formulate landscapes of India as the 'dreamwork of imperialism' that channelled both the confidence and tensions of British Indian rule.⁴²² Landscapes, in this regard, paralleled the strategic concerns of mapping and topographic observation.⁴²³ The representations of Indian landscapes by British and Indian artists, in this context, become a means of gauging the political imperatives of British power. Imaginings of British political power over India's landscapes thus, as will be seen, involved questions of belonging, which would constantly re-emerge with regards to the perception and definition of both the British and Indian relationships to territories in India.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I deal with the images of ruins and remnants of Indian past, both distant and recent, and uses the prism of critical heritage studies, and that of the idea of 'architectural ghosts' in order to think about the depictions of landscapes and investigate the imperial politics of landscape art in early British India. The second section is about the representations of venues of war and struggle between the Britons and Indians. In the final section, I address the depictions of the emerging centres of British power in the presidencies of Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay, and the reconfiguration of space under colonialism. The

⁴²¹ Denis Cosgrove, *Geography and Vision. Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World* (London, 2008), p. 10.

⁴²² W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape' in W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.) *Landscape and Power* (London, 2002), p. 10. See also, Rachel Ziady De Lue and James Elkins, *Landscape Theory* (London, 2008).

⁴²³ Mathew Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, pp. 61-76.

conclusions bring out the complexities of British imperial imaginations of Indian landscapes, thereby highlighting the contingencies in the realization of the British empire in India.

Re-viewing India: Indian past in ‘British’ hands?

Whilst delivering his Sixth Annual Discourse at the Royal Academy on artistic talent and aesthetic inspiration of forebears, the President Sir Joshua Reynolds makes an interesting allusion,

The travellers into the East tell us that when the ignorant inhabitants of those countries are asked concerning the ruins of stately edifices yet remaining among them, *the melancholy monuments of their former grandeur and long-lost science*, they always answer that they were built by magicians. The untaught mind finds a vast gulf between its own powers and those works of complicated art which it is utterly unable to fathom; and it supposes that such a void can be passed only by supernatural powers.⁴²⁴

Sir Joshua’s statement here makes us think about the following: firstly, a picture of decline from a previously grandiloquent status; secondly, the inhabitants’ abilities to understand and genuinely appreciate architectural works; and thirdly, the outsiders’ approach both towards the architecture and the inhabitants’ ideas about them. Musings such as these are central to the newly emerging field of critical heritage studies. The objectives of the practitioners of critical heritage studies is to interrogate the usage and reformulation of the past and its artefacts as heritage, and also integrate the voices of the surrounding communities into the management of their heritage. In order to achieve these ends, they endeavour to reduce the differences between tangible heritage, that is the monuments and artefacts, and the non-tangible heritage, that is, the peoples and their life-cycles, in order to restore and understand the meanings of the past and its applicability in the present in its fullest.⁴²⁵ As already mentioned in the introduction, history became a productive ground for the perpetuation of British power. Bringing in the approach of critical heritage studies in the analysis of the images of Indian landscapes opens up possibilities to delve within the imperial attitudes of managing India’s past in a manner that not only strived to firmly situate British presence in India, but also to enhance the British pride at the expense of culture and life in India.

⁴²⁴ Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, p. 177. Emphases mine.

⁴²⁵ See, for example, Laurajane Smith, *The Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006), Introduction.

If places are viewed as having significance through their use and the values invested by those who inhabit or visit them,⁴²⁶ then the first step towards knowing and understanding a new place is to comprehend the peoples' association with it. This is evident in Major Francis Swain Ward's oil painting. His image of the *Tank at the Shiva Temple in Chidambaram* (Figure 32), dated 1769-1770,⁴²⁷ is a study of the temple complex as a whole. Whilst emphasizing on the structure of the temple as evinced from his careful depiction of the elaborate *shikhara* (tower) above the *garvagriha* (sacro sanctum) which are the characteristic features of the Dravidian form of architecture, the artist's focus is largely on the tank and the human activities around it. Dressed in white, priests are shown as approaching the tank, performing their ablutions, and praying as they prepare themselves for worshipping at the temple. Moving away from the tank itself, it can be seen that the artist gives us the idea of the Chidambaram temple as a site in use. This is evident from the presence of a change of white fabric left by a priest along the columns above the stairway to the left of the image.

As he returned to the EIC's military service after his resignation due to disputes regarding pay and perquisites, Swain Ward gifted this painting along with ten others to the Company in 1773.⁴²⁸ Whilst the crisp, measured outlines of the temple architecture reflected his skilled draughtsmanship as an army officer, his aesthetic sensibilities are visible in the tonalities of the image and his ability to capture the gestures of the priests at the temple tank. In closely recording the human activities in the precincts of the temple, Swain Ward lives up to the expectations of him both as an artist and a soldier. Whilst being aesthetically pleasing, the art of painting as seen here becomes a mode of inspection where the artist's observes without himself being observed. He thus provides the Company a glimpse of southern India as it had begun to come under British political influence.

As Swain Ward's image sets out to understand the Chidambaram temple complex, it becomes clear that landscape art was also a way of bringing the everyday life of Indians out on the canvas to be viewed by the British. Such exposure was, however, accompanied by a need for the British to make themselves present within Indian landscapes. The British visibility, as will be seen

⁴²⁶ Doreen Massey, 'Space' in *Social Science Bites* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Quij4tjbTPxw> (as accessed on 3 April 2019).

⁴²⁷ F21 (British Library).

⁴²⁸ For details on Francis Swain Ward and his wider artistic ambitions, see Pauline Rohatgi, 'Preface to a Lost Collection: The Pioneering Art of Francis Swain Ward' in Pheroza Godrej and Pauline Rohatgi (eds), *Under the Indian sun: British landscape artists* (Bombay, 1995), pp. 31-52.

throughout this chapter, was a calculated one. An important factor was therefore to formulate imagery in a manner that would not only privilege the British ways of envisaging landscapes in India, but also serve to highlight the objectives and achievements of their imperial power. The proliferation of Picturesque aesthetics in the final decades of the eighteenth century back in Britain was cardinal to this reformulation of landscapes— a celebration of irregularity in nature, highlighting a ruggedness that excited the observer. Unlike the smoothness and uniformity that the aesthetics of beauty guaranteed, the Picturesque, in containing Indian landscapes within images, evoked its strangeness and, as a result, an exigency to curb it.⁴²⁹ This, in turn, became the focal point for the creation of British knowledge of India. Such tendencies are visible in Thomas Daniell's aquatint, *Hindoo Temples at Agouree* (Figure 33) that came out as part of the first volume of his *Oriental Scenery* in 1795.⁴³⁰ The aquatint brings to the fore various fields of vision. Unlike Swain Ward's painting of the tank at Chidambaram temple, Daniell's focus here is not on the particular site in its entirety, but rather the representation encourages the viewer to look ahead and beyond the immediate subject of the image, that is, the temples themselves.

The description of the plate as it appears on the letterpress is quite straightforward,

AGOUREE is pleasantly situated on the river Soane, surrounded with hills well covered with wood. In this place are many Hindoo temples, and also a small fort, which make a very picturesque appearance from the river.

Agouree is a place of worship of the greatest antiquity, which is obvious from the fragments of sculptured idols frequently to be met with there. The village at present is not very considerable.

The large tree in this view is the Banyan, or Bhur.⁴³¹

The banyan tree forms the arched 'gateway' to the image that gradually leads to the temples in the image along the banks of the river Son. The artist also presents a view of the lands on the other side that cast their reflection on the river, adding to the overall Picturesque effect. As Romita Ray has pointed out in her analysis of the image, the *Shikaras* (towers) of the temples match the roots

⁴²⁹ Edmund Burke, *A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful* (London, 1757), pp. 55 and 98; Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque*, p. 57; and Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, pp. 22-36.

⁴³⁰ Thomas Daniell, 'Hindoo Temples at Agouree, on the river Soane, Bahar' in *Oriental scenery: Twenty-four views in Hindoostan, taken in the years 1789 and 1790*; drawn and engraved by Thomas Daniell (London, 1795), from the King's Topographical Collection.

⁴³¹ Thomas Daniell, 'Hindoo Temples at Agouree, on the river Soane, Bahar' in *Oriental scenery: Twenty-four views in Hindoostan, taken in the years 1789 and 1790*; drawn and engraved by Thomas Daniell (London, 1795), N XIX Letterpress (via Eighteenth Century Collections Online, accessed on 3 April 2019).

of the banyan in their loftiness.⁴³² Such a visual representation re-creates nature and culture into the images of each other: the goal of the artist of the Picturesque being the rendition of nature as ‘picture-like’ is thus accomplished. The dynamics of culture and nature, as seen in the aquatint here, bears resonance in the idea of the Hindus as vesting godliness onto nature. Thomas Daniell as a member of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, and later the Society of Antiquaries and Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, shows here a keenness in deciphering the genealogies of faith and religion in India through his study of landscapes.

Whilst the depiction of four human figures near the shrine housing the Shiva *lingam* under the banyan tree reveals the sacredness of Agori as a place, the artist also displays possibilities of it being subjected to a European vision. If knowledge equates to power, then power itself can be understood as constructing particular forms of knowledge to serve and promote its continuity.⁴³³ Thomas Daniell’s reference to the banyan as symbolizing ‘pastoral peace and patriarchal longevity’ in 1810 when British imperial power in India had become prominent, hints at a new form of imperial paternalism whereby he saw India as attached to Britain by ties of ‘consanguinity and affection’.⁴³⁴ The Picturesque exaggeration of the twisted, protuberant trunk of the banyan in the image leads it to be studied, measured, and ultimately appropriated into the British narratives of India.⁴³⁵ Thus, as the banyan provides shelter to numerous creatures sustaining them with food, shade and succour, so would the British empire do for Indians, whilst entrenching itself deep into Indian soil.

Whilst the creation of political legitimacy in India necessitated some degree of British identification with the country, dangers of being overwhelmed by Indian landscapes were always a risk. This was not only the question of India infiltrating an essential notion of ‘Britishness’ as scholars like Beth Fowkes Tobin and more recently, Romita Ray have shown, but also that of generating deference towards their rule. The spatial dimensions of British political power and

⁴³² Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, pp. 107-108.

⁴³³ See, for example, Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (New Jersey, 1996).

⁴³⁴ Thomas Daniell, *A Picturesque Voyage to India by the Way of China* (London, 1810), pp. 2 and 96.

⁴³⁵ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, pp. 98 and 118-128. See also George Henry Noehden, ‘Account of the Banyan-Tree, or *Ficus Indica*, as Found in the Ancient Greek and Roman Authors’ *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1 (1824), pp. 119-134, in particular on the decision of adopting the banyan tree on the emblem and seal of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

authority, in this respect, justified the creation of a temporality that attempted to blend India's past and present with that of British history. It is important here to remember that both the orientalist admiration and the utilitarian denigration of India's past combined to proffer a picture of India as timeless and unchanging. The idea of a static 'traditional India' as it began to emerge, was against the living realities of fluidity in both landscapes and social structures.⁴³⁶ These assertions were predicated on the idea of Indians as lacking any awareness of history. Such a conclusion was based on the colonialist culture of linear time, and its inability to encapsulate India within its own chronicling of history and historiography.⁴³⁷ Images could, however, provide a respite from these intricacies of temporal politics by reproducing idealized versions of a primeval, and later feudalized British Indian empire. By the mid-nineteenth century, India became a version of Britain's glorified past that was both nurtured and considered as retarded and beyond salvation.⁴³⁸

Because imperial aspirations to modernize were fraught with problems in practice,⁴³⁹ the role of visual representation was all the more important. The British modelled themselves after the Mughals, as evidenced in their favouring of Persian as the administrative language, but also in more subtle ways such as James Rennell's adherence to Abul Fazl's geography in his survey. As discussed in the chapter above, British officials managed their self-presentation in the light of Mughal legacy, and such choices had to be made in a manner that both registered and signified the growing British political presence in India. The Picturesque again came to the artist's aid as seen in the *North East View of the Cotsea Bhaug on the River Jumna, Delhi* (1795) (Figure 34).⁴⁴⁰ The aquatint lays out a magnificent quadrangular building that housed the famous palace garden complex of the Qudsia Bagh which was commissioned by Qudsia Begum, the wife of the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah in about 1748. Thomas Daniell, however, pushes the date of the monument back to the times of emperor Akbar about two hundred years ago.⁴⁴¹ It is unknown

⁴³⁶ Gunnel Cederlöf, 'Fixed boundaries, fluid landscapes: British expansion into Northern East Bengal in the 1820s' in *Indian economic and social history review*, 46, pp. 513-540.

⁴³⁷ Romila Thapar, *Time as a Metaphor of History: Early India*, The Krishna Bharadwaj Memorial Lecture (New Delhi, 1996).

⁴³⁸ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, pp. 113-159.

⁴³⁹ Francis Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: The British Imperialism in India* (Princeton, 1967).

⁴⁴⁰ Thomas Daniell, 'North East View of the Cotsea Bhaug on the River Jumna, Delhi' in *Oriental scenery: Twenty-four views in Hindoostan, taken in the years 1789 and 1790*; drawn and engraved by Thomas Daniell (London, 1795), from the King's Topographical Collection.

⁴⁴¹ Thomas Daniell, *Oriental scenery: Twenty-Four views in Hindoostan, taken in the years 1789 and 1790*; drawn and engraved by Thomas Daniell (London, 1795) N. III Letterpress (As accessed on 2 March 2017 via Eighteenth

whether this misinformation on the part of Daniell was deliberate or accidental, but the fact that great achievements were dated back to the reign of Akbar echoes the earlier Hastingsian zeal to identify with the greatest of the Mughal emperors. A learned and generous patron of arts and letters like Warren Hastings was everything that a British artist in India could desire. Coming to India after Hastings' departure, Thomas Daniell felt the void in artistic culture as he reported back to his friend Ozias Humphry in Britain, 'times are changed'.⁴⁴²

As noted in the introduction, in the year 1795, when Thomas Daniell published the first series of his *Oriental Scenery*, of which this image is a part, he had dedicated it to the Court of Directors of the EIC. Through this dedication, it is clear that Daniell was celebrating the growing prominence of the Company, not only in terms of Hastings' acquittal from his impeachment, but also the recent successes against Tipu Sultan. At such ecstatic moments, the artist revisits the Mughal past that Britons in India had embraced and engaged with. The representation of the Red Fort and the palace of emperor Shah Jahan at a distance along the river Yamuna adds to Mughal identity of the site. Whilst bringing forth the grandeur of the establishment and its general upkeep as seen in the presence of two men cleaning the vicinity, Daniell also draws attention to the cracks on the walls and the debris behind the outer facade of the building. Antiquated portrayals were the forte of the artists of the Picturesque, and such visual representations helped generate images of melancholia and gloom. This, in turn, conjures an idea of distance from the depicted subject that, whilst maintaining a veneer of identification with it, provides the way forward in time.⁴⁴³ To the Mughals, in moments of political crises, architectural initiatives provided opportunities to look back to the times of glory in the past and being inspired by them. Qudsiya Begum's palace and garden complex, created amidst the tumultuous times in Mughal history, was an attempt at rethinking earlier architectural styles developed during the age of emperor Akbar whilst building new religious edifices.⁴⁴⁴ However, British engagements with India's past—where decay is made into a theme amidst the depiction of greatness—finds new meaning in the hands of the artist as he remakes Qudsia Bagh into a destination of Picturesque tourism.

Century Collections Online). Also, the artists of the Picturesque in India often buildings look older than they were in order to achieve the overall Picturesque effect, see Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, p. 33.

⁴⁴² HU/4/13 (Ozias Humphry Correspondence, Royal Academy of Arts).

⁴⁴³ Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760-1820* (Philadelphia, 2005), pp. 128-129.

⁴⁴⁴ Catherine B. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 304-305.

Ruins were an important staple of Picturesque tourism and travel. Empire facilitated tourism, and in turn, tourism helped shape an image of empire.⁴⁴⁵ Whilst imperialism helped the opening of new routes that made travelling more convenient, British artists also contributed to the imperial ethos that fabricated India into something that demanded the attention of the Britons. Vital to this process was the visualization of India as something that was familiar, yet capable of eluding British sight and sensibilities. Both similarities and differences between Britain and India are thus, calibrated with each other in the production of an idea of India for and by the British empire. If the closure of Europe to the Britons due to the Napoleonic Wars returned them to their own national landscapes, Britain's burgeoning eastern empire became closer to their perceptions of nationhood. When in 1802, Lord Valentia set out on a voyage to India and also planned to visit Ceylon, Abyssinia, and Egypt over the course of the next four years, it became his 'grand tour' of the east.⁴⁴⁶ Artists and travellers circulated not only narratives of their journeys, but also stories of them meeting with and overcoming dangers on their way. Such ideas at heart were one of affirmation of aristocratic masculinity,⁴⁴⁷ and in a colonial context, strengthened the colonizer's claim over the colonized lands and peoples.

Coming back to the ruins themselves, the art of the Picturesque developed and added on to the contemporary notions of disorder and decay. The gradual decline of the Mughal empire resulted in a decentralization of power that led to the emergence of new regional kingdoms. Such kingdoms, however, also underwent political tensions and struggles, a situation often exacerbated by British intervention. In fact, by the early nineteenth century, official reports gave an impression of the decline of old Indian towns, depredation and depopulation as a result of the continuous wars that occurred as the British took over and restored justice and civil administration.⁴⁴⁸ An important target of these ideas was Delhi. Since the early medieval period, Delhi had evolved as the most prominent centre of political power for those who held and aspired for an 'all-India' empire, mainly due to its strategic location. The depiction of Delhi in a ruined state, thus enabled the artist to

⁴⁴⁵ For a recent approach, see Eric Zuleow, Shelley Baranowski, Christopher Endy, Waleed Hazbun, Stephanie Malia Hom, Gordon Pirie, and Trevor Simmons, 'Discussion: Tourism and Empire', *Journal of Tourism History*, 7. 1-2 (2015) pp. 100-130.

⁴⁴⁶ Mathew Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, p. 59.

⁴⁴⁷ Sarah Goldsmith, 'Dogs, Servants and Masculinities: Writing about Danger on the Grand Tour' in *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 40.1 (2017), pp. 3-21.

⁴⁴⁸ Walter Hamilton, *The East India Gazetteer* (London 1815).

engender commentaries not only on Indian politics during the recent period, but also to think about the remains from the times of previous ruling dynasties. In Thomas Daniell's *Remains of an Ancient Building near Firoz Shah's Cotillah, Delhi* (1795) (Figure 35),⁴⁴⁹ the building dominating the scene is located within the precincts of Feroz Shah Kotla, the fortress housing Ferozabad, the capital of the ruler of the Tughlaq dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate, Feroz Shah Tughlaq in Delhi, dating back to the late fourteenth century. The building is in a dilapidated state, nothing but a shadow of its former eminence. Studying the remnants of the site, Thomas Daniell reflects on the plan of the structure: 'The plan of the outer wall is quadrangular, with round towers at the angles, and in the centre stands the durbar, or the hall of audience'.⁴⁵⁰ The building and its surroundings are presented as in a state of ruin with overgrown foliage. The scene is lacking signs of life except for a few human figures scattered here and there, and a buffalo laden with goods walking away from the building with two men in the front.

This state of things leads to the belief that the place had once been great, but now has been abandoned, and therefore, is in need of care and upkeep. The image brings two different, yet interconnected ideas to mind: firstly, the artist's ability to observe, investigate, and discern the architecture of the building through a study of its ruins, and secondly, a picture of general neglect, as seen in the limited presence of people around the site. Whilst the EIC had been concerned about the desertion of its territories, creating problems for the collection of revenues, here the imagery of emptiness as aesthetically evoked by the Daniells can be understood as illustrative of the idea of 'terra nullius', according to which vacant spaces were subjected to imperialism.⁴⁵¹ If the lack of people's direct involvement with the site in this image can be understood as a problem leading to its neglect, the presence of people around historical monuments could also give rise to chances of encroachment that the British had to avoid at all costs.⁴⁵² On the whole, images like these give a

⁴⁴⁹ Thomas Daniell, 'Remains of an Ancient Building near Firoz Shah's Cotillah, Delhi' in *Oriental Scenery* (London, 1795), from the King's Topographical Collection.

⁴⁵⁰ Thomas Daniell, *Oriental scenery: Twenty-Four views in Hindoostan, taken in the years 1789 and 1790; drawn and engraved by Thomas Daniell* (London, 1795), N. VII Letterpress.

⁴⁵¹ See, for example, *Letter Copy book of the Supervisor of Rajshahi at Natore, 30 December 1769 to 15 September 1772* (West Bengal State Archives), p. 76; Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Sovereignty, Property and Empire: 1500–2000* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 1–32. Technically, India was not considered a *terra nullius* to the extent that Africa was. However, the rhetoric of emptiness in the image becomes even more powerful as Indian places were shown as vacant. See also, Peter Hulme and Russell MacDougall (eds), *Writing Travel and Empire: Colonial Narratives of Other Cultures* (London, 2007); and Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York, 2010), 45.

⁴⁵² Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, pp. 211–214.

picture of Indians as having lost all connections with their past. In contrast, institutions under the colonial government like the Asiatic Society, the Indian Museum, the Bombay Literary Society, and later the Archaeological Survey of India restore and care for this lost past in a way that Indians were unwilling or unable to do. An undertaking such as this, however, demanded certain readjustments in the way India was to be known and recognized. Throughout the accompanying letterpress of *Oriental Scenery*, Thomas Daniell located Delhi, the traditional political centre of India in terms of its distance from Calcutta, the newly emerging centre of British India.⁴⁵³ The British, thus, came to be represented as heralding the future of India.

As Romita Ray has astutely pointed out in her analysis of British visual representations of Benares, the Picturesque imagery divested the city of its economic and religio-cultural significance.⁴⁵⁴ In doing so, as experts on critical heritage studies in India, like Amita Sinha and Neha Rajora have suggested, the gaze of the Picturesque tourist failed to appreciate the cultural landscapes of the country, leaving an indelible mark on how tourist destinations are conceptualized and treated in the post-independence period.⁴⁵⁵ Titled and described in ways to be easily comprehended by a British audience, and British-influenced Indian ruling classes and educated elites, prints and paintings of landscapes decoded varied aspects of India's life, resulting in them being reduced to less than the sum of their parts. This curation of India through landscape art meant that Indian history as a palimpsest could be invested with new meanings by its viewers.

For example, in the images of the Taj Mahal in Agra (Figures 36 and 37) by William Hodges and Charles Ramus Forrest, painted respectively in the 1780s and 1810s, the most famous monument of the Mughal era has been represented as an ornament of Picturesque delight.⁴⁵⁶ Based on *Char-Bagh* style, that is, a quadrilateral plan replicating the four gardens of paradise as mentioned in the Quran, the garden complex of the Taj symbolized the divine grace and approbation for the

⁴⁵³ For details on how the Daniells created distinctive visions of the British presidencies, and Indian towns and rural areas, see Apurba Chatterjee, 'Imperialism, Imagery and Political Legitimacy: Visualizing Early British India through the Eyes of Thomas and William Daniell' in Karen Harvey and Mikael Alm (eds), *Power of Description: Language and Social History in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Uppsala, 2019), pp. 113-137.

⁴⁵⁴ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, pp. 36-51.

⁴⁵⁵ Amita Sinha and Neha Rajora, 'Gaze and the picturesque landscape of Amber, India' in *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, (2014), pp. 1-14.

⁴⁵⁶ William Hodges, *The Taj Mahal* (From National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, available via Wikimedia Commons), and Charles Ramus Forrest, 'The Taj Mahal' in his *A Picturesque Tour along the Rivers Ganges and Jumna in India* (London, 1824).

Mughals. The architecture itself drew on Timurid traditions as Shah Jahan prided himself on his Timurid ancestry, and replicated the throne of God on the Day of Judgement according to Islam. The Taj Mahal was indeed replete with political and cultural metaphors that were important to self-definition of the Mughal empire.⁴⁵⁷ In these images, however, the aesthetic admiration of the Taj translates into its depiction as a structure whose architectural symbolism has been simplified by the British artists, and thus, as Nitin Sinha has argued, precolonial affective geographies gradually gave way to colonial objectification.⁴⁵⁸ For a European, the monument is made into a visual feast to be enjoyed during boat rides along the river Yamuna as it appears in the foreground of the images. Such simplifications, in turn, echo Hodges' own understanding of Hindu, Moorish, Egyptian, and Gothic architectural styles as all the same.⁴⁵⁹ Seen in the light of the Gothic revival in England since the mid-eighteenth century, this treatment of architecture in India by Hodges becomes an important part of defining, and in turn, integrating it within Britain's national imagination.

As Indian artists inculcated the Picturesque in their artworks, they had also begun to draw and paint riparian scenes. Some of these visual representations were inspired by, and often copied from the works of British artists. The watercolour painting, *Distant View of the exterior of the Jami Masjid and Buland Darwaza, Fatehpur Sikri* (c.1798-1804) (Figure 38), is a free rendering of plate XI titled, 'A View of the Ruins of part of the Palace and Mosque at Futty poor Sicri' (Figure 39) in William Hodges' *Select Views in India* (1785-1786).⁴⁶⁰ The unknown artist from Calcutta here reproduces the effects of aquatint through watercolour, and depicts the scenery through art of the Picturesque. Whilst Hodges' image presents the buildings as falling into ruin, the Indian artist does not do so. If crumbling structures on the riverside add dramatic, Picturesque effects to Hodges' images,⁴⁶¹ the Indian artist though working with a Picturesque framing and format, frees those from ruination. Although he presents the buildings as rugged, they display considerable solidity.

⁴⁵⁷ Catherine Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, pp. 169-251.

⁴⁵⁸ Nitin Sinha, *Communication and Colonialism in Eastern India: Bihar, 1760s to 1880s* (London, 2012), p. xxiv and Chapter 1.

⁴⁵⁹ William Hodges, *Dissertation On The Prototypes Of Architecture, Hindoo, Moorish, And Gothic* (London, 1787), not paginated (As accessed via *Gallica* on 8 April 2019).

⁴⁶⁰ Add. Or. 1134 (British Library).

⁴⁶¹ On the formats of the representation of rivers and ruins in the Picturesque, see Richard Payne Knight, *The landscape: a didactic poem: in three books: addressed to Uvedale Price, Esq.* (London, 1794), pp. 31 and 72. See also Barbara Maria Stafford, *Voyage into Substance*, p. 29.

Overall depth of the painting is enhanced by the artist's treatment of shadow around the windows. The bareness exhibited in Hodges' depiction is reversed in the hands of the Indian artist whose image points the viewer to the grandeur of the edifice which is further heightened by the lushness of its surroundings.

Thus, often in the hands of Indian artists, the Picturesque could accumulate different meanings. In Sita Ram's depiction of the Firoz Minar at Gaur (Figure 41), he closely follows Thomas Daniell's image of the same (Figure 40).⁴⁶² Sita Ram went to Gaur in the company of his patron, the Marquess of Hastings in spring 1817, almost three decades after the Daniells had visited the place.⁴⁶³ As a result, Sita Ram's depiction of the tower presents more of the overgrown foliage on the monument than that of Thomas Daniell. However, instead of the brownish tone as used by Thomas Daniell, Sita Ram here has adopted more of a pinkish tone that he had also derived from William Hodges, and renders the image in his exaggerated manner.⁴⁶⁴ Unlike Daniell's image, Sita Ram breaks the quietude of the scene by introducing a flowering *palash* tree (Flame of the Forest or *Butea Monosperma*) of the For in the foreground. As J. P. Losty has shown, Sita Ram was also learned in natural history drawing and painting.⁴⁶⁵ The extensive branches of the tree laden with bright red flowers, as seen in the picture, provide a framing for the tower at a distance and therefore, seems to breathe an air of freshness and rejuvenation at the site, palash flowers being a sign of the arrival of spring in Bengal. Bringing in various artistic skills and inspirations, Sita Ram thus takes recourse to nature in endowing the decaying tower with an image of hope and possibilities of new beginnings as signified by the palash flowers.

Contrary to Sita Ram's vision of blooming flowers in the midst of ruins, according to British officials, Gaur was 'an uninhabited waste' which was characterized by an overgrowth of forests, and also thronged by mosquitoes, alligators, and wild animals like jackals and tigers. It was, however, observed that the damage was often man-made, as the old edifices were resorted to by

⁴⁶² Thomas Daniell, 'Firoz Minar', reproduction of the original version from *Oriental Scenery* in William Orme, *Twenty-four Views in Indostan* (London, 1804), Plate XIII (In Orme's work, it is called a Pagoda). BL Shelfmark X768/2(13), and Add. Or. 4888.

⁴⁶³ The Marquess of Hastings himself was not much impressed by Gaur. See the Marchioness of Bute, *The Private Journal of the Marquess of Hastings*, ed. by (London, 1858), Vol. 2, p. 89.

⁴⁶⁴ J. P. Losty, *Sita Ram's Painted Views of India: Lord Hastings's Journey from Calcutta to the Punjab, 1814 – 15* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2015), pp. 17 and 19.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

people living nearby for building material. Even the EIC was not an exception, stones from Gaur were transferred for use in public works of Calcutta.⁴⁶⁶ Apart from the practical dimension of this measure of removing materials from decaying monuments to support the building of new structures, there was a deeper symbolic implication in this process. By structuring new buildings in Calcutta out of the remaining vestiges of old capital of Bengal, the British followed the practice of the former Muslim conquerors of India, for example, the famous Quwat-ul-Islam mosque in Delhi that was constructed out of building material acquired through the destruction of a local ‘Hindu’ temple.⁴⁶⁷ In this scenario, the role of the British artist becomes complex, as he inserts a narrative that justifies the acquisition of building material on the ground of the unavoidable decay of dilapidated buildings, and simultaneously, generates a mythology of the preservation of India’s past through art.

James Moffat’s aquatint titled, *Gate of Sultan Shah Hussein’s tomb at Gour*⁴⁶⁸ (Figure 42) presents the gateway and the tomb of the sixteenth-century ruler of Bengal, Sultan Hussain Shah, in a state of inevitable disintegration. With trees taking roots in the structures, the buildings are shown as weakened from within, reaching a stage beyond refurbishment and recovery. In this context, it was no harm to remove materials from the monuments away for further use elsewhere. Furthermore, by depicting the gateway and the tomb as fragmented, the artist can be said to have made the buildings into ‘architectural ghosts’ – something that would be remembered and viewed by the posterity of account of those having been represented by the artist.⁴⁶⁹

The idea of the artist as preserving India’s past becomes more relevant due to the fact that the lack of written documents made buildings and monuments among the most important of the meagre evidence available for the study and understanding of Indian history. Published in 1808, Thomas Daniell’s aquatint of *The Cuttub Minar near Delhi* (Figure 43),⁴⁷⁰ carefully outlines the Qutub complex with the Qutub Minar in full frontal view. Although the cupola of the tower had been

⁴⁶⁶ Henry Creighton, *The Ruins of Gour. Described, and represented in Eighteen Views; with a Topographical Map, Compiled from the manuscripts and drawings of the Late Henry Creighton* (London, 1817), pp. 1-5, and Letterpress to Plate No. VIII.

⁴⁶⁷ Kathleen Blechynden, *Calcutta, Past and Present* (London, 1905), p. 138.

⁴⁶⁸ James Moffat, ‘Gate of Sultan Shah Hussein’s tomb at Gour’, from *Views at Gaur, six aquatints by James Moffat after Henry Creighton* (Calcutta, 1808). BL Shelfmark: P105.

⁴⁶⁹ Jeanette Bicknell, ‘Architectural Ghosts’ *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 72.4 (2014), pp. 435-441.

⁴⁷⁰ Thomas and William Daniell, ‘The Cuttub Minar near Delhi’ in *Antiquities of India, Part V of Oriental Scenery* (London, 1808), Plate XXIV. BL Shelfmark: X432/5(24).

destroyed in 1803, the image shows the tower in its complete form. Daniell's idea of 'authenticity' in his visual representations, something that he used to the greatest advantage in the marketing of his pictures, here feeds into the idea of art as defying the forces of nature.⁴⁷¹ Whilst in the previous images the artists depicted the inevitability of decay, Thomas Daniell in this image highlights the capacity of the artist to limit the effects of destruction. By doing so, he ultimately bolsters the power of the EIC that not only achieved political ascendancy in India and promoted the cause of arts and sciences,⁴⁷² but also made his journey to India possible in the first place.

If part of representing Indian landscapes was to bring in to open the everyday life of people, the Picturesque, with its propensity for the disorderliness, embraced the representation of faceless figures as its stock in trade. Although the depiction of 'rough, tattered figures'⁴⁷³ – and, in the case of India, coloured bodies – fed into its overall Picturesque quality, such visibility could also potentially obfuscate the impact of British political power. In Thomas Daniell's aquatint, *Tremal Naig's Choultry, Madura* (1798) (Figure 44),⁴⁷⁴ an elaborate hall with majestic ceiling and intricately carved pillars is visible. Among all the pillars in the hall, the artist particularly attracts the viewer's attention to the second one on the right-hand side, by presenting some people as prostrating before it. Daniell further informs us that this second pillar comprises of the statues of the seventeenth-century ruler of Madura, Tirumala Nayak along with three of his wives. Tirumala Nayak was a great patron of arts and letters, and as Daniell further states, 'for his munificence, Hindoos still continue to pay him divine honours'.⁴⁷⁵

For Orientalists, Hindu temples and monuments held significance because of the fact that in the absence of authentic historical records, antiquarian interests such structures presented an important

⁴⁷¹ This argument is similar to that of Nicholas Dirks in his 'Guiltless Spoliations: Picturesque Beauty, Colonial Knowledge, and Colin Mackenzie's Survey of India', in Catherine B. Asher and Thomas R. Metcalf (eds), *Perceptions of South Asia's Visual Past* (New Delhi, 1994), pp. 223.

⁴⁷² Thomas Daniell, *A Picturesque Voyage to India*, p. 1. This can also feed into later colonial strategies and politics of the conservation of Indian monuments through the production of pictorial records, for details, see Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories. Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York, 2004), pp. 3-42.

⁴⁷³ Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque*, p. 76.

⁴⁷⁴ Thomas Daniell, 'Tremal Naig's Choultry, Madura' in *Oriental scenery: Twenty-four views in Hindoostan, taken in the years 1792*; drawn and engraved by himself and William Daniell (London, 1795), Plate XVIII. BL Shelfmark: P953.

⁴⁷⁵ Thomas Daniell, 'Tremal Naig's Choultry, Madura' in *Oriental scenery. Twenty-four views in Hindoostan, taken in the years 1792*; drawn and engraved by himself and William Daniell (London, 1795), Letterpress to Plate XVIII.

avenue to investigate the history of India before the Muhammedan conquests.⁴⁷⁶ Here, whilst the artist has set people aside from the centre of the choultry in order for his audience to have a proper, uninterrupted view of the building, his observation of Indian habits and behaviour ultimately brings to the fore Indians' own knowledge of, and respect for their past and heritage. The Daniells' claim to authenticity as hallmark of their view of India here is ultimately expressive of Indians' knowledge of their own histories.⁴⁷⁷ The paying of respect to Tirumala Nayak by Indians is of importance as it is not simply devotion to the person in question, but that of a tradition of beneficence. Temples in India were not only religious institutions, but important political and cultural centres. Whilst revealing the medieval South Indian tradition of worshipping rulers as God, this image also redirects us towards a consideration of pre-colonial Indian polities. Choultries were travellers' rest houses, and it is where Indian rulers made provisions of food and accommodation available for travellers and pilgrims for free or at minimal expense. Choultries were thus expressions of the Indian rulers' sense of duty and social obligation, and under colonial rule, they often became avenues whereby they upheld their own moral authority.⁴⁷⁸ Whilst the British attended to understanding the architecture of the Tirumala Nayak's choultry in Madura,⁴⁷⁹ for Indians, the place held a much more complex significance, entangled with their lives and values.

To return to my previous arguments, the British representations of Indian landscapes were a means to take a glimpse not only at the lie of land, but also at its histories and cultural life. Such an

⁴⁷⁶ Sir William Chambers, 'Some Accounts of the Sculptures and Ruins at Mahabalipuram' in *Asiatick Researches*, Vol. 1, 1788, pp. 145-170. In fact, Sir William Jones' had himself asked Thomas Daniell to produce an etching from Samuel Davis' drawing of the ruins of Mahabalipuram for the journal of the Asiatic Society, *Asiatick Researches*. See, Sir William Jones, 'The letters from William Jones to Samuel Davis were presented to the Royal Asiatic Society by John Francis Davis, son of Samuel Davis, on June 19th, 1830' in the *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. III - Part I, (1831), p. 4. Also, news had already reached London that Jones would bring back images of various Indian ruins. See *General Evening Post*, Thursday 11 February- Saturday 13 February 1790, p. 4 (PMC Press Cuttings). This was part of the Orientalist strategy to prioritize the search for a pristine Hindu past that had been suppressed by Muslim rulers. To the Utilitarian James Mill, it was good that Hindus did not leave behind much record of their past as they would have been inevitably shrouded in myths and fantasies, see James Mill, *History of British India*, Vol. 1 (London, 1817), p. 101. For the evolution of antiquarianism in eighteenth-century historical practices, see Katherina Boehm, 'Empiricism, antiquarian fieldwork and the (in)visibilization of the past in the early eighteenth century' in *Word & Image*, 33:3, pp. 257-266.

⁴⁷⁷ Joseph Farrington, *The Farrington Diary*, Vol. 1 (July 13, 1793 to August 24, 1802), ed. James Greig (London, 1922), pp. 11-12. See also, Thomas Sutton, *The Daniells: Artists and Travellers* (London, 1954).

⁴⁷⁸ Michael C. Linderman, 'Royal accommodations: pilgrim rest houses in early colonial South India' in *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (2013), pp. 187-203.

⁴⁷⁹ Drawings of the sculptures at Tirumala Nayak's choultry, commissioned by Adam Blackader, the Resident at Madura, from Indian artists at Victoria and Albert Museum, Accession Number: AL 7766 (1-143).

understanding on the part of the British was, however, on their own terms, and as a result, in their attempts as well as inability to comprehend India's past, Indian society came to be deemed as something ahistorical. The idea of an ahistorical India was a powerful one as it bore the potential of rationalizing the British spirit of discovery of and their rule in India. The representation of ruins, in this regard, was vital as it both painted a picture of decadence as well as presented a way forward with the Britons as taking charge of India. The images as examined here, thus represent the British mediation and management historical distance in a manner that was to strengthen their dominion in India. Indian artists, in their Picturesque representations, in contrast, attempt to reduce the effect of decay as a trope. Their work, as seen in this section, present an image of solidity and rejuvenation. If the knowledge of people's association with a place as in Swain Ward's painting, is the first step towards the understanding of its importance, their presence in the images can weave narratives that are complex at different levels. Swain Ward depicted the priests as scattered throughout his painting, whereas in Daniell's aquatint of Tirumal Nayak's choultry, human figures are more concentrated in some parts of the building than others. The reason of the patterns of people's presence can be found in people's awareness and understanding of their own heritage and past, something that colonial power could not completely obliterate.⁴⁸⁰ And, despite their supposed anomalies and deficiencies when considered regarding their adherence to western standards, it was the Indians' own imaginings of their past that the British administration in India had to ultimately rely on.⁴⁸¹

Staging War, Setting Empire

Whilst Britons were busy understanding and deciding the fate of India's past and determining its historicity, they were also involved in struggles against native rulers or backed one native ruler against another. Sites of war were thus depicted by both British and Indian artists. As Mary Favret has recently argued, the representations of war scenes in British Romanticism whilst situating warfare at a distance, drew the public in to the experiences of war.⁴⁸² As a result, in British imagery,

⁴⁸⁰ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments* (New Jersey, 1994), Chapter 1.

⁴⁸¹ R. S. Mantena, *The Origins of Modern Historiography in India: Antiquarianism and Philology, 1780-1880* (New York, 2012), pp. 123-150.

⁴⁸² Mary A. Favret, *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* (Princeton, 2010), p. 197.

the emphasis was on depicting Britons as brave, powerful, formidable and sturdy in warfare, and also ultimately as a positive force. The sites of war would become part of the legacy of a rapidly growing British empire in India. Whilst Britons sought to manage India's past, the present also needed to be managed in the best possible way. Managing the present properly appears important in the light of two factors: firstly, the British had to exert their own presence in India in a more assertive manner; and secondly, they wished to gain various economic and strategic advantages that came with conquests. Imagery thus had a crucial role to play. It had to add on as well as exclude factors that could yield an image of the British as conquering Indian landscapes. The approach of Indian artists in this regard, as I will show, was mixed in character. Accordingly, I examine the representations of Indian landscapes of war in terms of three elements: firstly, the sublimity of Indian forts which was only highlighted to present the British as powerful; secondly, Indian sites being turned into focal points for British engagement with Indian landscapes during war; and thirdly, the question of the impact of combat on India.

For the British, their victories in India had to be depicted as great, difficult, and virtually impossible to achieve. Such exaggerations facilitated the heightening of obstacles in their way, only to be surpassed and subdued in the end. In his aquatint of *A View of the South Side of the Fort of Gwalior* (Figure 45) (1787),⁴⁸³ William Hodges presents an image of the fort as sturdy and impregnable. The representation of physical surroundings of the fort, that is, its location atop the mountain and the density of vegetation adds to the idea of it being unreachable. In depicting this fort, Hodges has not emphasized its Picturesque quality:⁴⁸⁴ the foundations of the building being steady and not in ruins, and the battlements standing strong and firm. Hodges had travelled to Gwalior in the company of British forces and when he initially published the image, he did not provide much contextual information apart from the strength of the fortress and its final possession by the British. But as he wrote his travel account in 1793, during Warren Hastings' impeachment trial, he became more vocal about the concerted British efforts under Hastings in winning the fort of Gwalior, especially at a time when the British arms emerged victorious against Mysore.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸³ William Hodges, 'A View of the Fort of Gwalior, from the N.W' in his *Select Views in India* (London, 1787), Plate VI. BL Shelfmark: X307(6).

⁴⁸⁴ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, pp. 131-132.

⁴⁸⁵ Nathaniel Wraxall, *The Historical and the posthumous memoirs of Sir Nathaniel William Wraxall, 1772-1784; ed., with notes and additional chapters from the author's unpublished ms.*, Vol.4 (London, 1884), pp. 145-146. For

The Europeans, as Hodges informs us, referred to Gwalior Fort as ‘the Gibraltar of the East, as well for its natural situation, as for the works that had been constructed for its security’.⁴⁸⁶ Hodges’ patron, the then Governor-General of Bengal, Warren Hastings, not only recognized the fort of Gwalior for its strategic importance to the British in India, but also for its symbolic significance to the burgeoning British political power.⁴⁸⁷ Whilst the possession of the fort was considered as vital for the previous empires in northern India, for the British this could actually add to their prestige, alongside weakening the power of the Maratha chief Mahadaji Scindia.⁴⁸⁸ In his image, Hodges has excluded all scenes of conflicts between the British and the native forces. However, his description brings to the fore the narrative of British take-over of the fort in 1780. He makes his readers imagine the British military officials tiptoeing onto it, in the company of the sepoys who were made to wear footwear made of woollen cloth and stuffed cotton, especially designed to avoid any kind of noise during the operation which could potentially alarm those in the fort.⁴⁸⁹

As Hodges reports, the fort was taken within two hours by the British forces, and Major Popham assured the occupants of the fort of ‘quarter and protection’.⁴⁹⁰ Through this representation of the fort of Gwalior in both words and image, Hodges celebrated the might of British arms: the fort was deemed as strong as if only to highlight its predicament of being annexed by the British. If the display of the power of the British forces was the aim of the artist, so was his representation of British clemency as evinced from the description of Major Popham’s approach towards the occupants. What Hodges presents here, is not only a British sense of achievement and its glorification, but also the imperial responsibilities that followed and how the Britons were befitted to shoulder them.

If the sublimity of Hodges’ representation of Gwalior fort glorified the British territorial power in India, such celebrations became increasingly relevant at a time when Britons proved themselves as a formidable conquering presence. These images thus contributed to a sense of British

connections between Hodges and Warren Hastings, see Isabel Steube, ‘William Hodges and Warren Hastings: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Patronage’ in *The Burlington Magazine*, 115. 847 (1973), pp. 659-668.

⁴⁸⁶ William Hodges, *Travels in India* (London, 1795), p. 134. The image of Gwalior fort as described above was reproduced in this travelogue as an engraving.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 135-137.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

confidence that also led to the formulation of ideas which both justified the conquests and the control over lands that had come under British influence. The Daniells' *Shevagurri* represents the seat of power of the *Poligar rajah* or the landlord of the village of Sivagiri in the Tirunelveli district. The fortress of the *rajah*, who had become a tributary of the British government, is situated behind a rocky dome composed of granite that prevents it from direct attack. Atop the dome can be seen a temple and a choultry or travellers' rest house. The surroundings are marked by the presence of mountains with a river swiftly flowing by. In the foreground, some pikemen or native soldiers with their weaponry are visible.

The Daniells' acknowledgement of the sturdiness of the citadel and the depiction of the surroundings are illustrative of the inaccessibility of the region. The presence of armed men also adds to the potential dangers to the artists' persons as they had already faced attacks from thieves and marauders.⁴⁹¹ Added to these, Thomas Daniell states in the accompanying letterpress that the inhabitants of Sivagiri were difficult to subdue because they were rude by nature and could manoeuvre their way easily around the hilly tracts. He also notes a concern that the *Poligar rajah* himself often resisted the claims of the British government and he could only be brought into submission with much difficulty.⁴⁹² This idea of rudeness on the part of the local inhabitants and the *rajah* himself implicitly suggests their primitive nature. As Raman Ceylon has pointed out, as the British administration sought to quell the *Poligar* unrest, it deployed the idea of the *Poligar* primitivism.⁴⁹³ Whilst this region had been previously remote and obscure, the Britons had now extended their influence by making the local *Poligar rajah* their tributary, as if bringing Sivagiri into the 'pale of civilization'. The *rajah*'s and the inhabitants' resistance to the British government was indicative of them being enemies of the civilization that Britons brought to them.

The Daniells' highlighting of the adversities confronted by British imperialism was a means to celebrate the British prowess in the region. The artists do not present British armed force in this depiction of Sivagiri, but the fact they could reach there suggests the very idea of an all-pervasive British political power. Tourism and travel, in fact, become the steppingstone towards conquest

⁴⁹¹ Raman Seylon, 'A Reconstruction of an "Officially Expunged" Kingdom in Colonial South India: Panjalamkurinchi through Memory and Archaeology' in *Asian Perspectives* Vol. 48, No. 1 (Spring 2009) pp. 6-8.

⁴⁹² Seylon, *ibid.*, p. 8 and Thomas Sutton, *The Daniells*, p. 77.

⁴⁹³ Raman Seylon, 'Study of Poligar Violence in Late 18th Century Tamil Country in South India' in *African and Asian Studies*, 3.3-4 (2004), pp. 245-272.

and settlement.⁴⁹⁴ The presence of British artists here doubles as British political presence. Sivagiri is therefore another important landmark in the progress of British imperial authority which by the end of the eighteenth century had become dominant in India.

Besides the actual sites of war that became subjects of artistic representations, there were certain landmarks in the histories of British armed success in India which were also revisited time and again. One of the most important among them was the Chunar fort. The fort had come under the British control in 1760s, and then, in the early 1780s, it again became a bone of contention during the conflicts between Maharaja Chait Singh of Benares and the British. The story of Chait Singh's rebellion and the supposed British atrocities against him under Governor-General Warren Hastings featured prominently in the wake of the latter's impeachment. As Natasha Eaton has astutely pointed out, William Hodges, as the supporter of his erstwhile patron Hastings, made the scenes from Benares more and more visible in the exhibitions of the Royal Academy at the same time as Hastings' long impeachment trial dragged on.⁴⁹⁵ In his *views of India as well*, published in the early years of the impeachment, Hodges accords attention to the expansive measures of Hastings (Figure 47). Chunargarh, literally the fort of Chunar, was an important witness to the British combat, as after being taken away from Chait Singh, the fort became the shelter of Warren Hastings. In his view of the Chunar fort, Hodges thus wraps the site in the aura and mystique of British presence.

In the aquatint, Hodges represents the fort in complete sublime grandeur that embraces the quotidian life surrounding it. The blue skies with light rosy hues as reflected in the waters paints a picture of tranquility and peace. The imposing presence of the fort not only bears a witness to the British spirit of bravery and fortitude, but also has its resonance in the Mughal past that Warren Hastings had sought to understand and engage with. It was the siege and capture of the Chunar fort that turned the tide in favour of the Mughal emperor Humayun, the father of Akbar, as he wrested against Sher Shah Suri.⁴⁹⁶ Chunargarh was thus not only an important strategic point, but also one that evoked various connections that held huge significance in the questions of power and

⁴⁹⁴ Finola O'Kane, *Ireland and the Picturesque: Design, Landscape Painting, and Tourism, 1700-1840* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 2.

⁴⁹⁵ Eaton, *Mimesis Across Empires*, pp. 141. See also, Isabel Stuebe, 'William Hodges and Warren Hastings: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Patronage', *The Burlington Magazine* 115.847 (1973): 659-668.

⁴⁹⁶ John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 16

political legacies of early British Indian empire. Hodges' choices of subjects for his artworks, thus charted the course of British political presence of India in line with the Mughals and was thus reflective of Hastings' ideas of British political power. Sites such as Chunar fort not only bore the testimonies of British expansion, but also drew historical connections that could serve and sustain the regime.

Many years later, when artist Sita Ram accompanied Lord Moira to his trip upcountry, Chunar fort also featured as one of his subjects of representation. In his image of the fort inscribed as 'Another view of Chunar with European Burying ground to the Right', Sita Ram presents a continuity with the tradition of Hodges.⁴⁹⁷ Sita Ram represents the fort (Figure 48) as a complex, that now served as a military base for the EIC. Like Hodges, Sita Ram keeps the human presence around the fort to a minimum. The fort as depicted by both Hodges and Sita Ram is free from any wear and tear. The general upkeep of the fort is also enjoined by the visibility of a British flag hoisted on it, signifying the British political influence. In their discussions on British conquests during the Anglo-Mysore Wars, de Almeida and Gilpin had pointed out that the use of the captured Indian fortresses by the British forces was the materialization of the notion of Panopticon, formulated by Jeremy Bentham in the latter half of the eighteenth century.⁴⁹⁸ Integration of older Indian forts into the framework of British surveillance, as seen in this regard, was also one of tracing legacies of political power, the ultimate symbolism being one of precedence and territorial control over the previous political powers and potentates.

Another landmark repeatedly visited by British artists was the mosque at Jaunpur. The mosque had housed troops as Britons fought against local rulers in northern India. Looking first at William Hodges' aquatint of the Atala mosque (Figure 49), the artist presents us with an imposing view of the gateway of the mosque. Hodges does not allow a peek inside, but the immediate vicinities of the mosque are alive with the interactions between a few Indian figures dressed in white. Though the signs of age are apparent, the artist does not present the building in a state of decay. Thomas Daniell, though often vehemently critical of Hodges' work in terms of their authenticity, in this case, closely relies on his approach. In Daniell's aquatint (Figure 50), the scene around the mosque is animated by the presence of several Indian figures, and the structure itself is presented with even

⁴⁹⁷ Add.Or.4731 (British Library).

⁴⁹⁸ de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, pp. 78-9.

more solidity than that of in the work of Hodges. Thomas Daniell has erased all signs of dilapidation that we have seen in the Hodges' aquatint of the mosque, and this approach is thus different from his stance in case of the aquatint of Qudsia Bagh. Hodges and Daniell here minimize the Picturesque effect, as if highlighting the recent history of the mosque as being a British base, rather than its architectural or religious character. In the artists' hands, the mosque appears as Christianized, almost transformed in an Anglicized idiom. The human figures presented in the image are an appendage to the composition, adding no value to the pre-British significance of the site. Like the visual representations of the ruins, the re-attributions of meaning become an important component of British depictions of Indian landscapes.

As noted in Sita Ram's representation of Chunar fort, Indian artists acknowledged the expansion of British territorial power. However, their adoption of British artistic techniques at their disposal was, at best, variegated in nature. As we have already seen, even when directly inspired by particular portrayals by British artists, the effect of Picturesque decay and ruin in their artworks at large was limited. The state of political decline and transformation, however, was responded to. And, nowhere was this more appropriate than Delhi, the seat of all prominent political powers in Indian history. The gradual changes in political order that ensued with the death of Aurangzeb and the subsequent weakening of the Mughal empire resulted in a void where various potentates fought among themselves for extending their influence over the reigning Mughal emperor and Delhi. The resultant military struggles led to the capture of Delhi by British forces under the leadership of General Lake in 1803. With Delhi coming under the British dominion, the prestige of the Mughals waned, but the depreciation of political power did not mean the enervation of cultural life. As Narayani Gupta has pointed out, political decline was followed by a cultural efflorescence.⁴⁹⁹ The socio-cultural life in Delhi came alive with festivities, music, and more prominently with the re-emergence of a classical poetic genre, *Shahr-e-Ashob* in the Urdu language. Translated literally as the lament of cities, *Shahr-e-Ashob* poetry became an elegiac response to the political decline of Mughal Delhi and the rise of new power structures, and thus provided an opportunity to contemplate and reflect on the glories and achievements of the past and also their dissolution in

⁴⁹⁹ Narayani Gupta, *Delhi between two empires, 1803-1931: Society, Government and Urban growth* (New Delhi, 1981), Chapter 1.

the present times.⁵⁰⁰ Whilst it may be argued that such an approach was one of escapism from reality, it was also a strategy on the part of educated Indians to understand the changing political order of the times on their own terms.

So, how can we think of such reflections with regards to visual arts? With the passage of Delhi-Agra region under British control in 1803 by the Treaty of Surji Anjangaon, the British interest in Mughal buildings and monuments around Delhi and Agra rose even more. As a result, Indian artists came to be increasingly commissioned to prepare architectural studies of various structures. Although based on an understanding of the plan and layout of Indian buildings, such architectural drawings went beyond just the revelation of their structure and hinted at wider cultural and political associations. The watercolour drawing of the *Diwan-e-Khas* (Hall of Private Audience) in Delhi by an unknown Indian artist (Figure 51),⁵⁰¹ represents a building complex in its entirety, a principle which as Tillotson suggests, is typical of Indian artists' work. I suggest that through studies such as these, artists placed Indian buildings at the centre of narratives which were very different from the colonial ones. Being architectural drawings, these compositions are not bound by the conventions of Picturesque representation, nor are these mere condescending responses to the British inquisitiveness towards Indian architecture. If, as seen earlier, architectural pursuits gave strength to the Mughals in an age of crisis, both dynastic and otherwise in the eighteenth century, visual representations in later Mughal paintings had the same function.⁵⁰² In such a context, the drawing of the *Diwan-e-Khas* as considered here becomes representative of the glorious period of Mughal rule which though slowly but inevitably fading away, leaves behind its indelible mark. The arrangement of space in the drawing is evocative of a silence that finds voice in the emptiness of the surroundings.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰⁰ For the tradition of *Shahr-e-Ashob* in Urdu in the eighteenth century, see Dr. Na'im Ahmad, 'Introduction' in Dr. Na'im Ahmad (ed.), *Shahr-Ashob* (Delhi, 1968), condensed from pp. 9-31 trans. Frances W. Pritchett. See also, Carla Pietovich, 'Poetry of the Declining Mughals, *Shahr-Ashob*' in *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 25:1, 1990, pp. 99-110.

⁵⁰¹ AL.9248:4 (V and A).

⁵⁰² Sharma, *Art in Between Empires*, pp. 44-136.

⁵⁰³ The idea of emptiness has resonance with Sufi idea of 'Non-place'. See Natasha Eaton, 'Tourism, occupancy and visuality in north India' in Dana Leibsohn and Jeanette Favrot Peterson (eds), *Seeing Across Cultures in the Early Modern World* (Surrey, 2012), pp. 223-225.

The Mughal Delhi is again the subject in Sita Ram's all-encompassing *Bird's eye view of Delhi* (Figure 52) *from the Gate of the Fort*.⁵⁰⁴ Whilst the image is based largely on his imagination rather than an exactitude, Sita Ram brings together and integrates through the movements of people various monuments and buildings as an ensemble of the Mughal legacy. Although not completely overcast, the sky is full of clouds as the dusk befalls on the scene. By not making any particular building the focus of his image, Sita Ram draws the viewer's attention to the Delhi both as a sacral and temporal site of the Mughal political power. Sita Ram, in this image, celebrates Delhi in its various manifestations, strategic, architectural, as well as cultural. As I have already discussed in the previous chapter, following the British conquest of Delhi, the political authority of the Mughal emperor was significantly diminished, and his influence was confined to his palace, the Red Fort. In such a context, is Sita Ram's considering what remains of the Mughal ruler's dominions as a way of telling what is not his anymore? Or is this the artist's way of re-affirming the remnants of Mughal presence? It is impossible to know but can be said is that Sita Ram's image stands as a sharp statement of the changing state of Delhi and its increasing political control in the hands of the British. Whilst it is hard to speculate if the artists ever met, I suggest that this painting by Sita Ram is a precursor to Mahzar Ali Khan's panorama of Delhi as representing sites of Mughal imperial culture, commissioned by Thomas Metcalfe in 1842.⁵⁰⁵ Much of Mughal Delhi was to be destroyed in the aftermath of the Revolt of 1857.

Now, I turn to the impact that war between the British and the native rulers had on Indian landscapes. According to Pramod K Nayar, war was an important trope used in early British writings on India, and what he refers to is largely a British discussion of the depredations caused by Indian rulers.⁵⁰⁶ But how were the ravages caused by the Britons represented? How does the visual culture of wartime deal with it? This is the subject of this part of the section. A recurrent theme has been noticed by a number of scholars working on early colonial landscape art in India is that the scenes of actual combat are rare⁵⁰⁷ (as a matter of fact, it is important to remember that the combat between warring armies was the subject of history paintings as seen in the previous chapter). However, when it came to scenes of warfare, British artists had quite an interesting

⁵⁰⁴ Add. Or. 4826.

⁵⁰⁵ For Mahzar Ali Khan, see Eaton, *Mimesis Across Empires*, pp. 239-242.

⁵⁰⁶ Pramod K. Nayar, 'The Imperial Sublime', p. 66.

⁵⁰⁷ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, p. 66.

approach. Just as the images of deaths on British soil were avoided by artists in the eighteenth century, so were scenes of depredations caused by the Napoleonic Wars in Britain. Bringing war and its ravages home through art was a serious mistake, the artist risking their reputation and the popularity of their work.⁵⁰⁸ However, when it came to colonies, certain readjustments were at work. Just as the creation of the sites of commemoration was vital to the projection of Britishness and its colonial presence,⁵⁰⁹ it was also important to make visible the gallantry of the British against the native forces and its impact on Indian landscapes.

Writing on the third Anglo-Mysore Wars, Alexander Dirom reported that gardens of Tipu Sultan were subjected to depredations by the British forces as they marched along, and trees *were* cut down for timber and buildings were converted into accommodation for troops.⁵¹⁰ Such measures also found expression in visual imagery. In Robert Colebrook's aquatint of the Mausoleum of Hyder Ali (Figure 53) from his *Twelve views of places in the kingdom of Mysore* (1794), we find that the mausoleum has been relegated to the backdrop as the foreground of the image is filled with the tents of the British of the British forces. Although the image itself does not record the felling of trees or the Britons residing in the surrounding buildings, it is clear that the artist is more interested in conveying the British presence on the spot rather than the architectural or historical symbolism of the site. To Britons Hyder was a despicable enemy whom they could not vanquish, but they were well on course to defeat his son, Tipu and thus avenge the deaths of many of their countrymen who had fallen victims to the cruelty and bigotry of the father and son. The damages and exhaustion of the landscape here thus add to the British spirit of righteousness, that is, doing justice for their people and exhibiting their prowess to the enemy. Such a visual representation also symbolized the incoming British domination of Mysorean landscapes, leaving the memories of Hyder and later his son Tipu behind. Soon after the defeat and death of Tipu Sultan at the battle of Seringapatam, his family was pensioned off and removed to Vellore by the British. In such a context, the relegation of Hyder Ali's mausoleum to the background of the image can be

⁵⁰⁸ Simon Macdonald, 'To "shew virtue its own image": William Hodges's the Effects of peace and the Consequences of war, 1794-1795' *The British Art Journal* 9.1 (2008), pp. 57-66.

⁵⁰⁹ Rosie Dias, 'Memory and the Aesthetics of Military Experience: Viewing the Landscape of the Anglo-Mysore Wars' *Tate Papers* 19 (2013).

⁵¹⁰ Major Alexander Dirom, *Narrative Of Campaign In India Which Terminated The War With Tippoo Sultan In 1792* (London, 1793), pp. 179, 187, and 188.

understood as the first step of loosening the ties of his dynasty with Mysore.⁵¹¹ As the British political power in Mysore came to be established, memorialization itself evolved as a contested arena, and was to be negotiated at the cost of traditional practices and privileges of socio-cultural status and identity.⁵¹²

The British successes against Tipu Sultan in the Third Anglo-Mysore War made it possible for them to envision themselves as the incumbent power in the region. As a result, the depiction of places falling into the hands of the British was to be an orchestrated and managed one. Ravages and destruction cleared the path for occupation as the territories were laid bare for the British takeover. This is evident in Robert Home's *East View of Bangalore, with the Cypress Garden* (Figure 54). As I have mentioned above, Tipu's gardens were destroyed to provide raw materials for the sustenance of his enemies. In doing so, as seen in this image, the British not only tapped into Mysore's resource base, but also emptied the space of its meanings. Devoid of its vegetation and former grandeur, the beautifully ordered landscape has been turned into a Picturesque one, an effect that Home's representation here highlights. The ruggedness of the scene, as visible in this image, has been romanticized as the remnant of a bygone era which was to be discarded in favour of a new age as heralded by the rise of the British. Unlike the ruins as discussed above, the landscape does not produce an image of melancholia, rather it conjures the idea of changing times whereby ties with the previous regime have been severed.

What could the Indian artists' response be to such a scenario? Let us turn to the image of *Darya Daulat Bagh* (Tipu's Summer Palace) (Figure 55), by an unknown Indian artist, painted around 1795-1800, targeted towards the British market.⁵¹³ Created at the height of Tipu's struggle against and defeat in the hands of the British, and also at a time when Tipu himself had destroyed his much elaborate gardens to provide for the war effort, this image generates various narratives. The image depicts elaborately carved and designed walls, ceilings and cornices of the palace, matched by colourful frescoes. Also in view are three guards dressed in tiger-striped uniforms, tiger being Tipu Sultan's emblem. The artist does not give us any hint of the state of war outside. Was this a way of denying the perpetual state of struggle and as a result, a threat to Tipu Sultan's power? Or, was

⁵¹¹ IOR/E/4/88, pp. 34-44 (APAC, BL).

⁵¹² IOR/F/4/514/12363 (APAC, BL).

⁵¹³ IS.11:16-1887 (V and A).

it the testimony of what has been and cannot be retained? This remains unknown. Nevertheless, this image is vibrant, distinct from the visions of void and destruction of landscapes as discussed earlier in the images of British artists.

The British aim was to represent themselves as a powerful conqueror, not as a completely destructive force altogether. This was because of the fact that the political end of the British Indian empire was to be met with the untroubled accessibility to various regions and resources which hitherto had remained out of reach. Soon after the battle of Seringapatam when Wellesley ordered the survey of the revenues in Tipu Sultan's kingdom, the mitigation of British violence was considered essential for furthering 'the British interests in India'.⁵¹⁴ If access to new territories had their economic importance, the primary motivation were to be largely political and military, as Colin Mackenzie had clearly stated during his survey of Mysore.⁵¹⁵ The spirit of conquest, in this regard, was itself transformative: territorial gains enabled exploration of new areas, thus combining discovery with victory. Such was the case of Himalayan territories that had been recently won and thus inspired an imagination of places previously unseen. The sense of adventure to visit new areas was thus a celebration of British political presence. When James Baillie Fraser travelled with his younger brother William (who was acting as the political agent during the Nepal War in 1814) to the Himalayas, the greatest excitement for him was the fact that he was the first European to have 'penetrated' the region.⁵¹⁶ This idea of penetration is in line with what Jill Casid has referred to as the upholding of patriarchal zeal in her discussion of planting and colonial agriculture.⁵¹⁷ Indeed, around 1816-17 Captain J. A. Hodgson during his survey of Garhwal, took pride in pointing out that he had introduced the crop of potatoes to the hills.⁵¹⁸ Thus, Fraser's penetrative entry into the Himalayan region has its importance at various levels.

The spirit of adventure and discovery are evident from James Baillie Fraser's *Jumnotree, the Source of the Rivers Jamuna* (Figure 56). Human presence in the scene is limited to two people,

⁵¹⁴ IOR/F/4/50/1115 A (APAC, BL).

⁵¹⁵ 'Letter from Colin Mackenzie to Colonel Barry Close, the Resident of Mysore, Fort St. George 9 November 1799' in Public and Official Letterbook of the Superintendent of Mysore Survey, Colin Mackenzie, 1799 to 1803, M/ 130 B (Memoirs of the Survey of India, NAI, New Delhi).

⁵¹⁶ James Baillie Fraser, *Journal of a tour through part of the snowy range of the Himala Mountains, and to the sources of the rivers Jumna and Ganges* (London, 1820), p. v.

⁵¹⁷ Jill Casid, *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization* (Minnesota, 2004).

⁵¹⁸ J. A. Hodgson, *Field book of Survey in Sirmour and Joobul* (1816) (Memoirs of the Survey of India, NAI), p. 85.

and the artist's focus is on the high mountains which together with the flowing river in narrow streams bring the Gilpinesque Picturesque vision alive.⁵¹⁹ Such a vision is here transformed into an imperial gaze.⁵²⁰ The verdant surroundings as depicted in the image add to its richness, and the atmosphere appears to be calm, only interrupted by the sounds of flowing water. Although falling from high mountains, the flow of the river as seen in the image does not give a sense of speed. Does that mean that the pristine Himalayan landscape has itself bowed down in its subjugation to the British?

With the arrival of the British as a conquering power, the artistic endeavour to represent an image of familiarity becomes disruptive of the Himalayan scene. In his image of *The Village Jushul* (Figure 57), Fraser presents several houses built on hills and hillocks. The surroundings of Jushul are marked by the presence of greenery, and are draped by mists and clouds. The image of nature in its grandest manifestation is accompanied by the presence of three human figures in the foreground conversing among themselves. A visible contrast from natural richness in the image, however, is seen in the depiction of a now-fallen or destroyed building made of wood. Another house standing next to it features cracks on its walls. The familiar Picturesqueness of the image as represented by the presence of the fallen building gives rise to various questions. Did the British cause the fall? Or did the fall signify the general disruption of political order which could be corrected by British intervention? Taking cues from the geographer Veronica Della Dora, it can be pointed out that mountains represent both the limitations and achievements of human intervention.⁵²¹ As a Scottish laird Fraser was no stranger to mountains, and he does not let the lofty Himalayas challenge or intimidate him. Fraser here limits the limitations to produce an exaggerated effect of British pre-eminence in the Himalayas. Sublimity of the Himalayan landscapes thus becomes the Picturesque in James Baillie Fraser's hands.⁵²² Regarding Jushul, he has pointed out that important natural resources such as iron ores remained underutilized due to the lack of sufficient interest among the inhabitants of the village.⁵²³ As Romita Ray has argued,

519 Reverend William Gilpin, *Three essays : on picturesque beauty, on picturesque travel and on sketching landscape : to which is added a poem, on landscape painting* (London, 1792), p. 19.

520 Kim Michasiw, 'Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque' in *Representations*, 38.38 (1992), p. 94.

521 Veronica Della Dora, 'Mountains and memory: embodied visions of ancient peaks in the nineteenth-century Aegean' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33.2 (2008), pp. 217-232.

522 Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, nationalism, and the colonial uncanny* (Oxford, 2005), p. 44.

523 James Baillie Fraser, *Journal of a tour through part of the snowy range of the Himala Mountains*, pp. 236-237.

soon after Fraser's visit, the British sought to transform the region with botanical surveys, horticultural innovations, and plantation agriculture.⁵²⁴ This image resonates with the effects of decadence and neglect as seen in the visual representations of ruins, which are reproduced here again in order to pave way for the British presence. Simultaneously, Fraser also betrays the British presence as invasive, because of the fact the Himalayas were to be inevitably altered. Fraser's artistic transformation of the region was thus an important step forward in anticipating and as a result, laying the foundation of British overhaul of the character of the Himalayan landscapes.

This section has studied images representing sites of conflicts between the British and the native rulers of India. As I have shown, the British artists exhibited a tendency to heighten the dangers and difficulties posed by Indians only to be ultimately conquered by the British as part of extending their Indian dominion. Other than the locations of struggles themselves, the artists also made visible various landmarks that played important roles in the wars. In the battlefield, the British artists conjured the British image as a conquering force, capable of ruthlessly suppressing the enemy. However, the British averted the representations of themselves as a completely annihilating power, and thus with ravages that followed, they were rather keen to represent the prospect that laid ahead of them whereby new meanings and narratives could be constructed and applied. However, the spirit of discovery when combined with that of conquest, visually represented the British political power as transformative, often bringing into focus the trail of disruption that followed in its wake. For Indian artists, the victory of the British against native rulers was a reality that proved both inevitable and undeniable. Their coming to terms with such a reality was variegated in nature. Their responses, as seen here, ranged from an acknowledgement of the rise of British political power to that of the contemplation of the glorious past and the changing order of the day in the light of it. The British victory over various parts of India was a difficult and important task, something that had to be symbolically managed in a way to celebrate Britain's growing territorial power. Whilst British artists gave expression to and celebrated the might of British arms, Indian artists were keener on reflecting on the impact of the victories on Indian landscapes. In doing so, even though the British intended to represent themselves as not a completely destructive force, they became implicated in the disruption of the contemporary political order.

⁵²⁴ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, p. 67.

New Centres of Political Power

As the British took stock of Indian past and fought wars, simultaneously they also tended to develop their own bases, that is, the presidencies. The British presidencies in India, that is, Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay had humble beginnings in the latter half of the seventeenth century, but from the very outset, they aspired for more political importance and power. Beginning as the factories of the Company in India, by the late eighteenth century, the presidency towns became centres of administration with the increase in the EIC's political influence in India. Not only was the growing political power of the British a reason for the elaboration of the presidencies, but also the presidencies themselves gave expression to the rise of the British in India. The presidencies were the focal points of British Indian administration and thus were at the core of the ideologies of imperial rule.

Unlike the Mughal capital Delhi, the presidencies lacked any genealogies of political power and authority, and thus had to be re-made in the image of the British as the rulers of India. As the older towns and centres of political power in India came to be presented and visually represented as decrepit and in ruins, room was made for the growth and development of the British presidencies. With their new, shimmering white buildings plastered with chunam which were architecturally different from crumbling Indian buildings and monuments, the British invoked a message of novelty and freshness so as to be representing the new face and fate of India. The presidencies were at the core of fabrication of mythologies of British political presence as the choice of architecture was different from what was in practice in contemporary Britain. Whilst in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the British in Britain came to increasingly favour Gothic over Neoclassical architecture, for the colonies the latter was favoured over the former. Harking back to the Graeco-Roman tradition, Neoclassical architecture in India stood not only as a firm reminder of the British as carrying forward the glorious legacy of the Roman empire, but also invoked an image of grandeur that could recast the Britons' power as sanctified by history.⁵²⁵

Architectural developments together with elaborate town-planning were also ways of making alien environments familiar. It is not difficult to imagine that for the British in India, separated from

⁵²⁵ Thomas Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (Los Angeles, 1989), pp. 9-10.

their native land and people by great distances, such spaces could be important reminders of the world that they had left behind. Inspired by the buildings in Britain, architectural innovations in the presidencies created images of a Britain overseas. Neo-Classical architecture when deployed in India could inspire the idea of a classical world re-created. As artist William Hodges noted in his travelogue, the houses in Calcutta gave him the impression of ‘Grecian temples’.⁵²⁶ When it comes to the images representing the British presidency towns in India, the idea was not only one of perpetuating magnificence, but also that of creating an air of exoticism and foreignness that could make India potentially exciting for newcomers.⁵²⁷ India was to be pictorially represented as both imaginatively close and distant, where a life on British terms was possible, yet was often quite difficult. The representations of the presidencies in images were thus to lay out the ambience of British life in India as well as how India itself was being reshaped by the British themselves. If, as seen in the previous chapter, the images of natives surrounding the Britons in India was being increasingly deployed in the portraits and family conversation pieces for the purposes of representing their political power, landscape art took this idea a step further.

Whilst British visualization of Indian people focused more on transforming them into models of classification to enrich and strengthen European stereotypes, landscape art rendered them completely faceless, making them visible only through their dark complexions.⁵²⁸ As will be seen here, Indian figures in the works of British landscape artists are mostly depicted as dressed in white. Such ‘uniformed’ simplifications not only exaggerated their brownness, but can also be understood as Indians being brought under the civilizing and as a result, colonizing gaze of British imperialism. Indians are mostly depicted in various capacities subordinate to the British, as if to amplify the political presence of their masters. Taking the ideas of Romita Ray further, I suggest that the images were an important means of ascertaining the degrees of brownness and whiteness within the landscapes of India. When it comes to the works by Indian artists, these idioms feed into their visual representations as well. If Indians internalized the British ideas of India’s land and peoples, what could it mean for their representations of Indian landscapes? For the British in India, the presence of brownness was highlighted and visualized to the extent that it was abhorred. But how can brownness transcend itself as a western construct? How does brownness figure beyond

⁵²⁶ Hodges, *Travels*, p. 15.

⁵²⁷ Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, p. 45.

⁵²⁸ Romita Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, p. 25.

European stereotyping? It is the examination of these issues to which I shall turn in this section of the chapter.

The earliest images of India commissioned by the EIC were the paintings of its factories in Madras, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras around 1730 (Figures 58, 59, and 60). British artists George Lambert and Samuel Scott worked together on the paintings: George Lambert was responsible for the depictions of buildings and peoples in the background, and Samuel Scott as a noted marine painter, worked on the Company's ships: East Indiaman at the foreground of the canvases. Considering the paintings of factories of the EIC in places which were later to become the presidencies of Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta, it is found that the artists depict the surroundings coming to life as East Indiamen fire salutes on their arrival at the ports. Together with the ships, the factories of the EIC in the paintings form a dominant presence. Also visible in the paintings are several human figures standing on the stairs leading up to the factories, waiting to greet the passengers onboard and the goods arriving from Britain. 1730 was a difficult year in the history of the EIC, its privileges being constantly questioned and countered in favour of free trade. Fortunately, the Company found its saviour in the form of the Prime Minister Robert Walpole. Walpole intervened the EIC's favour and the charter of the EIC came to be renewed for another thirty years.⁵²⁹ The Company saw this as a major achievement, and the images of its factories became symbolic of its power as well as the celebratory expression of its success. For Brian Allen, the paintings might have been drawn from the contemporary tradition of depicting the landscape views of country-houses and palaces.⁵³⁰ The images, however, do not give us a glimpse of the lands lying beyond the factories, and thus according to Linda Colley, these early paintings of the Company's factories were illustrative of its limited ambitions in India in the mid-eighteenth century.⁵³¹

The paintings by Lambert and Scott have much more to them than what appears in the first place. As John F. Crowley has pointed out, the Dutch artistic tradition was replete with examples of drawings showing the internal working of the European factories in Asia.⁵³² Although the paintings

⁵²⁹ Sutherland, *East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics*, pp. 17-18.

⁵³⁰ Brian Allen, 'The East India Company's Settlement Pictures: George Lambert and Samuel Scott' in Pauline Rohatgi and Pheroza Godrej (eds), *Under the Indian Sun: British Landscape Artists* (Bombay, 1995), pp. 10-11.

⁵³¹ Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600-1850* (London, 2002), pp. 248-249.

⁵³² Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes*, pp. 15-16 and 169-170.

do not present a view of the workforces of the British EIC, the demands for their reproduction into prints suggest that the subject of the images had generated considerable interest and thus can be understood as presenting opportunities, economic and commercial that the British factories in India had to offer. Philip Stern has recently pointed out that the earliest experiments of political authority, that is, administration, the promulgation of laws and justice, and minting of coins, took place within the precincts of the Company's factories.⁵³³ Another important dimension was the combination of the temporal and the spiritual. In the painting of Calcutta, alongside the fort is also present St Anne's Church. The EIC was keen on encouraging church attendance on the part of its employees, and this connection between religion and politics was something that the Georgian state in Britain drew upon and its representative in India, that is, the EIC, was to pursue subsequently.⁵³⁴ The paintings, in this regard, can be said to be the earliest demonstration of the EIC's combination of spiritual, military, and commercial authority, with that is, the settlements around the Company's factories and the ships with the fluttering flags, demonstrating the power and prowess of the EIC. In other words, these factories were the initiation of the British dominion in India.

Within the next fifty years, the EIC gained significant political influence in India. The economic basis strengthened as a result of the trading privileges that were offshoots of their growing political power. The grant of *Diwani* (1765) was an important step in the acquisition of land revenues from India, with its prospects of filling in the coffers of the Georgian state. The growing political power and economic prosperity of the EIC was reflected in the manner its centres in India were to look like. Among the presidencies of the Company, Calcutta stood out most prominently. By 1773, Madras and Bombay came to be subordinated to it and by the 1780s, it had clearly overshadowed the *nawabi* capital of Murshidabad to become the capital of Bengal in due course. The dazzle of Calcutta relegated Murshidabad to the background. When George Fleming surveyed Murshidabad and the Berhampur cantonments between 1812 and 1814, he reported to the Surveyor General that he was 'surveying a dirty and populous town with narrow streets'.⁵³⁵

⁵³³ Stern, *The Company-State*, pp. 33-36.

⁵³⁴ Spear, *The Nabobs*, p. 110.

⁵³⁵ R. H. Phillimore, *Historical Records Of Survey Of India, 1800-1815*, Vol. 2 (India, 1950), p. 18.

The foundation of Calcutta as the ‘Second City of British Empire’ was also part of recording its growing affluence. The factory, fort, and the settlements of the EIC had suffered from the attacks of the final independent Nawab of Bengal, Sirajuddaulah in 1757 and had been reduced to rubble. The process of rebuilding Calcutta was thus also an act of representing the British in India as a force to be reckoned with. The EIC itself took an active stand in the process of rebuilding, and sent workers down from Britain who not only took part in the building of official buildings, but also new houses for the rising British population of Calcutta.⁵³⁶ The British attitude towards the city changed, and in an effort to secure their seat of political and commercial power, the new Fort William was built in the south as opposed to the old fort in the north of the city which now came to be used as a *godown*. Along the new Fort William there grew up fashionable British neighbourhoods. The favourite part of Calcutta for Britons was Garden Reach. William Hodges’ painting, *View of the Esplanade, Calcutta from Garden Reach*, dated c. 1785 (Figure 61) at the first sight hints at Lambert and Scott’s view of Calcutta- characterized by the depiction of the Hughli with ships sailing on it together with native boats. There is a possibility, given the popularity of the views by Lambert and Scott, that Hodges would have seen and thus, influenced by them. However, whilst Lambert and Scott due to the lack of their first-hand knowledge about the vicinities of Calcutta or probably based on the demands from their patrons, that is, the Directors of the EIC, focused only on the harbour and the Company’s settlement nearby, Hodges’ approach in this painting is illustrative of his witnessing of Calcutta’s expansion. Going further ‘into’ the city and taking his view from Garden Reach, Hodges is reflective of the changing character of Calcutta. Unlike the Calcutta of Lambert and Scott, Hodges’ Calcutta is no longer just a port city with the Company’s factory, but the sovereign and commercial aspirations of 1730 now translated into architectural and landscaped reality as evinced from the presence of trading ships as well as the shimmering white neoclassical buildings in the painting. Together with the administrative and the economic significance of the city, what Hodges has particularly taken into account is the fact that Britons had been able to carve a niche within Calcutta where they could they could feel at home with their own kinds of sociability as evident from the presence of a few Britons on the riverbank in the front who are engaged in fishing. In the grounds near the river are visible a few Indian figures who seem to be carrying a palanquin or a sedan chair and some other men both

⁵³⁶ Blechynden, *Calcutta, past and present*, pp. 86-87.

British and Indian walking around. Thus, in this painting by Hodges the British, though still limited in number, seem to be acclimatizing themselves through their building and social practices so as to mark their presence in India.

An important part of British life and sociability in Calcutta was the establishment of charitable and spiritual bases of the community. The Britons in eighteenth-century Calcutta were known for their hospitality and the spirit of service towards their countrymen.⁵³⁷ If upholding ‘Britishness’ in a faraway land was crucial to the British as Romita Ray has argued, religion and philanthropy had a vital role to play. This is evident from the next two images by Thomas Daniell to be examined here. The painting, *View of the Military Orphan House, Howrah* (Figure 62), dated 1787, is one of the earliest oil paintings executed by Thomas Daniell after his arrival in India. It was commissioned by the Military Orphan Society after the building in view was purchased in 1785. In this image, the river Hughli flows in the foreground with two country boats, a lifeboat with the Union Flag and a junk sailing on it. On the bank of the river is a lawn behind which is the building of the Military Orphan House with again the Union Flag on it flying high. A thick cover of trees is visible on both sides of the building above which we see an overcast sky. This building functioned as the school for the children of the private soldiers. As an organization for providing benefits for the personnel of the Bengal Army, the Military Orphan Society was one of the earliest examples of a Company welfare project. The painting, although apparently simple in content and execution, dominates the Indian space as an instance of institutionalization of the Company's governance, in this case illustrative of its benediction and charity. The surrounding elements in the painting give a sense of activity and liveliness that characterized the British presence in Calcutta.

The idea of British presence is taken further in Thomas Daniell's aquatint, *St. John's Church* (Figure 63), *Calcutta* as part of his larger collection titled, *Views in Calcutta* (1787). Here, the artist presents St. John's church, based on the model of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London, and one of the earliest churches to be built in Calcutta. The steeple of St. Anne's Church, as seen in the painting of Lambert and Scott, had been destroyed by an earthquake and its final deathblow came from the hands of Nawab Sirajuddaulah as he sought to deplete all vestiges of the EIC's presence, and renamed Calcutta after the Shiite Prophet Ali, as Alinagar. Completed towards the end of Warren Hastings' career in India, the building of the church was widely and generously

⁵³⁷ Hodges, *Travels in India*, p. 15.

supported by the British community in Calcutta.⁵³⁸ This image presents a frontal view of the neo-Classical church, with its columns, and garland designs on its cornices. Apparently, a service has just begun, and outside the church can be seen a multitude of Indians. Whilst a few of them are shown seated on the lawn or walking along it, most of the Indians in this image are pictured outside the church waiting with a palanquin, a carriage, and sedan chairs to fetch the church-goers home. The Indians are thus presented as at the service of the British. Along the church, we can find various shimmering white official and residential buildings in use by Britons. Beside these there appear on the image some ruins of old native buildings with overgrown foliage.

As one of the oldest churches in Calcutta to be established by the British, this depiction of St. John's church signifies a spiritual basis of the Company's authority. This church was not only a place of worship, but also an arena of commemoration. This was also the site of the memorial to Job Charnock, the founder of Calcutta and the interiors of the building displayed numerous memorials to individuals who had sacrificed their lives in India for the sake of the British nation. Moreover, the church had been constructed out of building material derived from the ruins of the ancient monuments at Gaur⁵³⁹ — which, as I have mentioned in the first section, were increasingly used for public works in Calcutta. It was also planned that tiles from the graves of the Muslim rulers in Gaur would be brought in to decorate the church, but was later cancelled.⁵⁴⁰ Such use of *spolia* in the construction of the church gives rise to a hybridity that can be seen as the symbolism of assertion of British politico-cultural dominion over India.⁵⁴¹ Thus, the Daniells, through this depiction, artistically captured the maturity of the city as the centre of British Indian administration.

The evolution of British presidencies in India depended on harnessing an Indian workforce and labour. This is evident in *The Government House, Fort St. George* (Plate IX, Series II of the *Oriental Scenery*) (Figure 64). Here, the Daniells depict the scene of a vibrant life in the English settlement in Madras. In the centre of the composition stands the Government House which was

⁵³⁸ Blechynden, *Calcutta, past and present*, pp. 137-138.

⁵³⁹ Pradip Kumar Mitra, 'Henry Creighton' in *Pratna Samikshya*, New Series 3, 2012 Centre for Archaeological Studies & Training, Eastern India, Kolkata, p. 214.

⁵⁴⁰ Blechynden, *Calcutta, past and present*, p. 137.

⁵⁴¹ On the political significance of *spolia*, see Tugba Tanyeri-Erdemir, Robert Hayden, and Aykan Erdemir, 'The Iconostasis in the Republican Mosque: Transformed Religious Sites as Artifacts of Intersecting Religioscapes' in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 46.3 (2014), pp. 489-512.

within Fort St. George. The Daniells present the fort as the nerve centre of the East India Company's activities in Madras. The sturdy walls of the fort and the orderly nature of the buildings within its vicinity give the sense of a well-managed and regulated environment under British control, as signified by the Union flag at the front. It is interesting to note that in spite of the proximity of Fort St. George to the sea, the flag has not been presented as fluttering in coastal winds. As the publication of the *Oriental Scenery* coincided with the tumultuous years of the French Revolutionary Wars, this depiction of the steadiness of the Union Flag can be understood as a visual trope signifying British order and peace. The surroundings are bustling with commodities and a multitude of people. Here, the native populace, like in the image of St. John's church, is presented in subordinate capacities as carrying palanquins, sedan chairs or goods on their back. Like in the paintings of Arthur William Devis as examined in the previous chapter, the figures of the Indians as working for the British en masse was also a way of representing their compliance to the British order.⁵⁴² The representation of the natives labouring near the English quarters is a reminder of the depiction of anonymous unfranchized labouring peasantry in English landscape paintings. Elizabeth Helsinger argues that the anonymity of the peasant labour in J.W.M. Turner's Picturesque landscapes reflects their exclusion from the political nation.⁵⁴³ Similarly, the Daniells whilst highlighting the prosperity of British life in India, creates an image of British dominance over India and its people.

Whilst the images by British artists represent the Indian workforce as subordinate to the cause of the British in India, the reality was a rather complex one. Both the EIC's commercial and later land revenue policy measures and regulations caused havoc in India. The result was the decline of Indian trades and crafts and the ruralization of the Indian economy. The pressure over land increased, and the subsistence of the population came down to a state of hand-to-mouth existence. Famines occurred, and the EIC administration proved unable to provide social and economic relief. The prosperity of the British presidencies was thus achieved at the cost of Indian life. The response of the British artists in this context, was rather complicated. Not only did their artworks significantly exclude the harshness of the economic impact of British rule in India, but they also

⁵⁴² For an understanding of how the British presence in colonial Madras was sustained by native labour, see Susan M. Neild, 'Colonial Urbanism: The Development of Madras City in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries' *Modern Asian Studies*, 13.2 (1979), pp. 217-246.

⁵⁴³ Elizabeth Helsinger, 'Turner and the Representation of England' in W.J.T. Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power: Space, Place and Landscape* (London, 2002), pp. 103-125.

represented a picture of overall order and harmony. This is evident from William Hodges' aquatint titled, *The View of a Farmyard in the Kingdom of Bengal* (Figure 65), dated 1786. The image presents the Bengal countryside in a state of calm and quietude. A woman is shown as carrying a pitcher of water over her head, whilst two children and some men are in a relaxed state. The village cults under the tree beside the hut and the presence of goats and cows in the scene add to the general peace that this representation evokes. This image does not even give a hint of the devastating impacts of the long-term effects of the Bengal famine of the 1770s, and those of the land revenue experiments on the part of the EIC throughout the mid-1770s and in the 1780s.⁵⁴⁴ Furthermore, it does not register (and thereby attempts to neutralize) the dangers of peasant rebellions in this period, continuing well into the nineteenth century.⁵⁴⁵

The British obsession with settled agriculture under the management of landowners influenced by Physiocracy found expression in the Permanent Settlement of 1793. Under this measure, although permanent ownership of land on the part of the landlords was secured, such guarantee came at the cost of exorbitant rates of land revenue, the pressure of which the peasants had to bear. The emergence of absentee landlordism as an outcome of the Permanent Settlement was a departure from an earlier age when the landlords took a direct interest in the upkeep and welfare of peasants.⁵⁴⁶ Even in this scenario, the image of tranquillity prevailed in the works of British artists. In George Chinnery's *Bengal Village Scene* (c.1819-1821) (Figure 66),⁵⁴⁷ the viewer is again presented with a picture of calm and tranquillity, tempered with the presence of a few human figures and some pack animals. The animals are shown in the picture as static, and out of the three human figures in the scene, two are depicted as bent and slouching, not as straight and steady. Chinnery's style in its effects is a clear reminder of Thomas Gainsborough's *Landscape with Gipsies* (c.1753-4).⁵⁴⁸ Like Gainsborough, Chinnery also presents the people in the foreground, revealing his fascination with them. Gainsborough's keen interest in the representations of gypsies

⁵⁴⁴ For a general outline of the harsh impacts of British experiments regarding land revenue in Bengal, see Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition*, pp. 82-83.

⁵⁴⁵ A. Dasgupta, 'The Fakir and Sannyasi Rebellion' *Social Scientist*, 10.1 (1982) pp. 44-55.

⁵⁴⁶ The classic study on the Permanent Settlement is Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996). For pre-colonial landownership in Bengal, see J. R. McLane, *Land and Local Kingship in Eighteenth-Century Bengal* (Cambridge, 1993). On the grievances due to the absence of earlier flexibilities in the EIC's revenue regimes, see Jon E Wilson, "'A Thousand Countries to go to': Peasants and Rulers in Late Eighteenth Century Bengal' *Past & Present*, 189.1 (2005), pp. 81-109.

⁵⁴⁷ Accession number: 1943P287 (Birmingham Museums Trust).

⁵⁴⁸ Thomas Gainsborough, *Landscape with Gipsies*, c. 1753-4, Accession Number: N05845 (Tate Britain).

was part of their deviation from existent societal norms and practices and their general decrepitude which became very popular with the artists of the Picturesque in the later years.

When in India, the representation of ‘coloured’ bodies became an important component of colonial objectification. Reminiscing about her first arrival in India, Lady Maria Nugent stated that she and her crew mistook the boatmen in Sundarbans to be monkeys and threw bread at them,⁵⁴⁹ Instances of British conceptualizations of the Indian body as primitive, ugly, effeminate, or even funny are numerous. In this regard, Chinnery’s image, whilst celebrating the idyll of Indian countryside, also feeds into the contemporary British understandings of Indian bodies. The pastoral evocations in this scene contributes to an image of peace and harmony, which the image represents as an obvious outcome of the British political presence in India. Observed from a distance, the village life in India is idealized in the two images as discussed above. This idealization not only elided the British impact on Indian economy, but also presented a state of calm that did not exist in reality. The idea of prosperity in India’s countryside under the British rule was a chimera. Such imaginings were to later become parts of British imperial ideology that viewed villages as the ‘real India’.⁵⁵⁰

But back in the city, the scenario was completely different. If the political legitimacy of British rule was to be based on its territorial expansion and the semblance of order that Britons brought to India, then urban life presented an image of disorder. The native quarters were excluded from the map of Calcutta, and as Swati Chattopadhyay has shown, the difference between the black and the white towns was more of colonial imaginary than a lived reality.⁵⁵¹ Living in India, whilst the British showed concerns about their life within the household to be open to their Indian servants, the world outside was even more complex to deal with. Taking inspiration from Chattopadhyay’s work, scholars like Romita Ray and Amanda Sciampacone and scholars have suggested that British representations of colonial Calcutta registered the fuzzy boundaries between British and native lives and also how the native presence could overwhelm that of the British in India.⁵⁵² Building on

⁵⁴⁹ Maria Nugent, *Travels in India*, Vol. 1 (London, 1813), pp. 72-73.

⁵⁵⁰ Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, pp. 69-70; and Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Bloomington, 2000), pp. 131-142. See also Surendra S. Jodhka, ‘Nation and Village. Images of Rural India in Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Paper (2003), pp. 3343-3353.

⁵⁵¹ Swati Chattopadhyay, ‘Blurring Boundaries: The Limits of “White Town” in Colonial Calcutta’ in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 59.2 (2000), pp. 154-179. Cf. Meera Kosambi and J. E. Brush, ‘Three-colonial port cities in India’ in *Geographical Review*, 78:1 (1988), pp. 32-47.

⁵⁵² Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*; Amanda Sciampacone, ‘Urban Ruin: James Baillie Fraser’s Representation of the Black Hole Memorial of Calcutta’ in *Third Text*, 25.6 (2011), pp. 751-762.

these ideas, I will probe the role of images in upholding the political legitimacy of early British Indian empire. If urban centres were spaces to exhibit the signs of British order, they were also avenues that exposed where such order went wrong, or had been circumvented. But what can be made out of the role of the British, and in particular that of British artists in such a scenario?

Artistic strategies, in this regard, were manifold. Scenes of urban life were interspersed with depictions of overall achievements of the presidencies, whether, economic, architectural or administrative. In William Baillie's aquatint, *View of Tank Square, Calcutta from the East*, dated 1784 (Figure 67), the artist presents to the viewer an image of Calcutta's growing affluence and development. Baillie combines the sites of memory (evident from the presence of the Holwell monument) with those of commerce and governance, and fashionable residences. In other words, Baillie reproduces in his image every important site that Thomas Daniell in his *Views* had represented in separate plates. Although a military officer, Baillie resigned from service and took up landscape painting at a time when the artistic scene in Calcutta was steeped in economic depression. In producing his views of Calcutta he did not receive the success he had hoped for, but it was not a complete failure either as he did manage to find subscribers to his work.⁵⁵³ This view of Calcutta from Tank Square by Baillie attests to his military draftsmanship from the emphasis on the contours and outlines of various buildings and the monument. In this manner, he encapsulates the whole expanse of British order within one image. The human figures in the scene are small in scale, and thus although attending to activities of their everyday life, do not give any impression of dissidence towards the colonial order.

A similar image is conjured by Scottish artist James Wales in his image of Bombay. In the aquatint, *View of Bombay Harbour* (Figure 68), Wales, like Baillie, also emphasizes the development of Bombay.⁵⁵⁴ The artist here represents the nearby fort area and the dockyard which had been finished in the mid-1780s. Unlike in Calcutta and Madras, the British interest in Bombay was slow to develop, and taken in the early 1790s, Wales here registers the increasing importance of Bombay for the EIC. The 1790s also saw the growing British intervention into Maratha politics, especially as they sought for allies in their struggle against Tipu Sultan. The image presents us with a busy scene as between the ship and the native boats in the foreground, and various vessels in the

⁵⁵³ William Baillie to Ozias Humphry HU/4/88-89 (Ozias Humphry Correspondence, Royal Academy of Arts).

⁵⁵⁴ Shelfmark: X436(1) (BL).

background of the image, the artist draws the viewer's focus in the middle zone, full of goods and peoples. The scene is one of activity and dynamism, that registers the growth of British influence in western India. When posthumously published in 1800, this prosperous image of the Bombay Harbour was a firm testimony of the British confidence as they prepared to battle it out against the Marathas in the subsequent period. Visiting Bombay in 1809, Maria Graham also noted the affluence of the harbour, as the nodal point of thriving international trade as managed by the British in India.⁵⁵⁵

Another response of British artists was to establish the distinctiveness of the British within the colonial cityscapes. As I have already mentioned above, black and white towns were hardly separate from each other in practice, but the British representations highlighted the differences between the native and the British settlements. In this regard, the essence of a particular part of the presidency town being 'native' was conjured in the artists' vision and the idea of it being different from that of the British part of the city was highlighted.⁵⁵⁶ In Thomas Daniell's aquatint *Hindu Pagoda and House* (1787) (Figure 69), the artist presents the character of the scenery as essentially different from the orderliness of the British buildings. Established by the rich Indian businessman Govindaram Mitter, the Navaratna temple (or Daniell's pagoda) in the left-hand side of the image was never completed. The structure was to eventually reduce to ruins and the main tower with five domes was to collapse in 1813. In the image, the artist draws immediate attention to the state of the buildings. Not only are the buildings in the scene different from neoclassical British official buildings and residencies, but also there is difference in the plan and layout of the street. The shabbiness of the vegetation and huts lined on both sides of the street invites the viewer to think of the locality, that is, Chitpur Road as a space which is different from the British way of life. A further noticeable aspect is that of the presence of a human figure in European dress, potentially an Englishman, driving forward his carriage at the centre of the image. As noted previously, in the Daniells' images of Calcutta, Indians in the presidencies are represented as at the service of the British. Besides this, when interactions between them are depicted, British artists present Indians as in awe or in compliance to the British.⁵⁵⁷ This aquatint takes this idea a step further. Whilst there

⁵⁵⁵ Maria Graham, *Journal Of A Residence In India* (London, 1812), pp. 12-13.

⁵⁵⁶ Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, pp. 45-48.

⁵⁵⁷ Cf. de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, pp. 183-189. Indians in the British images are not represented as serving the British or as subservient in their interacting with them only when the British are absent in the scene, or are not in visible direct contact in the foreground of the image. See James Baillie Fraser, *A view of Writers*

is present a host of various native figures, travelling, walking, sitting, and talking amongst themselves, the Englishman on the carriage is distant from such commingling. When James Baillie Fraser's published his view of the pagoda and its surroundings in 1826, there were no Europeans represented in the scene at all.⁵⁵⁸

This distancing in the later years was to become foundational to the idea of the Britons being separate from the people that they ruled, and was enforced in the images by confirming the principle of maintaining effective and 'respectable distance'.⁵⁵⁹ This is evident in Fraser's aquatint titled, *A view of Government House, from the Eastward (Views of Calcutta and its Environs, 1824-26)* (Figure 70), the artist depicts the magnificent arched gate of the building as topped by lions as leading to the extensive building of the Government House. Based on neoclassical architectural elements, the Government House was built in 1799 under the initiative of Lord Wellesley as the official residence of the Governor-General of Bengal. In 1809, Lord Valentia declared, 'I wish India to be ruled from a palace, and not a counting-house'. Though not completely happy, Lord Valentia still admired the Government House.⁵⁶⁰ The Government House, was thus an expression of configuring India as British dominion. Just outside the gate a few Englishmen on horseback who act as bodyguards follow the procession of Lord Hastings preceded by mace bearers and his silver stick, are faintly visible. Beyond that in the foreground there are swarms of the native populace thronging to the vicinity of the building in various capacities such as bearers of palanquins and sedan chairs, managing a bullock cart, carrying goods and simply sitting about. However, they do not enter the gate of the building. Behind the human figures in the front stands the battered wall of an old building which is now overgrown with foliage. The sky above is full of birds.

The architecture of the Government House, especially the structure of its gate, came to be emulated by the Indian elite in their residences like the Deb family of Sovabazar in Calcutta and the Dugar family of Murshidabad in Bengal.⁵⁶¹ Although the presence of Indians might be potentially seen

Buildings from the Monument at the West End (X644(6)) and *A view in the Bazaar, leading to the Chitpore Road* (X644(24)). See also, Sciampacone, 'Urban Ruin', pp. 757-58.

⁵⁵⁸ James Baillie Fraser, *A View of the Black Pagoda, on Chitpore Road in Calcutta* (IM.19-1918).

⁵⁵⁹ Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, p. 56.

⁵⁶⁰ Lord Valentia, *Voyages And Travels*, Vol.1 (1809), pp. 235-236.

⁵⁶¹ The adaptation of neoclassical architecture by Indians was not favoured by the British. See Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, p. 45.

as unsettling for the British government, this also signified the extension of British dominion on them as signified by their involvement with the space as they watch Lord Hastings' procession in awe from a distance. Moreover, it is clear that Indians in the image are made to be clearly seen in the depiction unlike the Englishmen who are only partially visible and also that they are not entering the gates or going closer to them. Two important inferences can thus be drawn: firstly, like in the Daniell's image of St. John's Church, the idea of visibility of anonymized, blurry figures of natives in subordinate capacities as subjects in the image ultimately accrues to their subjugation to the British; and secondly, the delineation of the natives and Britons within the urban space of Calcutta. The crumbling wall as seen in the image as against the firmly standing Government House in itself is illustrative of the British pre-eminence.⁵⁶²

Whilst the Indians in the above image were represented as standing far away from the gates of the Government House, what if they were actually in close proximity to a British edifice? What if distances were in danger of being transgressed? In her analysis of the Fraser's aquatint, *Writer's Building from the Monument in the East*, Sciampacone points to the presence of two English gentlemen on horseback pushing and driving away a crowd of Indians from the British quarters of Calcutta.⁵⁶³ Such prevention of the breach of boundaries is also visible in another view of the Government House by Fraser, *View of Court House Street, from near the South-Eastern Gateway of Government House* (Figure 71), dated 1826. In the foreground of the image is the gate which, in Fraser's words, is 'a veritable Roman triumphal archway', dominates the scene. Though slightly touched by the effects of Indian climate, the solidity of the structure speaks for itself, representing an image of continuity and stability. Throngs of Indian people are shown as walking along the Court House street, busy in their everyday activities, walking, carrying goods and water, and even bearing palanquins. On the left hand side, very near the gateway can be seen two Indian figures, one carrying water in a pot and the other sitting on the step close to the gate. In the front on the grassy patch there are a few goats. Although the proximity of Indians and animals to the gateway is noticeable, at the same time there can be seen a guard keeps an eye on the potential 'trespassers'.

⁵⁶² Although British artists attempted to project the firmness of British buildings, concerns regarding the vulnerability of British buildings to Indian climate, and that of frequent repair were ever-present. See *Asiatic Annual register*, 1810-11, p. 18; and Sten Nilsson, *European Architecture in India 1750-1850* (London, 1968), p. 28. See also, for example, BL: APAC: Z/F/4/1 (Index to Board's Collections). Throughout the index, several proposals of repair and maintenance of colonial buildings were addressed to the Board of Control.

⁵⁶³ Sciampacone, 'Urban Ruin', p. 761.

Whilst in Indian crowds had to be forced out in the image examined by Sciampacone, the guard in this aquatint protects against any kind of transgression altogether. It is the presence of the guard that signifies in the image both the British zeal and capacity to maintain a distance from the Indians and Indian life, even though it was not possible to do so in practice. Distance thus becomes the defining characteristic of the political legitimacy of the British as ruling India.

If British artists were anxious to represent British superiority over Calcutta and its inhabitants, and also distance the former from the latter, how did Indian artists respond? Indian artists were cognizant of the growing political power of the British, and thus their artworks register such changes. In Sita Ram's watercolour of *Mr. Donnithorne's House at Futtehghur where Lord Moira resided during the Hot winds of 1815* (Figure 72),⁵⁶⁴ the artist represents an extensive view of the house and the establishment with Lord Moira arriving in the company of his entourage. Representing the view from above, the artist invites the viewer to engage with the expansiveness of the area where the house is situated which itself is an evidence of the British prominence in the region. Whilst the house in the first place is striking in its similarity with the country houses in contemporary Britain, the artist's style of depiction is a clear reminder of Mughal miniature painting. As noted in the previous section, Sita Ram presented the Mughal capital of Delhi in a bird's eye view format. And, in the case of this image, he uses a similar method. In doing so, the artist here can be understood as reflecting on the changing times with the increasing prominence of British political order in India.

Even when Indian artists internalized the British idea of indiscriminate darkness of Indian complexions in images, their own approach was variegated in nature. In the watercolour drawing by an anonymous Indian artist titled, *House Built by Thomas Powney, Esq.* (Figure 73),⁵⁶⁵ there is a Palladian style villa, flanked on both sides by lush gardens. Reading the image from left to right, in the front, it can be found a carriage with an attendant, two guards near the steps leading to the entrance, a Briton on horseback attended by an Indian figure, and finally a male bearer. In this drawing, although the figures of Indians are dark in colour, wearing white, and in subordinate capacities to the Britons, the focus of the artist is on the nature of the work that they are doing rather their bodily demeanour. If British artists' emphasis, as seen in the previous chapter, was

⁵⁶⁴ Add.Or.4869 (British Library).

⁵⁶⁵ Add. Or. 740 (British Library).

the codification of Indian population through a knowledge and representation of their work and occupation, the anonymous Indian artist here draws attention to the actual work being done itself. This point can be further elucidated in another drawing by the same artist depicts two natives drawing water from a well (Figure 74).⁵⁶⁶ The presence of the villa in the background serves as a reminder of Indians working for the British, drawing water for rice-fields or gardens. The native figures, however, have been represented as being conversant with their work and handling it effectively. Not only does the artist demonstrate Indian skills in working with the machine in the scene, but in doing so, he also highlights the importance of Indians for the British in India. Unlike the images by British artists as discussed previously, where Indian bodies at work were largely bent and unsteady, the artist here presents the Indian figures as capable and masterly adept at their work. Although Indian subordination to the British had become a reality, images as these make a vital statement. Unlike the British artists' portrayal of blurring figures of labouring Indians, these images foreground their expertise and thus represent an image of productivity and skilfulness.

This section has looked at various visual representations of the emerging British metropolises in India at the hands of both British and Indian artists. Attention has also been drawn towards the portrayal of rural life, which as noted above, was a device to project the virtues of British rule. British artists highlighted the growth of neoclassical architecture and its endurance in the colonial topography as the symbols of British political power, order, and fortitude, and thereby their dominion over Indian landscape. Indian artists likewise acknowledged the rise of the British through the depictions of neoclassical buildings. Part of establishing British power in India was to develop the distance between the British and the natives, as an element of ensuring the subordination of the latter to the former. The British artists were thus keen to maintain the boundaries which in reality could hardly be possible. In doing so, they attempted to make Indian subordination to the British rule visible by garbing the Indian figures with an overall blanket of darkness which could both be viewed and supposedly reformed with the touch of whiteness. On the other hand, Indian artists, as seen here, subtly appropriated British representations by depicting Indians as robust and active, and also by drawing attention towards their work and expertise to emphasize their importance to the British rule.

⁵⁶⁶ Johnson 63, 6 (APAC: BL).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined visual representations of Indian landscapes by both British and Indian artists during a period of growing political power of the British over India. I have argued that the British sought to understand Indian history in a manner that would help them account for as well as further their own presence in India. In order to achieve that, Indian buildings and monuments were not only depicted in a state of ruin, but a picture of neglect and forgetfulness. Such efforts, however, were less than successful not only because of the British failure to codify Indian culture and history, but also the Indians' own understanding of their heritage and historical past. The British forces, though claiming to save India from disorder and despotism, were ultimately implicated in its destruction. Through such a process, they reinvested traditional landmarks with new meanings suited to their own expansionist agenda. Accordingly, British victories contributed to an ethos of confidence. In the light of British successes against Mysore, Hodges in his memoirs became more vociferous regarding the glories of the British armed struggles against Indian rulers, as seen in the representation of the Gwalior Fort. The British in India celebrated their political power by both building and picturing neoclassical architecture in the presidencies, presenting themselves as the worthy successors of the Roman empire. For this purpose, they both needed the service of Indians, but also wanted to set themselves apart from their subjects. The images of interactions between the British and the Indians in colonial cities never lost sight of the ultimate precedence of the British over Indians. The British dominion of India was all about maintaining the balance between involvement with India's peoples and landscapes and effecting a distance from them, the latter becoming prominent with the increase of British political power. The approach of Indian artists towards Indian landscapes as they came under the British is complicated in itself. Whilst recognizing the realities of British presence, they not only limited the images of ruin and decay, but also presented the importance of Indians in the rule of the Britons. In doing so, they represented Indian landscapes as undergoing transitions. Ultimately, they charted a course different to the colonial visual narrative of conquest, order, and modernity, by contemplating on the changing times and in some instances, representing images of hope and dignity of Indian life despite British dominion.

Chapter 3 – Natural World of Empire: A Study of the Illustrations of Indian Flora and Fauna

So fits enthron'd in vegetable pride
Imperial KEW by Thames's glittering side;
Obedient fails from realms unfurrow'd bring
For her the unnam'd progeny of spring;
Attendant Nymphs her dulcet mandates hear,
And nurse in fostering arms the tender year,
Plant the young bulb, inhume the living feed,
Prop the weak stem, the erring tendril lead;
(Or fan in glass-built fanes the stranger flowers
With milder gales, and steep with warmer showers.
Delighted Thames through tropic umbrage glides,
And flowers antarctic, bending o'er his tides;
Drinks the new tints, the sweets unknown inhales,
And calls the sons of science to his vales.
In one bright point admiring Nature eyes
The fruits and foliage of discordant skies,
Twines the gay floret with the fragrant bough,
And bends the wreath round GEORGE'S royal brow...⁵⁶⁷

Writing in the 1790s, Erasmus Darwin celebrates nature in the British empire as enshrined in the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew. Just as the Thames brings the riches from various parts of the world at the doorstep of Great Britain, the wealth of nature, as Darwin shows, adorns the crown of the Britannic Majesty. According to him, it was also the search for the knowledge of nature that took Britain's curious 'sons' of science far and wide. Nature thus becomes an indispensable part of the British domination in the world. The British empire, in this regard, is also one over nature. Whilst the previous chapters were concerned with the images of people and landscapes, in this chapter, I explore the complex entanglements of nature and imperialism through visual arts in early

⁵⁶⁷ Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden, A Poem in Two Parts. Part I- The Economy of Vegetation* (New York, 1798). *The Economy of Vegetation*, pp. 125-6.

British Indian empire. And, as I will show, the visual representations of nature in colonial India was an important part of British ideas about their Indian empire. Through a study of visual languages in the depictions of Indian flora and fauna, I suggest that the visualization of nature was inextricably linked with the legitimization of early British Indian empire. Imagery of nature thus became a metaphor for British political power in India as well as a way to explore its extent and limitations.

The importance of the study of natural history in early modern Europe, as Nicholas Jardine and Emma Spary point out, lay in the multifarious character of its roles, namely,

[A]s a universal discipline, prior to political, social and moral order; as the partner with civil and sacred history in the revelation of the workings of divine providence; the universal and stable foundation for the transitory and speculative systems of natural philosophy; as the basis for the agricultural, commercial and colonial improvement of the human estate.⁵⁶⁸

By the mid-eighteenth century, the ‘colonial’ dimension of the European practice of natural history had become more prominent as a result of increasing numbers of scientific expeditions in different parts of the world, both as an impetus to, and as the outcome of imperial expansion. It is in this imperial context of natural history that I consider the British preoccupation with India’s natural environment. Whilst artists, draughtsmen and naturalists were indispensable members of voyages to new destinations, ordinary travellers themselves displayed an avid interest in the natural environments that they came into contact with. The ‘artefacts’ of nature, including fossils, plant and animal specimens, were collected and many of those found their way into the natural history collections in the library of the EIC in its headquarters at Leadenhall Street in London.⁵⁶⁹

Collection, however, was not merely an end in itself. More often than not, British naturalists took more interest in the examination of foreign organisms than those found in Britain.⁵⁷⁰ Part of this excitement with foreign species came from the desire to classify and re-order the world as part of the ethos of enquiry and experimentation often described by historians as the ‘scientific revolution’.⁵⁷¹ The rising popularity in Britain of Carl Von Linnaeus’ taxonomy based on binomial

⁵⁶⁸ Nicholas Jardine and Emma Spary, ‘The natures of cultural history’ in N. Jardine, J. A. Secord and E.C. Spary (eds), *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 3.

⁵⁶⁹ Archer, *Natural history drawings*, p. 1.

⁵⁷⁰ Janet Brown, ‘Biogeography and empire’ in N. Jardine, J. A. Secord and E.C. Spary (eds), *Cultures of Natural History*, p. 306.

⁵⁷¹ Michel Foucault, *The order of things: an archaeology of the human sciences* (New York, 1989).

nomenclature coincided with Britain's increasing imperial ambitions.⁵⁷² This centrality of naming as part of the knowledge and control over nature also had a religious foundation as Adam gained dominance over animals by naming them in the second Biblical tale of creation.⁵⁷³ The growth of the British empire was thus accompanied by an intention to make the nature in her colonies conform to the dictates of European vision. The task of classification was daunting, and the Linnaean system very often proved to be limited in the categorization of the natural world, especially in the case of non-European flora and fauna.⁵⁷⁴ Lack of knowledge of nature, in this regard, can be paralleled with the failure of colonialism itself. The efforts of the colonial officials and naturalists to order and classify the natural world reflected the intensity of their aims to take possession of their colonies. Likewise recognition of the shortcomings of British imperial power, together with its achievements in managing colonial natural environments is thus vital to the exploration of the process of creation of political legitimacy of early British Indian empire.

The British empire's engagement with nature in her colonies, as scholars like Richard Grove, Richard Drayton, and Lucile Brockway have shown, was linked to wider issues regarding policy-making, governance, and profiteering. Major metropolitan institutions like the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew were at the centre stage of such underpinnings that determined the British utilization of colonial natural resources. Kew presided over a network of burgeoning 'sister institutions' in the form of botanical gardens in various parts of the British empire. Plant and animal species were collected, examined, and scrutinized for their potential commercial and economic usefulness for Britain and the perpetuation of her overseas empire.⁵⁷⁵ Apart from their economic importance, plants and animals from faraway lands were prized for their rarity and their acquisition signified social and cultural capital, and even political influence.⁵⁷⁶ Mary Louise Pratt

⁵⁷² On the connections between imperialism and Linnaean classification, see Staffan Müller-Wille, 'Walnuts at Hudson Bay, Coral Reefs in Gotland The Colonialism of Linnaean Botany' in Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan (eds), *Colonial botany: science, commerce, and politics in the early modern world* (Philadelphia, 2005), pp. 34-48.

⁵⁷³ Boria Sax, *The Mythical Zoo. An Encyclopaedia of Animals in world Myth, Legend and Literature* (California, 2001), p. ix.

⁵⁷⁴ On the problems of taxonomy in the eighteenth century, see Susannah Gibson, *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral? How eighteenth-century science disrupted the natural order* (Oxford, 2015).

⁵⁷⁵ Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism. Colonial expansion, tropical island Edens and the origins of environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge, 1995), Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government. Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven, 2000), and Lucile Brockway, *Science and Colonial Expansion: the role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens* (London, 2002).

⁵⁷⁶ See, for example, Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific: in the wake of the Cook voyages* (Carlton, Victoria, 1992), p. 4.

has famously suggested that, by the latter half of the eighteenth century, ‘one by one the planet’s life forms were to be drawn out of the tangled threads of their life surroundings and rewoven into European-based patterns of global unity and order’.⁵⁷⁷ The collection of the riches of nature in the colonies thus, was one of deracination as flora and fauna in the British colonies were removed from their natural settings and circulated and re-distributed to various parts of the British empire in order to suit the interests of Great Britain.⁵⁷⁸ Even within India, the uses of natural resources was based on their suitability to the benefits of British rule. In such a context, it is hardly surprising that even the British drive for natural conservation in India was, in turn, aimed in large part at keeping her economically favourable for the colonial masters. Measures for environmental protection in the colonies were couched in the traditions of class-based property and game laws in Britain, thereby restricting access to essential requirements such as those of timber and fodder on the part of indigenous populations.⁵⁷⁹

The acclimatization of flora and fauna in Britain and various parts of her empire ultimately fed into a celebration of the diversity and vastness of the British empire.⁵⁸⁰ Seen in this manner, control over natural environment was pertinent to the appropriation of new lands and peoples.⁵⁸¹ It becomes both a pre-requisite for, and an outcome of colonial displacement. Whilst in the first and the second chapters I have addressed the British political presence in terms of political authority and dominion, here the concept of command is my starting point in the investigation of Britain’s imperial power over nature in India. This chapter argues that the British command over India’s

⁵⁷⁷ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 31.

⁵⁷⁸ For a discussion of colonial collecting, see James H. Bunn, ‘The Aesthetics of British Mercantilism’ *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation*, 11.2 (1980), pp. 303-21. On the specific case of scientific practices in India, see Savithri Preetha Nair, ‘Native Collecting and Natural Knowledge (1798-1832): Raja Serfoji II of Tanjore as ‘Centre of Calculation’ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 15.3 (2005), pp. 285-286; and Savithri Preetha Nair, ‘Science and the politics of colonial collecting: the case of Indian meteorites, 1856-70’ in *British Journal for the History of Science*, 39.140 (2006), pp. 97-104.

⁵⁷⁹ Anand S. Pandian, ‘Predatory Care: The Imperial Hunt in Mughal and British India’ *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 14.1 (2001), pp. 84 and 87, Pablo Mukherjee, ‘Nimrods: Hunting, Authority, Identity’ *The Modern Language Review*, 100.4 (2005), p. 238, and Tim Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: Poetry, Criticism and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 2-4.

⁵⁸⁰ Lucile Brockway, *Science and Colonial Expansion*, and for a discussion of naturalisation of exotic plants in Britain, see Rebecca Preston, ‘The Scenery of the Torrid Zone: imagined travels and the culture of exotics in the nineteenth-century English Gardens’, in Felix Driver and David M. Gilbert (eds), *Imperial cities: landscape, display and identity* (Manchester, 1999), p. 195, and for animals see, Helen Cowie, ‘From the Andes to the Outback: Acclimatising Alpacas in the British Empire’ *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 45.4 (2017), pp. 551-579.

⁵⁸¹ Richard Drayton, *Nature’s Government*, p. xv.

natural environment proved to be less than absolute, and a study of the images of Indian flora and fauna can help in thinking about the connections between scientific knowledge and political imperatives in early British Indian empire.

My work draws inspiration from a more recent ‘nonhuman’ turn in historiography that has further added to the importance of nature in imperialism. According to Rohan Deb Roy, nonhumans were integral to colonial encounters and formed inseparable parts of the processes of sustenance and decline of world empires. This emphasis on nonhumans is not based on an anthropocentric approach, but rather a ‘co-constitution of nonhuman and human interactions’ that calls for an attention towards imperial life and politics as embedded in nonhuman agency.⁵⁸² Such an impulse can also be seen in Saurabh Mishra’s work that locates the complexities of strategic, medical, agricultural and even legal policies under the British Raj within the relationship of the animal world with various indigenous communities.⁵⁸³ This acknowledgement of nonhuman agency actively confronts the previous dichotomies between postcolonial thought and ecocriticism which were based on the ethical and academic concerns of privileging the human subject at the cost of nonhumans and natural environments in the colonies.⁵⁸⁴ It is thus the idea of co-constitutive interactions among humans and nonhumans that is central to my understanding of artistic representations of the natural world by humans during early British rule in India.

An important aspect of the study of natural history was the making of visual images of natural surroundings. Images were not only necessary for the classification of species but, due to growing interest of amateurs in natural history alongside institutional developments dating back to the latter half of seventeenth century, the role of images straddled the domains of science as well as

⁵⁸² Rohan Deb Roy, ‘Nonhuman Empires’ in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 35.1, (2015), pp. 66–75. The recent years have also witnessed the development of Plant Humanities at Dumbarton Oakes Research Library in order to closely address the role of plants in human life. See <https://www.doaks.org/research/mellon-initiatives/plant-humanities-initiative>.

⁵⁸³ Saurabh Mishra, *Beastly Encounters of the Raj: Livelihoods, Livestock and Veterinary Health in North India, 1790-1920* (Manchester, 2015).

⁵⁸⁴ John Miller, *Empire and the Animal Body* (London, 2012), pp. 3-6, 8-9, and 12-18. However, it is also important to be aware of the problem that vesting agency on the non-human world often borders on the danger of it being viewed from the perspective of human needs and requirements. On this, see Nathaniel Wolloch, ‘Animals in Enlightenment Historiography’ in *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 75.1 (2012), pp. 53-68, and Vinciane Despret, ‘From Secret Agents to Interagency’ in *History and Theory*, 52 (2013), pp. 29-44.

pleasure.⁵⁸⁵ Both professional and amateur British artists painted flora and fauna alongside Indian people and landscapes as they visited India from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards. However, as Mildred Archer has pointed out, when it came to the painting of Indian flora and fauna as natural history illustrations, particularly as a part of the visual record of the country, few professional British artists considered such commissions to be worth their while.⁵⁸⁶

In the absence of British professional artists willing to undertake the commissions of natural history illustrations, local Indian artists had to be employed instead. Natural history illustrations stand out as an important arena in which Indian artists extensively surpassed their British counterparts in achieving artistic commissions from the colonial masters, which, however, was a sign of them being caught in the vicious circle of colonialism. This was, in turn, an indication of their assimilation into the cultures of representation espoused by western authorities. India Office Records at the British Library, and archives of the botanical gardens in London and Edinburgh alongside those in the former colonies abound in the collections of natural history illustrations commissioned from Indian artists. However, as in the case of Indian artworks for the British more generally, with the exception of a few, the majority of these artists are unknown to us as their drawings remain unsigned.

By the eighteenth century, natural history illustrations were regarded as highly important. Their worth rose to the extent that Sir Joseph Banks, prominent naturalist and the president of the Royal Society during the cardinal period of Britain's rise as an imperial power, considered them to be useful enough to impart scientific information on their own right, without the need of them being complemented with textual explanations.⁵⁸⁷ As I have already mentioned above, the library in the headquarters of the EIC regularly received collections of natural history from all parts of the British empire. Plants and animals, however, could not always survive the long and arduous journeys between India and Britain. In such a scenario, bringing images of Indian flora and fauna was more prudent and convenient than bringing the live specimens themselves. Writing on Elizabethan

⁵⁸⁵ Anne Secord, 'Botany on a Plate. Pleasure and the Power of Pictures in Promoting Early Nineteenth-Century Scientific Knowledge' in *Isis*, 93:1, 2002, pp. 28–57, and Diana Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain* (New Haven, 2007), p. 30.

⁵⁸⁶ Mildred Archer, *Natural history drawings in the India Office library* (London, 1962).

⁵⁸⁷ Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection's Online Exhibition on the *Botany of Empire* <https://www.doaks.org/resources/online-exhibits/botany-of-empire/illustration-and-representation> (as accessed on 6 October 2017).

science, Deborah E. Harkness has pointed out that naturalists always preferred actual specimens or careful drawings to verbal descriptions of specimens. According to her,

Like a cabinet of curiosities, an image of a plant, insect or animal froze the specimen in time and allowed the naturalists to share it with other interested parties and study it minutely at their leisure. An artistic representation of a natural object could impart a greater sense of verisimilitude to the viewer than a description, especially when the descriptive power of words seemed unequal to the task of adequately capturing an especially rare or magnificent specimen.⁵⁸⁸

As the next best thing to the real specimen, much importance was vested in natural history paintings: their authenticity and credibility were matters of great relevance. As Daniela Bleichmar has suggested, irrespective of differences in their opinions, naturalists all over Europe ‘agreed not only on their adherence to a prevailing iconography and style, but also the value they assigned to the visual, the way they produced and used images, and the criteria they used to judge the illustrations’.⁵⁸⁹ The prevailing system involved picturing of plants and animals in a way that would facilitate the identification of principal features of a species in the process of its classification. For eighteenth-century natural history illustrations, the most important principle was not exactitude, but attention to the distinctive attributes of the specimen under examination. Thus, natural history illustrations were, to a great extent, ‘unrealistic’, often having minimal resemblance to plants and animals as in their natural surroundings. This is because whilst botanical images were based on dead plants that had been dissected for observation, the illustrations of animals, even though they were depicted in their habitat, were often made from those dead or in captivity.⁵⁹⁰

This chapter extends the argument developed in the previous chapters that visual representations facilitated the British acquaintance with India, to that of the images of plants and animals. Therefore, when extended to natural history illustrations in India, the quest for representations of flora and fauna in terms of their classificatory needs was a complex process. Within European natural history illustrations throughout the eighteenth century there was a constant, albeit not so successful effort of freeing the depiction of plants and animals from their mystical associations of

⁵⁸⁸ Deborah E. Harkness, *The Jewel House. Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution* (London, 2007), p. 37.

⁵⁸⁹ Daniela Bleichmar, *Visible Empire. Botanical Expeditions and Visual Culture in the Hispanic Enlightenment* (Chicago, 2012), pp. 8-9.

⁵⁹⁰ Kärin Nickelsen, *Draughtsmen, Botanists and Nature: The Construction of Eighteenth-Century Botanical Illustrations* (Dordrecht, 2006) pp. 5 and 17, and Diana Donald, *Picturing Animals in Great Britain*, pp. 30 and 42-44.

earlier times.⁵⁹¹ However, In the context of the British Indian Empire this equated with displacing flora and fauna from their ‘native’ roots and fixing them in the European world order as a means of control. In the pre-colonial era, nature formed an important part of ritual and cultural aesthetics. For example, the Sanskrit *Shanti Mantra* (hymn of peace), recited at the end of Hindu religious ceremonies, is a prayer for peace to ‘all beings’, including plants, creepers and herbs.⁵⁹² Decorative motifs from nature also manifested themselves in both religious and secular art and architecture. The *Ragmala* and *Baramasa* paintings of the Rajput and Pahari traditions celebrated seasons in India with a sensibility towards the varieties of flora and fauna. In the Mughal empire, whilst the technique of *pietra dura* brought floral designs on monuments to life, natural history painting had itself reached its zenith under the Mughal emperor Jahangir. Under the Mughals, artists documented the natural world in its resplendent glory, signifying its association with life, politics, and belief systems.⁵⁹³

It is also important to keep in mind that European influence on Indian art far predated colonization, and in the Mughal period, artists had been considerably influenced by European art. Natural history illustrations were not an exception, and the familiarity with European artworks is clearly visible in the work of Mughal artists. Under Mughal emperor Jahangir, who was himself a keen observer of nature, the knowledge of naturalism in art was highly valued. However, the influence of European conventions on Mughal miniatures was far from that of a slavish replication. Like in royal portraiture and landscape sceneries, artists were prolific in drawing upon European examples of natural history painting as suited to the political interests and symbolism of the Mughal empire.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹¹ Diana Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain*, p. 29.

⁵⁹² The Shanti Mantra in English translation reads as:

May peace radiate there in the whole sky as well as in the vast ethereal space everywhere.

May peace reign all over this earth, in water and in all herbs, trees and creepers.

May peace flow over the whole universe.

May peace be in the Supreme Being Brahman.

And may there always exist in all peace and peace alone.

Aum peace, peace and peace to us and all beings!

The translation has been sourced from: <https://www.templepurohit.com/mantras-slokas-stotras/shanti-mantra/om-dyauha-shantirantariksham-shantihi/> [Accessed on 4 November 2018].

⁵⁹³ On the representations of nature in Mughal and pre-Mughal India, Som Prakash Verma (ed.), *Flora and Fauna in Mughal Art* (Mumbai, 1999).

⁵⁹⁴ Ebba Koch, ‘Jahangir as Francis Bacon’s Ideal of the King as an Observer and Investigator of Nature’ in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 19.3 (2009), pp. 298-300. See also J. P. Losty, ‘Further Light on Mughal Flower Studies and their European Sources’ Working Paper, 2014, sourced from:

https://www.academia.edu/6285901/Further_Light_on_Mughal_Flower_Studies_and_their_European_Sources [Accessed on 29 December 2018].

In addition, as Marika Sardar suggests, Mughal painting under Jahangir also encouraged the development of artistic individualism and self-expression with Jahangir able to recognize work by any artist of his atelier.⁵⁹⁵ In the colonial era, however, this prioritization of individualism was to come to an end, as the artists were expected to conform to a set pattern based on European natural history paintings wherein Indian flora and fauna had to be depicted. Visual representations of India's natural environment were, therefore, based on readjusting this indigenous mode to fit with British ways of viewing that entailed their imperial presence in India.

Even though almost all artists catering to the British need for images for the investigation of India's natural environment were Indian, the visual language of Indian art of British natural history has not received much scholarly attention. Exceptions include Beth Fowkes Tobin, who has studied the botanical illustrations produced by Indian artists for the surgeon and botanist Dr. William Roxburgh. Tobin argues that whilst the botanizing conventions of the British empire favoured the representations of snipped stems of plants against white blank backgrounds, detached from their natural environment in the images, Indian artists had a tendency to revert to their Mughal cultural heritage. Such an artistic gesture based on the dynamism of design and intricacy in the images of plants was, as Tobin suggests, a way of resisting the process of turning Indian flora into what Tobin calls 'ideal types' for the purposes of European classification. Botanical images by Indian artists thus suggested that 'plants have an existence that lies outside European systems of control and management, an existence and a significance that escape British domination'.⁵⁹⁶

In recent years, scholarship has turned towards the British appreciation of nature in India in the wake of Romanticism. According to de Almeida and Gilpin, the Romantic period saw an increasing British admiration for India's natural environment that continued until the early nineteenth century, when the British had more firmly asserted their imperial power over India. The fascination with nature in India expressed itself in visual arts, and the paintings of flora and fauna by Indian artists became a part of the British Romantic imaginings of their Indian empire. The chief focus of de Almeida and Gilpin is, however, on British artists both in India and Britain. For them, British artists had taken a sympathetic view of India's nature in the Romantic age. This

⁵⁹⁵ Marika Sardar, 'The Art of the Mughals after 1600', in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York, 2000–) http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/mugh_2/hd_mugh_2.htm (October 2003) [Accessed on 6 November 2018].

⁵⁹⁶ Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, pp. 199–201.

attitude was reflected in the ways their images represented the vibrancy and vitality of Indian flora and fauna.⁵⁹⁷

Following de Almeida and Gilpin, Romita Ray acknowledges that British artists coming to India viewed its nature with a sense of wonder. This amazement found expression in their representations of Indian flora and fauna. The artists' encounter with Indian exotica, however, was not only that of enchantment, but one of ambivalence and anxiety to uphold a 'British' identity. According to Ray, the depictions of the banyan tree, Himalayan vegetation, and elephants became quintessential parts of what she refers to as the Indian 'Picturesque'. Images of flora and fauna, thus, were important sites for configuring the British knowledge of India as well as those of highlighting an urgency of imperial ideologies of their disciplining and mastery.⁵⁹⁸

Thus, the views of Beth Tobin and Romita Ray converge on the point of illustrations of Indian flora and fauna as suggestive of how the British sought to manage India's nature. Whilst for Tobin, the alienation of Indian plants from their natural surroundings worked as a means of their exoticization, for Ray, nature in India itself presented an excess that the British sought to negotiate and order in their images. Tobin and Ray hint at the complexities of colonial socio-political life as reflected in the imaging of Indian flora and fauna, whilst de Almeida and Gilpin's approach is informative of the British involvement with nature in India as part of Romanticism. This emphasis on Romanticism has shifted the focus from resistance of Indian artists to the idea of a more congenial interaction between Britons and Indians in matters of natural history. Theresa M. Kelley argues that the British in India viewed Indian plants not only in terms of their own knowledge, but also with those supplied by Indian artists and informants. According to her, Botany became a realm of conducive dialogue and collaboration between Indians and Britons that went beyond the needs of colonialism. Furthermore, Kelley emphasizes the fact that not every Indian artist undertaking natural history illustrations for the British is unknown, and that even those who remain anonymous exerted their presence in the colonial archive due to their aesthetic practices.⁵⁹⁹

Kelley's approach draws upon the work of botanist Henry Noltie. According to Noltie, drawing and painting were the only avenues through which Indians were able to contribute to the British

⁵⁹⁷ de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*.

⁵⁹⁸ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, pp. 53–95, 97–151, and 201–259.

⁵⁹⁹ Theresa M. Kelley, *Clandestine Marriages: Botany and Romantic Culture* (Maryland, 2012), pp. 162–209.

practice of colonial natural history on equal footing.⁶⁰⁰ This idea, I suggest, needs to be nuanced further. I have already mentioned that Indian artists only stood a chance in natural history art because prominent British artists did not see it as an economically profitable undertaking. As historians of science like Deepak Kumar have emphasized, there existed a fundamental inequality of remuneration and circumstances between Indian natural history artists and their British patrons.⁶⁰¹ The natural history illustrations commissioned by British officials from Indian artists were ultimately aimed at perpetuating the interests of British rule in India. Moreover, in spite of various narratives of possibilities of collaboration between Indian artists and their British patrons, it is pertinent to remember that British patrons were never completely satisfied with the works of Indian artists. To them, the artists had a fundamental lacuna: lack of perspective, which is considered to be pivotal in western artistic conventions.⁶⁰²

In questioning the conditions of collaboration, however, my aim is not to reproduce George Bassalla's classic model of non-western societies as passively situated at the receiving end of western scientific developments,⁶⁰³ nor do I deny the importance of Indians in the reshaping of, and registering their own presence within colonial science.⁶⁰⁴ A closer look at the visual languages of the illustrations of flora and fauna by Indian artists suggests that images both drew upon the European conventions of natural history art and 'modified' them according to the specificities of local style and design.⁶⁰⁵ Whilst the presence of British imperial power was a reality, these representations not only resist the paradigm of 'ideal types' for classification and engender a different way of viewing nature as part of Indian life as Tobin has stipulated, but also expose the tenuousness of the British imperial project. Here, I suggest that the British commissioning of natural history paintings from Indian artists gave them an opportunity of first-hand supervision of the artists' work so that they could appropriate the information they wanted. It is also due to these

⁶⁰⁰ Henry J. Noltie, *Robert Wight and the botanical drawings of Rungiah & Govindoo*, Book 2 (Edinburgh, 2007).

⁶⁰¹ Deepak Kumar, 'Botanical Explorations and the East India Company: Revisiting 'Plant Colonialism'' in Vinita Damodaran, Anna Winterbottom and Alan Lester (eds), *The East India Company and the Natural World* (New York, 2015), p. 29.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*

⁶⁰³ George Basalla, 'The Spread of Western Science' in *Science*, 156, 1967, pp. 611–22.

⁶⁰⁴ The most well-known use of the collaboration approach in eighteenth-century colonial science in India is in Kapil Raj, *Relocating Modern Science. Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900* (New York, 2007).

⁶⁰⁵ This view is similar to that of Daniela Bleichmar, *Visible Empire*.

factors that paintings of flora and fauna by Indian artists are a fascinating resource themselves. They also point more broadly to the British approach towards India's nature and its bearing on the fabrication of their own image as the rulers of India. Suffice it to say, if power over nature was important for British empire in India, nature and its representation also had a vital role to play in legitimizing and even offsetting the political legitimacy of British imperialism.

Based on such premises, this chapter focuses on how the illustrations of flora and fauna can be viewed as a part of the British self-image so as to legitimize their rule in India. As I have discussed in the first chapter, the European monarchies from the late seventeenth century onward had started to embrace a more 'demotic' idiom in the visual representation of their political authority. An important component of this demotic portrayal was their association with nature. Not only did the rulers stress on pastoral and agrarian tropes in their images,⁶⁰⁶ European nations had also been represented as animals in popular prints—a practice that became even more prominent as the eighteenth century ushered in the 'Golden Age of Caricature'.⁶⁰⁷ When transmitted to an imperial context, the British association with India's nature not only finds meaning in its economic uses, but also in its symbolic importance. In Spiridione Roma's painting of *The East Offering its Riches to Britannia* (1778) (Figure 75), the image of material richness is accompanied by a prospect of natural wealth as evident in the presence of palm trees, a tea chest, and a caparisoned elephant.⁶⁰⁸ The concept of command over India's nature thus had both ideological and practical connotations.

Caught between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, the visual representation of nature in India came to be encoded with not only socio-cultural values, but was also made expressive of its political and economic aims. Images thus create possibilities to explore how the British positionalities in terms of nature that ranged from a notion of visual delight to that of the prospects of improvement in India. Addressing these varied dimensions of British impact on India's natural environment, I analyze how illustrations of flora and fauna came to be shaped by the imperial ethos of partaking of nature as a rational, progressive, and scientific process. Whilst de Almeida and Gilpin's approach is informative of the British involvement with nature in India as part of Romanticism, Tobin and Ray hint at the complexities of colonial socio-political life as reflected in

⁶⁰⁶ Giulia Pacini, 'The Monarchy Shapes Up: Arboreal Metaphors in Royal Propaganda and Court Panegyrics during the Reign of Louis XV' in *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 39.3 (2016), pp. 431-448.

⁶⁰⁷ Dorothy M. George, *English Political Caricature: A Study of Opinion and Propaganda* (Oxford, 1959), Vol 1.

⁶⁰⁸ Accession number: F245 (BL).

the imaging of Indian flora and fauna. In the light of Ray's work, the scholarship of de Almeida and Gilpin, though significant, needs considerable reconsideration for addressing the demands of British rule on the representations of nature. Simultaneously, delving into the visual idioms and politics of British Indian empire, it is important to be wary of overstating the idea of collaboration as seen in Kelley's approach and ignore the unequal power dynamics between the British and the Indians. Put simply, Tobin's idea of resistance is taken further here to highlight the problems of British command over India's nature, and as a result, that of the political legitimacy.

The British response to India's natural environment combined an awareness of their position within the administrative establishment of the EIC as well as their own personal experiences of life in India, both of which can be understood as contributing to the glorification of British imperialism that made their contact with India possible in the first place.⁶⁰⁹ It is to this end that I examine interests of private individuals, rather than official naturalists or those involved directly in enterprises related to natural history, in the visual representations of India's nature. By private individuals, here I mean those employees (and their family members) of the EIC who did not have any official reason to involve themselves in the study of natural history in India. Indeed, officials like Colonel Robert Kyd were appreciative of private individuals as they endeavoured 'to enlarge the sphere of the resources of the state', thereby leading to the advantage of the government without any detriment.⁶¹⁰ Whilst the works and artistic commissions of official naturalists have received much scholarly attention, the endeavours of private British individuals in India in the field of natural history has only recently begun to be taken into consideration.⁶¹¹ Whilst viewing the representation of nature through the framework of political legitimacy, my analysis of the visual languages deployed in the natural history art created and commissioned by private individuals is also a contribution to the scholarship on their lives and works in India.

This chapter shows that natural history was of interest to Britons at various levels of administrative hierarchy, from that of a writer in the Company's service to the Governor-General. My focus here

⁶⁰⁹ For a similar idea, see Elizabeth Ann Pollard, 'Pliny's Natural History and the Flavian Templum Pacis: Botanical Imperialism in First-Century C.E. Rome' *Journal of World History*, 20.3 (2009), pp. 309-338, and Jonathan Saha, 'Among the Beasts of Burma: Animals and the Politics of Colonial Sensibilities, c. 1840-1940' in *Journal of Social History*, 48:4, 2015, pp. 910-932.

⁶¹⁰ Original Correspondence, No. 79, dated 4 November 1791, from Col. Robert Kyd to Mr. E. Hay. (NAI, New Delhi).

⁶¹¹ Henry J. Noltie, 'John Bradby Blake and James Kerr: Hybrid Botanical Art, Canton and Bengal, c. 1770' *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, 34.4 (2017), pp. 427-51.

is on four individuals: James Forbes, Lady Mary Impey, Sir William Jones, and the First Marquess of Wellesley. Whilst Forbes was a talented artist himself, others commissioned natural history illustrations from Indian artists. I study twenty-four images in this chapter, which have been selected from a much vaster colonial archive of natural history illustrations, in order to highlight the variegated dimensions of nature in imperialism and the role of natural knowledge as an imperial legitimation. In the three sections that follow, I begin with James Forbes' experience with India's natural environment. Thereafter, I discuss Lady Impey and Sir Jones, before finally moving on to Lord Wellesley. The approaches of Forbes, Impey and Jones towards India's nature are prioritized understanding and investigation, respectively. Both of these approaches redouble in the case of Wellesley as the British power over India intensified by his time. In the course of the discussion, it will be seen that scientific rigour as part of the British rule was less than complete in its appropriation of nature in India. As I start with James Forbes, who was the first to visit India among others discussed here, I map not only the broader shifts in British encounter with India's natural world but also its convergences and concurrences.

Understanding: Nature in India as seen by James Forbes

In 1765, James Forbes penned the following as he was about to embark on a journey to India to serve as a writer for the EIC in Bombay,

O say, what yet untasted bounties flow
 What purer joys await Hindostan's plains?
 Do lilies fairer, violets sweeter blow?
 Or warbles Philomel in softer strain?
 Do morning suns in ruddier glory rise?
 Does evening fan her with serener gales?
 Do clouds drop fatness from her wealthier skies?
 Or wantons plenty in her happier vales? ⁶¹²

For Forbes, who at the time of his departure was less than sixteen years of age, England was the only possible measure of what India could be. As he was preparing to bid farewell to his homeland temporarily, Forbes was overcome with a sense of anticipation of what has to expect in India. As he listed what things 'English' he was not to find in India, Forbes' lines here are also reflective of

⁶¹² Forbes Manuscript, Vol. 2 (YCBA), p. 3.

the nostalgia for his native land that he was to experience during his Indian sojourn. Much of this longing on the part of the Britons was for the ‘home’ that India could never become. Such sentiments, however, were not uncommon for newcomers to India in the pre-British times. The most notable example is that of Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, the founder of the Mughal empire. Compelled to leave his native Fergana due to continuous territorial conflicts, he invaded India and established the rule of the Mughal dynasty with the defeat of the Lodi Sultanate at the first battle of Panipat in 1526. Babur’s reign was extremely short, only four years. It is remarkable that even in this short span of time when he had been mostly busy fighting and guarding his newly conquered territories, he was attentively observing India’s natural environment.⁶¹³ He found Hindustan to be ‘a country of few charms’ with ‘its heat, its violent winds, its dust’ and yearned for his favourite fruits like grapes and musk-melons.⁶¹⁴ With his love of gardening, Babur ordered gardens to be constructed and arrangements were made for the cultivation of grapes and melons so that he could continue to enjoy his favourites.⁶¹⁵ Subsequent Mughal emperors developed a more optimistic view of the natural surroundings of India that was often paired with the duty of the sovereign to intervene on behalf of their subjects in the event of calamities.⁶¹⁶ The last Mughal ruler Bahadur Shah Zafar, when exiled in Burma after the Revolt of 1857, regretted deeply the fact that he would not be buried in Indian soil.⁶¹⁷

Unlike the Mughals, in most cases, the British did not go to India to stay. Service in India was an official responsibility to be undertaken and, on its completion, going back to Britain was the preferred route after emoluments and fortunes had been secured. By the second half of the eighteenth century, due to the increasing political power of the British, the administration of the EIC became more complicated and tedious. For Forbes, the means of overcoming ‘imperial boredom’, as Jeffrey Auerbach calls it,⁶¹⁸ was the study of India’s life and nature. These he wrote

⁶¹³ Amirthalingam Murugesan, ‘Perspectives of Environmental Studies during the Mughal Period’ in *Journal of Indian History and Culture*, 22 (2016), p. 181.

⁶¹⁴ Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Annette Susannah Beveridge, Vols. 1 and 2 (New Delhi, 1979), pp. 519, 532, and 645.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 532 and 686.

⁶¹⁶ For a more comprehensive treatment of Mughal approach to climate in India, see James L. Wescoat Jr., ‘Water, Climate, and the Limits of Human Wisdom: Historical-Geographic Analogies Between Early Mughal and Modern South Asia’ in *The Professional Geographer*, 66:3, 2014, pp. 382-389.

⁶¹⁷ Bahadur Shah Zafar, *Lagataa nahii.n hai jii meraa uja.De dayaar me.n* (Poetry in Urdu, written by Bahadur Shah Zafar, sourced from <http://www.urdupoetry.com>) [Accessed on 1 January 2019].

⁶¹⁸ Auerbach, ‘Imperial Boredom’, pp. 283-305.

about in his letters to his family and friends back home. After his return from India, Forbes revised and prepared for publication a thirteen-volume collection of his letters in 1796. As a result, the surviving manuscripts of these letters lack the emotional depth that one might expect from earlier poetic attempts. What is found here instead are rich and vivid descriptions of India, its land and peoples.⁶¹⁹ Among Forbes' accounts of India, descriptions, both verbal and visual, of India's natural environment stand out the most. When his work on India was published in a much abridged form for the first time as *Oriental Memoirs* in 1813 in four volumes, Forbes remarked in the preface, 'The manuscripts from which these volumes are compiled, and the drawings which illustrate them, have formed the principal recreation of my life. The pursuit beguiled the monotony of four India voyages, cheered a solitary residence at Anjengo and Dhuboy, and softened the long period of absence from my native country...Drawing to me had the same charm as music to the soul of harmony'.⁶²⁰

James Forbes has been hailed as the first British Romantic artist in India by de Almeida and Gilpin.⁶²¹ In Forbes' drawings and writings, they locate an unending love and appreciation of India. Whilst agreeing with de Almeida and Gilpin, Romita Ray takes a more nuanced approach towards Forbes. Amidst Forbes's enthusiasm towards India's nature and culture, she traces in him a tendency to want to know and in consequence master the arcane and primordial Indian nature and civilization.⁶²² My consideration of Forbes here aligns more with that of Ray. Although Almeida and Gilpin note a transition in Forbes' attitude towards India from one of amicability and admiration to a domineering stance,⁶²³ I suggest that a closer reading of Forbes' works, both published and unpublished, is necessary for a better evaluation of the politics of Forbes' fashioning of colonial nature in India.

In Forbes' manuscript, drawings are preceded by written descriptions of Indian flora and fauna. It is clear that Forbes intended his descriptions of India to be published as a travel account rather

⁶¹⁹ Thirteen volumes of Forbes's manuscripts are currently housed at Yale Center for British Art, Connecticut, USA.

⁶²⁰ James Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs: Selected and Abridged from a Series of Familiar Letters Written During Seventeen Years of Residence in India: Including Observations on Parts of Africa and South America, and a Narrative of Occurrences in Four India Voyages. Illustrated by engravings from original drawings* (London, 1813), Vol. 1, p. xi.

⁶²¹ de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance. British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 96.

⁶²² Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, pp. 123-5.

⁶²³ de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, p. 41.

than just as an epistolary collection. This is because, after he went back to England at the end of his term of service with the EIC, he revised his copies of the letters that he had sent earlier, attempting to rework them into finished pieces by referencing poets, linguists, historians, naturalists, and British administrators in India. Through his citations of works by other scholars and experts, Forbes aspired to make a name for himself within the scholarly community in Great Britain and, indeed, he became a member of the Society of Antiquaries and the Royal Society, and also that of the Academy of Arcadia in Rome. His scholarly aspirations meshed well with his official position which accorded him opportunities to travel, interact with British administrators as well as Indians, and think about and comment on India.

The wider range of possibilities at Forbes' disposal is reflected in the varied sources of his information on Indian nature. Apart from his own direct involvement, he also relied on other avenues as he wrote, '[m]y friends in India were happy to enlarge my collection; the sportsman suspended his career after royal game to procure me a curiosity; the Hindoo often brought a bird or curiosity for delineation, knowing it would regain its liberty; and the brahmin supplied specimens of fruit and flower from his sacred enclosures'.⁶²⁴ Whilst hunting developed as one of the Britons' favourite recreational activities in India and continued to flourish despite heated debates on animal welfare,⁶²⁵ Forbes in his work projects the self-image of a man concerned about living creatures. By doing so, Forbes had shorn himself of the dilemma that confronted Sir William Jones, whom he highly revered. Despite his interest in zoology, Jones remained hesitant to engage more deeply with the subject due to the harm done to the animals in course of observations and experiments. As he sentimentally pointed out,

This may be only a confession of weakness, and it certainly is not meant as a boast of peculiar sensibility; but, whatever name may be given to my opinion, it has such an effect on my conduct, that I never would suffer the *Cocila*, whose wild native woodnotes announce the approach of spring, to be caught in my garden for the sake of comparing it with *Buffon's* description; though I have often examined the domestick and engaging *Mayana*, which bids us good morrow at our windows, and expects as its reward, little more than security: even when a fine young *Manis* or *Pangolin* was brought me, against my wish, from the mountains, I solicited his restoration to his beloved rocks, because I found it impossible to preserve him in comfort at a distance from them.⁶²⁶

⁶²⁴ James Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. xi.

⁶²⁵ Diana Donald, *Picturing Animals in Great Britain*, p. 264.

⁶²⁶ William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. 1 (London, 1799), p. 154.

Whilst Sir William Jones abjured his zoological research on the grounds of cruelty, Forbes clearly stated that he had not done anything to cause harm to the animals under study, as if providing his readers with a disclaimer. Although care and protection for animals was upheld as a desired virtue in Britain by the mid-eighteenth century, the Britons in India developed a pejorative attitude to Indian rulers as being more caring and attentive towards animals than their human subjects.⁶²⁷ Such a point of view thus denied Indian royalty of feelings which were increasingly presented as being ‘natural’ to a civilized mind and taste.

When it came to the production of written and visual records of Indian flora and fauna, James Forbes received support from Britons placed in prestigious ranks of the British Indian administration. His endeavours were encouraged by Sir Charles Warre Malet who had served as the British Resident in Surat and at the Maratha court, and Forbes dedicated his published work to him. As Forbes mentioned in the preface of the first volume of the *Oriental Memoirs*, when he first arrived in India in the 1760s, there were no professional British artists of great reckoning and thus he did not have any model to follow. However, when Major-General Sir Archibald Campbell had come to stay in Bombay for a short period in 1768, he helped him with his drawing.⁶²⁸ In his training to prepare for his service with the EIC Forbes would have been taught topographical drawing and watercolour,⁶²⁹ and thus, as will be seen, he was able to use well-known artistic styles in his work. Although Forbes declares himself as ‘deprived of a choice of books’⁶³⁰ when in India, it is not impossible that he had seen some of the illustrated publications on natural history in course of his training. Though Forbes does not mention, it would not be a surprise if he had seen the works on birds by George Edwards and Eleazar Albin (Figures b, c, d, and e), alongside Buffon’s *Histoire Naturallae*, Thomas Pennant’s *British Zoology*, and later William Curtis’ *Flora Londinensis*. Whilst in England and even in India, he might have had opportunities to view Mark Catesby’s natural history of North America, and Maria Sibylla Merian’s work on insects in Dutch Surinam.

⁶²⁷ William Tennant, *Indian Recreations, consisting chiefly of Strictures on the Domestic and Rural Economy of the Mahomedans and Hindus*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1803), p. 74.

⁶²⁸ James Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. xi-xii. For the connections between military training and drawing, see, Mildred Archer, *British Drawings in the India Office Library. Vol.2 Official and Professional Artists* (London, 1969).

⁶²⁹ de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, p. 306, note 14.

⁶³⁰ Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. v.

Forbes' illustrations of natural history were possibly based on a variety of influences which, when taken together, can be understood as a commentary on British political power in India. Whilst de Almeida and Gilpin have suggested that Forbes had largely remained aloof from metropolitan science, I argue that Forbes did have the intention of bringing knowledge of India to Britain on terms that would be recognisable and acceptable there. Taking Romita Ray's idea of Forbes' effort to master the knowledge of Indian nature as my starting point, I examine four of Forbes' published drawings to show that his understanding of nature in India was diverse and multifaceted. This was facilitated by various artistic modes that created narratives about Indian nature and did so at an especially important juncture in the rise of the British empire. When published in 1813, after British rule over India had been considerably strengthened, Forbes offers a glimpse of an earlier period. Such imagery, though identifying with a newly found imperial confidence, highlighted the ambivalence of British political power in India around the period between the 1760s and 1780s as well as zest for the assertion of imperial command over nature.

Moving on to the drawings, it should be remembered that in India Forbes had the opportunity of viewing Indian plants and animals in their natural environment. Although he noted the natural habitats of various birds and animals,⁶³¹ this did not mean that connections between living creatures and their surroundings were always manifested directly in his images. This is evident in the image of the Bulbul or Indian nightingale on the branches of the cashew apple (Figure 76).⁶³² De Almeida and Gilpin have considered this image as an example of Forbes' romantic admiration of India.⁶³³ A closer reading of this image here suggests a different idea. In the first place, as it appears in his published work, for all the beauty of the colours of plumage and feathers, the Indian nightingale was not agreeable to Forbes who preferred the melodious serenades of the English nightingale.⁶³⁴ In his image, the bird is depicted in its complete grandeur, and the effervescence of the bright colours of the different parts of its body is brilliantly matched with the artist's keen attention to detail. The quality of the representation is heightened by Forbes' focus on the minute nuances of the different parts of the bird's eye and its golden beak. In the image, the bird perches on a branch of cashew apple. The fruit of cashew apple has been represented in all its forms,

⁶³¹ Forbes Manuscript, Vol. 10 (YCBA), p. 51, and Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 4, p. 352.

⁶³² Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 1 (Image not paginated).

⁶³³ de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, p. 95.

⁶³⁴ Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 50.

starting right from its initial stage to its final fully-grown form. Added to these is the representation of the flowers in their various stages of development in which the inner parts of the flowers have been presented with the same keenness as the outer parts. The leaves of the cashew apple in the image are resplendently green, rich in both ornamental and botanical details as seen in their beautifully drooping presentation, and the closely made outline of the veins on the surface of the leaves. The branch of the cashew apple with the bird on it, however, is free-standing. Furthermore, the curly leaves of the cashew apple branch, clearly reveal that the cashew apple branch had been collected as a sample and not where the bird was naturally seen. The nightingale in the image as static, without any sign of movement. The presentation of the plant together with the focus on different stages of its flowering and the motionless appearance of the bird, unlike the suggestion of de Almeida and Gilpin of this image being a romantic portrayal of natural beauty and harmony,⁶³⁵ reveals a tendency to turn both the bird and the cashew apple plant into scientific specimens.

The curly leaves of the cashew apple also point to the Dutch tradition of still life paintings. The influence of still life painting on Forbes' work is visible in the image of the mangoes of Mazagaon in Bombay (Figure 77).⁶³⁶ In this image, there are two ripe mangoes, golden and yellow in colour, on a branch surrounded by leaves. The amount of textural details on the leaves is appreciable, and the presence of spots on the leaves, whose effect is more enhanced in the published drawing than in the original, suggests mortality and natural wear and tear. On the top can be seen a beautiful butterfly which, according to Forbes, is seen on the mango tree itself,⁶³⁷ approaching the blossom that shows steady signs of their bloom. Forbes equates the worth of Indian mango with that of an apple in both his manuscript and published account, and thus familiarizes mango as an exotic delicacy at home which he strongly suggested to be imported to England.⁶³⁸ In fact, in the Dutch Republic, still life had become the medium for the depiction of exotics, thus reinforcing the idea of politico-economic and colonial expansion.⁶³⁹ As scholars like Miya Tokumitsu have suggested, the naturalism of Dutch still life art often became a vehicle for the presentation of prosperity and

⁶³⁵ de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, p. 93.

⁶³⁶ This finding is similar to that of Beth Tobin in case of Sydney Parkinson's images in Captain Cook's voyage. See Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, p. 201.

⁶³⁷ Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 3, p. 361.

⁶³⁸ Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 30, and Forbes Manuscript, Vol. 2 (YCBA), p. 12.

⁶³⁹ Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (London, 1990), p. 108.

affluence.⁶⁴⁰ Such opulence, however, was an outcome of human expertise in horticulture.⁶⁴¹ Forbes' inference is different. Although Forbes admits having procured fruits and flowers for drawing from the Brahmins, he believed that due to the fertility of Indian soil, cultivators were neither required to toil for their crops, nor did they do so because of their laziness.⁶⁴² When he praises the hard work and labour of the Indian peasantry, Forbes does so in order to criticize Indian governments as oppressive.⁶⁴³ Similar sentiments were echoed by William Tennant who not only derogated Indian cultivators as backward, but also saw them as resistant to change because they lived under 'despotic' rulers and the benefits of their work never accrued to them.⁶⁴⁴ Such denial of the labour and expertise of the colonized was a vital characteristic of imperialism.⁶⁴⁵ The representation of the mango in the still life format here, is thus not a celebration of Indian labour and expertise, rather that of the colonizer's success in the appropriation of the mango.

The depiction of gnarled, withered or eaten cashew apple and mango leaves, however, can also be said to represent the idea of 'Vanitas or Memento-Mori' which, as in Dutch still lives, signified the ephemerality of human life and existence.⁶⁴⁶ A similar association can be drawn in terms of the British rule in India, whose conquests and growing political influence were never without tensions. A recurring theme of discussion in administrative circles in the closing decades of the eighteenth century is that of Indians' relations to the natural world surrounding them. Britons were baffled at how Indians tamed animals and could often live surrounded by wild animals. Colonel Robert Kyd had further commented that Indians were hardly willing to share their knowledge with British experts and administrators.⁶⁴⁷ Expressions of anxieties of empire as seen in this supposed non-cooperation from Indians ruptured British notions of their command over India's nature.⁶⁴⁸ Whilst the ideas of Vanitas in still life art stood as a balance and check against the Dutch pride in

⁶⁴⁰ Miya Tokumitsu, 'The Currencies of Naturalism in Dutch "Pronk" Still-Life Painting: Luxury, Craft, Envisioned Affluence' *RACAR: revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 41.2 (2016), pp. 30-43.

⁶⁴¹ Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked*, p. 105.

⁶⁴² Forbes Manuscript (YCBA), Vol. 2, p. 21; James Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 19; and Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 4, p. 248.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*, James Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 4, pp. 13-14.

⁶⁴⁴ William Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. 2, pp. 65 and 418.

⁶⁴⁵ Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, pp. 22 and 32.

⁶⁴⁶ <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/glossary/still-life> (as accessed on 8 October 2017).

⁶⁴⁷ Mss. Eur. 95 (Robert Kyd papers), p. 54b.

⁶⁴⁸ See Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic world* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), p. 107.

their growing power and luxury, the adaptation of such modes by Forbes in India is a reflection of prosperity of British Indian rule and the problems of upholding and maintaining it.

The implication of Vanitas in Forbes' images in terms of political power over nature can also be extended to the domain of pleasure and sensuality. In Forbes' writing, India features as a land of sensory charms which, though delightful to Englishmen, was also overwhelming to their constitution.⁶⁴⁹ Throughout Forbes' active life, both in India and afterwards, the relationship between British men and their Indian *bibis*, as it has been noted in the first chapter, remained the subject of official discussions. Such concern for the supervision of sexual excess involving Indians and Britons, when seen in the context of understanding India's natural environment, become a question of unravelling the mysteries of the unknown and even unknowable thereby fathoming its phantasmagorical power. If the Freudian idea of the uncanny is applied to Forbes' representations of Indian flora and fauna, it can be suggested that the unlocked secrets of colonial nature not only appealed to the Britons for their nobility, but also when known and controlled or even attempted to be known, gave them a sense of exploratory achievement.⁶⁵⁰

In late eighteenth-century England, science was often surrounded with an erotic appeal which was heightened by encounters with exotic species.⁶⁵¹ Such sensuousness went hand-in-hand with the depiction of harmony and sensitivity in nature that developed as a result of the new focus on love and care towards animals as a virtue as has been discussed above.⁶⁵² This is visible in the image of a nest of tailor birds on convolvulus plant (Figure 78). Here, Forbes has carefully delineated the details of the flowers in terms of their colour and texture and has also presented to an impression of their various forms, both in bud and in full bloom. The fruits are shown as fully-formed and almost ripe. The treatment of the tendrils adds vitality to the picture by generating an image of them being gently touched by the moving breeze. Leaves of the convolvulus have been clearly

⁶⁴⁹ Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 31.

⁶⁵⁰ Sigmund Freud, *Das Unheimliche* (The Uncanny), 1999.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20110714192553/http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~amtower/uncanny.html> (As accessed on 10 October 2018).

⁶⁵¹ See, for example, Karen Harvey, 'The substance of sexual difference: change and persistence in representations of the body in eighteenth-century England', *Gender and history*, 14.2 (2002), pp. 202-223, and Christopher Plumb, 'The 'electric stroke' and the 'electric spark': Anatomists and eroticism at George Baker's electric eel exhibition in 1776 and 1777' *Endeavour*, 34.3 (2010), pp. 87-94.

⁶⁵² Diana Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain*, p. 38.

represented and their beauty subtly escalates as our attention is gradually turns to the birds' nest skilfully woven out of those. Inside the nest can be seen two eggs to be hatched in due course.

On the right side, there is a male tailor bird perched on the branch, as if keeping a close eye on the eggs in the nest. On the left side in air a female tailor bird has a thread-like object in her beak meant for strengthening their nest. Feathers and plumages along with the long beaks of the birds are detailed and, overall, the image is one of loving partners building up a home and family. Like the bulbul on the custard apple, the nest of the tailor birds in the image is free-standing. The naturalist here keeps an eye on their loves and lives. Forbes remembers having observed, 'an industrial pair of tailor-birds in my garden, from their first choice of a plant, until the completion of their nest, and the enlargement of their young'.⁶⁵³ As Saurabh Mishra has pointed out, birdwatching in nineteenth-century India often involved the colonial officials identifying with the birds and contemplating on their own lifecycles.⁶⁵⁴ Away from his home and people, as Forbes found solace in his study of India's nature, the intimacy of the birds portrayed by him can be interpreted as his own desire for companionship.

De Almeida and Gilpin have argued that informed by the Romantic appreciation of higher ideals of love and divination in Indian culture, Forbes' images were free from the explicit imageries of human sexuality in botany, as established by Linnaeus.⁶⁵⁵ This view, however, needs to be revised in the light of Forbes' association with Linnaean botany. Forbes mostly used Linnaean names to refer to Indian flora and fauna, and he adapted his drawings to Linnaeus' maxims. This is evident from his sketch of the wedded Banyan tree in Salsette is in conformity with Linnaean idea of the marriage of plants (Figure 79).⁶⁵⁶ Here, Forbes presents us with a lofty palmyra tree growing out of the base of a banyan tree. This condition was the outcome of a 'marriage' of the banyan and palmyra trees made possible by the deposition of the seeds of the palmyra at the trunk of the banyan tree by a bird, or the passing wind. This image is derived from images of Indian Burr and palmyra trees featuring in his manuscripts.⁶⁵⁷ Perhaps, Forbes wittingly excluded any delineation of the

⁶⁵³ Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 49.

⁶⁵⁴ Saurabh Mishra, 'History writing, anthropomorphism, and birdwatching in colonial India' in *History Compass*, 15.8 (2017), p. 3.

⁶⁵⁵ de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, p. 94.

⁶⁵⁶ Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 2 (Image not paginated). See also, Forbes, *Illustrations to the Oriental Memoirs* (London, 1835), p. 15

⁶⁵⁷ Forbes Manuscript, Vol. 2 (YCBA).

wedded tree from the manuscripts as they ended up being a gift to his thirteen-year-old daughter on her birthday.

Forbes presents the germination of the palmyra from within the banyan as a result of external factors like birds or winds. This feeds into a scientific debate that had raged in Britain in the 1750s between the supporters and opponents of Linnaeus and that had been renewed in the 1790s. Like the botanist Charles Alston at Edinburgh before him, naturalist and publisher William Smellie had opposed Linnaeus' sexual theory of reproduction. Smellie argued that mechanisms like wind or insects could not be considered as vital forces in the process of pollination, and thereby in the reproduction of plants. London-based intellectuals were deeply in favour of the Linnaean system and Smellie's ideas did not prove influential in the long run. In England, Linnaeus' ideas were equally popular beyond academic circles, and the celebration of European botanists in his binomials as well as the impetus towards the 'complete' knowledge of the natural world through his sexual system of classification were considered as a potent instrument in the perpetuation of British imperialism.⁶⁵⁸

Forbes' representation of the married banyan tree emphasizes his commitment to Linnaean botany. Beneath the trees is seated a couple, a man and woman, as if to exemplify the ideal of marriage. The depiction of the palmyra as rising high from the broad base of the banyan tree and as laden with fruits can be seen as producing an image of vitality and regeneration that Forbes visualized to be the case under the benevolent rule of the Britons.⁶⁵⁹ The bottle-nested sparrows frequenting their nests on the palmyra tree, thus, become witnesses to the rise of British power in India.

Forbes' natural history illustrations are a testimony to the complexities of British rendezvous with natural environment in India. Forbes' images are a combination of excitement at the novelty and an immediate urge to domesticate it to his British mind. Whilst through Forbes' use of still life he highlights the growing prosperity of British rule, such an approach can also be understood as expressive of the limitations of British imperial power in India. In a similar manner, his zeal to master the sensuality of Indian exotica remains unaccomplished as he himself fails to resist its allure and is on the brink of being subsumed by it. Science came to Forbes' cause and thus, despite such constraints, his drawings did enable the objectification of India's nature as part of establishing

⁶⁵⁸ Susannah Gibson, *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral*, pp. 94-99 and 105.

⁶⁵⁹ Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 4, pp. 209, 284 and 285.

British command, as evident in the image of the bulbul on the cashew apple branch. Science was not only the means of overcoming the uncertainties of colonial nature, but also that of the colonizers' mind as part of their Indian encounter. Scientific investigation is, therefore, the subject of the next section.

Investigation: Looking at the role of the Impeys and the Joneses

Whilst James Forbes considered the observation of nature his solitary pastime in Bombay, Calcutta grew as the centre of British possessions in India. As a result, British presence here increased and so did the number of imperial families inhabiting what was to become the 'Second city of British empire'. Aside from common forms of socialization including balls, theatre visits, and card games, some of these imperial families began to take an avid interest in India's natural history.⁶⁶⁰ The familial domain became the site of such enquiries that, as I explore in this section, it aided, supplemented, and even preceded official interventions in India's natural environment. Colonial domesticity, as addressed in the previous chapter, played an active part in the formation and fostering of the idea of a British empire as an entity in everyday life. Whilst Britain's sons of science pursued their enquiries, the daughters were not far behind either. The practice of natural history at home, I argue here, became an endeavour that could potentially help re-configure the image of India's nature as under British rule.

Two such imperial families taking initiatives in the study of natural history in India were the Impeys and the Joneses. If home was the domain to uphold the hierarchies and relations of power within British Indian empire, it also provided an avenue for the production, extraction and circulation of knowledge about colonial natural resources.⁶⁶¹ Living in the burgeoning British metropolis of Calcutta, Impey and Jones families' interests in natural history ensued in scientific investigations that were meant not only for the British in India but for also those back in Britain.

⁶⁶⁰ See Anonymous, *Hartly House*, Vol. 1 (London, 1789), p. 44; and Archer, *Natural History Drawings*, pp. 1-10.

⁶⁶¹ For a similar argument, see Tomomi Kinukawa, 'Science and Whiteness as Property in the Dutch Atlantic World: Maria Sibylla Merian's *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamesium* (1705)' *Journal of Women's History*, 24.3, 2012 pp. 91-116. On the importance of home in scientific investigations in England, see Paul A. Elliot, *Enlightenment, Modernity and Science: Geographies of Scientific Culture and Improvement in Georgian England* (London, 2010), Chapter 1.

If James Forbes visualized peace and prosperity in India under the British,⁶⁶² the production and dissemination of knowledge as facilitated by the Impeys and Joneses about India's natural environment has to be considered as a venture in making India lucrative for Britain, whilst ensuring the credibility of the British empire as capable of managing India's natural resources and, by extension, India as a whole.

For both the Impeys and the Joneses, the enquiries into natural history in India was at the intersection of both family and the British state. As will be discussed below, interest in colonial nature on the part of the Impeys and Joneses had its roots in the social lives and status of their families both in Britain and India. The explorations of India's natural history were very much a part of their domestic bliss and harmony. Within these familial milieux, drawing and painting played an important role. In the eighteenth-century British world, collecting and making of drawings and paintings were not only admired, but also privileged as something that was both tasteful and a valuable skill. The practice of drawing was vital to the study of natural history. Even more important was getting hold of the right kind of drawings and ensuring that they kept to acceptable standards of accuracy and beauty. Collecting of drawings, in this regard, gave the collector a sense of possession over the depicted item.⁶⁶³ Accordingly, indigenous artists employed for the purpose were not only carefully supervised in their work, but also given European models to follow.⁶⁶⁴ Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison's idea of 'four-eyed sight' which emphasises the subordination of the artist/draughtsman to the presumed superiority of the scientist thus took new forms in a colonial context.⁶⁶⁵ The aims were first to make them unlearn a given body of knowledge, keeping only that deemed useful by the colonial masters, and second, to learn things anew in order to suit the needs of British taste and their administration in India as such.

In the conversation piece of the Impey family in India painted by Johan Zoffany around 1783-84, the Sir and Lady Impey together with their children are watching a performance by street musicians (Figure 80). Two of the Impey children out of three in the image are engrossed in the act as one of

⁶⁶² Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. 4, Chapter XLII.

⁶⁶³ On the question of possession through collection, see Jean Baudrillard, 'The System of Collecting', trans. by Roger Cardinal, in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (eds), *The Cultures of Collecting* (Cambridge, M.A., 1994), pp. 7-24.

⁶⁶⁴ See, for example, Mildred Archer, *Natural History Drawings*.

⁶⁶⁵ Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity*, pp. 84-96

them is on the lap of a musician whilst the other is dancing as their father, Sir Elijah Impey, looks at them lovingly. Sitting next to Sir Elijah is his wife Mary. Another child holds on to her as she is gazing into the distance. Even a fleeting look at the image enables us to distinguish it from the usual way Zoffany executes conversation piece paintings. Zoffany was well-known for putting a touch of sentimentality in all his representations of familial life. His conversation pieces depict feelings of love, cordiality and affectionate intimacy as reflected in the coordination of their postures and expressions. In this portrait of the Impeys in India, whilst such affection is clearly visible, Lady Mary's portrayal seems to vary from the standard depictions of mothers in Zoffany's family paintings. Zoffany's mothers, though serious in their demeanour, are usually doting figures, attending to their children with care and at the same time displaying their marital status and fidelity. Lady Mary, as depicted in the painting, lives up to the ideal of conjugality as she is seated just next to Sir Elijah. That she is the mother of the children in the painting is attested to by the presence of a child. However, the fact that she looks away from the painting is significant in itself. Why did Zoffany represent Lady Mary Impey in such a manner?

By the time Zoffany had executed this painting around 1783, Lady Impey had acquired a collection of three hundred or so natural history paintings. Between 1774 and 1783, she had commissioned these paintings from three Indian artists, namely Shaikh Zain-al-Din, Bhawani Das, and Ram Das of Patna. These paintings prepared under Lady Mary Impey are the earliest example of the Indian artists working under British patronage. The images were a product of Lady Mary's interest in the natural history of India, which she had begun to pursue almost immediately after her arrival, whilst her husband took a keen interest in learning Persian and Bengali, and became a patron of arts and letters.⁶⁶⁶ The daughter of a baronet and the wife of a judge whose family had long-standing connections with the EIC's trade and commerce,⁶⁶⁷ Lady Impey's undertaking of natural history thus had important connotations in terms of her social rank and the expectations of it. And, the fact that Lady Mary appears detached in the family painting encourages the impression of her as a 'disinterested' observer, the cardinal virtue of the accomplished naturalist.

⁶⁶⁶ Elijah Barwell Impey, *Memoirs of Sir Elijah Impey* (London, 1846), pp. 57-59; and Stuart Cary Welch, *India: Art and Culture, 1300-1900* (New York, 1985), p. 420.

⁶⁶⁷ Jeremiah P Losty, 'Lady Mary Impey' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/66116> (accessed 20 May 2017); and E. J. Adair Impey, *About the Impeys*, ed. Irene Clephane (Worcester, 1963), pp. 11-12.

Although her son, also called Elijah Impey, remembered her only as a loving mother and a faithful companion to Sir Elijah, there is no doubt that, besides her family responsibilities, Lady Impey also aspired to be known as a natural historian.⁶⁶⁸ The presence of a huge retinue of servants, which was the characteristic feature of the British life in India, relieved her of most of the household duties. Left only with the task of overseeing the activities of her servants, Lady Impey redirected her energy to setting up a menagerie in their Calcutta mansion in the Fort William area.⁶⁶⁹ The fact that she inherited all the paintings in the collection of her husband after his death attests to her cultural and intellectual interests in consonance with her social standing.⁶⁷⁰

As Amanda Vickery has pointed out, aristocratic and middle-class women in eighteenth-century Britain were not simply confined to the private sphere of home and family. In fact, their domestic responsibilities, including childbirth and upkeep of the household, did not stop them from exploring ‘wider cultural horizons through reading and exchanging periodicals, pamphlets, papers and novels, through letters, and through cultural consumption on an unprecedented scale’. Interest in politics, scientific developments, music concerts, theatre, pleasure gardens, museums, and art exhibitions also became an indispensable part of feminine respectability.⁶⁷¹ An important element in this context was travel. Although women mostly travelled outside the country only in the company of their menfolk, travel gave them the opportunity to imagine themselves as what Elizabeth Bohls refers to as the ‘aesthetic subject’.⁶⁷² Travel, whilst acquainting women with new climes and constitutions of distant lands, offered outlets for creative energies beyond what was possible in their homeland. It can be thus stated that Lady Mary Impey’s stay in India introduced her to the bounties of nature, and her privileged political position as the wife of the first judge of the Supreme Court of Judicature in Calcutta gave her access to the contemporary ‘men in power’, most notably Governor-General Warren Hastings who was a close friend to Sir Elijah since his school days, and who shared her fascination for India.⁶⁷³ These networks and circumstances

⁶⁶⁸ Elijah Barwell Impey, *Memoirs of Sir Elijah Impey*, pp. 12 and 399.

⁶⁶⁹ J. P. Losty, ‘Impey, Mary, Lady Impey (1749–1818)’.

⁶⁷⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Symbolic capital and social classes’ *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 13.2 (2013), pp. 292–302.

⁶⁷¹ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter* (London, 1998), pp. 9 and 225–284.

⁶⁷² Elizabeth A. Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716–1818* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 17.

⁶⁷³ It is interesting note that one of the paintings in the Impey Collection of natural history illustrations is that of a shawl goat that Warren Hastings himself ordered to be brought for the Impeys’ menagerie in Calcutta when he sent an embassy to Tibet. This image is now in Victoria and Albert Museum. For details, see <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O16889/a-shawl-goat-painting-zayn-al-din/>. For women’s involvement in politics in

enabled her to pursue her interest in natural history, and to commission Indian artists for the project of natural history illustrations.

Her enthusiasm can be seen in her desire to discuss and convey her own knowledge of natural history. She interacted with prominent naturalists of her times like zoologist Thomas Pennant and ornithologist Sir John Latham. In his *Views of Hindostan*, Pennant reminisced about Sir and Lady Impey's generosity in letting him see the natural history paintings commissioned by them. Pennant benefitted directly from the couple's initiative, as he got some of the paintings copied by his paintress.⁶⁷⁴ Sir John Latham also benefitted from Lady Impey's work, and as he informs us in his *Supplement to the General Synopsis of Birds*, she had attempted to bring two birds onboard the ship on her voyage back to England. Although the monal birds (which were named Impeyan Pheasant after her) did not survive the arduous journey, this attempt to bring them on the part of Lady Impey might imply that she was keen to continue her enquiries into natural history when she returned to Britain.⁶⁷⁵ Simultaneously, Lady Mary's attempts to bring in exotic birds recalls previous British officials in India like Robert Clive and George Pigot who brought and gifted exotic animals to the EIC and the British royalty.⁶⁷⁶

As previously mentioned, the natural history paintings in Lady Mary Impey's collection are one of the earliest examples of works of Indian artists for the British. She made regular observations of Indian plants and animals, and in order to ensure that the paintings commissioned by her had a 'scientific' worth, Lady Impey provided her artists with illustrated scientific literature from Europe.⁶⁷⁷ About 320 paintings were made in all, in which illustrations of birds outnumber those of other animals, plants, insects and fishes combined. Thus, my focus here is on the bird paintings

eighteenth-century Britain, see Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life c. 1754-1790* (Oxford, 2005). For the political role of women in a colonial context, see Nicola J. Thomas, 'Mary Curzon: 'American Queen of India'' in David Lambert and Alan Lester (eds), *Colonial lives across the British Empire: imperial careering in the long nineteenth century* (Cambridge, 2006) pp. 285-308.

⁶⁷⁴ Thomas Pennant, *The View of Hindostan*, Vol. 1 and 2 (London, 1798), pp. 156, 158, 247, 252, 258, and 344. Pennant also acknowledged the accuracy of the drawing of shawl goat in his letter to Sir James Edward Smith, the founder of the Linnaean Society of London. See GB-110/JES/COR/8/34 from Thomas Pennant, Downing, [Flintshire], to James Edward Smith, Norwich, [Norfolk], 20 October 1798 (Linnaean Society of London).

⁶⁷⁵ Sir John Latham, *Supplement to the General Synopsis of Birds* (London, 1787), pp. 56, 64, 65, 78, 86, 89, 91, 93, 94, 95, 102, 118, 120, 152, 142, 145, 150, 154, 155, 156, 168, 177, 196, 201, 207, 208, 209, 220, 213, 229, 232, 256, and 257, and Thomas Pennant, *The View of Hindustan*, *ibid.*, p. 345.

⁶⁷⁶ Mark Sorrell, 'A zebra, a tigress and a cheetah: New light on George Stubbs's exotic animal subjects' *The British Art Journal*, 15.1 (2014), pp. 99-109.

⁶⁷⁷ Archer, *Company Drawings*, p. 6 and 73.

commissioned by Lady Impey, as she used them to interact with naturalists like Latham and Pennant who were specialists in faunal studies. This direct connection with naturalists can help us think about the investigative rigour that Lady Impey desired to achieve in her natural history illustrations. Based on the style and format of the paintings, it can be inferred that, for her, as for James Forbes, the illustrations in the works of Buffon, Albin Eleazar, and George Edwards might have been the models. Whereas Forbes drew on recent developments in natural history scholarship, Impey looked to advance European knowledge. Her contribution was well-acknowledged by the scientific community which named new species of bird after her and regarded her as an ornithological authority.

Before moving on to the bird paintings themselves, it is necessary to discuss the artistic approach employed in their execution. Among the Indian art for the British in general, Lady Impey's collection stands out as an important example where the names of the artists are known as the paintings are signed. The artists have also stated themselves to be natives of Patna where they probably moved when the Nawab of Bengal, Mir Qasim, settled there, shifting his capital from Murshidabad.⁶⁷⁸ As the inheritors of legacies of the Mughal atelier, the artists would have been familiar with European artistic conventions independent of the EIC. Their artworks were, therefore, a conglomeration of various aesthetic influences.

When compared with the illustrations of birds in the European works of natural history, the paintings commissioned by Lady Impey exhibit both similarities and differences. In Albin's and Edwards' books, the figures of the birds occupy only the centre of the page, the rest being blank. Names of the species are usually found at the bottom, and the blank space around the bird would have made up space for note-making and annotations. The first painting from the collection of Lady Impey examined here largely defies this pattern, however. In the painting of An Orange-Headed Ground Thrush and a Death's-Head Moth on a Purple Ebony Orchid Branch by Zain-al-din, dated 1778 (Figure 81),⁶⁷⁹ the artist has covered almost the entire paper, only leaving the left side blank. This approach on the part of the artist has its roots in the Mughal tradition.⁶⁸⁰ In the painting, the bird is incorporated within the branches of the tree, appearing smaller in size. Whilst

⁶⁷⁸ J. P. Losty, 'Mary, Lady Impey (1749–1818)'.

⁶⁷⁹ Accession Number: 2012.7 (Metropolitan Museum of Art).

⁶⁸⁰ Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, p. 197.

the artist lives up to the European convention of foreshortening, this work does not directly treat the bird as the ‘species in focus’, but as part of a larger picture. Such a portrayal is characteristic of Mughal artists, who were also familiar with the conventions of painting during the Renaissance, which also presented similar depictions of birds.⁶⁸¹ In representing the thrush in this manner, the artist is invoking these composite artistic legacies. However, the fact that the artist’s presentation here does not potentially leave much room for notes, poses a possible problem for the practice of European science.

As seen above, the orange-headed thrush has been represented together with a moth. Leafing through the works by Albin and Edwards, birds are also sometimes found in interaction with the natural settings in which they are depicted and often reaching out to insects as sources of food. The general trait is, however, that of birds perched on trees without any lively interaction with their surroundings. As Sir John Latham was to remark with regards to natural history illustrations in 1785, ‘the excellence of the artist is less necessary, and a correct outline the greatest recommendation’.⁶⁸² Looking at the painting of the pied hornbill by Shaikh Zain-al-Din (Figure 82), dated around 1777,⁶⁸³ the bird perches on a tree trunk, completely morbid and motionless. The artist, on his part, here, shows a greater sense of adaptation to the European conventions put forward for him to follow. Not only is there more space surrounding the bird, but he has also made use of the shadow perhaps to conform to the requirements of his patron. The hornbill on the tree sits static, appearing in a full view, as if to be examined, studied, and recorded by the naturalist. In being a subject of the European enquiry of natural history, the bird is found as alienated from its own environment. Whilst the attention to careful detail on the plumage is a reminder of the artist’s Mughal artistic legacy, this painting is not meant to be an individual piece of art commemorating a particular bird. Rather, the aim of this painting is to enable the naturalist to identify all birds not only of the same genus, but also the entire species. The painting, however, evokes a sense of life as seen from the presence of red flowers on the creeper climbing the tree trunk.

Even when the birds are not completely static as in the image of the hornbill as discussed above, the sense of movement in the birds remains stifled and constricted. In fact, the British medium of

⁶⁸¹ Allan Ellenius, ‘Notes on the Function of Early Zoological Imagery’ in Urs Schoepflin, Wolfgang Lefèvre, and Jürgen Renn (eds), *The Power of Images in Early Modern Science* (Berlin, 2003), pp. 167-170.

⁶⁸² John Latham, *A General Synopsis of Birds*, Vol. 3, Part I (London, 1785), p. ii.

⁶⁸³ Pied Hornbill (*Anthracoceros malabaricus*), Accession Number: LI901.7 (Ashmolean Museum).

Whatman paper often falls short in accommodating the magnitude of Indian birds. This is evident from the painting of the greater flamingo by Shaikh Zain-al-din, dated 1781 (Figure 83).⁶⁸⁴ As seen in this image, whilst the artist excels in the delineation of the bird's plumage with clarity, the depiction of the beak and neck gives the idea of a certain restrain and contortion, which if done in real life would prove deadly for the bird. In the works of Albin and Edwards, the movements of birds when represented, appears natural, thus adding to the credibility of the book having drawn the birds 'from life'. The natural mobility of the greater flamingo here has been compromised for it to be scrutinized as part of European scientific enquiry.

In the case of Lady Impey's paintings, even where mobility is 'freely' allowed, it still remains far less than natural. In the painting of the comb duck by Shaikh Zain-al-Din, dated 1779 (Figure 84),⁶⁸⁵ the bird is bending forward as if in search of food. However, there is neither any background, nor is there any sense of the natural surroundings of this bird, something that both Albin and Edwards had often presented in their images. It is not known if Lady Impey chose to have just the bird depicted excluding any hint of its natural settings. Such a choice, if made, is informative of what knowledge the patron prioritized and how. In the absence of any hint of the location, situation or food, the bird's gesture creates an odd effect to the viewer in a most unnatural way.

In both the paintings of the greater flamingo and comb duck, there is only the bird present- a style of presentation akin to Buffon's illustrations even though in the latter's work, birds are presented in various natural settings far more than is seen in Lady Mary's collection. This act of the alienation of Indian birds from any kind of natural surroundings continues in the painting of the common crane by Shaikh Zain-al-din, dated 1780 (Figure 85).⁶⁸⁶ Here, like the painting of the greater flamingo, it can be suggested that the artist as adjusting the mobility of the bird so as to accommodate it within the given frame. Although like the comb duck the bird has also been representing as bending its neck, unlike those of the comb duck and the greater flamingo, this image appears more realistic. The depiction of the common crane as pruning itself here does not appear as the paying courtesy to the patron, rather as a natural trend of the bird as trying to reach

⁶⁸⁴ Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopteros ruber*), Accession Number: LI901.18 (Ashmolean Museum).

⁶⁸⁵ Male Nukta, or Comb Duck (*Sarkidornis melanotus*), Accession Number: LI901.5 (Ashmolean Museum).

⁶⁸⁶ Common Crane (*Grus grus*), Accession Number: LI901.14 (Ashmolean Museum).

its plumage using its long beak. More than meeting the classificatory needs of European natural history, the bird here exhibits its own gestures which are a part of its behavioural process.

Like the Impeys, familial and domestic settings also became avenue for the works of Sir William Jones, the famed linguist and founder of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. Jones had arrived to serve as the Puisne Judge at the Supreme Court in Calcutta, and according to Theresa M. Kelley, he only became an amateur botanist after he came to India.⁶⁸⁷ However, in order to peruse Jones' botanical interests and practices, it is important to pay a closer attention to his life, society, and learning interests prior to his arrival in India. In his memoirs of Jones, Lord Teignmouth writes that his family was in the forefront of scientific practices in late seventeenth-century England. Sir William Jones' father, also William Jones, who had passed away when the former was very young, had close connections with the Royal Society. Mr. Jones counted Sir Isaac Newton, Edmond Halley, and Samuel Johnson among his friends.⁶⁸⁸ On his part, Sir William Jones had a strong liking for Botany right from his childhood as he kept a garden during his days as a student at Harrow School, and one of his friends remembered him as amusing himself in the study of botany and in the collection of fossils.⁶⁸⁹ Not only did Jones have what may be referred to as a strongly 'botanical' vision as he travelled through Europe, but as he charted his memorandum onboard the ship bound for India, the knowledge of the natural productions of India featured as one of the principal subjects of his enquiry.⁶⁹⁰

In India, Jones began to seriously undertake botany in 1784 in the aftermath of an illness that left him severely weak, and his physician did not allow any intellectual activity except the examination of flowers.⁶⁹¹ In his botanical endeavours, he was assisted by his newly-married wife Anna Maria who herself had begun to develop a keen interest in India's nature almost immediately after her arrival.⁶⁹² To her husband's pride, Anna was a keen enthusiast of botany, collecting plants during

⁶⁸⁷ Theresa M. Kelley, *Clandestine Marriages*, p. 179.

⁶⁸⁸ Lord Teignmouth, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings and Correspondence of Sir William Jones* (London, 1807), p. 5.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19 and 36.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 92 and 239.

⁶⁹¹ Jones to the Second Earl Spencer, 4-30 August 1787 in Garland Cannon (ed.) *Letters of Sir William Jones*, Vol. 2 (Oxford, 1970), 751-752.

⁶⁹² Letter from Jonathan Shipley to Benjamin Franklin, 1784 (unpublished) in the *Papers of Benjamin Franklin* <http://franklinpapers.org/framedVolumes.jsp> [Accessed 18 December 2018].

her morning walk and also illustrating them.⁶⁹³ In this regard, it might be suggested that the Joneses were keeping up with the Impeys. Although the Impeys' stay in Calcutta was nearing its end when Sir William Jones arrived, Lady Anna Maria Jones had developed close acquaintance with Lady Impey and shared her love of natural history.⁶⁹⁴ Anna Maria Jones was the daughter of Reverend Jonathan Shipley, the younger brother of artist William Shipley. Shipley was instrumental in suggesting the foundation of the Society of Arts, and his academy of drawing had been at the forefront of artistic education in London during the eighteenth century. It is notable that often the draftsmen of the EIC were trained at William Shipley's Academy.⁶⁹⁵ Alongside the Company's Botanical Gardens, many a botanical observation of Sir and Lady Jones were made in Krishnanagar during the former's retreat from official business. Those observations, together with Sir William Jones' consultations and discussions with European naturalists as well as Indian brahmins and *vaidyas*, resulted in his plan for a treatise on botany, which unfortunately did not materialize due to his untimely death in 1794. His plan on Indian Botany and other botanical writings published in the *Asiatick Researches*,⁶⁹⁶ when read in conjunction with his discourses, and poetical works gives us an idea of his intentions for botanizing India.

In his Second Anniversary Discourse delivered for the Asiatic Society in 1785, Jones declared knowledge of nature in India to be vital for Britain and as key to its political power,

A minute geographical knowledge, not only of Bengal and Bihar, but for evident reasons, of all kingdoms bordering on them, is closely connected with an account of their many revolutions: but the natural productions of these territories, especially in the vegetable and mineral systems, are momentous objects of research to an imperial, but which is a character of equal dignity, a commercial people.

If Botany may be described by metaphors drawn from the Science itself, we may justly pronounce a minute acquaintance with plants, their classes, orders, kinds and species to be its flowers, which can only produce fruit by application of that knowledge to the purposes of life, particularly to diet, by which diseases may be avoided, and to medicine by which they may be remedied; for

⁶⁹³ Letter from Jones to Patrick Russell, 28 September 1784 in Garland Cannon (ed.) *Letters*, Vol. 2, p. 707; and Letter from Jones to Sir Joseph Banks, 18 October 1791, in Lord Teignmouth, *Memoirs*, p. 431, and Lady Jones' Notebooks at Royal Asiatic Society of Britain and Ireland.

⁶⁹⁴ Michael J. Franklin, *Orientalist Jones*, p. 15.

⁶⁹⁵ Lord Teignmouth, *Memoirs*, p. 355, and Archer, *British Drawings*, Vol. 1, p. 1-5.

⁶⁹⁶ *Asiatick Researches* was the name of the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Here, in order to refer to Jones' published writings, I am using a compendium of his works published by his wife Anna Maria Jones in his memory in 1799. See William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones* (London, 1799) in six volumes.

improvement of the last mentioned art, than which none surely can be beneficial to the mankind...⁶⁹⁷

Sir William Jones' discourse runs contrary to Theresa Kelley's claim that Jones' approach to Indian nature was a far cry from the EIC's official emphasis on the economic usefulness of Indian plants.⁶⁹⁸ Jones, as Minakshi Menon has suggested more recently, wanted to prove himself as a 'useful man'.⁶⁹⁹ To Jones, the lack of an active, travelling botanist was a serious lacunae in the British enterprise of developing the knowledge and use of Indian flora—a gap which he could only fill partially as a 'private man'.⁷⁰⁰ His exhortations here, in fact, preceded Colonel Robert Kyd's initiatives in the foundation of the Botanical Garden in Calcutta, and the latter's vociferous advocacy in 1788 of research into the known as well as unknown plant, animal, and mineral resources in various parts of the Company's territories as important for British Indian administration.⁷⁰¹ As Garland Cannon has suggested, because of his talents, energy, and ability to coordinate scholarship on India through the Asiatic Society, Jones was a more valuable correspondent to Sir Joseph Banks than the medical officers in the EIC's service.⁷⁰² Jones had arranged for various seeds and specimens to be sent to Sir Joseph, and communicated with him and various official naturalists in India like Johann Gerhard Koenig and Dr. Patrick Russell regarding his botanical research.⁷⁰³

As Utilitarianism started to take roots in the late 1780s, some botanical investigations came to be aimed at improving the lot of the Indian people. In February 1793, Dr. William Roxburgh who was to succeed Robert Kyd as the Superintendent of the Calcutta Botanical Garden, recommended the cultivation of coconut with two purposes: firstly, to alleviate the problems of poorer natives in

⁶⁹⁷ Sir William Jones, 'The Second Anniversary Discourse' in Anna Maria Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones* (London, 1799), Vol. 1, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁹⁸ Kelley, *Clandestine Marriages*, p. 180 and 181. See also, Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 221.

⁶⁹⁹ Minakshi Menon, *Making Useful Knowledge: British Naturalists in Colonial India, 1784-1820* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of California, San Diego, 2013), pp. 55 and 97.

⁷⁰⁰ Jones to Sir Joseph Banks, 18 Oct. 1791, in Garland Cannon (ed.), *Letters*, Vol. II., pp. 891-92. See also, John Gascoigne, 'Joseph Banks, mapping and the geographies of natural knowledge' in Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers (ed.), *Georgian Geographies. Essays on Space, Place and Landscape in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester, 2004), pp. 151-173.

⁷⁰¹ IOR/P/3/33, pp. 191-193.

⁷⁰² Garland Cannon, 'Sir William Jones, Sir Joseph Banks, and the Royal Society' *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 29.2 (1975), p. 209.

⁷⁰³ Lord Teignmouth, *Memoirs*, pp. 409, 429-433, 435-436, and Garland Cannon, 'Sir William Jones, Sir Joseph Banks, and the Royal Society', *ibid.*, pp. 214-218.

times of scarcity; and secondly, to secure for them the benefits of their hard labour as opposed to those being diverted to the *zamindars*.⁷⁰⁴ British Utilitarian agenda was, however, more often at the cost of the Indian populace, and was largely meant for the benefit of the Company itself. So, for example, inhabitants of the villages of Alindoor and Nundumbaukam protested that the EIC's mulberry plantations and gardens had encroached on their cultivable lands on which they had solely relied for their livelihood.⁷⁰⁵

Jones' botanical studies in India began with his reading of Linnaeus' *Philosophia Botanica* that he considered to be the core text on the subject.⁷⁰⁶ However, there were certain points where he significantly differed from the premises of Linnaean botany. Firstly, although Jones had initially shown an identification with the Linnaean idea of the nuptials of plants, he also vehemently criticized it on the grounds of indecency. Secondly, in his approach to Indian botany Jones largely adopted an 'experimental' framework, which was opposed to Linnaeus' own practice of botany. Thirdly, based on his sound knowledge of Indo-European languages, Jones rejected the Linnaean idea of twenty-four classes; and fourthly, he did not hesitate to establish the Indian (that is, Sanskrit) names of Indian plants.⁷⁰⁷

At the core of this diversion from the Linnaean approach are Jones' Indian encounter and his oriental scholarship. Jones' linguistic proficiency enabled him to consult Indian experts, scholars, and texts regarding various plants, and thus, scholars like Kelley and Menon have suggested that he held the local knowledge of botany in high esteem.⁷⁰⁸ Such an idea echoes Kapil Raj's assessment of Jones' judicial career in India. Drawing upon the work of Stephen Shapin, Raj argues that Sir William Jones developed various networks of 'intercultural trust' with Indians that helped him harness their expertise for his pursuit of enquiry into India's socio-political life. In doing so, by diligently recording the names of his local informants and integrating them into the official framework of the EIC's administration, Jones valued their importance in his Indian

⁷⁰⁴ IOR/P/241/38, pp. 1010-1014.

⁷⁰⁵ IOR/P/274/69, pp. 1271-1354.

⁷⁰⁶ Menon, *Making Useful Knowledge*, p. 79.

⁷⁰⁷ Lord Teignmouth, *Memoirs*, pp. 354 and 431. See also Alan Bewell, 'William Jones and cosmopolitan natural history' in *European Romantic Review*, 16.2 (2005), pp.173-174, Tim Fulford, Deborah Jean Lee, Debbie Lee, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era: Bodies of Knowledge* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 80, and Kelley, *Clandestine Marriages*, p. 182.

⁷⁰⁸ Kelley, *Clandestine Marriages*, p. 182; and Menon, *Making Useful Knowledge*, pp. 51-119.

experience.⁷⁰⁹ A similarity with Raj's approach can be found in Kelley's emphasis on the phrase 'two native physicians in my family' in Jones' correspondence that she considers as symptomatic of reliance on Indian botanical wisdom.⁷¹⁰

Jones's relationship to local knowledge may have been more complicated, however. At the very outset, it must be remembered that no Indian members were allowed in the Asiatic Society before 1829. Whilst scholarly contributions from Indians were encouraged, Jones' approach in this regard becomes a condescending commentary on Indian character itself as well as aimed at extracting their knowledge and turning it to the purposes of British empire.

Much may, I am confident, be expected from the communications of *learned natives*, whether lawyers, physicians, or private scholars, who would eagerly, on the first invitation, send us their *Mekamat* and *Risalahs* on a variety of subjects; some for the sake of advancing general knowledge, but most of them a desire, neither uncommon nor unreasonable, of attracting notice, and recommending themselves to favour. With a view to avail ourselves of this disposition, and to bring their latent science under our inspection, it might be advisable to print and circulate a short memorial, in *Persian* and *Hindi*, setting forth, in a style accommodated to their own habits and prejudices, the design of our institution; nor would it be impossible hereafter to give a medal annually, with inscriptions, in Persian on one side, and on the reverse in *Sanscrit*, as the price of merit, to the writer of the best essay or dissertation. To instruct others is the prescribed duty of learned *Brahmans*, and if they be men of substance, without reward; but they would all be flattered with an honorary mark of distinction; and the *Mahomedans* have not only the permission but positive command, of their law-giver, *to search for learning even in the remotest parts of the globe*.⁷¹¹

Whilst this was clearly Jones' prejudice towards Indians as keen on currying favour with their colonial masters, his approach also hints at a strategic enterprise to encourage local complicity in the creation of knowledge as useful for the British. The reliance of European naturalists on Indians can be traced back to the times of Hendrik Van Reede who for his *Hortus Malabaricus* had extensively relied on the knowledge of local physicians of Kerala in the seventeenth century. The importance of *Hortus Malabaricus* was great to the extent that it was even consulted by Carl Linnaeus. However, placing William Jones within such a tradition is problematic because of the basic difference between him and Van Reede in their approaches to Indian knowledge. Not only

⁷⁰⁹ Raj, *Relocating Modern Science*, pp. 95-138.

⁷¹⁰ Kelley, *Clandestine Marriages*, p.182.

⁷¹¹ Sir William Jones, 'The First Anniversary Discourse' in Anna Maria Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. 1 (London, 1799), p. 17.

did Hortus Malabaricus use the local system of botanical classification prevalent in southern India, but also Van Reede included in the text the certificate given by Indian physicians at the beginning of his work to establish its credibility.⁷¹² Jones although took the information provided by Indians into consideration, his experimentalism enabled him to scrutinize it further. Science thus vested in him an agency whereby he did not accept Indian botanical expertise at its face value, rather only if it was proven correct through his experiments or, sometimes his own critical reasoning.⁷¹³ Whilst recognizing the importance of local knowledge, Jones was equally concerned about the non-cooperation and misinformation on the part of indigenous population as evident in the case of the acquisition of the specimens of *Jatamanasi* (spikenard) from Bhutan.⁷¹⁴

It is also important to remember that Jones' rejection of Linnaeus' maxims did not mean a complete overhaul of Linnaean botany. In fact, his emphasis on the economic importance of botany is similar to Linnaeus' vision of progress to be achieved by the knowledge of nature.⁷¹⁵ Regarding his naming of Indian plants using Sanskrit names, the idea of varying from Linnaeus and giving Indian species Indian names was derived from Linnaeus himself.⁷¹⁶ Jones also displayed a tendency to favour Linnaean classificatory system as a whole.⁷¹⁷ In the Tenth Anniversary Discourse of the Asiatic Society delivered in 1793 in the presence of Lord Cornwallis as Governor-General, Jones pointed out that, '[W]e cannot employ our leisure more delightfully than in describing all new *Asiatick* plants in the *Linnaean* style and method, or in correcting the descriptions of those already known, but of which dry specimens only or drawings, can have been seen by most *European*

⁷¹² See Hendrik Van Reede Tot Drakenstein, *Hortus Indicus Malabaricus*, Vol. 1 (Amsterdam, 1678).

⁷¹³ Sir William Jones, 'The Design of a Treatise on the Plants of India', and 'Botanical Observation on Select Indian Plants' in Anna Maria Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. 2 (London, 1799), p. 5, and p. 111, respectively. See also Ray Desmond, *European Discovery of Indian Flora* (Oxford, 1992), p. 65.

⁷¹⁴ Sir William Jones, 'On the Spikenard of the Ancients' in Anna Maria Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. 2 (London, 1799), p. 15.

⁷¹⁵ Lisbet Koerner, *Linnaeus: Nature and Nation* (London, 1999), Chapters 2 and 6.

⁷¹⁶ Sir William Jones, 'Botanical Observations on Select Indian Plants' in Anna Maria Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. 2 (London, 1799), p. 47. See also, Staffan Müller-Wille and Karen Reeds, 'A Translation of Linnaeus' Introduction to *Species Plantarum* (1737)' in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 38 (2007), pp. 563-572.

⁷¹⁷ In his botanical observations, Jones even whilst disputing, he continued to adhere to his system and modes of examination of plants, and attempted to add on to the Linnaean knowledge. Whilst naming plants in Sanskrit, he tried to ascertain their Linnaean generic names. See, Sir William Jones, 'Botanical Observations on Select Indian Plants', 'Design of a Treatise on Plants of India, and 'A Catalogue of Indian Plants, comprehending their Sanscrit, and as many of their Linnaean Generic Names as could with any degree of precision be ascertained, by the President' in Anna Maria Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. 2 (London, 1799). See also Henry Noltie, 'On Pandanus leram and the other botanical binomials of Sir William Jones' in *Taxon*, 62.6 (2016), pp.1268-1274.

botanists’.⁷¹⁸ The commingling of Linnaean botany with the imperial ambitions of the British in India also manifests itself in Jones’ *The Enchanted fruit, or The Hindu Wife* as Britannia emerges all-pervasive, enabling the sustenance of life and vegetation ‘In *British*, or in *Indian Air*!’⁷¹⁹ Similar sentiments were to be echoed in Robert Thornton’s *Temple of Flora* as Britain’s cooler climate was deemed as a shelter from various parts of the empire.⁷²⁰

Jones’ consideration of Indian knowledge thus does not simply reflect an admiration of India, as Theresa Kelley has claimed, but is illustrative of his zest for ending the Brahmanical monopoly on learning and erudition.⁷²¹ The recent publication of a hitherto unknown letter of Sir William Jones to the then-Governor-General confirms this interpretation. In this letter written in 1785, Jones refers to Indian scholar Ramalachona Kanthavarna, his Sanskrit teacher whom he had brought to Calcutta as a ‘greater Asiatick curiosity than the rarest production of nature or the oldest manuscript’.⁷²² This is the same person whom he had also referred to in his correspondence as a ‘pleasant man’ during the same period.⁷²³ If Jones’ positionality is taken at best to be a bifurcated one, that is, caught between the love for India and the British imperial interests, this still makes a starker case for the fact that what is ruled and dominated cannot be loved and revered, at least not in the long run. It is these ideas, I contend, that inform the botanical illustrations prepared by Indian artists for Sir William Jones.

Lady Jones’ botanizing in the company of her husband is informative of their urge to build up a solid basis of investigation in their study of Indian flora. Whilst the dissection of animals posed a problem in the hot climate of Bengal deprived Sir William Jones of the opportunity to study his favourite pet loris after its death, botany did not pose such a problem. Various plant species were

⁷¹⁸ Sir William Jones, ‘The Tenth Anniversary Discourse’, and Sir William Jones, ‘The Second Anniversary Discourse’ in Anna Maria Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. 1 (London, 1799), p. 155.

⁷¹⁹ Sir William Jones, ‘The Enchanted fruit, or The Hindu Wife’ in Anna Maria Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. 6 (London, 1799), pp. 198-199.

⁷²⁰ Robert John Thornton, *Temple of Flora, or, Garden of the botanist, poet, painter, and philosopher* (London, 1812) (Not Paginated).

⁷²¹ Letter from Jones to Arthur Lee, dated 1 October 1786 in Garland Cannon (ed.), *Letters*, Vol. 2, pp. 712-13; and James A. Boon, ‘An Endogamy of Poets, and Vice Versa: Exotic Ideals in Romanticism/Structuralism’ in *Studies in Romanticism*, 18.3 (1979), pp. 333-361.

⁷²² Letter from Jones to John Macpherson, published in Joshua Ehrlich, ‘Empire and Enlightenment in three letters from Sir William Jones to Governor-General John Macpherson’ in *The Historical Journal*, 62.2 (2019), pp. 550-551.

⁷²³ Letter from Jones to John Macpherson, dated in Cannon (ed.), *Letters*, Vol. 2, p. 682.

therefore dissected and examined. Afterwards, Lady Jones drew and coloured them.⁷²⁴ Plants were not only brought to them, but also collected and ventures were made into the gardens kept by fellow Britons. The couple often patiently waited for months to observe the flowering processes.⁷²⁵

Although Jones had begun to commission Indian artists to paint Indian flora almost at the same time as when his enquiry into botany had begun, as Jochen Sokoly states, he did not make any mention of them.⁷²⁶ The presence of borders surrounding these illustrations suggest that they were perhaps prepared to accompany Sir Jones' treatise on Indian botany.⁷²⁷ It is these illustrations which form the subject of my analysis here. One commonality that can be traced between the Joneses and the Impeys is that both of them employed Shaikh Zain-al-din as one of their artists. Unlike in the case of Impeys, among the surviving paintings in Sir William Jones' collection, only one of them appears as signed by Shaikh Zain-al-din, although about seven of them have been attributed to him.⁷²⁸ The other paintings remain unsigned, and in some of them, there is 'Lady Jones' written in the handwriting of Sir William, as if to indicate that the plant was identified or discovered by Lady Jones. Another important feature in the paintings commissioned by Sir Jones is that many of them look incomplete or unfinished. By the mid-eighteenth century, not only did unfinished drawings acquire an importance due to their espousal in Edmund Burke's aesthetic theory,⁷²⁹ but also, they began to serve more of a practical purpose with the rapid expansion of British empire. In the paintings of Indian artists commissioned by Jones there is the anticipation of a tendency which would become exceedingly popular with official naturalists like Benjamin Heyne. When Heyne commissioned Indian artists to produce botanical illustrations, in order to save time and expedite the process of the drawing and painting, he had asked them to paint only a

⁷²⁴ Lord Teignmouth, *Memoirs*, p. 353, and Garland Cannon, 'Sir William Jones, Sir Joseph Banks, and the Royal Society', p. 219.

⁷²⁵ WJ/3/2 (Lady Jones' sketchbook in William Jones Papers at Royal Asiatic Society, London), and Lord Teignmouth, *Memoirs*, p. 430.

⁷²⁶ Jochen Sokoly, 'Zayn al-Din, Sir William and Lady Anna Maria Jones and their Study of Botany— The Jones Collection of Indian Company School Drawings and Watercolours at the Royal Asiatic Society, London' in Jochen Sokoly and Alison Ohta (eds), *India: East/ West. The Age of Discovery in the Late Georgian India as seen in the Collections of the Royal Asiatic Society, London* (Qatar, 2010), p. 54.

⁷²⁷ Raymond Head, *Catalogue of Paintings, drawings, engravings and Busts Catalogue in the collection of the Royal Asiatic Society* (London, 1991), p. 94.

⁷²⁸ Inventory Number: 025.075, as published in Jochen Sokoly, 'Zayn al-Din, Sir William and Lady Anna Maria Jones and their Study of Botany', p. 168.

⁷²⁹ Burke, *A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful*, p. 59.

flower and a leaf and attend to the rest of the illustration later.⁷³⁰ Moreover, whilst the study of oriental literature, life, and culture enabled Jones to identify Indian plants and in turn, to transmit its knowledge back to Britain, in the botanical illustrations commissioned by him, there is no tendency to relate plants to their native settings and environment. Jones' artists follow the European format of natural history illustration. The manner of representation is characterized by that of snapped twigs with largely a focus on the flowering parts of the plant, that, as Beth Tobin has argued, made them easier to assimilate into European knowledge system as well as material existence.

My focus here is on how the botanical illustrations that Jones had commissioned from Indian artists figured in this regard. In addition to reading the work of Rumphius, Van Reede, and Linnaeus, Jones also possessed Alexander Russell's *Natural History of Aleppo*.⁷³¹ Among Jones' images is also present a drawing of the Acanthus plant (Figure 89) that Sir William Jones has referred to as Haricusa in his Catalogue. This image with the full Latinate name of the plant, that is, Acanthus Sativus vel Mollis Virgilis along with its different versions beneath the painting. It remains unknown if Sir William Jones had any intention of inserting the Indian names of plants in the drawings that lack those. The image is from Giorgio Bonelli's *Hortus Romanus juxta systems Tournefortianum Paulo*.⁷³² It is only in a handful of paintings by Lady Jones that there are Indian names of the plants, which probably were used for their local sourcing. The image is a detailed study of the roots of the plants, attesting the impression from previous images of having been closely examined by the Joneses. Just above the roots appears the seed of the plant and the flower, both of which appear to have been dissected. The plant itself stands on the right side, with some flowers at the bottom in bloom and those above as buds. This can also be seen as a model that Indian artists had to follow.

Among the surviving botanical images in the collection of Sir William Jones, I will be analysing five illustrations so as to be able to reflect on the nature of the collection as well as the choices

⁷³⁰ Archer, *Natural History Drawings*, p. 28.

⁷³¹ *Catalogue of the Library of Late Sir William Jones...sold by auction* (London, 1831), p. 16.

⁷³² Rare Book Division, The New York Public Library. "Acanthus sativus, vel Mollis Virgilii = Branca Ursina = Acante. [Bear's Breeches]" New York Public Library Digital Collections. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dd-c9ab-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99> [Accessed 13 September 2019].

made when preparing these images. The first image is that of *Eugenia Malaccensis* (Figure 86).⁷³³ This particular plant or a variant of it is listed as *Eugenia Jambu* in Jones' *Catalogue of Select Indian Plants*. This is an unsigned image, attributed to Zain-al-Din where only the Latinate Linnaean name of the plant is noted, together with the fact that it was seen as in bloom in March 1790. Such information together with the appearance of the fruits and flowers in the image as dissected, give us an idea of the kind of scientific knowledge that Jones would have considered important. The image is not complete, with only the sections coloured for the plant to be understood. However, an important aspect seen in the image of the plant in its uncoloured parts is a half-eaten leaf. Although the plant is not in its naturalistic setting nor is there any other form of life adjacent to it, it is clear that the artist has here attempted to invoke a sense of the plant's life story. Nevertheless, the fact that the half-eaten leaf remains uncoloured suggests that the patron might not have been interested in this kind of information in the first place.

The fact that Sir Jones was keen on controlling the meaning of the botanical illustrations on the basis of his command of scientific knowledge is evident in the image of *Butea Superba* by an unknown Indian artist (Figure 87).⁷³⁴ Like the *Eugenia Malaccensis*, this picture is also unfinished. Whilst the leaves remain uncoloured, emphasis has been rendered in the depiction of flowers together with the stalks and a woody stem. Beneath the stem can be found the flower pod and a dissected flower. The sizes of both the dissected flower and the pod have been enlarged, thereby giving the impression that these might have already been examined by Sir or/and Lady Jones. The result of such examination can be seen in the way different parts of the plant have been marked in the image. The plant here is again shown as removed from its natural settings, but unlike in the case of *Eugenia* where the artist might have attempted to give a hint of the plant's life story, this image is entirely different. The flower pod, though existing in the image, has not been shown on the plant but rather as detached from it. Through this process of detachment, I suggest that the plant has been depicted as being removed from its lifecycle, thus serving as a model for European scientific enquiry. Furthermore, the tendency of the Indian artist to fill up an entire paper has been disciplined here as the leaves that could have potentially filled the paper have been left uncoloured.

⁷³³ Inventory Number: 025.084 (Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland).

⁷³⁴ Inventory Number: 025.070 (RAS).

In some cases, the artists are not even allowed to use the given space for their drawings fully. This is evident from the image of another unnamed plant (Figure 88).⁷³⁵ This image is incomplete, and except for the right-side of the paper, the rest has been left empty as if making space for observations on the part of Sir and Lady Jones. What is seen in the image is that only a few leaves and flowers have been coloured so as to represent the plant in its entirety. Also, the dissected fruit can be seen. Various parts of the plants have been marked and an index on the top right has been included in order to give the viewer the information of about various sections of the plant. The fact that only the flowers and leaves on the top have been chosen to be coloured together with a leaf at the bottom left and only a fragment of the woody stem, suggests that not only the plant has been completely detached from its natural environment, but also its different parts have been segregated from each other under the discerning eye of European science.

The fact that India's natural life did not always comply with European scientific imaginations is, nevertheless, evident from the next painting. The image here is that of *Morinda* Sp. (Figure 90) by an unknown artist, whose leaves and branches had been collected by the Joneses. Whilst the gnarled, gradually drying leaves hint at the fact that parts of this plant have now been disjointed from the whole and the dissected flower itself is a hint at the impact of the scientific investigation that this plant has undergone, the artist does depict a kind of exuberance of the species in the painting. The presence of the flower pod on the larger branch along with the leaves depicted on the side, and also the fact that the growth of a flower from the separate pod can be seen, presents a sense of the life in the plant specimen even when it has come under British observation. It is this quintessential spirit of colonial nature or at least that of the Indian artist that could never be completely suppressed.

The investigations into India's natural history by the Joneses and the Impeys reveal a tendency to resituate and thus, command Indian flora and fauna in terms of European world order. Whilst local names of species were often used, the images as such suggest dissociation from the local roots of plants and animals. Although both the Impeys and Joneses were using Indian knowledge, they had the discretionary power to accept or reject images. Jones did not document and thereby did not acknowledge the contribution of Indian artists, and even when in the case of Impeys the names of Indian artists were recorded, it was clear that they were to strictly adhere to European standards.

⁷³⁵ Inventory Number: 025. 086 (RAS).

In this process, women like Lady Impey and Lady Jones managed to acquire much more prestige than they would have possibly gained if operating in Britain.⁷³⁶ Indian empire thus enabled the scientific contribution of these women to be recognized and respected. However, as revealed here, though Indian artists adhered to the European conventions, their approaches to flora and fauna often side-tracked the priorities of European classificatory system. In doing so, they not only expressed and preserved their own artistic heritage, but also implicitly questioned the efficiency of the colonial regime in supervising the production of natural history illustrations, and in turn, bore witness to the incomplete success of the British in knowing and mastering nature in India.

Intensification: The Governor-General's Natural History

In a Public Letter in 1806, the EIC declared its intention to considerably reduce or rather reconsider Marquis of Wellesley's ambitious, grandiose project called the Improvement of Natural History in India, so as to spend money on it in a manner that matched up to its usefulness to the British rule in India.⁷³⁷ The idea of utilitarianism had already begun to become prominent in Britain, and the government was to be largely an instrument in bringing it about, thus ensuring the benefit of the populace. In this case, however, the project of utility surpassed what the EIC had envisioned its initial investment in India to be. Like the Marquis of Wellesley's own abrupt recall, his elaborate project of natural history plummeted before it could reach its fruition. The departure of Wellesley, the first Governor-General to rule India from a 'palace', left the project incomplete, and under the subsequent Governors-General, core of the project, the Barrackpore Menagerie tended to reduce and by the latter half of the nineteenth century, was closed down.⁷³⁸

However, by the time Wellesley had to leave India, he had amassed a huge collection of natural history illustrations. Analysing the natural history illustrations prepared for Wellesley can help not only explore how Wellesley visualized his role as the Governor-General of India, but also the larger concerns about nature in the British Indian administration. Hitherto unexplored, natural

⁷³⁶ Inventory Number: 025.081 (RAS).

⁷³⁷ IOR/F/4/4471 (APAC: BL).

⁷³⁸ *Ibid.*

history art personally commissioned and collected by Wellesley provides a window into the nature as a site of power in the age of increasing imperial confidence.

In his minute on 26 July 1806, Wellesley declared in Fort William that the progress in the study of some aspects of natural history had not developed at the rate of the study of the other branches of knowledge in India. As he pointed out,

The knowledge hitherto obtained in Europe respecting certain branches of natural history of the continent of India and the Indian isles is defective. Notwithstanding the progress which has been made within the last twenty years in the prosecution of scientific enquiries connected with the manners, produce, and antiquities of this part of Asia, many of the most common quadrupeds and birds of this country are either altogether unknown to the naturalists of Europe, or have been imperfectly and inaccurately described.

The illustration and improvement of that branch of natural history of India, which embraces an object so extensive as the description of the principal parts of the animal kingdom, is worthy of the munificence and liberality of the English East India Company, and must necessarily prove an acceptable service to the world.⁷³⁹

In highlighting the importance of the study of zoology in India in the early part of the nineteenth century, Wellesley can be said to have been thinking ahead of his time. In India before and during his tenure as the Governor-General, the study of botany had generated considerable interest among the British inhabitants, let alone the official naturalists. With the foundation of the Botanical Garden in Calcutta, the enthusiasm for economic Botany had ensued. When it came to zoology, such interest was largely lacking. The Company's naturalists were focussed on Botany, and even surgeon Patrick Russell who had composed an extensive two-volume treatise on snakes in the Indian subcontinent was primarily employed as a botanist and naturalist.⁷⁴⁰ The study of zoology had not developed at par with that of Botany. The establishment of the Zoological Society of London had to wait till 1828, and even then, animals were more a part of popular entertainment than that of concerted, serious research.⁷⁴¹

Apart from institutional factors, it is important to take into account the mental world of the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries when it comes to the study of zoology. Recent British

⁷³⁹ Robert Montgomery Martin (ed.), *The despatches, minutes, and correspondence, of the Marquess Wellesley, K. G., during his administration in India*, Vol. 4 (London, 1837), p. 674.

⁷⁴⁰ On Patrick Russell, see Indraneil Das, 'Patrick Russell (1727–1805), surgeon and polymath naturalist' in *Hamadryad*, 37:1 & 2 (2015), pp. 1-11.

⁷⁴¹ Marika Vicziany, 'Imperialism, Botany and Statistics in early Nineteenth-Century India: The Surveys of Francis Buchanan (1762–1829)' in *Modern Asian Studies*, 20.4 (1986), pp. 637-8.

victories in India created possibilities for changes and developments that had not been attempted so far. The natural history project can be understood as a measure in this regard. Wellesley believed in show, dazzle and extravaganza, and an idea like that of the study of zoology at a time when it was not much at the forefront either in Britain or in India, was perfectly suited to his attitude to political power and authority. The endeavours of the ‘princely Wellesley’⁷⁴² here are reminiscent of the pursuits of natural history by the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II (1576-1612). Although largely considered an eccentric, the elaborate character of collections (of which natural specimen were a major part) in his *Kunstkammer*, that is, the Cabinet of Curiosities has come to be viewed as a form of representation of ‘imperial magnificence and a symbol of his claims to power’.⁷⁴³ This was perfectly relevant in an age when the British alliances with Indian rulers and the credibility of the latter depended on who could supply them with animals to facilitate their war efforts.⁷⁴⁴ As gifts of animals played a major role in diplomacy, and Indian rulers also turned to the Botanical Gardens in Calcutta when it was required to acquire plant samples, the step towards the improvement of the study of natural history can be understood as a measure to strengthen the British presence in India.⁷⁴⁵

The fact that Wellesley meant his natural history as form of display is clear from its sheer range. More than 2600 illustrations were prepared for his collection in all. Not only were the images of birds and animals present, but those of plants were also included in order to keep in line with the Company’s own interests in India’s natural environment. In this way, his personal collection was slightly different from what he wanted the project on natural history to be. Right from the very outset, Wellesley was in favour of developing the knowledge of natural history in India. As a result, when he spearheaded the foundation of the Fort William College for the training of British officials in India, the study of botany and natural history were to figure prominently in the curricula.⁷⁴⁶ It is clear from this act that Wellesley’s vision of the use and applicability of natural

⁷⁴² I am borrowing this phrase from de Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, p. 170.

⁷⁴³ Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, ‘Remarks on the Collections of Rudolf II: The *Kunstkammer* as a Form of Representatio’ in *Art Journal*, 38.1 (1978), pp. 22-28. On collections of exotics as a symbol of political power and prestige, see Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific: in the wake of the Cook voyages* (Carlton, Victoria, 1992), p. 4.

⁷⁴⁴ IOR/F/4/114/2128 (APAC: BL).

⁷⁴⁵ *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, 1788-89, Vol. 8, p. 442, and Desmond, *European Discovery of Indian Flora*, p. 65.

⁷⁴⁶ Robert Montgomery Martin (ed.), *The despatches, minutes, and correspondence, of the Marquess Wellesley, K. G., during his administration in India*, Vol. 2 (London, 1836), p. 358.

history was far-fledgling. Whilst mostly all of the naturalists of the Company were trained at Scottish universities, Wellesley seems to have intended to create an alternative educational centre which would train the servants of the EIC to become experts in everything ‘Indian’ at first-hand.

It is under the aegis of these wider strategies that Wellesley’s personal collection of natural history illustrations have to be understood. Twenty-seven volumes of illustrations exist in all, and the magnitude of this collection is informative of Wellesley’s personal influence. Being the Governor-General of India, Wellesley’s official and diplomatic circles were wide, and together with this, he also had the opportunity of acquiring specimens of plants and animals, and sometimes even their drawings not only from the official naturalists of the EIC but also private collectors and the Indian royalty.⁷⁴⁷ With such diverse contributions, Wellesley was able to procure a sizeable number of specimens that he managed to get recorded in images. Although artist Robert Home was commissioned to paint a snow leopard and it is known that he had also produced several watercolour drawings of Indian fauna,⁷⁴⁸ the majority of the works under Wellesley were undertaken by Indian artists. Whilst the natural history illustrations were a reminder of the times and influence of Wellesley as the Governor-General of India, they were also a vital step in India’s familiarizing the British with India’s natural environment at a time when Britain’s political authority in India grew and expanded further.

Wellesley’s collection of natural history illustrations is significant on various grounds: it was in itself a proof of the British supremacy in India as animals and plants from different parts of the country had been brought to the official head of the British government in India. This reach of the British to various parts of India coincided with other official surveys taking place during Wellesley’s times as the Governor-General. Moreover, Wellesley’s interest in natural history was not simply a part of his personal emolument, rather he wanted to make it as part of an ‘imperial collection’. Such an idea was commensurate with Wellesley’s strategy to gather information about all aspects of India’s natural productions.⁷⁴⁹ Thus, like the previous British conquerors and Lady Impey, Wellesley wanted to perpetuate this interest in natural history in a much wider fashion by giving away parts of his collection to the Barrackpore Menagerie, which became the centre for the

⁷⁴⁷ Archer, *Natural History Drawings*, p. 7.

⁷⁴⁸ RCIN 406015 (Royal Collection Trust).

⁷⁴⁹ Francis Buchanan, *A journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar*, Vol. 1 (London, 1807), Introduction.

Institution for Promoting Natural History in India.⁷⁵⁰ The creation of an ‘imperial collection’ made the complexities of India’s nature more accessible and intelligible to the British on their own terms.⁷⁵¹ Whilst maintaining and furthering the Company’s interest in botany as represented in his sizeable collection of the images of Indian plants, which are more in number than that of birds, animals or insects, the Governor-General nevertheless aimed to break new ground by also promoting the science of zoology.

This final section of this chapter analyzes eight illustrations from Wellesley’s collection, four of plants and four animals. In doing so, I will pay close attention to not only the modes of their portrayal, but also what their representation implies about British command over nature in India. Through these various strategies of representation, I suggest that Wellesley’s collection provides us to fathom the colonial demands on Indian flora and fauna. The depiction of plants and animals in the collection of the Marquis of Wellesley can be seen as reflecting his vision of India and the changing role of Britons in it. By helping create a visual record of Indian flora and fauna on a scale both elaborate and extensive, Wellesley aimed to make India more palpable, and thus manageable.

Most of the illustrations in the collection show a use of watercolour. Whilst some of the images display the use of watercolour in a typical European manner, the others are characterized by the use of the paint in a style that is reminiscent of Mughal paintings in gouache. Whilst the previous scholarship has emphasized a great deal on the adaptability of Indian artists, I suggest that it is important to keep in mind the various adjustments that Indian artists had to make. As Indian art became souvenirs for the British to take home, the applicability of watercolour could be seen as adjusting to the mode of their travels and visits throughout India. Also, the textures produced through watercolour painting can be understood as adding to an idea of exploration- thus feeding into the knowing, knowledge, and knowability of India to the British, particularly when it came to paintings of manners, landscapes, and flora and fauna. The different uses of watercolour thus have to be seen more in the light of the changing dynamics of the British imperialism and its varied ways of visualizing India.⁷⁵²

⁷⁵⁰ Archer, *Natural History Drawings*, pp. 29-31.

⁷⁵¹ Jacques Derrida, ‘The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)’, trans. David Willis in *Critical Inquiry*, 28.2 (2002), pp. 369-418.

⁷⁵² This analogy is derived from the work of Dias, ‘Memory and the Aesthetics of Military Experience’.

Before taking a look at the images of Indian plants in the collection of the Marquis of Wellesley, it would not be amiss to mention that, together with the images, Wellesley also got a list prepared containing the Linnaean names of Indian plants. This suggests that he wanted to prepare the collection in a way that would be of use to both the officials of the EIC in India and to European scientists. In certain images there are names of plants written in indigenous languages, a trend that he can be seen as supposedly carrying forward from the work already conducted by the naturalists of the Company like William Roxburgh. This could, however, not only be taken as a direct evidence of the British as acknowledging local knowledge systems, but could also be read as them appropriating and de-centring Indian knowledge, thereby India's natural environment. The first image presents a part of the bamboo tree (Figure 91), which is a clear reminder of illustrations in William Curtis' *Flora Londinensis*. The flower buds and the stem with leaves are separate, and have been presented in a criss-crossed manner. Together with the dissected flower on the left, the presentation of the stem and the leaves and flower buds give us a sense of the fact that the plant has been examined. Not only is there the influence of the naturalists' hand in the dissected flower, but also the way the flower buds and the stem have been placed gives the impression that some leaves have been plucked away in course of the botanical research. Below the image, there is the name of the Linnaean class of the plant, *Hexandria Monogynia*, together with the Latinate names, *Bambos Stricta* or *Bambos Hastata*.⁷⁵³ William Roxburgh has been accredited with the name of the species in the image. On the left-hand side, the usage of the Bamboo is highlighted, that is, the utility of the sticks as shafts for spears. Thus, the image hints at the fact that the plant has been examined for its usefulness, thus having removed from its native roots.

The theme of removal is even clearer in the image of specimen of *Nyctanthus Arbor-Tristis* (Figure 92).⁷⁵⁴ Although the Bengali name of the plant listed as Singhara, it is important to note that this name is wrong and the correct Bengali name for the plant would be Siuli (Singhara being the Bengali name of Water chestnut). The plant has been depicted in the usual manner of the illustration of natural history specimens with flowering parts being made visible alongside the curly leaves giving the impression of the specimen being collected. An additional feature of this image is that of it being clipped on the left side. Whilst Indian artists had a tendency to fill in an

⁷⁵³ NHD/14 Fol. 62 (APAC: BL).

⁷⁵⁴ NHD/10 Fol. 27 (APAC: BL).

entire page as noted earlier, when it came to illustrating flora and fauna, this image stands out as a possible example whereby both colonial patrons and fact of colonial archiving can be understood as potentially limited Indian agency. It is not known at what stages parts of the image showing leaves had been clipped: whether at the stage of its preparations (such tendencies were a commonplace in European illustrations and were also visible in William Roxburgh's *Plants of the Coromandel Coast*, dated 1799, and thus proves that Wellesley kept an eye on and adhered to the standards of official surveys) or in course of their rebinding in 1866,⁷⁵⁵ the image makes it clear that indigenous contribution had to be adjusted to the demands of British format of natural history illustrations.

The limits of British imperial authority over Indian flora is visible in the illustration of *Asclepias Longistigma* (Figure 93).⁷⁵⁶ In this image, the flowers and leaves of the plant are the focus. Although the leaves are almost dry, the dynamic depiction of the tendrils vests the plant specimen with a life force. On the left, there is a dissected flower of the plant. Although colonial power makes itself visible through the act of dissection, here, through the binding of the image, it can be seen that the parts of the dissected flower have been cropped out of the picture. Whilst the flowers can be fully seen as present on the specimen, through the cropping of the dissected flower, colonial power can be seen as metaphorically undermining itself.

Another important aspect to take into account in terms of the natural history illustrations commissioned by Wellesley is that of the link between the species and their natural environments. Although detachment as a phenomenon still remained considerably significant in the images, there is a certain hint of plants being positioned back again in their natural settings. This process, however, is not straightforward. This tendency can be seen in the image of the coconut tree (Figure 94).⁷⁵⁷ Whilst the coconut tree itself as standing tall and upright, at the same time, the tree does not look in its complete state. The leaves of the tree have been pruned away so as to make its

⁷⁵⁵ By the early nineteenth century as well, such trends of clipped leaves became more and more normalized in botanical art, and in particular in the documentation of exotic species. See, for example, James Edward Smith, *Exotic Botany* (London, 1804). Regarding archiving, I am here thinking in terms of Jacques Derrida's idea of archival violence whereby matters and subjects get excluded from the archiving. Created in the age of upsurge in Britain's imperial confidence in the aftermath of the Revolt of 1857. See Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Erik Prenowitz (Chicago, 1996).

⁷⁵⁶ NHD/11 Fol. 47 (APAC, BL).

⁷⁵⁷ NHD/22 Fol. 52 (APAC, BL).

internal parts more visible. Furthermore, the coconut has been plucked and it is seen both in its green form and after the removal of the kernel.

This tendency of depiction of Indian flora in its natural environment also continues in case of the depiction of fauna as well. In the image of the leopard, the animal is within the settings of a forest (Figure 95).⁷⁵⁸ The particular leopard depicted in the image was sent to Wellesley from Malabar. The information provided on the image goes further that the spots on the leopard were only visible in a particular kind of light. This in fact, suggests that the species had been carefully observed, examined, and also compared as it is stated that a similar animal had been shot in Bengal. This combination of locating Indian fauna in their natural setting together with their observation continues in the image of the two goats in a grassy land (Figure 96).⁷⁵⁹ Whilst grass is the chief diet of goats, the image is enlivened through the animated nature of their interaction. Their postures are not static, but are informative of a sense of movement. The animals are looking directly at each other, and the artist has successfully evoked a sense of intimacy in the animal world that is largely absent from the images discussed in this chapter before. The sense of beauty has also been evoked through the movement. This is because the style of natural history paintings had begun to transform in Britain, thus influencing natural history illustrations in India. The depiction of natural environment was significant in this direction as Diana Donald has pointed out.⁷⁶⁰ Such a depiction also remind of the near contemporary works of British artists like Robert Home, Charles D'Oyly and Christopher Webb-Smith, and back in Britain in the works of William Daniell where surrounding landscapes were also given an equal importance.⁷⁶¹

These transformations, however, should not obscure how that observational strategy and ordering of the natural environment were still vital concerns in the history of British imperialism in India. This is evident from the image of the nilgai (Figure 97).⁷⁶² Whilst in the first folio, the nilgai is presented as standing on a patch of land, in the folio that follows only the head of the animal is present. It is important to remember that deer heads with antlers often figured as trophies of hunt,

⁷⁵⁸ NHD/ 32 Fol. 2 (APAC, BL).

⁷⁵⁹ NHD/32 Fol. 81 (APAC, BL).

⁷⁶⁰ Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain*, pp. 52-53.

⁷⁶¹ See, for example, William Daniell, *Interesting selections from animated nature, with illustrative scenery* (London, 1809); and Charles D'Oyly and Christopher Webb-Smith, *The Feathered Game of Hindostan* (1828).

⁷⁶² NHD/32 Fol. 73 (APAC, BL).

and natural history and hunting, were often clearly linked.⁷⁶³ Championed as a means of mastering India's wilderness, hunting facilitated the collection of specimens for scientific research and also for museum display, which was clearly linked to the national pride.⁷⁶⁴

The mode of display also indicates how the Indian environment was managed and disciplined. As it has been seen in the case of natural history illustrations commissioned by Lady Mary Impey, the artist had to struggle to conform the enormity of the pink flamingo within the borders of the paper. This act, whilst depicting colonial command, was also illustrative of the great extent of its task performed at the cost to the bird. However, in Wellesley's collection, the pink flamingo (Figure 98) is shorter in size.⁷⁶⁵ Whilst in Impey's painting, the large size of the species is highlighted more, in this case the artist, whilst adhering to exactitude, nevertheless gives the impression that the large size as well as strangeness has been contained and was adjusted according to the needs of the regime.⁷⁶⁶

This section has largely addressed how the tendencies of understanding and investigation of India's nature were intensified in the natural history illustrations commissioned by the Marquis of Wellesley. Wellesley's images, executed by Indian artists, are a testament of what he wanted to, but could not achieve in his official measures of prioritizing the research and exploration of natural history. The scale of his undertaking as seen in the collection was enormous, and as the Governor-General, Wellesley endeavoured to develop a grasp of India's natural world and extend his command as a parallel to the British political achievements. Images of Indian flora and fauna in his collection are a testimony to the aspirations of an extensive British Indian empire that Wellesley had envisioned. However, the rise of British imperial power did not lead to a complete control of nature in India. Even though science facilitated the ordering of nature, misinformation could not be completely avoided and as seen here, colonial power did also potentially undermine itself.

⁷⁶³ Mukherjee, 'Nimrods'.

⁷⁶⁴ George Swinton, *Papa's keepsake: being stories and verses, funny and grave, for Archie the scholar, and Alan the brave : and a rose for a looking glass, wondrous rare, for my own darling Meggy the fair* (London, 1829), pp. 4 and 17.

⁷⁶⁵ NHD/28 Fol. 1 (APAC: BL).

⁷⁶⁶ Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree*, pp. 149-50.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have dealt with the British pictorial approach towards India's natural history. Under British rule, nature in India was depicted in order for it to be understood, investigated, and commanded in a way that would suit British interests, both economic and cultural. The British take on India's nature, as I have shown in this chapter, ranges from being socio-cultural to overtly scientific, and later on, science increasingly becomes the tool to manifest a cultural symbolism of empire. Whilst the idea of the contestation between pre-colonial versus colonial artistic culture remains, it needs to be nuanced in a manner that it is able to look at the complexities of colonial politics of nature. In such a context, the idea of cooperation between the British and Indians largely remains a chimera, as opposed to the suggestions of Noltie and Kelley. As has been seen throughout, whilst the Indian artists were made to adhere to the European classificatory models, they also differed from it and by doing so they problematized the European knowledge of Indian flora and fauna. Indian artists' approach was not one of alienation, but rather a way of understanding it as a part of India's culture and life, something that colonialism could not completely grasp. As such natural history illustrations represent the limits of European knowledge over nature in India, their artificiality failing to capture the vitality of nature in Indian culture and life.

In the case of James Forbes, the documentation of India's nature came with the problem of being overwhelmed by it and moral concerns over the pride over imperial gains ultimately being short-lived. When science came to the rescue of British perspectives of India's nature, as in the cases of the Impeys and the Joneses, and later in the natural history illustrations commissioned by the Marquis of Wellesley, the greatest aim was to remove the vestiges of artistry that could potentially compromise scientific objectivity. As a result, images studied here, in particular those in the second and third sections, exhibit an inclination to sever links with the native socio-cultural life. Whilst Forbes tried to achieve this by reworking his drawings before publication, the Impeys and the Joneses, as well as the Marquis of Wellesley arranged for the close supervision of Indian artists working for them and also by giving them European models to emulate. However, these measures proved to be less than successful. Whilst scientific investigation enabled objective enquiries into Indian flora and fauna, it also came to be undermined not only in the works of Indian artists but also within the colonial archive itself as seen in the third section. Although European science made

things from all over the world identifiable by means of its own classificatory coda, I suggest that the artistic approach of Indian artists was one of retaining the uniqueness and specificities of local flora and fauna. The findings of this chapter elaborate and complicate Tobin's idea of cultural resistance. Natural history illustrations, as examined here, make the all-pervasiveness of colonial scientificity into a misnomer. If European natural history illustrations were the order of the day, through their divergence from it the representations of the plants and animals in the colony challenged both the premises of colonial domination and its political legitimacy.

Conclusion

This thesis has studied the making of political legitimacy in the early British empire in India through images. In so doing, it has argued that central to the creation of political legitimacy was the fabrication of an imperial self-image. The foundation of British imperial authority has been examined here through visual representations of people, landscapes, and flora and fauna in India by both British artists and Indian artists whose artworks catered to Britons in India. The importance of art was not only to be measured by the range of audiences for such works – which was vast – but, as demonstrated in the above chapters, also by its status as a medium through which empire was visualized and even shaped. Visual arts, in other words, enabled the British to see themselves ruling India.

Although the exercise of power necessitates a degree of abstraction, colonialism brought it to the point of culmination.⁷⁶⁷ The importance of abstraction was central to the maintenance of difference, that possibly was the colonizers' only resort in a strange, unfamiliar land.⁷⁶⁸ As noted in the first chapter, the formulation of abstract ideals in matters of governance seeped easily into British private lives in India. Whilst Beth Tobin has viewed art as a mode of abstraction which she parallels with colonial extraction,⁷⁶⁹ this thesis suggests that visual arts in British Indian empire itself came to be shaped by abstraction. Such an assertion redirects us to the acknowledgement of the role of Indian artists who provided low-paid creative labour whilst remaining mostly anonymous. In this regard, artworks as examined here makes the limitations of the colonial regime visible — not just the limitations imposed on Indians by the British, but also that of their own imperial power. Historians like Robert Travers, Sudipta Sen, and Jon Wilson have pointed towards the British zeal for the interpretation of Indian realities as commensurate to their own worldview.⁷⁷⁰ This thesis has revealed how imagery gave expression to their versions of 'India', and influenced it. In other words, colours, lines, and contours became the writ of India's fate under British rule.

This is not to deny Indian agency within colonialism. In fact, this thesis' emphasis on the artworks by Indian artists itself testifies to an attempt of bringing forward the voices of the colonized.

⁷⁶⁷ John Barrell, *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (Basingstoke, 1992), p. 41.

⁷⁶⁸ Wilson, *The Domination of Strangers*, p. 66.

⁷⁶⁹ Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, p. 202.

⁷⁷⁰ Sen, *Distant Sovereignty*, pp. 30-50; Travers, *Ideology and empire*, pp. 29-40, and 214-223; and Wilson, *The Domination of Strangers*, pp. 53-65.

However, as I have noted, the search for Indian agency should not be at the cost of the understanding of colonial destruction. Although I do not suggest that the colonial experience had completely obliterated the lifeblood of Indian society and culture, it is important to acknowledge the resultant dislocation of life in India. This thesis has considered visual arts as one of the means to fathom the violence, both physical and epistemological, and has achieved this through a nuanced understanding of hybridity which is underpinned by the realities of difference of power. Regarding Indian agency, I propose that the answer lies in between drawing inspiration from Indian heritage and reworking aesthetic conventions of the British. As with the introduction of technologies in India by the British, the benefit of Indians always took a backseat.⁷⁷¹ Visual arts by Indian artists as shown here, present a profound cognition of the colonial condition, and their capacities to respond are catered to the context.

The idea of the British as rulers of India has been examined in this thesis in the light of three concepts that I identify as aspects of imperial power, which are: political authority, dominion, and command. In the first chapter, I explored the concept of political authority in images of British administrative and military officials. Analysis of these images revealed how the British defined themselves in relation to the pre-colonial political order, bringing up variegated tendencies of both identifying with and standing apart from and above Indian politics. This approach revealed the key emphasis of the British government in India on benevolence, which, however, was not to be valued over gains from land revenue and commerce. What the portraiture, conversation pieces and history painting of early British India showed was the emptiness of the rhetoric of benevolence and, of course, how these claims could ultimately be questioned. Indian artists, whilst acknowledging British ascendancy, exposed the limits of their rulership over India in various ways. One of these ways was to celebrate Indian rulers as pillars of their communities in art bought by the British, as evident in the painting of the procession of Nawab Babar Ali by the unknown Murshidabad artist. The limits of benevolence were further exposed as British artists like Arthur William Devis, who, even whilst staging Indian compliance in their representations of British rule, could not escape the fact that consent could not be achieved in reality. Resistance to British power through its subversion in art challenged its show of benevolence. Similar was the case of British private life

⁷⁷¹ Daniel Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1981).

in India for, if home, as the microcosm of empire, was the site to uphold hierarchies of race and power, it was also the place where such hierarchies lay in danger of being upset. Thus, whilst Francesco Renaldi's painting of the Palmer family represented Major Palmer at ease and almost as a master of the Indian environment that surrounded him, the painting also highlighted the fact that Palmer was perhaps too enmeshed in Indian manners and lifestyle. The distinction between ruler and the ruled was thereby in danger of being transgressed. Even the figures of Palmer's small children from his Indian *bibi* could not escape such anxieties—the over-emphasized whiteness of their complexion and attire, as I have discussed, was expressive of the British authority's desperation to uphold its presence.

In the second chapter, I took up the concept of dominion to investigate British control of land in India. British understandings of Indian spaces, as the chapter explored, were largely based on a tendency to assimilate them into the colonizers' own vision. As a result, Indian sites were divested of their intended affective meanings and were represented in a manner that the British, as rulers of India, could invent new narcissistic meanings for them. The decadence and ruin of Indian buildings, as pictured in works by British artists, portrayed an image of Indian neglect and ignorance of their past. Such representations were part of a British tendency to salvage an ahistorical India – sometimes, just through depiction – whereby the sites could not only withstand decay, but also the dangers posed by larger forces of nature. In this regard, Moffat's representations of Hussain Shah's tomb in Gaur and the Qutub Minar in Delhi by the Daniells are important cases in point. British artists, however, could not pretend that Indians were ignorant of their past. Whilst the Daniells claimed to represent Indian sites with exactitude and fidelity, such claims to authenticity ultimately brought Indian knowledge and regard for their heritage into focus. This is evident from the aquatint of Tremal Naig's Choultry with its representation of Indian figures as paying their respects to their long-deceased ruler Tirumal Nayak, who was widely known for his generosity. Though British artists portrayed the Britons as a conquering yet clement force, they could not conceal the fact that the British presence in India was destructive. Indian artists not only attempted to arrest the impact of decay, but their representations also visually subverted the British rise to political power by representing their conquered sites as spaces with rich Indian socio-cultural and political genealogies. British representations of the presidencies were ones of celebration, where brown Indian bodies worked near shimmering white neoclassical

buildings, to show not only their submission but also consent to a new political order. On the other hand, Indian artists, in their representations, highlighted Indian labour and its importance.

The third chapter of the thesis examines images of Indian flora and fauna and their relationship to the processes of command. The idea of command, as this chapter has revealed, was to be realized through visual representations of plants and animals that not only provided ways of knowing, but also made them recognisable within the European world order. This is evident from the colonial masters' practice of giving European natural history illustrations to Indian artists working for them. Visual representations of flora and fauna in India, as I have shown, literally became testimonies to colonial displacement. This is evident not only from the twisted neck of the greater flamingo in the painting commissioned by Lady Mary Impey, but also in the unfinished, unnamed drawing of the fructified plant in the Jones Collection. Understanding nature in India, however, was not straightforward. Although scientific investigation provided the means and agency for the objectification of nature, this did not prove to be all-pervasive. Moreover, as seen in Wellesley's Collection, colonial archiving could also potentially undermine the British pursuit of natural history in India. The British artist James Forbes often displayed a tendency to be overwhelmed by Indian nature in a manner that ultimately exposed the tenuousness of British control over it; whereas, anonymous Indian artists localized plants and animals in their natural history art by adhering to their traditional artistic practices, thus exposing what the British could not – and possibly would never – know. Indian artists, in deflecting the claims and motives of a European science that turned flora and fauna into specimens, challenged the effectiveness of the imperial legitimization of knowledge, and as a result, British command over Indian nature.

All three chapters of the thesis are also based on three unifying strands. The first is the question of art as a mode of power. In all the chapters, I have shown that visual arts were crucial to the imperial self-image of the British not simply as a medium of visualization, but also as a means of formulating and in turn, shaping expectations. Whilst the first chapter noted the idea of representing the customs of Indians as a means of projecting their victimhood, the chapter on landscape art brought up images whereby the presence of the artist doubled as the presence and influence of British imperial power. Foremost, in this context, are the Daniells' representations of Delhi and Sivagiri: their emptiness and savagery, respectively can be read as invitations for British intervention. Furthermore, images of British officials by British artists were as much about

bringing to the fore individual approaches to office, as they were about shaping their images based on what was expected of them. Two important cases in point here are the images of Sir Elijah Impey and Warren Hastings. As I have shown, the need for a knowledgeable, forthright administrator was felt by the British in their early Indian empire, and Hastings' painting by Devis was a reference to this ideal. Zoffany's representation of Impey, painted just before his departure, was something of a lasting legacy that he was to leave behind as the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Judicature serving Britain's imperial interests. As the thesis has revealed, artistic representations by Indians often challenged such expectations by posing limits upon them. This is evident in the portrait of Dr. Fullerton by the Murshidabad artist, Dip Chand. By depicting Fullerton in a state of uneasiness, seated awkwardly on the floral carpet, Dip Chand represented him as unsuitable for the position that he had assumed. Also, in the portrait of Sir David Ochterlony, the anonymous Delhi artist plays upon gaps and juxtapositions between the expectations and realities of the sitter's behaviour in the Indian milieu.

The second strand of imperial power identified here is that of the position of Indians in early British India. Indians, royal and elite as well as ordinary, are represented in works by British artists. Such images show them either as incapable or in the capacity of mere subjects who have happily accepted subordination. Artistic representations, in this regard, 'manufacture' consent by representing Indians cheerily at work, as evident in Arthur Willian Devis' paintings of the brazier in his shop and the young girls grinding corn. What Indian artists did, on the other hand, was to present Indians as deft and skilful, as well as highlighting the importance of their labour to the regime, making the latter actually dependent on their subjects. The ideas of consent and those of the legitimate relationship between the ruler and ruled are thus played up very differently. If ideas of 'consent' made the British rule in India legitimate in the artworks by British artists, Indian artists turned their interpretation of that ascendancy into one of dependence. Nevertheless, as the analysis of these visual acts in this thesis has revealed, such 'consent', even visual, could hardly be achieved in practice. An important example here is that of the young girl playing with her pet parrot in Devis' painting. Similarly, Indian rulers as depicted by British artists were often posed in a way that implied consent to imperial power, notably in the cases of Nawab Nazim-ud-daula in Edward Penny's painting to commemorate the establishment of the Lord Clive Fund and that of two noblemen standing below Richard Colley Wellesley on a set of stairs. However, images such as these do not escape the anxieties of power. Wellesley's subordination of the Indian princes and

transformation of their territories into spheres of British influence caused furore in the Parliament; meanwhile, Lord Clive's image, though manipulating the Nawab's figure into an effeminate one in order to save face, could not escape strident criticism.

The final strand addressed by the chapters is the dual role of art as a source of information and a means of knowledge-making. The most important genre in this respect was that of natural history illustrations by Indian artists. As this thesis has shown, these artists had to adapt – and stringently adhere – to European standards and patterns of natural history drawing. What Indian artists did in practice, however, was preserve local specificities of Indian flora and fauna through their artistic style. The side-lining of Indian epistemic and aesthetic contributions was rampant, so that the majority of Indian illustrators remain unknown and, moreover, continued to be ignored when it came to British representations in this field. James Forbes pictured his mango in a manner that was clearly reminiscent of Dutch still life paintings. Since Dutch still life celebrated the presence of the exotic and products of the Orient as material achievements of European culture, the fact that the fruit was received from Indian brahmins became relegated to the background, for thenceforth it was to be considered a British appropriation. However, as I have shown, such approaches on the part of the British coincided with anxieties and frustrations due to their inability to procure correct information about nature from Indian people. Indian expertise was also obscured in works by British artists in which indigenous figures are represented as working *en masse*, presented as mere subordinates, whereas Indian artists tended to emphasize the skill of their Indian subjects. Indian knowledge of their own past is negated by the representations by British landscape artists, who depict Indian buildings in ruin, as sites of Picturesque tourism defined by their fallen state of neglect, and thus devoid of cultural and historical associations. The messages of these representations were, however, rather self-contradictory. What Indian artists did by freeing sites from the stigma of ruination was to touch upon the deeper cultural and historical meanings of such places. This practice hinted at a form of knowledge which was culturally rooted as well as affective. Also, as my study of paintings by Tanjore artists reveals, Indians could sometimes control the way in which information about their countrymen was recorded, that is, by subjects wearing their 'holiday clothes' in images which were designed to be representative rather than personalized. In the same paintings, Indian artists, whilst broadly conforming to colonial totalizations, do not lose sight of people's individual subjectivities so that the artists retained a measure of control over the agenda of colonial subjecthood.

The thesis' emphasis on the political legitimacy of early British Indian empire has revealed various forces at work. As I have shown, images were not only instrumental in instantiating the hierarchies of imperial power, but also in creatively enforcing them. For example, the youth of the *ayah* in Johann Zoffany's painting of the Blair family buttressed the position of Mrs. Blair as lady of the house, in charge of both her own children and her servant. Another instance is the Indian noblemen standing in steps below Lord Wellesley. Such enforcement of hierarchies, however, was not straightforward. Just as the presence of *bibis* at home could make Britons 'go native', swarms of Indians on the streets, even though working in subordinate capacities, could eclipse the British presence. The responses that these situations might have generated, as this thesis has addressed, were varied. Whilst artists like Renaldi 'whitened' the mixed-race children as part of claiming them as British, James Baillie Fraser ensured that the precincts of British political power were not visibly molested by Indians. Images by Indian artists, on the other hand, posed questions that problematized imperial hierarchies so that, in other words, they challenged imperial legitimations. For instance, although apparently a souvenir brought back as a reminder of his defeat at the hands of the British, the image of Tipu Sultan's beautifully ornate palace by the unknown Calcutta artist in early 1800s, complete with soldiers in tiger uniforms, nevertheless conjures a powerful narrative of Tipu's authority. Imperial legitimation, through the calming, civilizing presence of the British as a benevolent force, too had its limits. Whilst Devis' paintings attempted to rob Indians of their subjectivities, the tranquillity seen in the paintings by Hodges and Chinnery served as a response to a Bengal countryside seething in discontent. When it came to dominion, Indian artists employed the so-called emotive qualities of the Picturesque to reinvest Indian sites with their cultural significance, of which British artists had denuded them. Sita Ram's image of the Firuz Minar, although closely following the representation by Thomas Daniell, revitalizes the scene with the bright hues of the *palash* flowers. Furthermore, if knowledge, both historical and natural, was the source of British mastery over India, visual arts brought to the fore the importance of local expertise— whilst British artists like the Daniells could not escape it, Indian artists reinforced it further not only in the use of their own artistic formulae in the illustrations of flora and fauna, but also visually highlighting the skills of Indians at work.

Images, as examined in this thesis, reveal the problem at the core of the self-image of early British Indian rule. Although the colonial state was generally a 'dominance without hegemony' and coercion in practice, theoretical debates and discussions over the nature of the EIC's government

in India highlighted the need to forge a self-image with which to reconcile themselves to their empire-building project. These ideological experiments and established positions put emphasis on the idea that Britons were indeed benevolent, and that their rule was in the interest of Indians, even though the latter were seen to be unsuited to liberty and freedom. The extent to which this self-image, as manifest in different artistic genres, ateliers and sites of display, actually made an impact upon Indians in their daily life may have been limited. However, the ideas articulated in such images through this new visual language of imperialism became part and parcel of British attitudes to India in the subsequent generations. As I have shown here, images by both British and Indian artists are reflective of the dichotomies of the ideas of imperial legitimation and that of a legitimate relationship with Indians based on their acquiescence and consent.

This thesis is thus a study of the confluence of the artistic and the political in an imperial context, and highlights these domains as not only closely integrated, but also mutually informative and responsive. My analysis of images makes a case for a deeper understanding of the eighteenth-century British Indian empire, which amounts to a substantive reconsideration of imperial political culture in India. Viewing images as forms of political commentary and action can facilitate the interrogation of the historical roots of persisting hierarchies and discourses of difference in present times. The role of images is never simply confined to resurrecting the past, but is rather one of visualization of the ideals that people and institutions have lived and inspired to through time. They must therefore have an important place in contemporary engagements with public history, in order to sensitize and critically come to terms with the shared imperial heritage of the modern world.

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