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MUSLIM INDIA IN ANGLO-INDIAN FICTION

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

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ABSTRACT

British political ascendancy in India was achieved by the defeat of an alternate imperial presence, that of the Mughuls. During the next two centuries, Indian Muslims continued to present a complex front of strength and disempowerment and British power was sustained in a hostile environment by constant vigilance. Not the least of the strategies employed to maintain political control was verbal abasement, which existed alongside military action, diplomacy, economic exploitation and social manipulation to demonstrate British superiority. The British attitude towards Indian Muslims was further influenced by the long history of rivalry between Islam and the West.

The combined impact of such deep-seated cultural antipathies and the contemporary political needs of imperialism led the British to depict Indian Muslims as a particularly ignoble and dangerous community. This image often conflicted with the larger historical role played by Muslims on the sub-continent, as well as with specific personal interactions between British and Muslim individuals. Philip Meadows Taylor, Rudyard Kipling and E. M. Forster have all observed Muslim India closely but all three writers have allowed cultural prejudice to influence their work. This contradictory outlook, sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious, has worked itself into a curiously dual portaiture of Indian Muslims in Anglo-Indian fiction. At a superficial level, duality exists as a common personality trait in Muslim characters. At a deeper level, duality marks the divided perception aimed at Muslims by Anglo-Indian writers and results in a complex amalgam of sentiments: hostility, codescension, loathing, fear, fascination and envy.
Anglo-Indian fiction merges pluralities of the Islamic experience into a monolithic pattern, which is dehumanized at the same time to serve the interest of polarization. However, in sharp contrast to an intention to polarize Muslim identity as one totally opposed to the western psyche, the authors' duality of perception actually exposes hidden affinities between the two cultures and betrays inherent conflicts in the western self-image. The ideological traps in building such polarities are particularly evident in the characterization of Muslim women in Anglo-Indian fiction, where the combined effects of culture and patriarchism throw into relief hidden contradictions of value.

The diminution of Indian Muslims in Anglo-Indian fiction is therefore tied to a built-in strategy of denial. The need for denial is dictated specifically by the dynamics of a latent fraternity between the two cultures. This denial of fraternity operates both ways; the tropes of denial embedded in the discourse of British imperialism is countered by the denial implicit in the desecularised Islamic discourse adopted by Indian Muslims as a step towards political freedom.

The legacy of colonialism survives today as a split in the Indian Muslim community. Opposite patterns of disavowal are being adopted, one defensively against the West and the other introspectively against religion. The tumult over Rushdie's alleged desecration of Islam has paradoxically raised scholarly consciousness about the religion, both among Muslims and non-Muslims. In the reverse dynamics of present, post-migratory global culture, such a consciousness may well look back at the role of Muslim intellectuals in colonial India.
In memory of my father, who showed me the enlightened face of Islam
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As improved technology and global interdependence continues to bring people of all denominations closer together, both literature and critical evaluations of literature are increasingly taking into account the complex pattern of their manifold interactions. This interaction having begun on a significant scale during the age of western colonial expansion, a predominantly large component of these creative and critical discourses are anchored within that historical framework. For obvious reasons, this body of literary representation and critical evaluation has initially taken the form of a dialectic between typical western perspectives of seeing the non-western world and alternative instances of self-projection by emergent writers and critics from freed colonies, who challenge the stereotypes created by their colonial precursors. Subsequently, a plenitude of anthropological and cross-cultural literary studies in a world so decolonized have multiplied the interfaces of contact, turning dialogue into a polyphony. And to this plurality of voices and past conflicts generated through years of actual colonial rule have been added contemporary tensions resulting from neo-colonial disparities of trade, technology and international policy-making.

Given such a climate of global discursiveness, one has to note with surprise and concern the relative dearth of meaningful, academic dialogue between the Islamic world and the West. Muslims, in spite of being a global community of people, tend to be dismissed as being peripheral if not actually injurious to modern civilization; while exceptions are always acknowledged, the community as a whole is generally represented in the West as uninspired, unproductive, inflexible and violent. There is
no want of confrontational rhetoric between these two ideological fronts, an interchange which serves to alienate rather than promote understanding. But in serious, intellectual encounters, Muslims add up to only a marginal presence. To put it another way, among those plural voices continually emerging and gaining in this new-world heteroglossia (to borrow Bakhtin's term), Islam does not have a credible voice to impart. A connection may be forged between this discursive non-presence of Islam and the self-serving Western discourse about it. I am of the opinion that focused critical attention is called for to examine the implications of the West's particular defamation of Islam. This cannot be explained as just one among many examples of colonial reductionism; it is the inevitable outcome of long-standing open, latent and anticipatory political rivalry between the two cultures, one which has contributed to the systematic evolvement of an Other in Western literature that is more "other" than all other Others.

Serious academicians generally tend to avoid questions of representing Islam in any significant, in-depth inquiry, because the assumptions that dictated stereotypes of the Muslim image during colonial rule remain at present. In contrast, there has arisen in the West, at least at the academic level, a new sensitivity towards most cultures it has politically administered and verbally trivialized during those years of colonial domination. A spate of critical writing is presently engaged in exposing the artificiality of colonial discourse that shrouded dominated cultures in ignominy, and these occasionally touch upon representations of Islam in passing and without emphasis. These critiques usually concern themselves with the common denominators pertaining to the possession of one weak culture by a stronger one; in other words, they essentialize colonial encounter. One such work is David Spurr's *The Rhetoric of Empire*. Here Spurr examines a dozen prominent methods of verbal subjection more or less universally applied to colonized cultures in different regions of Asia and Africa: surveillance, appropriation, aestheticization, classification,
debasement, negation, affirmation, idealization, insubstantiation, naturalization, eroticization and resistance. Spurr clearly states his critical intention in the Introduction:

The questions to which I continually return are the following: How does the Western writer construct a coherent representation out of the strange and (to the writer) often incomprehensible realities confronted in the non-Western world? What are the cultural, ideological, or literary presuppositions upon which such a construct is based? 

My contention is that this wide array of discursive procedures does not comprehend the full impact of the West's relationship with Islam. The West has had a protracted and tumultuous relationship with the Islamic world long before it became a colonial power, and so the latter was hardly strange and incomprehensible at the start of the eighteenth century in the way vast tracts of Asia and Africa were to the first wave of Western traders, missionaries and miscellaneous settlers. As such, their outlook towards each other goes beyond the usual dialectics of colonial invasion and domination of one by the other. It is characterized in addition by mutual defensiveness, competitive rivalry and overall adversarial tensions.

The tendency of the West to view the Islamic world with suspicion predates the former's history of colonization. It started when contact was first made as early as the Middle Ages (which the West revealingly calls the Dark Ages) when the Islamic civilization reached its zenith and tried to expand into Europe. The bloody Crusades that followed mark the beginning of the adversarial relationship between these two cultures. Islam's political expansion into Europe also made it an economic rival; Karl de Schweinitz is of the opinion that the fall of Constantinople to the Turks, in 1453, severely impeded European trade with Asia, and gave a huge impetus to the colonial program by making necessary the discovery of alternative trade routes:

To outflank Islam served not only Christ but Mammon as well. If the markets of Asia could be reached without passing through Muslim
lands, Christian merchants might reap hitherto what had been harvested by Muslim traders. It surely was not fortuitous that the fall of Constantinople was so closely followed by the first voyage to the New World of Christopher Columbus in 1492 and the first voyage to India of Vasco da Gama in 1497.  

As such, rivalry in diverse interests and mutual defensiveness lie at the core of their attitudes to one another. Their paradigms of encounter have shifted and reversed in response to the rise and fall of their respective political effectiveness. This animosity has persisted over centuries, through the decline of Muslim imperial power, through the rise and decline of Western colonial power, and remains today as a canker sore on global understanding and cooperation. Therefore, while the West's relationship with other colonized cultures is marked mainly by ideological crisis, its relationship with Islam is further complicated by political and economic rivalry. No other non-western culture has now, or has had in the past, a comparable political presence outside its national boundaries. While relating to other cultures, therefore, the West has been satisfied with establishing racial and cultural superiority; but more rigorous tropes of distortion, trivialization and marginalization have had to be applied to Islam to perpetuate, intensify and institutionize its identification as a menacing, adversarial presence.

Deeply embedded in these continuing antipathies is the idea that Islam is a distortion of Judaism. Edward Said's monumental book, Orientalism, is largely built upon this core preoccupation with distrust between Islam and the West and describes well the sense of violation attendant upon such a belief:

Given its special relationship to both Christianity and Judaism, Islam remained forever in the Orientalist's idea (or type) of original cultural effrontery, aggravated naturally by the fear that Islamic civilization originally (as well as contemporaneously) continued to stand somehow opposed to the Christian West.
However, the general tenor of Said's discussion moves beyond this particular conflict to comprehend the much larger subject of verbal violence. It is true that he opens his study with a premise declaring the superiority of Islam's political resistance to Europe as opposed to the submissiveness of the Orient:

Islam excepted, the Orient for Europe was until the nineteenth century a domain with a continuous history of unchallenged Western dominance. This is patently true of the British experience in India, the Portuguese experience in the East Indies, China, and Japan, and the French and Italian experiences in various regions of the Orient.  

Nonetheless, as a given, this idea too loses prominence under the more conspicuous argument that he develops, exposing the art of domination through Western discourse. For the most part, he presents the orientalization of Islam as a mere extension of the general orientalism bearing down upon all Asiatic societies. The range of his subject-matter is impressive; an entire chapter is devoted to charting the scope of the orientalism he means to establish. His reference to Islamic orientalism covers Egyptian, Arab and Near Eastern territories, as the Asiatic form comprehends such far-flung regions as Persia, India, and the Far East. The examples of Western discourse he chooses to scrutinize are British, French, German and Italian, and cover diverse disciplines, such as philosophy, history, fiction and poetry. His examination of the aesthetic appropriation of each of these forms is penetrating and scholarly, but focused as his work is on laying bare the nature of orientalizing techniques rather than to overtly distinguish among its various manifestations, he shifts quite easefully from one form to another. Indeed, he emphasizes the similarity of the exercise, reading in this universalizing tendency a further sign of semantic invasion.

The purpose of this study is to focus on a special category of Western representation of Islam that in some fundamental way resists the essentializing Said accepts for the larger purpose of introducing an innovative idea. In Orientalism, Islam and Arab cultures are held to be synonymous; there is an unspecified suggestion
that if Islam exists in different forms in other regions, it is a corrupted version. It logically follows from this latent assumption that Said places Islam and India as totally separate categories, omitting to attach any significance to the fact that from the fifteenth century onwards, Islam found an increasingly strong foothold in India to become its second most populous religion. In the process, it became stamped with certain distinct characteristics of the indigenous culture of India. Consequently, the tension subsisting between Indian Muslims and their British colonizers have marked local complexities that cannot be found in the West's experience of Islam in the land of its birth. As a result, the dialectics of the historicized image of Islam in Western writing on the one hand, and the colonial and post-colonial transformation of the Muslim image or images of self-definition on the other, can at least be sought convincingly in the the context of the Indian sub-continent.

One conflict that Said quite categorically records, but subsequently and intentionally casts aside for the purpose of the greater unity of his work, is the emasculation of Islam's initial militant image, in the process of being drawn into the feminized face of the Orient:

In the Suez Canal idea we see the logical conclusion of Orientalist thought and, more interesting, of Orientalist effort. To the West, Asia had once represented silent distance and alienation; Islam was militant hostility to European Christianity . . . De Lesseps had melted away the Orient's geographical identity by (almost literally) dragging away the Orient into the West and finally dispelling the threat of Islam.

British representations of Islam in India reveal some tendencies diametrically opposite to the orientalizing patterns demonstrated by Said. While the urge to overpower and possess a hitherto strong rival is present here as elsewhere as an integral element of colonialism, there is also evident in this case a parallel need to sound out the hidden strengths, real or imaginary, of an imperfectly understood enemy. Accordingly, instead of a simple exercise in "dispelling the threat of Islam" by orientalizing measures, there exists in the Indian context a muted but pervasive colonial imposition
of sinister attributes, linked to a dangerous faith, on a naturally urbane, even pacifist, race. Said's own terminology, no less than standard western discourse, characterizes the Indian race as weak and timorous:

For there was always India, where, after Portugal pioneered the first bases of European presence in the early sixteenth century, Europe, and primarily England after a long period (from 1600 to 1758) of essentially commercial activity, dominated politically as an occupying force. Yet India itself never provided an indigenous threat to Europe. Rather it was because native authority crumbled there and opened the land to inter-European rivalry and to outright European political control that the Indian Orient could be treated by Europe with such proprietary hauteur—never with the sense of danger reserved for Islam.

A close-reading in the British depictions of Muslim India reveals that there is, in fact, a pervasive effort to keep up a sense of the threat of Islam, just below the facade of arrogant complacency maintained by the British at the official level, one that Said refers to as "proprietary hauteur."

Muslim power was regnant in India long after it had subsided in the Middle East, and took grandiose forms of indulgence and display. And further, notwithstanding the freedom-loving spirit of the Arab, the rugged nomadic Bedouin did not ache for a lost empire the way Indian Muslims did. The British recognized in Indian Muslims an aptitude for military action, and even while they successfully harnessed this resource to the service of their own empire, they never felt wholly secure handling such a dangerous weapon. A secret system of warning and precaution found its way into the fictive discourse of British colonizers, underscoring the Islamization of a primarily Asiatic people. Contrary to the impression conveyed by Orientalism, Indian Muslims repeatedly showed revivalist tendencies, as opposed to years of Arab somnolence which persisted until well into the twentieth century. Consequently, under actual historical pressures of Muslim intransigence in British
India and the insecurities it fostered, the usual weak/strong dialectic of orientalism often becomes confused in Anglo-Indian discourse about Muslim subjects.

The relationship between Indian Muslims and the British were complicated in yet another significant way. Despite permanent, large-scale migration and steady cultural integration, Muslims continued to be considered outsiders in India, while Arab Muslims remained indigenous inhabitants of their land. The Muslim imperial presence in India, which the British in unison with India's Hindu population liked to dub as illegitimate, raised questions about Britain's own authority to rule India. Denied outwardly, the parallel existed as an ominous reminder, and an uneasy fraternity suggested itself through shared complicity in an identical crime. There are other signs of fraternal resemblances between the two antagonistic communities that irked the British and motivated verbal violence on the Muslims of India. Islam came to India filtered through the rich, artistic civilization of Persia. Such gracious influence and conscious cultivation of courtly manners brought an urbane, genteel culture to Indian Muslims; they practised elaborate ceremonies and rituals that contrasted sharply with the ascetic Islamic lifestyle held on to in Arabia at that time. In spirit, though not in actual styles and customs, their manners were more in harmony with the British love for social etiquette. The British Raj absorbed many Mughal accoutrements in its official ceremonies, to preserve proper awe for its authority. As India moved towards modernization, both Hindu and Muslim youths of high birth and means took to English dress, sports and arts with alacrity. Curiously, however, the fact that Anglo-Indian rhetoric developed stereotypes of the physically well-groomed, active and sportive Muslim, as opposed to the intellectually-advanced but physically feeble Hindu scholar, shows that the British suffered greater fellowship anxiety where Muslims were concerned. Much as the government welcomed conformity for communal peace, the British community in general felt suspicious of overly successful imitations of British culture. Compared to Arab Muslims, Indian
Muslims were more flexible about religion and on the whole more receptive to change. It is true that Indian Muslims resisted modernization longer than the Hindus did, but this was more the outcome of political resentment for the loss of empire than of an excessive preoccupation with religious ideals. After an initial resistance, they even opened themselves to Western education. In *Orientalism*, Said views Western manipulation of the Islamic heritage predominantly as the insidious "incorporation and assimilation of the Orient" with its quite distinct ideology. In India, the British seemed far more aware of the difference of Islam from other Indian cultures and its proximity with the culture of the West: this again led to acute anxiety of fraternity. This anxiety expresses itself in contradictory images of the Indian Muslim in Anglo-Indian fiction: an outer persona of active geniality and a hidden self of brooding malignancy.

Some of these adversarial conditions are so visible that strategies of conscious manipulation are clearly seen to be at work. However, more significantly, there exist multiple levels of unconscious revaluation of the Islamic presence in Western discourse that reflect suppressed anxieties in the western self-image. The two most apparent areas of hostile denial are religion and politics—Islam's alleged trespass into the moral symbolism of Christianity, and the rival interests of imperial domination in the mutual history of Islam and the West. Here, difference of values is asserted by both cultures repeatedly, emphatically and unambiguously to maintain their own respectivity in the face of dogged similarities. As a matter of fact, even these areas are susceptible to layered responses. The ideal of secularism prevents zealous proselytizing in the West, but that does not make the notion of the sacred less valuable to the adherants of Christianity. Denouncing Islam's encroachment on the West's own religious terminology is an indirect form of allegiance to the Christian worldview, while still holding on to the principle of secularism. Similarly, the Western and Islamic worlds are equally guilty of the drive for domination, the former
hiding racial discrimination under the ideal of democracy and the latter veiling religious favouritism behind protestations of universal brotherhood. Accepting each other as points of preferred polarity, the two cultures measure and remeasure their own existence and their own affinities. Those unresolved contradictions of conscious will and unconscious desire specific to the western psyche can be studied as they are played out in complex conceptual patterns and mirrored in the reconstructed face of Islam. Other instances of misrepresentation are less pronounced, particularly in the delineation of individual persona, which are also simultaneously linked to the greater text of the cultural superego.

The multicultural texture of the population of British India provides an excellent scope to examine Britain's varying outlook on the different religious communities under its rule. Also, the fact that Muslims in India underwent a dizzying transformation of fortune, and a concomitant metamorphosis of identity, from trader and invader to ruler, then to subject and rebel, and finally, through varying states of autonomy and self-rule, to simultaneous majority and minority presence as citizens of sovereign, independent states, affords the amplest opportunity to examine both the impact of Islam on the consciousness of another culture, and the influence of external pressures on the Muslim community's changing patterns self-definition. As will become evident through the examination of particular texts and writers, this falsification took place on a much larger scale than is witnessed in the misrepresentation of other cultures by Western colonizers.

The nature, extent and implications of the inducement to misrepresentation imposed on Indian Muslims can be systematically uncovered by studying any form of Anglo-Indian historical, discursive or imaginative literature written about them. I have chosen to examine the treatment of Muslim characters in British fiction centered on the Indian sub-continent, not simply for the purpose of specificity and focus. The choice of fictional narrative, as opposed to history, journal, treatise and essay, is
meant to uncover links between writing and the political subconscious, which can take deviant courses beyond the avowed stance of expositional prose. Fredric Jameson has alerted critical readership to the presence of *the political unconscious*, a cautionary mindset guiding the ideological bent of even non-political writing, and even when there is no conscious debasement involved:

> To imagine that, sheltered from the omnipresence of history and the implacable influence of the social, there already exists a realm of freedom—whether it be that of the microscopic experience of words in a text or the ecstasies and intensities of the various private religions—is only to strengthen the grip of Necessity over all such blind zones in which the individual subject seeks refuge, in pursuit of a purely individual, a merely psychological, project of salvation. The only effective liberation from such constraint begins with the recognition that there is nothing that is not social and historical—indeed, that everything is "in the last analysis" political . . . . The assertion of a political unconscious proposes that we undertake just such a final analysis and explore the multiple paths that lead to the unmasking of cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts.  

According to Jameson, no individual writer is entirely free from the pressure of this repository of unconscious preconceptions (from the perspective of the viewing subject) just as no culture, in its objectivized elements, can fail to be read ultimately as the sum total of diverse "socially symbolic acts." Now, considering the duration and level of antipathy subsisting between the West and Islamic world, the force of a political unconscious shaping their fictional images of one another can easily be surmised. The failure of Anglo-Indian writers to recognize their image of Muslim India as one that is politically mediated and also their inability to decipher the inner workings of Islam's social symbolism have accumulated channels of misapprehension, and these have hardened into fictive stereotypes of the amoral, libidinous and violent Muslim.

A rich collection of Anglo-Indian poetry exists that might have been tapped for the trapped unconscious of colonial experience, but the emphasis of poetry is more
on the personal, the emotional and the idiosyncratic, whereas the scope of the novel is broad, social and more detached. The hidden anxieties of an entire culture can be approached more effectively through the expansive form of the novel. The object of my thesis is to explore in much greater detail and depth than has been attempted so far, the characterization of Muslims in British fiction set in India and written during British colonial rule, and to explain common assumptions, patterns and implications in terms of the historical, political, economic and psychological realities pertaining to both the writer-colonizer and the colonized-subject. To demonstrate the validity of my thesis, I shall refer to relevant major works of British fiction from the colonial period. In other words, I will examine the works of those writers who actually lived in India and interacted with its indigenous population, particularly the Muslims. My focus will be on three novels, viz. Confessions of a Thug by Phillip Meadows Taylor, Kim by Rudyard Kipling and A Passage to India by E.M. Forster. Two of these novels, the first and the last, have Muslim protagonists; the remaining, Kim, has a significantly important Muslim character and the protagonist, too, because of his Indian upbringing has a close affinity with the Muslim way of life.

To demonstrate specifically the directions taken by false assumptions, stylized patterns of thought and dubious inferences of the colonialists in British India with specific, though hidden and sometimes even unconscious, ideological designs, and to elucidate the contemporary life of Muslims I intend to look into a few novels written by Bengali Muslim writers. Although relatively little known among his works, Meer Mosharraf Hossain's Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha (Recollections of an Indifferent Wayfarer), is accepted as the first novelistic work by a Bengali Muslim writer. First published in 1890, it is a rambling autobiography set during the indigo revolt in Bengal, in which the author tries to come to terms with the contradictions of his own identity. Najibur Rahman's Anwara (named after its female protagonist) was first published in 1914; it is a pseudo-romance with a frankly didactic purpose and an
avowed Islamic message. In 1919, Kazi Abdul Wadud wrote Nadibakkhe\textsuperscript{y} (On the Heart of the River). It describes the quiet life of the Muslim peasantry and, although it is a modest piece of writing, Rabindranath Tagore commends its author in a foreword for choosing to write on this long-neglected topic. Kazi Emdadul Haque's Abdullah (named after the protagonist) is a realistic novel, written in 1933, that projects the outdated values of an enfeebled and decadent Muslim aristocracy, with the object of inspiring reform. Muslim writers were late-comers in the domain of Bengali literature and failed to achieve the artistic brilliance of colonial Hindu writers, who chose to write in their vernacular from the very beginning. Because of the close association of Islam in India with Persian and Urdu, the languages of the western provinces, the Muslim elite of Bengal tended to neglect their vernacular. Bengali Hindus, on the other hand, venerated the Bengali language which happens to be a modern derivation of Sanskrit, the language of sacred Hindu texts. It must be noted therefore that the novels mentioned above are not renowned classics; they are relatively immature works with, at best, a popular fame. However, they serve well as representations of Muslim society in colonial India, and must suffice in the absence of better-hailed examples. Besides the necessary linguistic constraint of the present writer, this exclusive focus on Bengali fiction can be justified by the fact that Bengal was the most literate, nationally conscious and culturally prolific province of colonial India and as such the pulse of the country can be read just as well from this one perspective as from a cross-section of the entire subcontinent.

Conceptual generalizations about "lesser" cultures are integral to the imperial rhetoric of the West but Islamic culture, with its rich geneology and heritage can hardly be dismissed as a primitive culture. Ideologically, Islam takes an opposite stance from the West on many sociological issues and so often serves it as an inverted mirror by magnifying and revealing some of the latter's failures, just as many of its own embedded weaknesses are exposed by parallel successes in western modes of
operation. Allen Greenberger, while holding a rather sanguine view as regards the Anglo-Indian depiction of Muslims, agrees that the primary impulse shaping the nature of fictional narratives about India came from the British source:

It is events in England, and in the West in general, which determines the image held of India at any particular time. From this it follows that the images were not changed by the Indian reality. It is far more likely that the images have influenced the way in which the reality was seen. The changing images appear to have had little to do with the developments in India.

From the logic of this very assessment it becomes apparent that Islam became subject to larger waves of derivation than other Indian cultures; the British carried to India more solidified preconceptions about Islam than about Hinduism, or any of the other religions present there. They responded to the generous Buddhist creed warmly, and with an open mind. Again, even martial Hindu races like the Rajput and the Maratha had no history of antagonism with the West. And so, even when they defended their freedom with rare valour, they did not stretch their expectations to dream of extensive empires. Besides, once they accepted the reality of their weak position in relation to their colonial rulers they welcomed the support of the British against their common Muslim enemies. Muslim princes rarely sided with the British to put down a Hindu foe. Muslims in general were less inclined to make compromises for their own survival than were others and the British were embittered by their obduracy. It was inevitable, therefore, that the projection of the various Indian cultures in Anglo-Indian discourse should follow a gradation of value, the most pliable subjects rendered the least savage and, conversely, the most recalcitrant, the least enlightened.

Controlled and motivational representation of Muslims can be perceived on different levels. At a superficial level is the exoticization common to the portrayal of most remote cultures. Rich, elaborate costumes, theatrical gestures, colourful exclamatory dialogue, etc. give western readers a taste of exciting strangeness. Even when modern Muslim youths are presented, their flamboyant outward appearance and
generally garrulous behaviour are usually emphasized at the expense of inner character analysis. They are shown to be pleasing in appearance, ceremonial in dress, courtly in manner, martial in bearing and deft in sport. But these same attributes, which the British heartily approve of, by some curious psychological reversal make Anglo-Indian writers averse to Muslims, as if they were engaged in British impersonations. Assuming such gentlemanly traits to be monopolies of the British character, institutionalized in the public school image, they seem to take offence at the ease with which Muslims can share these experiences with them. Coupled with the disturbing idea that oriental Muslims and occidental Christians have a common religious background, and rival political aims, this exasperation with similarities gives birth to a systematic strategy of denial that operates at a deeper level of the narratives. Dark and considerable rifts are made to appear between the western and the Muslim mind, the latter expressing itself in deviational patterns of psychic reasoning and moral thought. The Muslim character is subconsciously developed as an alter-ego of the western self. This allows for the divergence of several contradictory impulses within the western personality into two separate units of consciousness, and also allows the narrative to shift between the hidden dualities integral to colonial discourse. By setting up a parallel entity that can simultaneously be disowned as a darker non-self, the Anglo-Indian writer can thus use the same experience to combine criticism and vicarious wish fulfillment.

This kind of deep-rooted fear of Islamic culture often led Western writers to falsify their first-hand experience of the Islamic world. It is my contention that Anglo-Indian fiction writers persistently allow their cultural prejudice against Muslims to invade their creative territory, setting aside impressions from actual, often extremely positive, encounters with Indian Muslims. The reason why this kind of language and slanted fictionalizing elicits surprise in the case of Taylor, Kipling and Forster is that these men have lived and worked closely with Muslim people and did
not have to depend on cultural stereotypes to accommodate them in their fiction. All three writers observe India from up close and, therefore, assume a stance of prosaic objectivity, appearing to avoid the ambiguities and stereotypes that mark the colonial experience in the writings of Britishers who never set foot on the Indian soil. They seem to have a genuine desire to penetrate the myths pertaining to "other" cultures and present them, as it were, "from inside." Taylor worked for the Nizam of Hyderabad. In Brantlinger’s words, "He married a Eurasian woman whose grandmother had been a princess of Delhi; his close, sympathetic identity with Indians and Indian social patterns gave him a perspective often critical of British racism and misgovernment." It is well-known that Kipling had a happy childhood in India and was traumatized by his removal to a school in England; he returned to India, subsequently, because this is where he felt he belonged. Equally well-known is Forster’s friendship with Ross Masood, whom he loved and admired to the point of sexual infatuation. The attachment Forster felt for Masood perhaps predisposed him to a liking for the Islamic religion and culture; it certainly provided his primary source of knowledge about them. Here is what E. M. Forster has to say in The Hill of Devi about an inherently Islamic experience:

I went up the left hand further minaret, and saw all the magnificent buildings glowing beneath me and all the country steaming beneath a dim red and grey sky, and just as I thought nothing could be more beautiful a muezzin with a most glorious voice gave the evening call to prayer from a Mosque. 'There is no God but God.' I do like Islam, though I have had to come through Hinduism to discover it. After all the mess and confusion of Gokul Astami, where nothing ever stopped or need ever have begun, it was like standing on a mountain.

The oft-quoted phrase from the call to prayer should be properly translated "There is no God but Allah," to avoid redundancy and absurdity, but apart from this very common misrepresentation, Forster displays here a frank and admiring attitude
towards Islam. In another letter, written while he was visiting Ross Masood, he remarks, "I have passed abruptly from Hinduism to Islam and the change is a relief."^12

In his *Indian Journals and Essays*, Forster describes his attendance at a Muslim wedding. Among the wedding guests he observes some men in prayer. The sensitivity and respect with which Forster acknowledges their devotions is truly remarkable:

For at one end of the garden burst a gramophone—'I'd rather be busy with my little Lizzy'—and at the other, on a terrace before the house, about twenty orthodox Muslims had gathered for the evening prayer. Facing the sun, which sets over Mecca here, they went through their flexions, bowing down till they kissed the earth in adoration to God, while the Gramophone birred ahead, and by a diabolical chance, reached the end of its song as they ended the prayer. They rejoined the other guests without self-consciousness. But in them was the only beauty and dignity. ^13

In *A Passage to India*, there is a most unremarkable reference to some Muslims engaged in prayer, as Aziz loiters around the polo field trying to avoid Dr. Panna Lal: "Now it was sunset. A few of his co-religionists had come to the Maidan, and were praying with their faces towards Mecca."^14 The narrative here is not meant to arouse exalted feelings; if anything the reader feels censorious when Aziz hits "a Brahmany bull" (*Passage*, p. 76) with his polo mallet to prevent it from disturbing the worshippers. In the real incident, the men praying are mild and uncomplaining; in the novel, they become the occasion of mindless, needless cruelty. In *Forster's Passages to India*, Robin Lewis points to the equivocal nature of Forster's response to Islam: "Forster's attitude to Islam is a mixed one: although attracted by the sense of calm which is expressed in the simplicity of Islamic design and architecture, he was at the same time repelled by what he saw as its sternness and rigid moral sense."^15 One cannot but wonder why the warmth and fond associations that appear to have lingered in Forster's memory from his Indian visit become short-circuited in his fictional depiction of Muslim India.

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This is not to suggest that literature should reflect reality; a whole canon of literary criticism exists to deny any such pretension or obligation. Nor do I call into question the literary value of the novels I choose to demonstrate the nature of their Muslim characterization. Besides, their failure to mirror Muslim society faithfully simply reflects another truth, the existing discontinuities of perception between the two cultures. However, each work of art must be consistent within its own framework, and so, the artistic intent of each writer being different, each artifact must grow in a distinct direction. Taylor, Kipling and Forster have written novels that are very different from one another, and yet there is an underlying similarity in the way they present their Muslim characters that seems temporarily to suspend their artistic freedom and submit them to cultural conditioning. Mary Louise Pratt discusses the subtle ways in which subjective experience and objective writing can play upon each other. Her essay titled "Fieldwork in Common Places" concerns the authenticity of a contemporary anthropological work, but by establishing the historical link of modern ethnographic writing with colonial literature at the beginning of the discussion, she demonstrates the larger applicability of her idea:

The case obviously threatened some delicate disciplinary boundaries. Most pointedly, it brought to the surface the anguished and messy tangle of contradictions and uncertainties surrounding the interrelations of personal experience, personal narrative, scientism, and professionalism in ethnographic writing.  

The three Anglo-Indian authors chosen for scrutiny here likewise display contradictions and uncertainties in their transition from personal experience to professional relocation. They are quite unambiguous in their recording of exterior features, but the deeper they penetrate into issues of personality and questions of religious faith, the more unhinged their writing becomes from the sources that serve as their creative models. There is undeniably more surface detail in their portrayal of Muslim characters, as opposed to sweeping, stereotypical references to Muslims in
the works of British writers who only know of them by hearsay. Taylor displays amazing breadth of knowledge about Muslim dress, gestures, manners, linguistic expressions, etc. Kipling lingers quite lovingly on the unhurried and hedonistic lifestyle of the well-to-do Muslim, as represented by Mahbub. Forster reveals detailed, statistical and comparative knowledge about the Muslim community's advancements in modern education, participation in professional activities, evolution of a particular sort of religious nationalism, as well as its expectations, conflicts and frustrations at the turn of the twentieth century. In fact, Forster often comes so close to an intuitive understanding of Muslim motivations and sentiments that his depiction begins to assume living colours. And yet, these colourful details only serve to hide a dark fear of the irrational, incomprehensible, religious zealot, that is part of the common racial heritage of all Anglo-Indian writers. In fact, the grim core laid bare by these "knowing" authors is ultimately more reductive of the Muslim presence than the unknowing guesses of literary adventurists. After all, experience generates authority. Besides, less informed British writers in their island habitat focus on superficial elements of cultural disparity, like costume, custom, language and mannerism, that can become less threatening with increased familiarity. Writers like Taylor, Kipling and Forster penetrate beyond surface texture to deep emotional and spiritual patterns that seem forbidding and unchanging.

Taylor, whom Patrick Brantlinger declares to have been "without doubt the greatest Anglo-Indian writer before Kipling," as a police officer had direct access only to the seamiest section of Indian life. He wrote his Confessions of a Thug based on "the suppression of Thuggee, the secret cult of professional murderers and robbers who worshipped Kali, Hindu goddess of destruction." Here, his novelistic vision of India is captured through the clouded lens of an imaginary archetypal criminal mind; yet, his narrative use of the official form of a criminal confession gives it an unwarranted impression of unmediated truth. As Homi Bhabha points out in The
Location of Culture, confession as a discursive tool allows the official mind to control the mind of the subject. Bhabha's example of the native, apparently a resolute Hindu refusing to respond to a Christian missionary, eludes the subversive power of the confessional:

The natives' resistance represents a frustration of that nineteenth century strategy of surveillance, the confession, which seeks to dominate the 'calculable' individual by positing the truth that the subject has but does not know. The incalculable native produces a problem for civil representation in the discourses of literature and legality.¹⁹

However, the protagonist of Taylor's novel is made a willing accomplice to the narrator's design. While it is a fact that Muslims and Hindus alike joined the cult of the Thuggee, the former were numerically less prominent. Through the characterization of the criminal protagonist of the novel, a captured Thug whom Taylor names Ameer Ali, we see the bewildering and arbitrary implication that this pseudo-religious, ritualistic crime is more suited for the lawlessness of the Islamic faith, an assumption which can only be explained by the writer's obvious ignorance of and deep-rooted distrust for Islam. Prejudice becomes evident not only in the choice of name and cultural identity, but also in the nature of evil projected through this figure. Brantlinger describes the novel as "a slightly fictionalized horror story"²⁰ and the horror lies not so much in the bloody deeds committed by the Thugs but in the chilling, amoral unconcern with which Ameer Ali "confesses," even brags about his crimes. Kipling celebrates what to him is India's allowance for the instinctive life, as opposed to the conditioned life of his own culture, but asserts in the same breath the moral superiority of learned responses. And the most extreme impulses of decadent self gratification he translates in terms of Muslim custom, habit, taste and imagination.

E. M. Forster's Passage to India affords by far the most transparent and most comprehensive view of the Muslim community in India. Not only that, this novel
almost seems to vindicate the stereotypical image of the cruel Muslim, by making 
Aziz a helpless victim of injustice. As a matter of fact, here as well as in Kipling's 
Kim, it is the Anglo-Indian officials who appear to have the most negative exposure, 
being openly committed to serve the interests of the Empire and well-inclined to 
sacrifice human scruples along the way. At best, they have flat wooden exteriors and 
only act in mechanical and predictable ways. In contrast, the Muslim characters (like 
other Indian characters) are strongly individualized and have dynamic roles to play in 
the unfolding of plot and theme. However, a closer look at these latter characters 
reveals dehumanizing strokes well below the surface, whose impressions are all the 
more effective because they are so unobtrusive. I intend to show through my 
evaluation of the three novels I have chosen (as well as other works when they appear 
relevant) that this almost non-human coldness lies at the base of all Muslim 
characterizations in British fiction. There are some other common character traits— 
like crude physicality, mental weakness, sexual hypocrisy, etc—but these all add up 
finally to an instinct that is so unresponsive to the finer, human qualities of head and 
heart that the reader is bound to feel a shudder of recoil, even when there is no 
outward, incriminatory behaviour. Mahbub Ali, in Kipling's Kim, is almost a 
benevolent character. He works in collaboration with the government, befriends the 
boy protagonist when he needs help, hardly lifts a finger to injure any person and 
often becomes an uncomplaining victim of violence himself. Yet, he is a sinister 
figure; his silence, his caution, his absence of emotion and, above all, his absolute 
disregard for the lives endangered by his participation in the Great Game make him 
almost inhuman. If Mahbub Ali has a misleadingly benign front, Dr. Aziz in Forster's 
A Passage to India, has an almost childlike simplicity and fragility, behind which 
lurks amazing cruelty and vindictiveness. His withering comment about Adela's 
unattractive and, to him, mendicant sexuality—not to mention his demand for a heavy 
compensation at the end of the trial—cloaks him in a coldness that all his warmth for
Fielding and Mrs. Moore cannot dispel. Aziz's lack of human compassion is very different from the stony unconcern maintained by Anglo-Indian officials like Ronny Heaslop towards their Indian subordinates. The latter is clearly a pose of expediency, an artificial construct over far more positive character traits that cannot be displayed in public. The iciness at the bottom of Aziz's heart is integral to his nature. One Muslim character after another in British fiction displays such mindless, heartless, rigidity and easily contributes to a subtle suggestion that Islam is the kind of faith that inspires passion but deadens compassion and rationality.

This study attempts to analyze the specific nature of such representations and to explore the hidden and manifest drives that cause Anglo-Indian fiction to cast Islam in these particular images. A broad survey of the historical presence of Muslims in India, as both rulers and British subjects, as well as a close look at certain biographical information about selected Anglo-Indian authors, shows that specific moments in history and in personal experience have relatively little impact on the images of Muslim India reflected in their works. What is more instrumental in these delineations is the long-standing cultural antagonism between Islam and the West. This relative blindness to the changing impulses of Muslim society explains why Anglo-Indian fiction generally overlooks the pluralities in existence within the community. Parallel to the depiction of Muslim men, substantial attention has been given in this dissertation to the especial treatment of Muslim women in Anglo-Indian fiction, since here the twin imperatives of patriarchism and colonialism have resulted in extremely crude stereotypes which, nevertheless, evoke psychological subterfuges of immense complexity. In conclusion, this study also examines the impact of such portrayal upon the self-image of Muslims in the Indian sub-continent, beginning with the four Muslim fiction writers of colonial India mentioned earlier and including the post-colonial emigrant writer, Salman Rushdie. This critical span helps to chart the significant change effected in the community from a harmonious state of religious
enlightenment to an internally divisive reaction to colonial belittlement. One extreme response has been to cling blindly and tenaciously to religious identity in order to deflect Western domination, while the other has been an equally undiscerning denouncement of religion, in order to demonstrate alignment with the ideals of Western liberalism. In the context of Rushdie's themes of rejection and reconciliation in *The Satanic Verses*, it is worthwhile to note how proximate in spirit Rushdie's sincere and inspired disavowal of Islam is to the enlightened deference shown to Islam by the sagacious, western-educated Muslim leaders of colonial India.
CHAPTER 2
HISTORICIZATION OF THE IMAGE OF ISLAM UNDER BRITISH RULE

There is a noticeable difference between the nature of the historical presence of Muslims in India, both as rulers and British subjects, and the image of them that developed during the years of British domination. However, the fact that the colonial rhetoric succeeded in making the concept of Islamic rule seem to its readers to be synonymous with backwardness, intolerance, inefficiency and bigotry, was not merely dependent on the specific dialectics of Britain's struggle with Muslim India. This image adheres to the larger historical context of more than a thousand years of ideological conflict between Islam and the West. The impact of this historicized and essentialized identity has always been so strong that it has overridden the influence of local conditions, relating to specific moments in history. Thus, the image of the Muslim in Anglo-Indian writing was not defined entirely by the relationship that developed between the British colonials in India and its Muslim population. An association spanning more than three centuries, from the time the first English merchants stepped on the Indian shore to the final rolling down of the Union Jack on Indian soil, was bound to have undulations in its amities and discords. However, these swinging changes of attitude are not all reflected faithfully in the imaginative literature left behind by colonial writers.

The stages of appreciation and cooperation between these two dynamic people have been overshadowed by the defensive and combative phases of their relationship. Negative influences have been allowed to reinforce the existing dark image of the Muslim in western minds, preventing positive influences finding their way into the
larger discourse of British colonialism. Anglo-Indian fiction is dominated particularly by the persona of the violent, hedonistic and morally evasive Muslim, who poses a lingering, insidious threat to British power. Besides the obvious contentiousness of the growth of British power and the rapid dissolution of the Mughal empire, several other factors reinforced the defensiveness of this relationship. A third factor that contributed to the vilification of the Muslims was the sudden growth of venomous nationalistic sentiment with which Hindus disavowed the right of Muslims to the Indian homeland. Curiously, this particular brand of nationalism welcomed the British as rulers and saviours, and produced sympathetic vibrations in the outlook of the new masters. Finally, beyond these visible adjustments were myriad undeclared, perhaps unacknowledged, some even unrecognized, tensions derived from problems of western self-identity that later became fixed on to various convenient myths about Muslim identity. Thus we see a noticeable disparity between how Muslims were actually perceived by their contemporaries in life and how they were depicted in history and fiction to suit the purposes of different communities. It is important to make a distinction here between the inevitably fluctuating ways in which the English actually perceived Muslims through their changing fortunes on the Indian sub-continent, and the static forms in which these perceptions were eventually translated into literature. This distinction is analogous to the discrepancy I point out between the close associations that often developed between Muslim and British individuals, including fiction-writers themselves, and the distrustful incomprehension that typifies the delineation of Muslim characters in Anglo-Indian fiction. While the depth and intricacy of the anxieties that contributed to such alienation may not always have been apparent to the writers themselves, there can be no denying of the fact that a conscious element of choice was always involved in colonial representations of Muslims. At both levels, the narrow personal and the broader societal, the British were receptive to positive encounters with Muslims, but they chose to deselect such
friendly experiences and fall back on the traditional mistrust of Islamic culture, when constructing an abstract, historicized image of the Muslim in their colonial discourse.

The successive generations of British men and women who came to India found their behaviour towards Muslims determined to a large extent by the progressive stages of the latter’s disempowerment. During the early years of British settlement, when commercial interests had not yet become overlaid by imperial designs, the Muslim presence in India was a formidable one. When the first ships of the East India Company landed at Surat, in 1608, Jahangir was on the throne of Delhi and the Mughal empire was resplendent with wealth and power. It took two more generations, the reigns of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, before the decline of Muslim power began to set in. For two centuries, the British had to negotiate their way into Indian society, propitiating local rulers, compromising with the laws and customs of the land, courting the company of the nobles, and generally desisting from acts that might give offense. The attitude of Muslims towards the growing tide of British arrivals was one of hospitality and magnanimity in the beginning; the Muslim ruling class graciously opened their doors to foreign guests and lavished attention on them. In their turn, the latter maintained an appropriately respectful demeanour towards their hosts. Michael Edwardes speaks in British India of the free social interchange that existed between Muslim aristocrats and British merchants before their relationship degenerated through political rivalry:

In the eighteenth century there was considerable social intercourse between the British and the Muslim aristocracy. Many British officials spoke and read Persian, the literary language. Some of them regarded themselves as Indian rulers. On one level, those British in India who had no intellectual interests enjoyed the superficial luxuries of Indian aristocratic life.¹

This aspect of the early British colonial encounter is carefully excluded from fictional accounts of this time, although it persisted in reality until the rule of Warren Hastings, who displayed open interest in and admiration for the ways of the Muslim ruling
class. This picture of the powerful, gracious and capable Muslim host is missing in fictional representations, barring its mildly satirical use in the characterization of Forster's Dr. Aziz, where a humble, ineffectual, subordinate personality tries as host to impersonate none less than a Mughal emperor.

Margaret Macmillan's Women of the Raj also takes note of the fact that earlier British arrivals in India had a less pronounced sense of their exclusiveness:

In the eighteenth century, the British would not have drawn themselves back so firmly from contact with Indians. Until the start of the nineteenth century, the East India Company was only one power among several and its representatives had to deal with Indians who were their equals, if not their superiors, in power. There were independent and powerful Indian princes; the British were rather in awe of them. ²

The British generally found it easier to consort with Muslims than with Hindus, on account of their religion as well as their higher social position. Macmillan particularly mentions British women, some by name like Mrs. Major Clemons, Lady Login and Mrs. Fanny Parks, who socialized well with _zenana_ women before they developed into the much-maligned, arrogant type of the Anglo-Indian _memsahib_: "British women often made friends with Indian women as a matter of course. They did not find anything odd about going into the _zenana_, or women's quarters, and since they often spoke an Indian language fluently they were able to have real conversation."³ According to Macmillan, political and sociological changes in both Europe and India were responsible for the deterioration of relationship between the British and the Indians: "The Industrial Revolution which made Europe vastly more powerful than the rest of the world helped to put a stop to this easy intercourse."⁴ Even if this were not so, rapid technological development in the West certainly increased the rift between the two regions: "The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, together with faster and safer communications between Britain and India, meant that the exile could keep closer ties with Home."⁵ This meant that the Anglo-Indian
community had no need to adapt to the land where they were forced to reside. But before communication with England improved, they were a people in exile and eager for acceptance. They were awed by the grandeur and ceremony that surrounded public events and noble personages, and quite appreciative of the graciousness with they were themselves received.

As it became increasingly clear that the British were in India not merely as guests or traders but as a real military and political threat to the local princes, this gracious relationship turned discordant. Resistance to British rule generally came from Muslims; besides them, only Marathas and Sikhs presented a significantly hostile front to the British, but even they chose occasionally to become allies of the British to counter Muslim princes. The rule of the British East India Company started in 1757, with the defeat of Nawab Sirajuddoula of Bengal. Subsequently, stiff resistance came from Hyder Ali and his son, Tipu Sultan, of Mysore. It was only by setting another Muslim ruler previously inimical to British occupation, the Nizam of Hyderabad, against them that the Madras Confederacy of the East India Company was finally able to overcome Mysore in 1799. Tipu Sultan died fighting valiantly in this battle, and his kingdom was portioned out among the Nizam, the Peshwa and the East India Company, in the Treaty of Seringapatam. When the British tried to install Shah Shuja, the deposed Amir of Afghanistan, on the throne of Kabul they encountered a big humiliation: "In November 1841, the Afghans rose in revolt and compelled the British to retreat . . . . Dost Muhammad again became Amir." Even the successive Mughul emperors after Aurangzeb, though militarily feeble, continued to exert a great deal of moral weight on issues of legitimacy and inspiration for Indian Muslims. In the words of S. M. Burke and Saleem Al-Din Quraishi,

The Mughal Emperor no longer had the military power to enforce his will, but the aura of the House of Timur still lived in the length and breadth of the country. The nawabs and subedars still sought formal sanction of the Emperor on their accession and valued the titles he bestowed upon them; they struck coins in his name; and prayers in
mosques were read in his name. The British were not strong enough to claim sovereignty on their own account.  

The 1857 uprising tried to legitimate itself by declaring allegiance to Emperor Bahadur Shah and after the rebellion was quelled, it was in the interest of the British themselves that they took Shah Alam, his grandson, within their protection. They did not feel entirely at ease until they had devised ways of divesting each of these Mughal successors of their royal privilege; they exiled Bahadur Shah to Burma, urged his heir apparent, Fakhr-Uddin, to concede to leaving the palace-fortress of Delhi and reside at Qutb on his accession and, on his death, stripped Bahadur Shah's eldest surviving son, Muhammad Quraish, of his imperial title and allowed him only the status of a Shahzada.

The hard struggle for ascendancy that the martial nature of Muslim princes necessitated for the British brought a corresponding vindictiveness in their strategies of portraying Muslims in literature. As the Mughal empire crumbled under Bahadur Shah and his weak successors, and the British moved in to fill the power vacuum, early impressions of the opulent, cultured, proud but magnanimous Muslim princes and nobles were quickly replaced in their minds by the conventional Muslim image of the narrow-minded and self-indulgent despot. According to Edwardes, the social atmosphere became different with the arrival of Lord Cornwallis in 1786. He goes on to describe how distance and diminution were applied by conscious policy in order to construct British superiority:

English political concepts were to be transplanted into the soil of India, and Indians were to be removed from the halls of government. With Cornwallis's admiration for English principles and institutions went a belief in the general superiority of Englishmen and the role they must play in preserving British rule in India.  

On the one hand, Indians in important administrative positions were made redundant with the arrival of English replacements, and on the other, they were brought under an
entirely different system of legislation and revenue collection. The Indian judges who were thus transplanted were mostly Muslim because the land was generally administered by Muslim law, before British law came into force. Muslims were likewise replaced at other upper level administrative posts. Stripping eminent citizens of their status was analogous to demeaning the entire community:

He replaced native judges with English judges. He abandoned, almost entirely, the traditional etiquette of diplomatic relations. Cornwallis succeeded in forcing the old Indian governing classes into isolation, leaving behind them only the Indian servant, the clerk, the merchant and the banker as representatives of India and Indian culture. An entire system of devalorization descended on Indian Muslims. The Qazi or Muslim judge was held in great esteem in Indian society during Mughal rule; one only has to glance at Mahmoud Ali, the ludicrous pleader who represents Muslims in the legal profession in Forster's Passage to India to understand the process that initiated such a fall. The rising fortunes of the British necessitated this retroactive supplantation of the Muslim image because their own political ascendancy had to be supported by the reordering of existing structures of eminence.

When British domination became fully established, Muslims reacted with bitter resentment, resistance and strife, feelings that gathered momentum and exploded in the Mutiny of 1857; the British rulers reciprocated with acute mistrust in them and singled out Muslims for persecution. The Sepoy Mutiny was believed by the British to have been primarily instigated by the Muslims and this idea gave rise to spate of racial writing with a decidedly anti-Islamic thrust. Patrick Brantlinger, commenting on these near-hysterical fictional and non-fictional accounts, mentions a play by Dion Boucicault that violates several historical truths: "In Jesse Brown, Boucicault does not try to avoid stereotypes or even to be historically accurate. Although the setting of his play is Lucknow, Boucicault transplants Nana Sahib from Cawnpore to center stage. He also converts Nana from Hinduism to Islam, making
him swear by Allah in every other line." Harriet Tytler's blatant accusations against Muslims in her *Memoirs* can only be explained in terms of the general psychological climate of her time. According to her, the 1857 Mutiny was master-minded by Indian Muslims and the Hindus were merely naive pawns in their hands:

The gullible Hindus, two to one in each regiment, firmly believed Prithee Rai's raj would return and then they would be masters of India. The wily Mohammedans, who were using these poor deluded men as a cat's paw, encouraged the belief, knowing all along that they would soon find their mistake, for the Mohammedan meant to reign by the edge of his sword, which would also be used to proselytize the poor idol worshippers.11

Insurgence is so strongly allied with Muslims in the British imagination that Meadows Taylor's novel on the Mutiny, *Seeta*, turns the chief conspirator into a Muslim impersonator, in the interests of verisimilitude: "Taylor's version of the Mutiny seems at first to be an extension of Thuggee, because the chief conspirator, Azrael Pande, is a former Thug who, disguised as a Muslim priest, goes about the countryside preaching rebellion."12 Thus, we see that the period of amity between Indian Muslims and the early British settlers passed ignored while one, albeit inflammable but isolated, incidence of conflict was blown up to farcical proportions in Anglo-Indian literature. The cruelty of Indian rebels, that too usually and arbitrarily attributed to Muslims, was emphasized; and the cruelty of British suppression of rebels was conveniently overlooked or glorified. British Western colonial rulers felt just a little more than usual suspicion for Muslim subjects and Muslims themselves, looking nostalgically back to their glorious and imperial past, had a difficult time reconciling themselves with their subject status.

Although Muslims were forced to accept the reality of British rule after the failure of the Sepoy Mutiny, they nurtured a smouldering sentiment against the *Dar-ul-Harb*, the land of the unfaithful as opposed to the *Dar-ul-Islam*, the land of the believers. Reaction from such dissatisfaction took two directions: one introverted and
in search of a cultural regeneration; and another explosive, aimed at open conflict with the British government. Muslim uprisings that took place at different times and were aimed at denouncing British sovereignty in India, particularly over its Muslim inhabitants, were the Wahabi, the Farai'zi, and the Khilafat movements. Attempts at an Islamic revival took the form of cultural resistance against feared westernization and cultural purification from already prevalent Hindu influences. The prominent Shah Waliullah (1703-63) translated the holy Quran into simple Persian to make its teaching accessible to many. Two of his sons made both free and literal translations of the Quran into Urdu. The most well known of Shah Waliullah's sons was Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1824), who issued a _fatwa_ that India had become a _Dar-ul-harb_ and the faithful should wage a holy jihad against its rulers. His disciple, Saiyid Ahmed of the Rai Bareilly family, proceeded to implement this directive by direct confrontation with the British government. This was the Wahabi movement, which had such a large-scale impact on the Muslims of India that money and men poured in from Bengal to support battles fought in the Punjab and the North-west Frontier province. The Faraizi movement, which was basically a movement of Muslim peasants against Hindu zamindars, was centered in Bengal. There were both kinds of religious leaders in Bengal: Haji Shariat-Ullah and Maulvi Karamat Ali were reformists and conciliatory towards the British government; there were also militant Muslim leaders like Mir Nasir Ali, better known as Titu Mir.

The strongest and most popular Muslim agitation against the British government was the Khilafat movement, which protested England's stance against Turkey in the first World War. It coincided with the rise of nationalism and demand for self-rule in India. The resentment of Indian Muslims against a foreign yoke was aggravated by British policy towards Turkey. As British imperial power augmented, it became imperative for it to curtail the strength of the Ottoman empire for a number of reasons. First, a strong imperial rival is a threat in itself. Second, giving support to
adjoining areas in conflict with Turkey, like Armenia and Bulgaria, meant the build-up of popular sentiment in favour of Britain in a strategic location. Third, the Ottoman empire being the last remnant of Islamic imperialism, Indian Muslims looked up to the Turkish sultan as the head of a symbolic, global Muslim empire much like the Holy Roman empire of the Catholics in 14th and 15th century Europe. Anti-British Muslim agitation in India could not be contained without removing the source from which it derived spiritual sustenance, and so British public sentiment linking Muslim discontent in India with the autocracy of Turkey, was fiercely vocal against Islamic power:

This popular outcry, coalescing with the post-Mutiny anti-Muslim feeling, roused some fiery tempers in Britain. It crystallized the old Christian-Islamic clash, recalled to mind the alleged Muslim initiative in India, revived the crusading spirit and raised hopes of new imperial gains. British learned journals of the period are replete with articles and comments written to show the impossibility of a Muslim power in Europe, the inherent incapacity of Islam to exist as a political system and the dire necessity of bringing the Ottoman Empire to an end.  

Indian Muslims openly agitated in name of the Turkish Khilafat, and their intransigence led the government to initiate a harsh policy against them, withholding privileges of education and employment, in a calculated bid to weaken them as a community.

Soon, however, there came a turning point both in the policy of the British government and in the attitude of the Indian Muslims. P. Hardy records this change of attitude in *The Muslims of British India*:

The British recognized that political persecution of devoted Muslims was no way to reduce Muslim passion and stopped the trials of actively-disaffected Muslims, the 'Wahhabi' trials, begun in 1864... They began, slowly at first, to offer educational boons to Muslims in the hope that more Muslims would then become qualified to compete successfully for the official and professional employment created by British rule. The premise of British policy was that it would be possible to balance and rule between the Hindus and the Muslim

33
communities, once significant elements of the latter had been convinced that they had more to gain by collaboration than by opposition. 14

An interim period of calm followed, as many Muslim social reformers saw the value of propitiation and cooperation. While the government extended opportunities of education and employment for Muslims, prominent members of the community spelled out the need for self-examination, self-criticism and self-improvement. Some British officials, like Curzon and Hardinge, were also sagacious enough to realize that the Muslim population could be sooner won over by relaxation of restrictive rules and even enticement, than by punishment. There were periods of genuine understanding and cooperation. In Bengal, Hardinge and Fuller devotedly advanced the cause of minority Muslims and became popular among them. In The British Raj in India, Burke and Quraish acknowledge the good offices of both these men:

Lord Hardinge was a tactful Governor-General and tried in a number of ways to assuage Muslim feelings, which had been hurt by the annulment of the partition of Bengal. East Bengali Muslims welcomed his announcement that a teaching and residential university—the first of its kind in India—would be founded at Dhaka . . . . He also resolved an ugly dispute relating to a mosque at Cawnpore to the satisfaction of the Muslims.15

Fuller was so dedicated to promoting to the welfare of the Muslims of East Bengal that he had to be removed from office before any regulation injurious to their interests could be implemented: "The Muslims had been shocked in the early part of Minto's regime by the resignation under pressure of Sir Bampfylde Fuller, Lieutenant Governor of East Bengal, who was noted for his pro-Muslim bias."16 On Minto's recommendation, Morley received a Muslim delegation headed by the Aga Khan that communicated the concerns of Indian Muslims about uniform electoral representation:

There is general agreement that the right of communal representation won by the Aga Khan deputation meant that the British formally
accepted that the Muslims in India formed a political entity separate from the Hindus. It became a feature of all future enactment and culminated in the constitutional recognition of the Muslims as a separate nation entitled to a homeland of their own.\textsuperscript{17}

It is true that the larger shifts in official policy were dictated by the needs of \textit{realpolitik}, and not social altruism alone, but the fruits of such amity were salubrious all the same.

The entente between the British government and its Muslim citizens peaked with the 1906 Partition of Bengal, which gave them a majority representation in East Bengal. However, Muslims became bitterly resentful again when the partition was annulled in 1911, on account of violent opposition from Bengali Hindus. They felt betrayed: "Their confidence that their interests were safe in British hands was shaken. It was not their loyalty but Hindu subversion that had paid off."\textsuperscript{18} This disillusionment strengthened Muslim realization that they had to make a more concerted effort for their rights. Always lukewarm towards the agenda of the Indian National Congress, they now felt the need of a separate political forum for themselves. On the face of fierce Hindu opposition to the Partition of Bengal, the All-India Muslim League was founded in Dacca in 1906, by Nawab Salimullah. And instead of resuming hostilities, they intensified their pacifist attitude towards the government. In their bid to please the British administration, Muslims allowed their relationship with Hindus to deteriorate and did not take part in the \textit{Swadeshi} movement. When Hindus began to agitate violently for self-government, the Muslim section of the Indian population became convenient allies in the British government's delaying tactics. In 1947, the departing British safeguarded the special needs of Indian Muslims by creating Pakistan. However, by making common cause with the British in resisting Hindu nationalism, Indian Muslims paid a heavy price; they had to cross to Pakistan through a bloodbath at the hands of angry, militant Hindus, and retaliated in kind towards innocent Hindus fleeing from Pakistan. Thus we see that
the actual relationship between the British colonials and Indian Muslims did not follow an even course of discord. Yet, when one searches for evidence of such harmonious contacts in the historical and imaginative literature left by colonial writers, one is more often than not disappointed. Anglo-Indian discourse contrarily effects a systematic rewriting of the history of Muslim presence in India that contradicts impressions received from actual history. This constitutes a continuous reworking of history from the advent of Muslim rule in India to their supplantation by the British and their subsequent struggle for independence.

Muslims ruled India for nine centuries. This long span is broadly divisible into two periods—the Turkish Sultanates and the Mughul empire. The Turkish tradition contributed to the type of the ruthless but capable Muslim soldier well known in western literature. The Persian tradition brought culture, ceremony and social graces, but this second type is not so well represented, the Muslim aristocrat being usually depicted as selfish and degenerate. Three dynasties of Delhi Sultans, the Slave kings, the Khiljis and the Tughlaks, ruled for about two centuries. Their reigns were marked by constant warfare and transference of power, and their greatest achievement was protecting the land against Mongol invasions. The Mughals unified the vast country, brought law and order (by means of the nizami and diwani adalats), provided for a large army (the mansabdari system), developed an elaborate structure for revenue (the tahsildari system), built public utilities and patronized art and culture. The personal talents and charisma of the six great Mughal emperors—Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb—imparted a touch of awe and splendour to their enlightened rule.

Western historians tend to lavish the greatest praise on Akbar, mainly because he was the least drawn towards Islam and attempted to combine Islam and Hinduism in a new religion called Din Elahi. This was certainly a sagacious political step comparable to the first Queen Elizabeth's establishment of the Anglican church to put
an end to religious conflict and dissent in her kingdom, and perhaps would have succeeded if he was merely uniting sects of a single religion and not two profoundly different faiths. To merit this single benevolent but impracticable step taken by Akbar above every other achievement of the other five Mughal emperors shows that opposition to Islam was a factor that overrode many other considerations. The fact that Aurangzeb, who was a staunch Muslim, is subjected to the worst vilification supports this idea. However, modern western historians, even if they are not entirely beyond prejudice, are comparatively more balanced than colonial historians in their representation of Muslim rule in India, and so we see that Michael Edwardes is not influenced by Aurangzeb's religious fervour to ignore his other qualities: "Perhaps the ablest of the Mughal emperors, Aurangzeb was determined to restore the Islamic character of the state, which he believed had been lost in Akbar's attempt to create a working partnership between Muslims and Hindus." Percival Spear describes the entire Mughul period as a time of enlightenment:

By coincidence or the working of some yet unfathomed historical law the sixteenth century was an age of greatness and creative endeavor nearly everywhere. Europe had its Renaissance and Reformation, its age of discovery and its literary glories. France with its Francis I and Calvin, Germany with its Luther, Italy with its galaxy of artists and divines, Spain with its empire builders and Ignatius Loyola, England with its Queen Elizabeth and Shakespeare make an impressive array... In this galaxy, the Indian constellation shone brightly with Babur, Sher Shah and Akbar in the political field, Abu'l Fazl in the world of scholarship and literature, the poets Faizi and Tulsi Das, the artistic creations of Fatehpur-Sikri and the Mughal school of painting.

British historians of the colonial time tended to view this great phase of Indian history as a period of misrule, exploitation, religious persecution and empty pageantry.

Anglo-Indian writing develops the myth of a "dark interregnum" in India, an alleged rule of unenlightened military despotism and severe religious intolerance,
preceding the advent of the British. Initially, the idea of a dark interregnum was justly counted from the chaotic years after the death of the last strong Mughul emperor, Aurangzeb. Gradually, however, the term was applied to the entire period of Muslim rule. While they reigned, the awe inspired by the six great Mughul emperors precluded any slur on their image but, as Spear points out, the political defeat of their successors brought a corresponding fall in their reputation:

The awe of power, or "the divinity that doth hedge a king" is something that affects every judgement and every situation. Without it hates and distastes long concealed resume their natural influence. Thus it was with the Mughals . . . In judging the fortunes of political powers, one has always to keep in mind not only their intrinsic resources, but the idea or reputation of their power with that of external forces.21

Shorn of absolute power, Muslims not only became subject to "hates and distastes long concealed" but new hates and distastes as well. Hindu sentiment against Muslims, allied with their desire to reconstruct the history of an ancient golden age, contributed partially to this change of attitude. Sudhir Chandra, in The Oppressive Present, examines the sub-text of Hindu responses to the Muslim presence in India, in an attempt to analyse the larger context of Indian reaction to colonialism:

As we saw in the preceding chapters, one section of the Hindu intelligentsia in the nineteenth century traced the general decline of the country to the beginning of Muslim rule. As it fulfilled certain collective needs, this belief was not dependent on historical evidence. It possessed sufficient vitality to defy the facts that undermined it.32

Even such antiquated, orthodox Hindu social practices as child marriage, and sati or widow burning, were traced to the presence of cruel and lustful Muslim men in the country. Chandra surveys the writings of Bankim Chandra, Harish Chandra, Radhacharan Goswami and many others, to illustrate how prevalent attitudes towards Muslims intermingled with the acceptance of the British as god-sent deliverers: "Resentment against Muslims was more than the need for a dark interregnum,
necessary to sustain the twin myths of divine dispensation and a glorious past."^23 Bankim Chandra was especially abusive towards Muslims, and his Anandamatt, with a retroactive medieval setting, is unabashedly crude in its denouncement of Muslim rule in Bengal. It glorifies a specialized cult of Kali, united in religion and roguery, that is singlemindedly committed to the destruction of Muslims (as opposed to the Thuggee cult that victimized people of all creeds):

The novel depicts a band of sanyasis, called Santanas or children, whose objective was to annihilate Muslim rule in Bengal. They called themselves children because in their temple they placed three images of the goddess Kali as representation of the motherland. They followed the principle that the end justifies the means, and did not shirk from lawlessness and roguery. The children put an end to Muslim rule but had to put up with British rule in its place. The novel denounces the former but praises the latter. Bankim Chandra's other writings also display galling resentment against the Muslim conquest of India. 24

Since the idea of Muslim misrule promoted the cause of British imperialism, it was quickly absorbed into the colonial rhetoric.

The idea of a harmonious Hindu civilization, predating the world's two most populous, conflict-ridden religions, Christianity and Islam, also appealed to a weary and disillusioned Europe. Great scholarly interest was shown in ancient Hindu culture at this time, particularly in France and Germany, with discoveries of the Upanishads and the Mahabharata, and England shared in the activities of the newly founded Asiatic Society. Logically, the twin purposes of glorifying a past Hindu civilization and a modern western one resulted in an underrating of the centuries in between. We see a similar contempt for the European Middle Ages, sandwiched as they were between the shining Graeco-Roman civilizations of the past and the modern renaissance. This other "dark interregnum" incidentally was an age of Islamic enlightenment, just as the period of Mughal rule in India had its own achievements.

39
Partha Chatterjee quotes Nehru as having identified the period of Muslim rule as the second great historical movement or cycle of the nation:

The second cycle occurs in the periods of the Islamic empires, reaching its peak during the reign of the Mughul Emperor Akbar. It takes the form of a new cultural synthesis between indigenous and Turkish, Afghan, Iranian and Arabic elements, and attains great brilliance in art, architecture, literature, music and even some synthetic religious cults and philosophies.  

There is little recognition of this on the part of Hindu and Anglo-Indian writers. Although some western scholars continued to show interest in the ancient Hindu civilization, British administrators showed open contempt for Hindu culture because of indefensible rites like female infanticide, burning of widows on their husbands' funeral pyres, ritual murder and caste segregation. In order to ensure political support from Hindus they had to balance this critical judgement by declaring even more emphatically that the previous, Muslim rule was one of oppression and lawlessness. Could not this myth have been engendered, besides, in the need for the British masters to reassure themselves that there was no danger of Muslim ascendancy in the future because they were characteristically unfit to rule? Thus, the continuum is preserved of the backward Muslim, from past Muslim rule to contemporary Muslim society.

This vilification of the centuries-old Muslim rule in India amounts to a denial of the fact that British imperialism shared many of its methods of domination; indeed, many of the visible props of the British Raj were part of the legacy left by the Mughuls. Percival Spear states in his concise history named *India*: "The Mughals found... very little of either integration or organization. But they left a form, and a name and a precedent for everything, as the British discovered as they began to examine the territories they had taken over." In the early years of Company rule, the administration operated through the existing legal and revenue systems inherited from the Mughuls and continued to do so while it gained experience as to how the land
could be ruled. Reforms were gradual and executed through trial and error. Persian and Urdu were the languages used to communicate with the people and, even after English was introduced as the official language, remained as expedient alternatives. In *The Story of My Life*, Philip Meadows Taylor writes about his diligent efforts to master the Persian language as preparation to enter the Company’s Civil Service, while he was in the employ of the Nizam of Hyderabad (1825-29): “I worked on as well as I could, taking care not to neglect my Persian studies, and occasionally reading with a Moonshee or a native teacher, and looked forward hopefully to the time when, by some possibility, I might gain an entrance into the Civil Service.” Besides the use of Persian, there were other forms of borrowings, as well. The pomp and pageantry, the imperial ceremonies and etiquette, titles and designations were directly culled from the Mughuls. Islam and Christianity being both egalitarian and hospitable religions, missionary efforts were integral to the success of both empires; the scorned lower-caste Hindus were easily won over by the promise of equality, if not of material rewards. The greater success of one empire in one aspect can be balanced with the more enduring success of the other in another. The British were able to unify the whole of India and maintain greater law and order, because of their superior technology—more powerful guns, railway, telephone and telegraph—and because of their rational, secular outlook. Their predecessors had to make do with more primitive instruments of control and made themselves unpopular, besides, with the majority of their subjects because they enforced discriminatory policy based on religion. In the words of Perceval Spear:

War to extend or defend the *Dar-ul-Islam* was holy and hence arose the concept of jehad or holy war. In spite of this belligerence, tolerance towards the unbeliever has been a historic feature of Muslim doctrine. Religious minorities exist in various countries today after thirteen centuries of Muslim rule. An unbeliever was a *dhimmi* who purchased protection by payment of a poll tax called *jyzia*. He was certainly a second-class citizen but he did continue to exist.
Although more humane than forced conversion or extermination, the jyzia is decidedly discriminatory, and the excuse that religious tolerance was not practised in any significant degree during those times, either in Europe or in Asia (Bernard Grun's The Timetables of History informs us that in the year 1536, when Emperor Humayun was on the throne of Delhi, three hundred and seventy-six religious houses were dissolved in England by royal decree and William Tyndale, an English reformer, was burned at the stake), does not change the fact that the privileges of non-Muslim subjects were substantially curtailed during Mughal rule.

From a broader perspective, the Muslims were more successful than the British as empire-builders, since they were able to take permanent roots in the land they conquered. They did not colonize the territory and disown the people. They immigrated, in wave after wave, penetrating deeper and deeper into the social fabric and so, even while they exploited the country's riches for their own aggrandizement, they kept the wealth of India intact. They made India their home. The British colonizers used India to enrich their distant, nuclear home; consequently, for all their civilizing and modernizing measures, they remained aliens and were made to leave when Indian nationalism came of age. British imperialism was built around a paradox; its custodians sought acceptance as rulers but enforced social distance. Even its evangelical mission was marred by this same paradox, whether one speaks strictly of religious conversion or of the conversion to rational enlightenment through western education. The Indians were asked to share the religion, philosophy and culture of the West; yet, they were kept at arm's length, on considerations of race and colour. Conversion to Islam meant total acceptance. That is why, despite political, economic and educational backwardness in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Islam's hold on the imagination of a significant segment of India's population was not reversed. When official blunders and inconsistencies seem temporarily to weaken the hold of
the British Raj in *A Passage to India*, E. M. Forster tries to regain confidence by recalling what appears to him the more final defeat of the Muslims:

> The triumphant machine of civilization may suddenly hitch and be mobilized into a car of stone, and at such moments the destiny of the British seem to resemble their predecessors', who also entered the country with intent to refashion it, but were in the end worked into its pattern and covered with its dust. ²⁹

Forster does not seem to grasp that it is precisely the readiness to be "worked into [India's] pattern" which has prevented Muslims from being "covered with its dust." It has made them gain resilience from their swinging fortunes and live to become absorbed into the living texture of modern India. So Muslim rule cannot be bracketed away as a void, an interruption or an anomaly. What causes Anglo-Indian discourse to characterize it as such is the need to dissipate those values that challenge the supremacy of western civilization and question the motives for spreading it around the globe.

In an earlier aside in the same novel, Forster has a sadder comment to make: "How can the mind take hold of such a country? Generations of invaders have tried, but they remain in exile. The important towns they build are only retreats, their quarrels the malaise of men who cannot find their way home" (*Passage*, pp. 148-9). The last sentence expresses a wistful desire not simply for the soil of England, but also for a lost time when beliefs, loyalties and people's sense of purpose were clearly defined. It clearly suggests that the roots of antagonism couched in the imperialist discourse are to be found in the barely acknowledged feelings of loss suppressed in modern western culture. Partha Chatterjee, discussing Bankimchandra's answer to the conflict of progress and spiritualism in Indian nationalism, contrasts with it the singleminded pursuit of reason in western culture:

> The superiority of the West was in the materiality of its culture. The West had achieved progress, prosperity and freedom because it had placed Reason at the heart of its culture. The distinctive culture of the West was in its science, its technology and its love of progress. But
culture did not consist only of the material aspect of life. There was the spiritual aspect too, and here the European Enlightenment had little to contribute. 30

Progress, prosperity and freedom were obtained at a price. Progress caused fragmentation of traditional institutions, producing general insecurity in the larger society; the taste for individual freedom corroded commitments and strained relationships; and prosperity brought mental restlessness. In addition, the colonists suffered from the pains of exile. When they looked at Islamic society, they certainly saw backwardness and rigidity, but they also saw strong commitment to faith, to tradition, to family, to community, and to the ultimate value of social cohesiveness, even at the expense of individual freedom. It is needless to deny that such an image of durability could arouse a certain kind of regret, even if it was accompanied by self-disdain for such weakness. Ulysses's compatriots may well have been simultaneously beguiled and repelled by the siren song of the East, and the worldly discourse of Islam definitely spoke the Oriental language most familiar to the West. The guilty desire to escape from the insecurities, divisions and contradictions of western culture, into a theoretical state of stability, may have contributed to the defensive mantle of opposition to Islam.

Historical writings on India by Anglo-Indian scholars clearly reveals strong influence of the official stance towards Muslims and even reflects slight changes in the direction of official policy. These works are more factual and analytical than those of contemporary Muslim historians who wrote about the triumphant days of Muslim rule in India, and were full of imperial bluster and the rhetoric of despotic administrators. However, the writings of the Anglo-Indian historians possess an undeniable conflict of methodology and motivation. Their scholarly search for truth all too often clashes against their need to belittle Muslim achievements in order to celebrate British rule, and reflect the views held by political philosophers in the West.
The line drawn by the latter between European and Oriental despots is sometimes absurdly flimsy, as Homi Bhabha points out in his article, "Sly Civility:"

Such is the devious strategy of Montesquieu's idea of despotism which authoritatively shaped the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' image of Mughal and Brahmin India. For Montesquieu, it is in the difference between monarchy and absolute monarchy (that is, sovereignty without honour) that despotism emerges as a textualization of the Turk and faces Versailles and the Court with its uncanny horrifying double.31

The fact that even Anglo-Indian historians base their premises on assumptions held for centuries in remote Europe provides an illustrative backdrop to the way fictional authors allow their actual, first-hand knowledge of individual Muslim people or of the general Muslim community to become waylaid, under subtle pressures of cultural defensiveness. This kind of patriotic review of history is integral to the self-image of any imperial nation, and Muslim historians indulged in it no less than the British, often expressing contempt for the idolatry and caste distinctions of their Hindus subjects. However, the prejudice couched in British histories tends to be overlooked because they are otherwise so analytical and authoritative; as a result, their unrelentingly disfavourable projection of Muslim rule in India, besides being a symptom of deep-grained antipathies, becomes also an instrument of their perpetuation.

John Clark Marshman (1794-1877), Henry Ferdinand Blochmann (1838-1878), Sir William Wilson Hunter (1840-1940) and Henry Beveridge (1837-1929) are all Anglo-Indian scholars who have written historical studies on the Muslim rule in Bengal. Marshman, a missionary historian with understandable zeal for the dominion of a Christian nation, wrote The History of Bengal with an aim "to magnify the British achievement in India by depicting the proximate Muslim period in the darkest possible way." 32 His own words declare as much: "the space allotted to the Mahomedan period has been abbreviated to make room for a fuller narrative of the
progress of British power, in which the Queen's Indian subjects are more particularly interested." 33 Blochmann, an influential member of The Asiatic Society of Bengal, a supervisory member of the Semitic group of the Bibliotheca Indica and a student of Fleisher, the renowned German orientalist, is profoundly knowledgeable about Muslim rule in Bengal and meticulous in his fact-finding endeavours. Being German, he may be surmised to have felt little instinctive regard for the interests of the British empire and so, his representation of Muslim rule in Bengal in various historical essays and articles (which his early death prevented from becoming compiled as the best general history of medieval Bengal) is very positive; however it is interesting to note that Blochmann received official patronage only because of a change in the British government's policy towards Muslims, at the initiative of the viceroy, Lord Mayo.

W. W. Hunter wrote an excellently researched, three volume Annals of Rural Bengal but curiously his focus was only on the concluding phase of Muslim rule in India. Delowar Hossain comments:

In other words he was a historian of the transitional period between Muslim and British rule, and studied medieval Bengal in its decline in a wish to vindicate British supremacy. This occasionally caused him to exaggerate the achievements of the succeeding British government. For all that, Hunter did see the medieval history of Bengal in a clear general perspective. 34

This might seem like a paradoxical statement, but actually the existence of prejudice in an otherwise clear vision supports my thesis; dislike for Muslims is so ingrained in the cultural orientation of the West that even scientific seekers after truth slip into unfair selectivity of focus or into self-serving interpretation. The British official position is much more blatantly defended in a much shorter disquisition written at the behest of the Viceroy, Lord Mayo, to explain the reasons why Muslims were dissatisfied with British rule, The Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen? The long colourful title is in keeping with the exaggerated claims made by him inside. Here he exhibits an acute awareness of the
full extent of degradation suffered by Muslims, particularly in Bengal, with their loss of political power, but this understanding, far from producing empathy for the disadvantaged Muslim population of Bengal, leads Hunter to evolve a theory of their proneness to vindictive behaviour. Just as the presence of 'motive' constitutes a powerful factor in apprehending the criminal in a court of law, so the existence of Muslim grievances under British rule becomes, for Hunter, the surest indication of their willingness to conspire against the government. In *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier*, also focused on the Muslims of Bengal and written more than a hundred years after Hunter's *The Indian Musalmans*, Richard Eaton draws attention to this:

... European colonialists have long stereotyped the Muslim clergy, or ulama, as a conservative class of men obstinately hostile to 'change.' Aware that North Africa, India and Indonesia had all been ruled by Muslims prior to the rise of European imperialism, French, British and Dutch colonial officials anxiously suspected Muslim resentment of their rule in these regions. In 1871 W. W. Hunter published an influential book that portrayed India's ulama as stagnant, unprogressive, disenfranchised, and potentially seditious—a stereotype that lingered long after the close of the colonial era.  

Drawing attention to his own findings, Eaton proceeds to declare such accusation to be unjustified: "Evidence presented in this study, however, has pointed to the dynamic role played by Bengal's religious gentry in advancing the frontiers of both the Mughal political-ideological system and the Islamic world."  

Beveridge, who made a detailed historical study of the Muslims of Bengal, shows the same intermingling of prejudice and objective observation. Quoting and commenting on Beveridge's work, Delwar Hossain asserts:

Again it was Beveridge who for the first time tried to explain 'the excessive preponderance of Mahomedans in Eastern Bengal in the light of a consequence of food-habits, superstitions and family relationships of the Hindus and Muslims' and doubtless attributed it to 'colonization' rather than 'conversion' ... . These views were corroborated and expanded by succeeding writers on the subject.
And yet, his sound knowledge and understanding of the Muslims in Bengal does not prevent him from taking up the official position when the desirability of British rule in India comes into question:

Beveridge's depiction of Muslim rule in Bengal is diverse, sometimes critical and occasionally appreciative, but on the question of the utility that had been accrued to the country from the introduction of the British administration, he is wholly aligned with other contemporary Anglo-Indian historians. Muslim rule, according to him, had been characterized by lawlessness and insecurity.  

Thus we see that all these Anglo-Indian historians, more or less, approach their subject with the purpose of making western imperialism appear a boon for the people of India.

One way for the British to justify their presence in India was of course by reiterating that their predecessors were inefficient and oppressive. The sullen demeanour preserved by the fallen Muslims did not improve relations between them and the new rulers. Any historical account of British rule in India reveals that the Muslim inhabitants bitterly resented it and rebelled at every pretext. Nineteenth and early twentieth century Muslim leaders were moderate and accommodating; they spoke in terms of cooperation and compromise, and not in the language of extremism and discord that has come to be associated with the mainstream Muslim leadership, during the past few decades. They understood the value of western education and believed in fostering better relations with Hindus. Such currents of progressive thought, recorded in voluminous details by Naresh Jain in his study on Indian Muslims titled *Muslims in India: a Biographical Dictionary*, have not found acknowledgement in Anglo-Indian literature; if progressive Muslims are depicted at all, they are turned reactionaries with a vengeance, when their self-interest is at stake. If historical representation, despite its essential commitment to truth, can become opinionated and self-serving, it is perfectly natural for creative writing to be heavily acculturized. Not
only does fictional literature not have to conform to any standard of truth; it openly serves an egotistical god, the writer himself. As an extension and a reflection of the author's ego, it draws on both — the dynamics of personal experience and the accumulated, unchanging thrust of cultural being, which in turn is shaped by perceived notions of history — and it is a challenge for the critic to discover which mode of affiliation is dominant in texts where these are in subtle conflict.
CHAPTER 3

OVERLOOKING PLURALITIES OF SUBJECT AND PERSPECTIVE

The delineation of the Muslim in imaginative Anglo-Indian writing is rigid and homogeneous, following neither temporal developments nor territorial diversities obtaining in the community. In the last chapter we have seen how the impact of the changing political fortunes of Indian Muslims, upon themselves and on the successive groups of British colonials and immigrants, have been subordinated in Anglo-Indian writing to the conventional Western reaction to Islam. In this chapter, we will see how complexities of spatial distribution also tend to be disregarded in such discourse. Either an individual from one region, sect, class, generation, etc is taken to typify the entire community, or else some amorphous, supposedly generic, characteristics are hinged on to individuals who seem to belong just about anywhere in northern India. This tendency to overlook differences among the many sub-cultures of Muslim India is characteristic of most Anglo-Indian literature.

Ameer Ali, in Confessions of a Thug, cannot be said to belong to any locality or class; his outwardly exhibited, social self is painstakingly put together with every attribute commonly associated with Muslims and calculated, besides, to produce maximum contrast with his secret identity as a Thug. It will not be an exaggeration to say that he is intended to be the archetypal Muslim, down to the deadly duality hidden in his heart. Mahbub, the hot-blooded Pathan of the North-west Frontier region in Kipling's Kim, may seem like a strongly individualized exception but actually his narrow, tribal outlook serves to articulate the same primitive urges that are generally ascribed to Muslims. Among the three authors, Forster is relatively the most sensitive
to the complexities of Muslim experience. In her book titled *E.M. Forster's Passages to India*, Robin Jared Lewis calls attention to his ability to get under the accidental impression of individual traits, and articulate basic patterns of identity from within. She particularly expands on the close association he had with the more educated and enterprising members of the Muslim community: "The Muslims in his novel, with exception of Aziz, are not based upon any specific acquaintances, but are derived from prolonged contact with a talented and dynamic group of Indian Muslims whom Forster met on his first visit to India." However, even though Forster tries to rise to the challenge of effectively portraying Indian Muslims in *A Passage to India* by presenting a wide assortment of male and female characters, of different ages and from different localities, classes and professions, most of these depictions are shallow; they stop short at denotation and fail to evoke a significant range of connotations. In contrast, the representations offered by Bengali Muslim writers bring out the wide-ranging and contentious nature of these social variables. Turning back from these to the large number of Muslim characters who appear in the pages of Anglo-Indian fiction, we have to come to the conclusion that the latter fail to exhibit the full range of subcultural diversity and ideological conflict that actually attaches to the Muslim community.

Because the discursive image of the Muslim community has evolved and filtered through certain needs, achievements and inadequacies of the perceiving minds of "other" cultures, the empirical complexities of their own identity, at any given moment in time, have been relatively ignored. These pluralities are multifarious, and can be identified by applying different criterions of distribution, though these categories also sometimes tend to overlap. In the introduction of his two-volume *Muslims in India: a Biographical Dictionary*, Naresh Kumar Jain mentions several sects, groups, affiliations and derivations in the Muslim community that belie its homogeneous image in British literature. The list, comprising "Wahabis and Faraizis,
Deobandis and Aligarhians, titled gentry and commoners, loyalists, Congressmen and Muslim Leaguers, Home Rulers and Khilafatists, Ahrars and Unionists, Khaksars, Razakars and Red Shirts, Sunnis, Shiahs, Bohras, Khojas, Ahmadiyas, Moplahs and Memons and a host of other categories,\textsuperscript{2} is largely determined by political affiliation, some with exceedingly short-term ends. Some distinctions, however, like the Shia-Sunni divide or the classification of titled gentry and commoners, express more enduring and dissimilar categories. In addition, the presence of language-based, regional sub-cultures within prominent religious communities, largely overlooked by Anglo-Indian fiction and even down-played by Jain, is nevertheless an extremely 'significant' feature of the Indian sub-continent. These local cultures inspire feelings almost as strong as religious sentiment, and prevent a complete fusion of national identity based on religion. India was partitioned in 1947 on the issue of religious self-determination, but the regional cultures belonging to the two wings of Pakistan were so disparate that within four years blood was spilled on the streets of Dhaka, to assert the issue of cultural self-determination of its Bengali population. This event, the Language Movement of 1951, was the beginning of a long struggle for regional autonomy that finally ended in the independence of Bangladesh.

The emergence of Bangladesh manifests the coexistence of two contradictory impulses in Islamic culture and its agenda of self-propagation: a centripetal one that inspires all believers to rally around its centre of universal and permanent symbols, and a centrifugal one that drives its sub-groups to turn away from its homogenizing influence, to find niches for their many, self-articulating differences. As Jain, echoing many other commentators on Islam, reiterates:

What held this heterogeneous community together was the sentiment of a common allegiance to Islam and its symbols — mosques, sufi shrines and Hajj. This sentiment has been a great cohesive force among Muslims cutting across doctrinal and other differences within the community and giving them a very strong sense of religious identity. But this religious cohesiveness did not mean that their social, economic and political interests were the same, and what affected
Muslims of one area or class did not necessarily affect those of other areas or classes. ³

Not only that, even Muslims in one area do not necessarily subscribe to the same ideas, interests and sensibilities. Bangladesh can be taken as an overriding symbol for any self-divisive, hybrid nationalistic entity, with a long history of territorial migration, religious conversion or cultural assimilation, or a combination of all of three. It certainly reflects debilitating paradoxes contained in the specific hybridity which is integral to Muslim culture everywhere, and most of all in India, where there is always that inevitable implantation of a global Islamic ideology on the narrow territorial units of culture.

Even in the later years of British rule, with recent developments in the region still wrapped in the nebulous future, the province of Bengal had a majority of Muslim inhabitants. And yet, the Bengali character in Anglo-Indian fiction is invariably a Hindu, representing the narrow type of the educated middle-class. One of the most well-known character types in this genre is the satirical portrait of the Bengali babu; notable examples are Kipling's Hurree Chunder Mookerjee and "Guthrie's classic Bengali babus, Hurry Bungsho Jabberjee and Chunder Bindabun Ghosh.⁴ It hardly needs to be stated that this highly exaggerated fiction-figure diminishes the entire Bengali community, just as the absence of any sort of Bengali Muslim character in Anglo-Indian fiction reduces its scope of Muslim characterization. Bengali Muslims shared many social practices with Bengali Hindus, besides following the basic Islamic teachings to be found everywhere else in India. This produced a hybrid self-identity that was so strong in character that no less than two syncretic nationalistic movements were needed in future years to give it a home. Bengalis comprised the single largest ethnic group in the the state of Pakistan, which emerged under the banner of Muslim nationhood in 1947. Again, it was this same population that found some of its deepest cultural sensibilities, those anchored in its distinct language, literature, and
social ceremonies, antagonized by the idioms of religious conservatism propounded by Pakistan, for the purpose of national unity. This conflict, along with the fact of economic repression that the western wing of Pakistan imposed on the eastern province, not to mention the genocide unleashed on the Bengalis by its military junta in 1971, induced the latter to fight for yet another national identity, that of Bangladesh. Even after twenty-five years of independence, ethnicity and religious sentiment continue to be uneasy consorts in Bangladesh's concept of nationhood.

Bangladesh's dual experience of violent self-assertion, and its fierce, present-day controversies of national identity, serve to demonstrate the force behind latent contradictions of religious ethnicity, hearkening back to its days of turmoil in British India. If we go back now to the period of British rule under discussion here, we must realize that India being a land of great geographical diversity, with an abundance of local cultural influences, Indian Muslims were perpetually confronted with a crisis of identity involving regionalism, state nationalism, and pan-Islamic internationalism. From the perspective of Anglo-Indian literature, the first element is usually ignored, the second called into question by naming Muslims outsiders in Hindustan and the third simply laughed at as a naive dream of power.

Next to basic religious faith, and language-based ethnicity, the third prominent component of Muslim identity is the matter of Islamic sect. The majority of Indian Muslims are Sunnis; yet, the Islamic festival that is most commonly depicted in Anglo-Indian fiction is the Mohurram, an occasion observed with extreme fervour only by Shiah Muslims. This fanfare too developed through close contact over the years with the rites of Hinduism. There is clear evidence of the influence of the Durga Puja on the pageantry of the Mohurram. Both festivals last for ten days, at the end of which the garishly decorated, symbolic tomb of the Prophet's grandsons is carried by a procession of devotees to the riverside, like the gaily dressed up figure of the goddess Durga, and both are relinquished into the water with tears and laments.
To foreign observers, such exaggerated behaviour easily appear as signs of unreason and immaturity. As a young newspaper reporter, Kipling wrote a satirical sketch on the Moharrum, called "The City on the Two Creeds" for the Civil and Military Gazette, where condescension lurks close under the humour:

Because many hundreds of years ago Yezid, son of Mowwajib, first of the Ommeiad Caliphs of Damascus, met on the plains of Kerbela, west of the Euphrates, and slew Hossain and Hassan, sons of Ali, First or Fourth (as you are Shiah or Sunni) of the Caliphs, and of Fatima, his wife, it is now necessary for every Deputy Commissioner in the Province, once a year to spend half the night in a native city while the representations of the tombs of the butchered and Blessed Imams stagger up and down the ways. The consequences of any act, some moralists hold, are infinite and eternal; and this instance backs the theory.5

The other reason why this event attracts a disproportionate amount of interest from foreign observers, as a major Muslim religious observance, is its potential for causing communal unrest. Forster too seems to have been quite troubled by this conflict, or at least sufficiently amused by the flimsy causes that sparked them off, to mention Mohurrum several times in his A Passage to India:

Moharram was approaching, and as usual the Chandrapore Mohammedans were building paper towers of a size too large to pass under the branches of a certain peepul tree. One knew what happened next; the tower stuck, a Mohammedan climbed up the peepul and cut the branch off, the Hindus protested, there was a religious riot, and Heaven knew what, with perhaps the troops sent for. (Passage, p. 110)

While it cannot be denied that the rites of Mohurrum have a potential for theatricality, well-suited to purpose of narrative, the fact remains that for the majority of Muslims (the Sunni sect), Mohurrum is simply a quiet day of mourning.

Besides regionalism and religious sectarianism, Muslims were divided by fairly rigid class stratification. The demographic constitution of Bengal during colonial rule shows that not only was there a considerable concentration of Muslims
in this lower deltaic province, there were also multiple social classes in the community. Richard Eaton, in his detailed study of the Muslim population of Bengal from 1204 to 1760, identifies three prominent influences in the growth of class-structure among them. The first wave of immigrants, who were Turks fleeing from the Mongol invasion, brought the tradition of mystic sainthood or Sufism. The pretensions of an haute culture were fostered among a second group, descendants of an aristocratic or genteel class that emerged under the Mughals:

... an influx of a new elite class of ashraf Muslims--immigrants from points west of the delta, or their descendants—who were typically administrators, soldiers, mystics, scholars or long-distance merchants. For them a rich tradition of Persian art and literature served to mediate and inform Islamic piety, which most of them subordinated to the secular ethos of Mughul imperialism.6

A simple, earthy, subsistence-oriented lifestyle prevailed over the third and most numerous segment, viz. the peasants: "By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, the dominant carriers of Islamic civilization in Bengal were not the urban ashraf, but peasant cultivators of the eastern frontier, who in extraordinary ways assimilated Islam to their agrarian worldview."7 The Muslim middle-class is conspicuously missing in most Anglo-Indian fiction. It is true that at the beginning of British rule in India, there did not exist a group identifiable as such. There was a large section of poor Muslims who owned no land and lived as serfs. A much smaller group enjoyed privileges of wealth and social distinction under the Mughals and left service-oriented occupations to Hindus.

When in power they had monopolized high offices, leaving the daily work of administration to a Hindu middle class. When deprived of office they had no profession to fall back upon and hardly any group that could take a positive attitude towards the new order. The dispossessed gentry and reduced maulvis could only sigh for the past and hate the present.8
The blessing of distinction turned to burden, for these highly placed Muslims found themselves unequipped to adjust with the British administration. But changes began to creep in. Muslim societies presented highly volatile conditions all through the colonial age, as old families of wealth and distinction sank into poverty and oblivion and new bastions of power emerged under British patronage. The opportunity of English education opened up new avenues of career for the adventurous. Also, a shrinking of landed property through fragmentation among multiple inheritors caused young men to rethink their dependence on the land and seek employment in the towns and in the metropolis of Calcutta. And so, the bourgeois class gradually did come to exist alongside the older social classes, viz. the aristocracy and the peasantry, even though it developed far more slowly among the Muslims than among the Hindus.

Driven always by the impulse to define and justify British presence in the subcontinent, Anglo-Indian writers exhibit a highly selectivized rendering of the community. Muslim characters are derived predominantly from three groups: the aristocrat, the soldier and the servant. In Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug* are the pompous Nawab Hussein Yar Jung Bahadur and Nawab Subzee Khan, both preoccupied with little besides feasting and general merry-making in the company of nautch-girls, the Anglo-Indian word for professional Indian dancers; the Khan in Taylor's *Tippo Sultaun* only seems to be engaged in a perpetual search for the perfect wife or mistress; the Khan Bahadur of Forster's *A Passage to India*, described as a "philanthropist" by the narrator, but his community work seems to be confined to fostering and guiding communal feeling among his young Muslim proteges. Almost without exception, Muslim personages in high places are shown to be vain, indolent and self-indulgent, and consequently unsuitable for leadership. Kipling, the darling Rudy Baba of doting Indian servants, has little interest in Indian nawabs and potentates. As a secret informer in his novel *Kim*, Mahbub Ali occupies a middle position between soldier and state servant. Indian servants are shown to excel in their
particular duties only through the able guidance of British masters; their natural propensity for lying, stealing and cheating is held at bay by fear of a superior intelligence. A Passage to India gives brief, occasional glimpses of industrious and disciplined servants in Anglo-Indian homes. One only needs to turn to Muhammad Latif, in the employ of the vainglorious Aziz who has few scruples himself, to recognize where credit for good behaviour is due.

Forster, besides being the most perspicuous of the Anglo-Indian writers, wrote at a later time when Muslims had started to enter the different professions. A Passage to India includes professionals from several fields, e.g. medicine and law, but there is little actual character differentiation among them. Their professions do not sit easy on them; they hang loose, rather like badly fitted clothes. The narrative abounds in signs of Aziz's lack of professionalism; as a doctor, he exhibits no preference for hygiene, scientific truth or objectivity. His disregard for villagers drinking contaminated water during a cholera epidemic at Mau is appalling. Mahmoud Ali is just as unprofessional as a lawyer. One only needs to compare his emotional outbursts in the courtroom during Aziz's trial with the subdued professionalism of Amritrao and Mr. Das, to realize that the narrator wants to make a point of his incompetence: "Give us back Mrs Moore for five minutes only, and she will save my friend, she will save the name of his sons; don't rule her out, Mr. Das; take back those words as you yourself are a father; tell me where they have put her, oh, Mrs. Moore..." (Passage, p. 227). In vain does Mr. Das try to show him the error of his style, by declaring "This is no way to defend your case" (Passage, p. 227). The farce that develops in this crucial and dramatic scene is achieved at the expense of the burgeoning Muslim intelligentsia. Even Ronny's contemptuous explanation "...her disjointed remarks had doubtless been sold to Mahmoud Ali for a few annas; that sort of thing never ceases in the East" (Passage, p. 227) cannot be separated from the
narrator's view, because how else did Mahmoud Ali get this information? Forster does not even hint at an alternative source.

The small coterie of Muslim characters in A Passage to India may have been inspired by a real group of young Muslim intellectuals, but these fictional counterparts are much debased variations of the actual sources. Robin Lewis's well-documented book, E. M. Forster's Passages to India, is very informative about the Muslim men the writer met on his several visits to India; besides the well-known Ross Masood, she discusses some highly successful doctors, lawyers and political activists and is frankly appreciative of them:

Men like Hamidullah and the Nawab Bahadur are not 'toadies,' as Chaudhuri would have it: they are intelligent and perceptive men keenly aware of their delicate position in India as a distinct minority in an uncertain period of social and political change. The same is true of Forster's Muslim friends, men like Dr. M. A. Ansari, who later served as president of Congress. It is to them that we must turn to understand the curiously equivocal nature of the Muslims in the novel. 

Her assessment of the historical figures is both perceptive and positive, but her total identification of the real with the fictional is naive. She fails to detect the enormous gap between individuals like Ansari and the shallow, cowardly and bickering crowd that represent the new Muslim intelligentsia in A Passage to India. The nature of systematic diminution applied to the characterization of Muslims becomes especially clear as the reader turns one by one to the antecedents of Aziz's character that Lewis herself presents.

According to Forster's own declaration, Aziz is modelled on Syed Ross Masood. But Masood, the carefully-groomed grandson of the illustrious Sir Saiyyid Ahmed of Aligarh, was a far more admirable personality than the cowardly and vulgar Dr. Aziz. Lewis, while exploring the sources of Forster's insight into Muslim culture in terms of the different phases of his travel in India, also refers to the dynamic personality Masood presented at Oxford. In her words, "The distinguished historian,

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H. A. L. Fisher, who was Masood’s tutor and later became Warden of New College, remembered his pupil as an all round success. Among his many qualities, Fisher makes particular mention of Masood’s "brilliant conversation," a talent conspicuously missing in Aziz. When he does draw on Masood for a convincing portrait of the modern Muslim youth, Forster concentrates on outward appearance and the less flattering features of his character. Jalil Kidwai’s Murqqa-e-Masood (Portrait of Masood) quotes a friend, Saiyidian, to identify his propensity for dramatic speech bordering on deception:

He [Masood] knew how to utilize the art of exaggeration in his speech so as to produce the maximum effect in telling an anecdote or drawing a word-picture of a scene or character. But there was no malice or desire to offend in this exaggeration. It was just an artistic device, employed in the spirit of an artist.

Whatever Masood’s good intentions were, the very fact that Saiyidian feels called upon to defend this apparent insincerity in a friend proves that this was a weakness in his character. The other attribute that Masood shares with Aziz is his enthusiasm for Persian poetry: "Accounts of Masood’s personality from those who were close to him all stress characteristics which describe Aziz equally well. The foremost of these is a passion for Urdu and Persian poetry: Aziz is always quoting poetry to his friends." However, given Forster’s inability to appreciate Masood’s poetry, this resemblance is meant to water down Aziz’s image with pathetic sensibility, and not to promote it. And yet these are the two traits belonging to Masood that Forster chooses to invest in Aziz. As for other aspects of Aziz’s character, it is difficult to see how they reflect those of his model; there is no evidence that Masood was boisterous, weak-minded, duplicitious or unkind.

Lewis traces several other sources for Aziz: Dr. Ansari, Saeed Mirza and Muhammad Ali—and in every instance Forster is seen to have opted for less flattering derivations from the principal. Another source of Aziz, besides Masood, was Ansari:
"As a young man of twenty-five, he topped the list of successful candidates for the M. D. degree in 1905 and was appointed Registrar of Lock Hospital in London, later he served as House Surgeon at Charing Cross Hospital, which acknowledged his outstanding contribution in surgery by opening a ward called the 'Ansari Ward.' While it is understandable why Forster may not have desired such a distinguished model to function as a representative figure in his novel, the unprofessional Aziz is surely an extreme reaction in the other direction. Yet another source for Aziz was Abu Saeed Mirza, an Indian friend from Cambridge, whom Forster went to visit in Aurangabad. On this trip, he and Mirza went on a horse-ride that clearly forms the basis of the concluding scene in *A Passage to India*. The entry of this episode in the *Indian Diary* reads thus: "Saeed bursts out against the English, 'It may be fifty or five hundred years but we shall turn you out'." Lewis comments: The casual tone here belies the considerable impression this made on Forster: he is clearly in sympathy with his friend's sentiments, seeing 'energy and sense' at the core of this outburst towards the English. Forster takes Saeed's little speech and expands it in the novel into Aziz's outburst on British rule; the spirit and vitality this young Muslim who no longer wants or needs the approval of foreigners is probably taken directly from Abu Saeed Mirza. Like Aziz, Saeed feels affection for his English friend, but is no longer willing to know him on unequal terms. If Forster was impressed by the force of Saeed's ambivalent sentiments towards him, he does not make a convincing case for it in *A Passage to India*. Does Aziz really feel affection for Fielding? He basks in the Englishman's approval, as long as it lasts, and quickly turns cantankerous when the fellow-feeling runs out. It is questionable whether Aziz cares about anyone besides himself. And for all his sympathy, Forster's attention was more forcibly drawn towards the extraneous mannerisms of his Muslim friends rather than to the deeply-felt political grievances that moved them thus: "Forster sees Saeed as a direct descendant of the Mughals and their penchant for grandiose gestures, and he presents Aziz in the same light." Lewis faithfully records
the author's responses to his Muslim acquaintances, but fails to perceive the mildly satirical position he maintains towards these gestures. In 1912, Forster met Muhammad Ali, a Muslim activist who started a progressive newspaper called Comrade. Indian Muslims identified strongly with the Turkish cause, and being a politically committed person, Muhammad Ali reacted intensely to the Turkish alliance. Forster's outlook on this reaction was amused and patronizing:

Forster's diary records the emotionally charged atmosphere among his friends at the time . . . Forster viewed this melodramatic response as typical of the Muslim community in times of stress, and it may well be that Aziz's histrionic behaviour before his trial and his frequent outbursts of poetic lamentation at the sad state of Indian Islam were derived from Forster's experience of these activists in 1912 and 1913.

She overlooks the fact that here there is a great deal of prejudicial reading of cultural difference. Forster is too quick to generalize about the "typical" behaviour of Muslims, considering that his knowledge of the community extends to a mere handful of Anglicized youths.

The narrowness of the Muslim image, prevailing in the bulk of Anglo-Indian literature, also becomes evident when we consider that we can identify at least five distinct groups of people from England who presumably interacted with Indian Muslims: official administrators, planters and traders engaged in private commercial enterprise, visitors, scholars, and women. The perspective given overwhelming prominence is the official one, and the reason is obvious. British officialdom in the colonies was an idealized and artificial construct, meant to assert the superiority of the rulers. The disorientation of visitors, the unbiased scientific interest of scholars, the social compromise of private settlers and the sexual responsiveness of women weakened that position and were deliberately kept aside or faintly recognized. It is only Forster who bravely challenges the sexual assumptions of the colonialist, expressed pompously as Oriental Pathology by McBryde in A Passage to India.
according to which "the darker races are physically attracted by the fairer, but not vice versa -- not a matter of bitterness this, not a matter for abuse, but just a fact which any scientific observer will confirm" (Passage, p. 222). The number of English women who actually married Muslim men during the years of colonial rule, whether for sexual preference, or for a life of luxury, or for the security of lifelong commitment, is worth looking into. Margaret Macmillan, in her book entitled Women of the Raj, include marriage with Indian men as one of the radical experiences of unconventional Englishwomen, and in almost all the instances she gives, the men are Muslim: "An Englishwoman who married into a strict Muslim family in 1937 found that she was accompanied everywhere, even in the purdah quarters, by a female relative or servant." According to Macmillan, some of these women even found contentment:

In spite of the obstacles, some of the marriages were very happy. Women with enough strength of character and the right sorts of husbands made a satisfying, if restricted world for themselves. Henry Beveridge once called on a large blond lady married to a Muslim in a small town in Bengal.

She even mentions by name "Morag Murray [Abdullah], a Scottish girl" who married "the son of a Pathan chieftain." 

Islamic studies have always formed a significant aspect of Orientalist philology, and yet Anglo-Indian literature never projects Islamic culture as a subject worth discovering.

Even while the Raj was at its strongest, there were women who approached it with curiosity and enthusiasm. They settled themselves to learn a language, perhaps like Annette Beveridge who ended up by translating the memoirs of the Emperor Babur from the Persian; or they explored India's culture like Anne Wilson who made a serious study of Indian music. 

Even though Indian music may have had sacred roots in Hindu devotions, music as entertainment was largely under the patronage of the Muslim aristocracy. There is only passing mention of the grand art and architecture of the Mughals, unless there is
a particular intention of demeaning them by calling attention to their brittle showiness. The literature of Muslim poets is dismissed as shallow romanticism. The neglect or the negative exposure that Islam generally suffers in Anglo-Indian novels often takes the form of an avoidance of facts. For example, in *Kim* Kipling's representation of the Lahore Museum is telescoped to meet the need of his story; scholarly attention seems entirely engaged in the ancient pre-Islamic creeds of India. Alongside the approbatory depiction of Buddhism, a strong scholarly interest is displayed in Hinduism and other minor religions and tribal cultures of India. But any allusion to Islam as a major influence in the ethnic make-up of diverse Indian communities is systematically avoided. Kipling's own father was a Curator of the Lahore Museum at a time when Lahore was still dominated by Mughul influences, and it is unlikely that Kipling was not well acquainted with the institution or that it did not have a significant collection of Islamic artefacts.

The perspective of the visitor might have easily been adopted as the central axis of *A Passage to India* since that was Forster's own position in India. Instead, an unimpressionable, non-committal professor is given the favoured status. The visitor's perspective is feminized, with the substitution of Adela and Mrs. Moore and thereby made subsidiary. Both characters are allowed to be fallible, one through excess of sensibility and the other by an inordinate dependance on propriety, and the consciousnesses of both these characters experience an explicit breakdown. Both are vulnerable as visitors and with all their protestations of friendliness and good faith, feel genuinely threatened by the novelty and strangeness of a faraway land, a fear that both recreate as hallucinatory attacks on their person. Plans for their stay in India aborted, they leave for England completely broken in spirit; Mrs. Moore dies on the voyage out and Adela is henceforth dead to the narrative. Just as, in the long run, they gain nothing but harm from India, so they cause nothing but trouble for its people. Their feminine desire to form connections does not produce racial harmony. The
official masculine stance, even though it is shown to be crass, insensitive and deeply alienating, is the one that works in the end to restore a workable peace between the two communities.

Even though Forster seems cognizant of the rapidly changing conditions in Indian society, he is unaware of their full implications in the personal and domestic lives of individual men and women. To get a penetrating and comprehensive view of the Muslim society in British India we must turn to the novels of Muslim writers, if only to assess the contrast they present to Anglo-Indian novels. The novels of Bengali Muslim writers of the time reflect these and other complexities pertaining to Muslim life in Bengal, some aspects of which they also share with other parts of India, details of experiences that Anglo-Indian fiction fails to bring into cognizance. Bengali Muslim writers, while being channels of representation, also constitute themselves signs and mileposts of the changing times. In fact, the emergence of Muslim writers in the domain of Bengali literature began principally as a search for self-identity. Being late-comers, they did not achieve the same level of creative sophistication shown by the major Hindu writers. Bengali literature flourished at the hands of Hindu writers, reaching exalted heights during the golden age of Bengali Renaissance with internationally known literary figures like Rabindranath Tagore, Michael Modhushudan Dutt, Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Sharatchandra Chatterjee and others. Modern Bengali Muslims found their religious affiliation with Persian and Urdu culture somewhat diluted by the western, secular education that became increasingly available and attractive to the younger generation. This in turn caused a reconsideration of their Bengali identity and a happy immersion in the literature created by Bengali Hindus. Gradually, Bengali Muslim writers began to appear in small numbers and with hesitant steps, aware of their meagre artistic background but determined nevertheless to make an entrance. Their existence paled beside the presence of literary giants among the Hindus, the only Bengali Muslim writer to gain
clear prominence being the rebel poet, Kazi Nazrul Islam. Even Muslim readers
generally looked askance at the efforts of Muslim writers and scholars to this day
regard most of these works in terms of their placement in Bengali literary history
rather than for their intrinsic literary worth.

Be that as it may, these writers are important for holding up a mirror to the
Muslim society of British India. Retrospectively, modern critics sometimes deplore
the fact that they were not as a group more revolutionary, but faced with the urgent
need of an internal revolution, a house-cleaning of sorts, the single-minded opposition
to British rule would have shown a greater lack of social awareness. The Bengali
novels in discussion depict the inertia and melancholy of a formerly vigorous people
fallen upon bad days, and also of the stirrings of new awareness in a culture that had
almost willed itself into decline. They dramatize the conflict of generations, class
differences, the multifarious relationships between men and women, their joys and
their triumphs, but more often their burdens and their struggles, the indignities of
colonial subjection, the challenge of modernization, and the need for change even
while holding on to tradition for identity. Their tones and strategies vary, as they in
turn admonish, caution, cajole or inspire their Muslim readers to reform their ways
and restore pride in themselves. They recreate fictionally the reality faced by
Muslims in specific geographical settings and during particular historical eras. For
example, Meer Mosharraf Hossain's Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha gives a graphic
record of the tortures inflicted on both Hindu and Muslim peasants to enforce the
cultivation of indigo, and ends with the well-known Indigo Rebellion of Bengal. A
character type significantly absent in Anglo-Indian fiction is the Muslim peasant;
equally disadvantaged under successive waves of rulers, he is the least calculable
choice for the self-congratulatory discourse of the British in India. Furthermore, any
mention of the peasant, Hindu or Muslim, would inevitably bring under scrutiny the
unofficial British presence in India, cruel and avaricious planters and traders, who
were often an embarrassment to the official administration and were quietly ignored whenever possible. Many Bengali works of literature dwell on the sufferings of the peasants, who are forced to live by toiling on land that they do not own. The angriest and most moving depictions focus on the indigo plantations, the most well-known depiction being the Hindu writer Deenbandhu Mitra’s play, Neeldarpan (Indigo Mirror), but the situation faced by peasants was bleak everywhere. Apart from a consideration of this particularly shameful episode, the peasantry forms by far the largest segment of the Indian population, and Muslim peasants are a proportionate part of it. P. Hardy has this to say about the oppression of particularly Muslim peasants of Bengal:

The supporters of the fara‘izi movement were mostly depressed Muslim cultivators sinking into the sea of landless labourers, oppressed by their mainly Hindu landlords or by the new class of European indigo planters, who treated their ‘native’ labour almost as plantation slaves . . . The British administration in Bengal which was responsible for the Permanent Settlement which had conferred such advantages upon landlords over cultivators, held the balance tilted in favour of the landlords, by trying to enforce the 'law and order' of the status quo.  

The interests of all feudal landlords were upheld by these legislations, whether they were European, Hindu or Muslim, making class rather than race or religion the overriding factor. The Meer Sahib was a collaborator with the British, and hence guilty by default in the implementation of those measures that led to the indigo revolt in Bengal. Bengali writers are generally, and understandably, categorical in their condemnation of indigo plantations, because the forced substitution of a cash crop for rice meant starvation for the peasants, but Mosharraf Hossain is divided in his moral affiliation. His religion, culture, domestic upbringing and social placement demand unquestioning reverence for his father; yet, the latter's unprincipled life, spent in shameless self-gratificaton, fills the author's mind with horror. Emdadul Haque’s Abdullah is set during the troubled times resulting from the pre-independence
partition of Bengal. The indigenous literature of Muslim Bengal also presents a comprehensive picture of its contemporary society, showing its conservatism as well as the beginnings of progressive thought among its younger generations. By approaching sensitive social issues with reason, enlightenment, sympathy and pragmatism, they project a multi-dimensional picture of Bengali society at the time.

All these changes produced sharp crises in social identity. As the inheritance of each successive generation of Muslim men began to dwindle, the pressures of living up to decrepit customs and a false show of greatness brought disappointments, humiliations, worries and often financial ruin. Yet, social pride forbade members of genteel families to work for a living. Adventurous young men did defy these foolish sentiments to find employment where it was available, but they too smarted under the indignity of subordination in an inferior position. In *Abdullah*, we see several young men including the protagonist Abdullah and his brother-in-law, Abdul Khalek, fighting veritable crusades to break out of their stagnant patrimonies and improve their prospect by employment in government schools and offices. The transition from being independent members of the landed gentry to competing unfavourably for regular, low-paid jobs was an experience full of disappointments, conflicts and indignities for these first generation fortune-hunters. Although the hero of *Anwara*, Nurul Islam, is the son of a prosperous land-owner, he is obliged by reduced circumstances to work in a jute firm as a mere clerk. He is a conscientious worker, well-loved by the manager, and yet he is always painfully conscious of his subaltern condition; in fact, his only ambition is to be free from servitude:

He had observed that an employee was constantly obliged to concentrate all his physical and mental energies on pleasing his employer. He seldom enjoyed the opportunity of being able to freely devote himself to the higher ideals of human life. For this reason, he [Nurul Islam] hated the prospect of being in service, from the core of his heart. 23
These dislocations, dependent as they were on modern education, may not have been widespread in number; nevertheless, they produced deep alienation and dissolution in the upper ranks of Muslim society. One may recall in this connection, but in an entirely different milieu, Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrook* which reflects with subtle delicacy the changing fortunes of a prominent Hanseatic family, caught with old Enlightenment values in a rapidly changing, greedily materialistic world. The shifting state of Muslim society under British colonial rule, along with its accompanying crises of identity and class consciousness, had certain parallels with changes in European society under the surge of individualism, where old families fell before the onslaught of new wealth. All of the above indignities, losses, diversities, conflicts and parallels may well have afforded a rich assortment of models for Anglo-Indian writers to draw from, if they were interested merely in faithful portrayal. Instead, they depict Muslim society as static and homogeneous, or in Said's forceful term, "petrified." Forster's purpose in including the various professions seems to make their career opportunities reflect directly and most positively on the reformatory impact of British rule.

Abdul Wadud's *Nadibakkhe* portrays life in a small Muslim village in Bengal, unmediated by tensions derived from the colonial encounter. As a matter of fact, there is no mention here at all of the British rulers of Bengal. What De Schweinitz says about the self-absorption of caste-ridden Hindu society applies generally to rural Muslim communities, as well:

> Given this kind of decentralized social organization with its attendant economic specialization of function, what difference did it make to the people inside the system if at some remote capital, or seat of "national" government, a foreign ruler occupied the throne which he had won by force of arms? Did the imperialist emperor in Delhi change the circumstances of the peasant in Bengal? 24

Wadud's *Nadibakkhe* gives a most emphatic "no" to this question. It shows how little the British presence meant to the peasants, who eeked out their meagre existence
patterned by the seasonal and agrarian cycles of the year. Nadibakkhey faithfully mirrors this Muslim population of rural Bengal. It is a quiet, unpretentious depiction of the most commonplace events of village life—children playing, men working in the fields, women tending their homes and cultivating relationships with families inhabiting adjacent homesteads, quarrels and reconciliations, new lives birthing and old lives passing away, and the paces of time moving inexorably on. Its subordination of the personal to the impersonal, of the self to the larger reality of nature's timelessness and, yes, its very quietness sometimes gives it an impression of controlled power, reminiscent of Hardy's Wessex novels, even though it lacks the magnificence of setting and breadth of characterization associated with the latter. The hero, Lalu, is made of the same stuff that Hardy's Diggory Venn and Gabriel Oak are fashioned from. Nadibakkhey's emotions too are strong and true, and swathed similarly in iron binds of habit and socialized will. The characters do not speak their minds openly, but under that steely reticence hold back uncommon capacity for love and self-sacrifice. There is a minimum of conversation in the novel, and the pace of the narration is slow and even. Emotions are conveyed to readers by direct intrusion of the omniscient narrator into the dumb recesses of the mind, and characters read emotion by posture, facial expression, gestures and general demeanour. When the hero, Lalu, comes home after a long absence to find his chosen married to another, he carries on the daily business of living quietly, calmly and uncomplainingly, even though the light seems to have gone out of his entire world:

These last few days on the boat, he had not eaten much; besides, he had had the exertion of rowing. Today, the meal cooked by his sweet mother should have appealed to the deep hunger that lay in all his being. But, alas! where was that hunger now! A strange spell of numbness had overcome his nature—who would have hungered for food now? . . . Lalu's mother did not push him to eat; being a woman she knew what pain was and how it could embitter all of life's blessings. She too kept down her hurt and quietly ministered to her son's comforts. 25
By ignoring the peasants of India, Anglo-Indian writers cut off the largest segment of the Indian experience from their art. Besides, the characters of Nadibakkhey particularly belie the theatricality Forster associates so glibly with the Muslim community. The variety of personality and experiences projected collectively by these Bengali Muslim writers sets up the pluralities overlooked by Anglo-Indian authors.

Ideologically, there is no caste distinction in Islam; yet, the Indian Muslims developed strong class consciousness, possibly under the influence of Hindu culture. Some of these social abuses were so serious that they clogged up every healthy drive for individual self-development, which in turn weakened the whole society. The programme for change advocated by these writers was in conjunction with religion and not outside it. Najibur Rahman's Anwara focuses on the sublimating influence of Islam on true believers, while Kazi Emdadul Haque's Abdullah concentrates squarely on the abuses themselves that had crept into the practice of Islam in India, and general ills pertaining to the contemporary Muslim society. For example, the peculiarly Indian phenomenon of caste differentiation had hardened even the structures of Muslim society; as a result, genteel families applied such very exclusive standards for marriage that in-breeding became a rule, rather than an exception. Carried over many generations, in-breeding could produce genetic enfeebling, a misfortune Muslims could ill afford to risk in their already fallen state. The progressive voice in Wadud's Abdullah, Meer Sahib, denounces this practice in no uncertain terms:

Since we can see for ourselves that the practice in our society of marrying within the family does not bear good results, that in many cases the children born show signs of ill health, weakness and retardation, that where there is some mixed blood, the children grow up to be strong, spirited and intelligent, I refuse to admit any other argument [in its favour]. 26
Forster recognizes the prevalence of such attitudes in genteel Muslim society, but seems unaware of rising opposition to it within the community; at least he chooses not to write about it.

These Bengali novels also portray with sensitivity the various limitations, problems, trials and triumphs experienced by the young women of Muslim society. Relative freedom was enjoyed by rural women, working-class women in cities and older women everywhere. While Anwara takes an exceedingly conventional and chauvinistic position, recommending absolute deference to God in heaven and husband on earth for the most blessed way of attaining happiness, it also shows covert aspects of power exercised by women; for instance, their assertion of sexuality within the narrow scope of marriage and domesticity. The novel has a strong moral tone. The combination of physical beauty and moral virtue in Anwara exerts a wholesome influence on her husband, Nurul, while the sexual allure of her unscrupulous stepmother leads her father to commit evil deeds. Both Anwara and Nadibakkhey demonstrate the hierarchical play of power and familial rivalries among women. Meer Mosharraf Hossain uplifts women in tragic roles of noble, stoic suffering but Abdullah takes a frankly rebellious stance and vituperates against the different ways in which women were deprived of their rights by orthodox Muslim families, especially the purdah system. The indigenous literature of Muslim India thus presents a versatile picture of its contemporary society, showing its conservatism as well as the beginnings of progressive thought among its younger generations.

The three Bengali novels discussed above are concerned with no more than topical subjects and issues. In this sense, their aesthetic appeal is a limited one, even though they are fairly successful as representations of contemporary Muslim society. Meer Mosharraf Hossain, recognized as the earliest Muslim novelist of Bengal, can be set apart from this group in that he tries to lift his work above the specific social conditions he portrays to express certain enduring insights—about the nature of human
relationships, the constituents of personal tragedy and the complex, often self-subversive, play of power. These insights are offered across cultural boundaries, that which makes his writing meaningful in the colonial context; they also serve to reveal the pluralities of Muslim society raised in this chapter. They show how individuals are divided within themselves and how their social selves are tortured by mixed loyalties. For example, the author's filial loyalty is torn between the mother whom he idealizes and the amoral, self-indulgent father from whom he nevertheless draws his own identity. Meer Sahib is a man of few moral scruples; not only does he squander his wife's fortune on thoughtless profligacy, he does not lift a finger to help the destitute people of his village. As a matter of fact, he befriends their oppressor. Kenney follows a wise policy of conciliation towards the wealthy Meer Sahib:

T. I. Kenney has grand thoughts and high hopes. His predecessors had constantly preoccupied themselves in vain feuds with the zamindar of Shawnta, and were always defeated. Kenney has learned from this and befriended Meer Sahib from the very beginning. They have agreed not to enter into disputes or to intend each other any harm — instead, they would assist one another at times of need.37

And so it is that when Kenney persecutes the poor to the limits of their endurance, the cheerful and benevolent Meer never speaks a word of protest, even though his own elder brother is reputed to have once dealt out violent punishment to an oppressive Neelkar sahib. Meer Mosharraf Hossain has been criticized for his alleged dearth of nationalistic sentiments; he is not adequately incensed against Kenney and the wrongs inflicted on the peasants of Bengal by the exploitative agricultural policy of the British government. Contrary to popular taste, he fails to idealize Shah Golam, his father's old enemy, who later becomes a champion of the peasants and teaches them to agitate against Kenney. However, it is precisely this refusal to become a propagandist that makes him an insightful writer. He cuts through cultural differences and societal antagonisms to lay bare the hidden springs that regulate human behaviour. Although he is the son of a Muslim aristocrat, Meer Mosharraf Hossain
takes no defensive stance in favour of Muslim landowners; the most benevolent zamindars in his book are Hindu. The portraits of Pyari Shundari and Bhairab Babu are admirable foils that show up the inadequacies of Meer Sahib. Also, as a man of conscience Mosharraf Hossain supports the indigo rebellion but, as a member of the feudal aristocracy, he is curiously ambivalent about the structures of power that it has to confront. He does not present the situation as a simple fact of resistance to British oppression. The author is, therefore, an accomplice by birth to the structures of social tyranny and an opponent by conviction. This self-division is apparent in the form of his ouevre.

Meer Mosharraf Hossain reiterates the dialectics of power as a motif through different layers of social stratification, beginning with the British empire and the usurping, Anglo-Indian land-owner, T. I. Kenny, at the top; moving through indigenous Hindu and Muslim feudal lords and domestic hierarchies rich or poor; and descending to the use and abuse of power in personal relationships. He writes about the sufferings of the peasants of Bengal at the hands of British plantation owner; however, he also shows how the weak suffer at the hands of the strong, no matter what race or culture they belong to. And he also shows how the strong suffer themselves. He examines power as a tragic aspect of life. In Mosharraf Hossain's works, those characters who are corrupted by power are shown to be as much victims of historic inevitability as the ones who are persecuted by the misuse of power. It may be mentioned here that his famous novel, Bishaad Shindhu (Sea of Sorrow), in a shocking reversal of customary practice, casts the most villainous character in Islamic legend, Yezid, as a tragic Miltonic Satan caught in his evil destiny, and unable to escape his sin. In Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha, he humanizes the arch-villain, Kenney--so much so that his end seems both tragic and dignified. The Englishman is not held solely accountable for tyranny. Even Indians—land-owners and serfs, fortune-hunters or political demagogues—all are shown to be equally manipulative of power,
and equally vulnerable to it. Kenney's servants and lathiylals, his informers and advisors, in short his whole machinery of misrule, is made up of Indians who participate in the arts of domination with perfect willingness. In trying to protect themselves from becoming victims they become accomplices, and reinforce both colonial and feudal structures of domination.

Meer Mosharraf Hossain examines the molecular patterns of failure inherent in the imperial scheme, having gone through the experience of the fall and being able afterwards to observe the structures of domination from below. He does not see imperial success as a combination of superiority and obligation, a form of noblesse oblige, as the British do in India, but as a skillfully sustained build-up of politic behaviour, which picks up a cyclical dynamism of its own, causing races and nations of men to become caught in its momentum. Thus, imperialism originates in a surge of growth—in knowledge, wealth and industry—but it is sustained through a number of devices, none of which are commendable in themselves. These are a consistent policy of befriending and manipulating the strong, while permanently disempowering the weak; a system of societal control maintained through secrecy, misinformation, intrigue and corruption; and the evolvement of an ideology to disguise or justify its exploitation. As Sara Suleri points out in The Rhetoric of English India.

... colonial facts are vertiginous: they lack a recognizable cultural plot; they frequently fail to cohere around the master-myth that proclaims static lines of demarcation between imperial power and disempowered culture, between colonizer and colonized. Instead, they move with a ghostly mobility to suggest how highly unsettling an economy of complicity and guilt is in operation between each actor on the colonial stage.  

This is a cynical and pessimistic attitude to power, quite different from the righteous self-confidence of the British, for whom imperialism is a vertical rise in power originating in racial, inborn superiority and is therefore defensible even in its corrupted state over other races held to be intrinsically inferior. Also, Mosharraf
Hossain's study of power embodies a far more complacent and philosophical outlook than the resentful malevolence Anglo-Indian writers ascribe to Muslim characters, on account of their loss of empire.

Bengalis comprise just one section of the Sunni Muslim population of India, and the Bengali novels discussed above effectively project the pluralities prevalent within this one particular community. These differences cover class, profession and locality, besides the diverseness of individual personality, experience, taste and opinion. They afford an illuminating contrast to the homogeneous depiction of Muslims in Anglo-Indian novels, which either fail to, or neglect to or deliberately omit these pluralities.
CHAPTER 4

DEHUMANIZATION OF MUSLIM CHARACTERS

The characterization of Muslims in Anglo-Indian fiction is marked by a twin set of dualities. One is the deliberate and manifest duality thrust on Muslim characters, not simply to signify the alleged duplicity of Muslim men, but also to create an alternate space where they might be stripped of their benign, human attributes and made to appear bestial. The other is the duality of perception focused on these characters, which itself becomes assailed by contradictions, as hidden nuances continually resist or supersede each other and undermine the conscious intention of the writers. The first is justified by the implied absence of an ideological centre in Islam, an unambiguous frame of moral reference, that which allows believers to equivocate at will. This idea is supported by the inclusion of other religious faiths in India, which are shown to have a specific spiritual end in view for their adherents, and an unmistakable code of behaviour to reach it. So, the Buddhist Lama in Kipling's *Kim* has his Way to grant him *nirvana* from the torturous Wheel of Life. However misguided the worship of Kali may seem to those who are not her votaries, even the criminal Ganesha, in Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug*, has his *dharma*; he contemplates his gradual ascent up the ladder of being through repeated births, and is not willing to admit any deviation from his strict religious code, to endanger his spiritual freedom. And although Forster has left more than one piece of evidence in *The Hill of Devi* that he found the ceremony of Krishna's birth at the Maharajah of Dewas's palace quite distasteful, Professor Godbole's rapt participation in these rites constitutes the most profound Indian experience in the third book of *A*
Passage to India. In contrast, Islam is presented in most Anglo-Indian novels as a psychological tool, capable of being manipulated to justify every base desire. Its appeal extends to the materialistic and hedonistic drives in crude human beings, who follow its religious precepts, not with any sense of right and wrong, but simply with the hope of being rewarded in heaven with sweeter indulgences than those to be found on earth. The will to cling to such an interpretation of Islam launches Anglo-Indian fiction writers into a series of contradictions: from their perspective, Muslim men appear to be both rigid and flexible in belief, unintellectual and crafty, animal in bodily reflexes but lacking animal innocence, and finally on the question of power, grossly ineffectual and yet a secret, lowering danger for the British empire.

Generally critics of Anglo-Indian fiction do not perceive the sustained forms of debasement aimed at Islam. A long-accepted authority on the subject, Allen Greenberger seems to think that Anglo-Indian writers are very favourably disposed towards Muslims. He examines classics like Forster's Passage to India, but he cites examples from other works as well, ones he himself describes as being little more than "potboilers," to demonstrate his point. He states, in The British Image of India:

A list of the Indian characters used by these writers shows the predominance of the Muslim—Mason's Shere Ali; Steel's Fatma, Shureef, Futteh Deen, Feroza, Mir Ahmed Ali, Azmutoolah Khan, or Roshan Khan; Perrin's Osman or Jan Mahomed; Croker's Hassan, and Wentworth's Imam Bux. This is only a partial listing, but it is impossible to find anything like a roll even this long of Hindu characters—major or minor. Even when it makes little dramatic or pedantic difference whether characters are Hindu or Muslim they are invariably the latter.¹

However that may be, the traits for which these Muslim characters are chosen for depiction are physical or shallow mental characteristics, and not qualities of any moral depth that can withstand the test of experience. Greenberger makes a hasty connection between the martial or sporting aspect worn by Muslim characters, and the

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assertive masculinity of purpose ascribed to British colonialism: "Not only are Muslims seen in a favourable historical light because of their conquests, but they are depicted as possessing the values of activity, masculinity, and forcefulness, which to these writers, were the most important virtues."² The fact is, these Muslim characters are made to put up a flimsy "show" of heroism, meant to dress up tinsel scenes of romance and adventure, and always capitulate under the true, gritty heroism of the British. In Taylor's Tippoo Sultaun, Mir Kasim is the Muslim counterpart of the British hero, Herbert. Kasim is given an entirely physical portrayal: he is handsome, agile, adept at hunting and fighting, and absorbed besides by wanton desire for his patron's young and beautiful wife, Amina; his service under the Khan is motivated principally by his wish to remain at her side. Herbert, on the other hand, is an embodiment of moral virtues. He is driven by the noble sentiments of patriotism and personal honour. He is inspired by the heavenly, unsullied love for a pure young English girl, whom he leaves for the greater call of duty to serve his country. To equate these two depictions under a common label of "activity, masculinity and forcefulness" is nothing less than willful blindness.

Within the broader patterns of misguided representation, a certain historical sequence can be traced in the way Muslims are depicted in Taylor's Confessions (1839), Kipling's Kim (1901) and Forster's A Passage to India (1924). The gradual expansion and strengthening of the British empire has brought increased confidence and sense of control to the fictional discourse of Anglo-India. The converse process of the weakening of the Muslim population has shifted its perspective from dangerous deeds to dangerous personalities. Greenberger's categories for the novels he discusses—era of confidence; era of doubt and era of melancholy—have been constructed from the point of view of the British self-image. Concerned as they are with issues such as the success of empire and the ethics of domination, these categories are distant from the subject of Muslim portrayal, as such. To view
changes in representation from the perspective of colonial encounter on the ground, the order and emphasis of the above classification must be somewhat reversed: era of fear, era of confidence and era of anxiety.

A lack of subtlety may easily be perceived in Taylor's portrayal of the Muslim character. As a police officer, Taylor was responsible for weeding out unlawful elements from the land and ensuring the safety of his people; he was pitched against a strange environment, with mysterious, horrifying rites. His anxiety to perform well and the constant fear of failure seems to have intensified the censorious tone of his novel. The severity of the writer's hostile stance against the protagonist of The Confessions of Thug can also be historically explained. Taylor wrote this novel during the rule of the East India Company, a troubled time for the British occupation of India. Even for later novels, he looked back into history for his subjects. Seeta, first published in 1881, is a story of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. It is the third novel of a sequel, beginning with Tara: a Mahratta Tale (1863) which dramatizes the rise of the Marathas and their conflict with Aurangzeb. Tippoo Sultaun, completed in 1840, is about the Mysore Wars that ended in 1799. Taylor's choice of subject-matter reveals a lingering preocupation with threats to British power, especially from Muslim opponents; he even admits to having ruminated in all seriousness on the question of British survival on the sub-continent. In his own introduction to Seeta, he mentions that in the year of Clive's victory over Nawab Sirajuddoula of Bengal, "a strange astrological prediction was recorded, that the rule of the East India Company would last only one hundred years." Taylor goes on to say that the general reaction to this prophecy had a considerable influence on his writing:

I may seem to some, perhaps, to have laid more stress upon the weird prediction in regard to the events of Sumbut 1914, 1857-58, than it deserves: but those who lived among the people at the time--as I did--felt the power it had gradually assumed over the native mind, among all classes and in all localities of India, and apart from other pretexts for disaffection, mutiny, and rebellion, I had always considered, and
shall continue to consider it, as one of general combination and action in that year. 4

British political ascendancy in India was achieved by overthrowing Muslim rulers, not only from Delhi, the seat of the Mughul empire, but also from lesser kingdoms breaking away from the weakened monarch at the center. The scattered remnants of Muslim power still amounted to a formidable challenge and the use of diplomacy, guile and psychological warfare was just as instrumental to victory for the British, as actual battles fought on the land. It is, as it were, an act of spooking the enemy and guarding the freshly acquired territory, spacial and psychological, from retraction. In Confessions of a Thug, Taylor carries over this strategy on a metaphorical level and confronts the political menace by setting up an archetypal Muslim character in the most terrible role imaginable, and then hunting him down to his death on the gallows. The long delay in the capture of Ameer may be said to correspond to the difficulty of subjugating Muslim India.

After the successful suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny, India came under the direct rule of the British monarch. This put an end to the insecurity and corruption of Company rule, and restored confidence on both sides. In Kipling's time, British rule was well established in all areas of the Indian subcontinent, with some rebellious elements in the border regions. The chief of these was the North-West Frontier Province, the home of the Pathan horse-dealer in Kim. The reduced political threat from the Muslim community is reflected in the plot and characterization of this novel. Mahbub is a trusted and obedient servant of the British government; he exemplifies Britain's successful suzerainty over Indian Muslims. By the time Forster came to India, the relationship between Britain and her Indian subjects had started to heat up again. The entire fabric of the country was touched by nationalist agitation, and the British began to feel understandably concerned. Although there was less sense of physical danger than what existed in the pre-Mutiny days, there was an undeniable
atmosphere of foreboding from the increasing evidence of Indian discontent. Aziz's withdrawal from Chandrapore is a sort of "secession" from the British empire; it prefigures the political secession of India and Pakistan from Britain and reflects the latter's anxiety over a painful and permanent loss of control over dominions long taken for granted.

It appears from the far reaching conceptual, dramatic and metaphorical effects of anxiety on the fictional representations above that the Anglo-Indian perspective on the nature of Muslim presence in India did not content itself simply with recognizing an external enemy. Persistent efforts can be seen through various depictions to connect the menace of the Muslim population with the very ideological principles of Islam. Taylor makes a clear candid statement in his novel, Confessions of a Thug, emphasizing just such a belief. Islam is portrayed here as an intolerant faith, which has no intrinsic moral basis. Accordingly, for a Muslim, truth and humanity have no part in piety. As long as he professes belief in a single God, Allah, and prays five times a day, he can equivocate shamelessly on the matter of moral virtue. And this is what makes him an entirely vicious creature. While this may sound analogous to the criticism aimed at Catholicism by Protestants, there is a actually a significant difference. Protestant disapproval is actually directed at the Church, which is held responsible for distorting the true religion of Jesus Christ, whereas the calumny western discourse attaches to Islam is meant for the faith itself. As the narrator, a British officer in charge of Ameer Ali, learns with horror of the murderous deeds performed by the Thugs, he wonders what motivates a Muslim to join this Hindu cult:

In the Hindu perhaps it is not to be wondered at, as the goddess who protects him is one whom all castes regard with reverence and hold in the utmost dread; but as for the Moslem, unless his conduct springs from that terrible doctrine of Fatalism, with which every true believer is thoroughly imbued from the first dawn of his reason, it is difficult to assign a reason for the horrible pursuit he has engaged in.
The Hindu Thug can be partially exonerated from his crime because he acts in blind faith and in genuine fear of divine retribution. The Muslim Thug is the worst villain because he is drawn to it by choice and by conscious rationalizing. I am making a distinction here between rationality and rationalization. The first is a straightforward, honest exercise of reason to arrive at an inevitable conclusion. The second is a false show of reasoning used to forge causal links, usually against true reason, towards a pre-conceived conclusion. It is a generally accepted notion that the western mind is rational; according to the colonial perspective, intellectually and morally inferior minds, belonging to backward cultures, are given to rationalization.

This is exactly how Ameer Ali, a "true believer" is won over to the Thuggee profession by his adopted father, Ismail, who represents it as "one of the means by which Allah works out his own ends" (Confessions, p. 27). Ismail rationalizes his behaviour thus: "... as it becomes the fate of those who are called to it to follow it, there is no possibility of avoiding the profession, though one desired it; and as a direct consequence, no sin in associating with Hindus in the practice of it, from whom it has had its origin" (Confessions, p. 27). Taylor seems to have forgotten that the paradox of predestination and free will is an integral part of Christian doctrine, and as well Islamic, and that it does not hold out a religious sanction to be evil. Ameer Ali's faint reluctance to become a Thug derives from the necessary association with Hindus and the worship of Bhowani, a Hindu goddess -- not from the heinous deed he must perform. In fact, he is thrilled by the adventure, mystery, intrigue and sense of power promised by this outlawed profession; he is repelled by the tame, legal occupations of the village youth: "... when I saw them following what their fathers had done, and what appeared to me low and pitiful pursuits, my spirit rose against them, and I have cast them off" (Confessions, p. 18). One may object to reading Taylor's opinion in the beliefs of his fictionalized villain-protagonist. One may even want to draw a line between the attitudes of Taylor and the narrator. Where, then, should we look for the
author's standpoint on Islam? Certainly not to the village mollah, who is a type of the religious bigot and condemns all moderate practitioners of the faith: "... it is true that some professors of our religion, sufis and others, whose creeds are accursed, have from time to time promulgated heterodox doctrines, which are plausible enough, and entrap the unwary; but they lead to ultimate perdition" (Confessions, pp. 13-4). Significantly, there is more than one village mollah, only barely distinguished by geographical location (only one is given a name), testifying to the uniformity of a character type. This shallow, narrow-minded priest is the most positive Muslim character presented in the novel; he gives refuge to Ameer's wife and daughter when they are turned out into the street and has a real scruple about accepting the wealth of a murderous Thug. In a novel where the best of Muslims is a harmless but weak-minded fool and the worst is an obdurate killer, and where all direct and indirect allusions to Islam cohere to form an ignominious image, there seems little sense in splitting hairs over the relative shades of opinion among author, implied author and narrator.

There is little outward violence in the behaviour of Mahbub in Kipling's Kim: his malevolence is pushed down to a level of secret intrigue, which has no immediate effect but stirs constant feelings of insecurity. Further down and held fast by the unbreakable chains of British law, is the same wild ferocity embodied in Taylor's villain-protagonist. Violence, hypocrisy, bestiality and treachery exist in Kim as integrally the marks of an Islamic way of life, as they do in Taylor's novel. Mahbub Ali is not a social outcast and a renegade from law like Ameer Ali -- on the contrary, he is a government spy and an indispensable ally of the British in putting down rebellion in the northern mountain states -- yet, his natural instincts are as ferociously lawless as a Thug. As a British subject and within British territory, he has to curb these instincts to avoid imprisonment, but murder as personal vendetta is perfectly within his own moral framework. In fact, he considers this mandatory to preserve his
honour. Whenever he feels threatened, he contemplates his opponent's death: "It annoyed him vehemently that people outside his tribe and unaffected by his casual amours should pursue him for life. His first and natural impulse was to slay them" (Kim, p. 199). It is, therefore, a source of continuing annoyance to him that "south of the border, a perfectly ridiculous fuss is made about a corpse or two" (Kim, p. 199). The significant factor here is that Mahbub Ali has no concept of murder being a sin, even though he is shown to have some religious sensibilities. Just as in the case of Ameer Ali, his murders and prayers go hand in hand. Kim, accompanying him on a mission, registers the "halts for prayers (Mahbub was very religious in dry washings and bellowings when time did not press)" (Kim, p. 207). For the moment, we will overlook the sarcasm and the irreverent epithets, "dry washings" and "bellowings," respectively for ablution and prayer, and take this simply as evidence that the man prays, albeit sometimes. Ameer and Mahbub both consume strong drinks and indulge in sexual incontinence with the full knowledge that these are religious transgressions, and the former has very strong views about adultery. There must follow the inevitable question in the reader's mind: What kind of religion can this be that forbids drink and concert with women so vehemently, but condones murder? If one reverts to the afore-mentioned objection that the distortion of Islam given here derives from the character and not the writer, the same answer given earlier must follow. There is no "undistorted" version of Islam in the novel to give credence to the idea that Mahbub is not meant to be generally representative of Muslims or that Kipling does not share the narrator's stance.

It is only when one comes to the subtler and more aesthetically pleasing depiction of Islam in Forster's A Passage to India, that the true import of the British perspective comes to a focus. Through Aziz's preference for Persian poetry and Muslim architecture, Islam is given an image that is no longer outwardly menacing; indeed, its pathos is feeble and tedious when not downright comic. In Forster's
lifetime, British colonial power was already firmly entrenched in India for almost two whole centuries; Mughul rule was too far away in history, and in contemporary politics, Muslims were by far the weaker of the two nationalist groups in India. Naturally, the British literary position is confident and patronizing and the Muslim imperialist pretense simply absurd. However, just as Aziz is suddenly transformed in the novel from an obsequious well-meaning stooge to a mean, destructive "rotter" (Passage, p.270), on scrutiny Islam too sheds the ineffectuality of a departed dream to become a potential source of evil violence. It occurs as a morally vacuous religion, unable to give concise moral direction and encouraging its believers to indulge in self-serving equivocation. This conception is clearly symbolized in the structure of the mosque where Aziz rests to recover his wounded pride:

Where he sat, he looked into three arcades whose darkness was illuminated by a small hanging lamp and by the moon. The front—in full moonlight—had the appearance of marble, and the ninety-nine names of God on the frieze stood out black, as the frieze stood out white against the sky. (Passage, p. 41)

The mosque is externally ornate, beautified by arches and the rich calligraphy that characterizes Islamic architectural design. Inside, there is nothing but empty space, filled with shifting shadows. There is no center, like the altar in a church or the idol in a temple; and this absence tells a tale: Islam has no moral core, being only an amalgamation of outward ceremonies and observances. While this absence of a medium at the actual moment of prayer may also suggest the immediacy of God's presence before his worshipper, and the simplicity of true faith, such is not the interpretation welcomed by Forster's representation of the mosque. Forster, Kipling, or for that matter, any number of Anglo-Indian writers, fail to find a moral vision motivating the believer's religious gestures in Islam, and hence proceeds the Muslim's obsession with devout behaviour and indifference to true morality in their novels. So, too, the insistence on the word and not the spirit of virtue. In all three novels that are
being discussed, Muslims are shown to be without a code or law (in the Lama's language, a Way) and, therefore, they find themselves capable of rationalizing any action that they choose. And that is why they are potentially more dangerous than the most destructive criminals of another faith, since the latter's capacity for evil is contained within the dictates of that religion. The Muslim psyche inhabits a region of moral chaos, that is constantly changing like the shadows within the mosque. This results in a dual identity -- one that keeps up social pretenses and one that gives in to surreptitious gratification. The symbolism of the contrasting black-and-white Arabic characters on the frieze reinforces the duality of the Muslim character: "The contrast between this dualism and the contention of shadows within pleased Aziz, and he tried to symbolize the whole into some truth of religion or love" (Passage, p. 41). Significantly, in British colonial fiction, Muslims are often placed on the opposite side of the law: the outlawed criminal, Ameer Ali; the temporarily-tamed tribal insurgent, Mahbub Ali; and the jailed rebel-doctor, Aziz. It may be argued that Aziz is wrongfully accused and it is true that he is acquitted at the trial, but it is also true that the law, even in its error, serves to expose him in his true colours: there is another, more significant and symbolic, trial carried on in Fielding's mind, where Aziz is unmistakably condemned.

There is evidence in his manuscripts that Forster self-consciously altered the text of this novel in order to project a narrower, more prejudicial and altogether uglier face of the Muslim community than seemed to have suggested itself to him initially. A Passage to India falls outside the perimeters of the usual colonial adventure story; therefore, there is not much scope here to develop the combative instincts of its Muslim characters. Even so, at the slightest provocation these characters assume either dangerous hostility or a petty form of querulousness, depending on the strength of their adversary. Forster portrays Aziz, Hamidullah, Mahmud Ali, etc, as surly and intolerant characters as an afterthought or in reconsideration of an increasingly
communal slant to the story. For a Ph. D. dissertation, Robert Ligon Harrison has made an illuminating study of Forster's novel, titled *The Manuscripts of A Passage to India*. Here he compares two earlier manuscripts to the finished version as it appears in published form. The first draft, which Harrison calls MS.A, projects a far better image of Indian Muslims than the novel as it stands finished. The changes bear ample evidence that Forster, despite his good relations with many Muslim men from his college days, was not able to escape the force of his culture's inherent distrust for Islam. If not for any other consideration, it appears that he has darkened the face of Muslim India, at least in deference to the expectations of his European readers.

The first of these significant changes occurs in Chapter II: "Added in the book are names of Aziz's visitors and their scornful discussion of Hindu religious ceremonies. Hamidullah, who is seen rather indistinctly in the book is treated at greater length in MS.A, especially in relation to Fielding's encounter of the political mind with the social." It appears as if Forster initially based Hamidullah's character on the intelligent, well-informed and fiercely vocal political group of friends he met in India. He reconsiders such a positive portrayal and grafts in its place a narrow communal outlook. Aziz's character suffers the greatest debasement through this manuscript sequence:

MS.A presents some background material on Aziz not included in the book (his life as a medical student in Germany, his interest in fencing, riding and physical culture), and has him quote to the company at dinner a lyrical intermezzo of Heine. On the other hand, the book places more emphasis on Aziz's bond with Islam and his tendency towards pathos, adding a Persian inscription he proposes for his tomb.

Every trait or experience that connects Aziz to the average well-educated, active and sensitive European youth is carefully obliterated to create a heavily acculturized identity. The only problem is that Forster's familiarity with men like Masood, Ansari and Hydari was based precisely on their common college experience, of the kind
quoted from MS. A above. He had insufficient knowledge of what it really meant to be a Muslim; and so in the novel, he makes Aziz tediously and endlessly speak of his bond with Islam, instead of actually showing any such bond. The pathos in Aziz's character is also an addition to MS. A: "Aziz's statement of India's great need for 'kindness, more kindness and after that even more kindness' and Fielding's reaction to it are only found in the book." For an Anglo-Indian author who came so close to the heart of Muslim India, Forster has made a piteous portrayal indeed.

An existence outside the pale of civilized norms holds a fascination, as well as a horror, for the sophisticated and care-worn intellect of the West, as it has repeatedly been pointed out in literature written about regions strange and beyond. So Nathaniel Hawthorne has drawn characters irresistibly drawn towards the dark and sinful forest, as has Conrad in his exploration of the heart of darkness. Edward Said, in his exposure of orientalism, has discoursed at length about the exoticization of remote lands as a mode of veiled and vicarious wish-fulfillment. Muslim characters in British colonial fiction contain within them these dual aspects of terror and forbidden charm, originating in their alleged freedom from moral constraints. Their conceptualization bears an unmistakable resemblance to wild animals: beautiful in form but ferociously destructive in instinct. Ameer, Mahbub and Aziz are all described as possessing beautiful, alive bodies. The narrator of Confessions devotes the better part of a page to a detailed, physical description of the captured thug:

His figure, as I have said, is slight but it is in the highest degree compact, agile and muscular . . . In complexion he is fair for a native; his face is even now strikingly handsome, and leads me to believe that the accounts of his youthful appearance have not been exaggerated. His forehead is high and broad; his eyes large, sparkling and very expressive . . . His cheeks are somewhat sunken, but his nose is aquiline and elegantly formed, his mouth small and beautifully chiselled, and his teeth are exquisitely white and even. (Confessions, p. 176)
This description almost reads like the precision-recording of a rare animal's body-parts, in a naturalist's diary. There is no touch of human personality evident here, to mar the raw physicality of the fascinating creature. Walking up to the Marabar caves with Dr. Aziz in Forster's *A Passage to India*, Adela cannot help noticing, "What a handsome little Oriental he was" (*Passage*, p. 163). Forster is careful to add that this appreciation is wholly sensual and completely detached:

She did not admire him with any personal warmth, for there was nothing of the vagrant in her blood, but she guessed he might attract women of his own race and rank... It does make a difference in a relationship—beauty, thick hair, a fine skin. (*Passage*, p. 163)

Her approving look is akin to the admiration aroused by a strikingly beautiful animal, who inhabits an entirely distinct sphere of existence; he may attract the female of his species but it is absurd to contemplate any personal connection with the viewer.

All three men mentioned above are well-built, strong and agile, with remarkably well-shaped features and they have health and vigour to boot. They are all masterful riders, enjoying an instinctive rapport with their horses. Their senses are sharp, their movements quick and quiet and their reflexes unfailingly true. Mahbub Ali is no longer in the prime of his youth but his large, well-fed, apparently indolent frame is capable of swift, crafty maneuvers that perpetually baffle his opponent spies; in his own words, he is ever vigilant "to muddy the wells of inquiry with the stick of precaution" (*Kim*, p. 32). If the reader wishes to trace the stealthy agility of Ameer Ali to his training as a thug rather than his inborn nature, it will be illuminating to look closely at the chapter where he kills a panther with a knife, prior to his initiation into the Thuggee cult. While a whole crowd of men armed with guns stand helplessly by, Ameer leaps quickly and silently on his prey, in matchless imitation of the panther herself, as she attacks an unwary villager:

Another instant she had crouched as she ran, and sprang upon him; he was under her, and she fiercely tearing his body. It did not stop me... Another bound had brought me close to the brute, whose head was
down, gnawing the body beneath her. I made but one stroke at her, which, praise be to Allah! was successful; the blade buried itself deep in the back of her neck, and she seemed to drop dead; I bounded off to one side and watched for a moment. (Confessions, p. 23)

The precise orchestration of their deadly movements shows that Ameer and the tigress are siblings under the skin. So it is with the other Muslim characters; underneath their extraneous human trappings, clothes and social mores, they all suggest the primitive physicality of animals in the wild.

In an early manuscript of A Passage to India, the narrative follows Aziz's point of view, when he is taken into custody after the Marabar episode, focusing on his sense of honour and his bravery. The book shifts consciousness to Fielding and shows Aziz as a trapped animal. Dr. Aziz is a well-domesticated social animal in the presence of friends and enemies alike, with a strong sense of honour, but confronted with danger or injury, his impulses are those of a wild animal: "His impulse to escape from the English was sound. They had frightened him permanently, and there are only two reactions against fright: to kick and scream . . . or to retreat to a remote jungle" (Passage, p. 289). Attention is continually drawn towards the bestial nature of the unredeemed Muslim, through explicit and implicit reference to animals, a strategy that synchronizes well with the general process of dehumanization imposed on these characters. For the post-Disney generations of readers, enthralled by the frolicsome innocence of animals, it is difficult to fathom the negative force of suggestion that bestiality connotes in nineteenth-century literature—viz. lack of feeling and judgement, coupled with base, exploitative drives. When men are depicted as being bestial, they are condemned as being even worse than beasts, because the absence of a moral consciousness is natural in animals, but it is perverse in human beings. While recurrent references to the animality of Muslim characters suggests that they are tied to their biological perceptions and have not evolved to the level of cerebral insight, this really involves a contradiction of portraiture. The nature of the hunt engaged in
by Ameer and Mahbub, so secret and so successful and so much more protracted than the quick, instinctive kill of a beast of prey, require cunning, sophisticated reasoning, and precise mental calculation.

There is one characteristic that Ameer, Mahbub and Aziz share in common with wild animals, that transports them a step further from being despicable to becoming a brooding terror — viz. the predatory instinct. They are all hunters at heart and exhibit the typical workings of the predatory instinct: stealthy pursuit of the victim, keen but patient watchfulness, sudden spring into action and final, usually unfailing, murderous grasp. The sinister atmosphere of Taylor's novel derives principally from the way Ameer Ali stalks his prey, long before he lays a finger on him. He initially fixates on one person or group that appears to be comparatively defenseless, and in possession of a substantial amount of disposable wealth, and then he or they no longer remain fellow human beings, but become sacrificial "bunij" to be hunted down to destruction. He and his band of thugs keep them surrounded, watching every move, measuring distances with uncanny instinct, coordinating the actions of the "herd" through quiet, calculated gestures, and all with an air of such seeming indifference to their intention that they can only be compared to beasts cautiously closing in upon their kill:

There sat the old man: beside him his noble-looking boy: behind them their destroyers, only awaiting the signal: and the old man looked so unconscious of danger, was so entirely put off his guard and led into conversation by the mild, bland manners of my father, that what could he have suspected? (Confessions, p. 34)

It is true that wild beasts are not malicious and only kill for survival, whereas the human animal kills for the thrill of the kill, yet the manner of luring a prey to where it can best be overpowered and the stealthy wait for the perfect moment certainly underscore an affinity. Although Mahbub and Ameer function on entirely different grounds, their modes of operation are easily comparable; it is only that the concrete
physical moves of the one are replaced in the case of the other by equally calculated, abstract and psychological maneuvers. The bodily imprisonment of a victim within the camp of the killer thugs, the planned journey to the site of the gruesome deed, the gradual narrowing of physical distance between the individual killer and his prey until the strategic position is reached, the ominous signal that Ameer calls the "jhirmee" and the final, fatal curl of the "rumal" have correspondences in the deadly world of espionage that Mahbub manipulates with such aplomb. Mahbub leaves his prey to roam freely, letting his mind's eye follow their every move. Under camouflage of his business as a horsedealer, he traverses all of India, particularly the northern regions, acquiring meticulous knowledge of the human traffic coming down from the mountain passes. This knowledge he uses to weave his rope of intrigue around his victims or opponents. He drops a veiled remark here, picks up some information there, throws about a few misleading hints to hide his trail, and slowly and inexorably, the noose tightens around some unwary or inadequately defensed enemy. The success of his mission depends on how well he is able to conceal his manipulations and lure his victims into a false sense of security. The hunt has to be silent and protracted, the kill quick and sudden; how similar this is to the practices of the Thuggee!

It is true that Colonel Creighton, Hurree Babu and Kim are all zealous participants in the Great Game, but this does not make them all cold-blooded hunters of men. One only needs to examine their respective motives for adopting such a dangerous profession. Hurree Babu is interested in gathering folk-lore information for the Royal Ethnological Society, and what better way for him to absorb the texture of a culture, than by repeatedly losing his own identity among diverse communities, chameleon-like, as skilled spies are trained to do? With comic trepidation, he watches over the exorcism of evil spirits from Kim's drugged body: "It is an awful thing still to dread the magic that you contemptuously investigate -- to collect folk-lore for the Royal Society with a lively belief in all Powers of Darkness" (Kim, p.
Of course, Creighton is not a field worker and has to remain rooted in his station as a civil servant, but he too is interested in the Royal Society and envies Hurree his travel opportunities:

... deep in his heart also lay the ambition to write F. R. S. after his name. Honours of a sort he knew could be obtained by ingenuity and the help of friends, but to the best of his belief, nothing but work—papers representing a life of it—took a man into the Society which he had bombarded for years with monographs on strange Asiatic cults and unknown customs. Nine men out of ten would flee from a Royal Society soiree in extremity of boredom; but Creighton was the tenth. (Kim, p. 248-9)

Kim joins the Game through a sheer love of adventure and an opportunity to see the land and its people, with whom his soul has bonded in such miraculous harmony. Mahbub alone appears to have no other higher aspiration; for him, the hunt is an end in itself. He is absorbed partly in an epicurean perception of life and partly in an instinctive drive to kill enemies as a ritual of self-determination. Like animals in the wild, Mahbub Ali defines his territory by annihilating his opponents. He averts suspicion by moving at a leisurely pace, stopping at eating-houses where he gorges himself on rich greasy food, and spending his nights in cheap brothels. He purposefully exudes an air of degenerate, self-satiated contentment that makes it seem highly unlikely that he can ever shake off his sloth to harm anyone. Wild animals at rest have a tranquillity about them that belies the power of their destructive nature; so does the wily Afghan.

In some ways, the predator-prey connection seems to be reversed in Forster's Passage to India, because initially it is Aziz who is seen to be trapped in the inevitable net of degradation thrown on native Indians, by the British rulers. Smarting under the constraint of having to rush at Major Callender's beck and call, Aziz looks around the British compound with a heavy heart: "The roads, named after victorious generals and intersecting at right angles, were symbolic of the net Great Britain had thrown
over India. He felt caught in its meshes" (Passage, p. 39). Aziz's gentle, entirely civilized, demeanor forcefully brings home to the reader the gross injustice of this repression. Soon, however, it becomes obvious that the captive is a wild, dangerous creature, whose social conditioning is only skin-deep. When the symbolic containment gives way to a literal imprisonment in jail, Aziz is at the end of his moral tether. Intense fear and injury peel off all his pretensions, and all his suppressed bestiality struggles to the surface: "From the moment of his arrest, he was done for, he had dropped like a wounded animal" (Passage, p. 236). The entire time that the fearful trial hangs over him, he cowers under pressure, but secret rage and hatred fester in the depths of his consciousness. He only bides his time until his release. As soon as Adela's confession in court restores his freedom, his strength and his pride, he rears himself up for an attack, and the obvious prey is the young girl, abandoned by all her friends. Now, undoubtedly, we see a distillation of the predatory instinct in Aziz's character. It cannot be otherwise; for Forster's novel is set inside the very hub of British civil government, as opposed to the intractable jungle terrain of Taylor's India, and even to Kipling's underground spy-world, outside the jurisdiction of visible law. Here, even destruction has to be legally permissible. The intended financial blow to Adela is meant to be as devastating as the British law will allow. By robbing her of her small fortune, Aziz wishes to commit her to a state of death-in-life, for he truly believes that no man will marry her without material persuasion; and from his point of view, what is a woman's life unblessed with a man's presence? As for the psychological belittlement actually imposed on her, it is as extensive as is the Muslim community's capacity for linguistic abuse: the Nawab, Hamidullah and others join the doctor in defaming her as an ugly, shameless and forward girl. Being the narrow-minded chauvinist that he is, Aziz judges all women by their ability to attract men -- and so, by reiterating Adela's utter lack of charm every chance he gets, he tries to turn her into a non-entity. It is a symbolic death that he inflicts on the unhappy offender.
Both race and history have combined in the imagination of British colonial novelists as progenitors of the hidden violence of the Muslim community. If Aziz's social disgrace can be viewed for a moment as a mirror for the political disgrace experienced by Muslims through the loss of their empire, then the revengeful aggressiveness of Aziz's response can also be interpreted as a symbolic representation of the Muslim community's wounded pride, searching to vindicate itself through indiscriminate violence. Human social psychology certainly confirms the notion that criminally violent behaviour is generated by abuse and humiliation in early life; it is reinforced by a feeling of hopelessness, a sense of irretrievable loss of identity. Childhood in the life of an individual is clearly comparable with the history of a community, a nation or a race. In this larger context, the chain of successive progeny maintain historical continuity and, bound by the chain of causation, act out the legacy of past generations. The political defeat of the Muslims under the rising tide of western imperial power has haunted the colonial imagination of British writers no less than it has the Muslims themselves. It dominates the very opening of Kipling's *Kim*, where some small boys are seen playing a version of the "I-am-king-of-the-castle" game. It is highly significant that the white boy is sitting triumphantly on Zam-Zammah, a cannon on permanent display outside the Lahore Museum. Kim amuses himself by teasing both his friends, Muslim Abdullah and Hindu Chota Lal, maintaining his own superiority and his own right, but his childish babble alternates with revealing comments about the shifting fortunes of empire:

'Thy father was a pastry-cook, Thy mother stole the ghī,' sang Kim.
'All Mussalmans fell off Zam-Zammah long ago!
'Let me up!' shrilled little Chota Lal in his gilt-embroidered cap. His father was worth perhaps half a million sterling, but India is the only democratic land in the world.

The Hindus fell off Zam-Zammah too. The Mussalmans pushed them off. Thy father was a pastry-cook---- (*Kim*, pp. 5-6)
Even this good-humoured prattle asserts that Muslims are both incompetent and aggressive. They took away the land from the Hindus by military force but lost it again through ineptitude. The British are beyond challenge, because they are the only true and capable rulers of India. The Muslims of the sub-continent certainly had their own theory about the rise and fall of the Mughul empire, but they have not always been as uniformly obsessed with their political identity as colonial writers would have us believe. They accepted defeat and passed into an inertia that almost brought their survival into question. Any study of the growth of Indian nationalism during British rule shows that many Muslim leaders and thinkers (among them Sir Syed Ahmed, the founder of the famous Aligarh University) had learned to accept the end of Muslim imperialism as a historical reality, and urged their community to stop looking backwards and get on with the task of improving their present. They called on the British government, as well, to cease viewing Muslims as political adversaries and allow them equal privileges with the rest of its Indian subjects. Although the administration did gradually awaken to the wisdom of this outlook and implement several favourable policies to remove legitimate grievances of the oppressed Muslims, general suspicion remained in the minds of the rulers.

The fear of a potential unstable enemy receded into the Western subconscious, only to surface in relevant imaginative discourse. Contexted in the deeper conflicts of the macrocosmic nation, Muslim men are doomed to permanent political subjection. With the ascendancy of the strong and capable British sceptre, there can be no possible revival of Islamic imperialism, and the depth of this political despair is reflected in the intense hatred placed at the core of each Muslim character, created by the colonial writer. That this is no unfounded assumption or aspersion, is borne out by the fact that even western journalism today seems committed to searching out Muslim malignancy in all parts of the globe; so much so, that after the bomb explosion incident at the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, in April 1995, it came
as revelation that every act of terrorism is not perpetrated by a Muslim. In Forster's A Passage to India, there is a comic episode where the Muslims of Chandrapore band together, angry and armed, for no better reason than to capture Dr. Panna Lal and terrorize him for giving evidence against Aziz. True, the danger fizzles out and the "hunt" simply becomes a parody of itself, but here too we find the same pattern: injury, insult, suppressed rage, calculated revenge at appropriate moment and terrorization of the weak. What dispels the peril is Panna Lal's sudden decision to turn himself into a buffoon and, incredibly, this acts like a charm:

There was nothing pathetic or eternal in the degradation of such a man. Of ignoble origin, Dr. Panna Lal possessed nothing that could be disgraced, and he wisely decided to make the other Indians feel like kings, because it would put them into better tempers. (Passage, p. 238)

Actually, there is nothing mysterious about the reaction produced by the Hindu doctor. By making the Muslims "feel like kings" he touches a sympathetic chord. He weakens the root of their aggression by recognizing their superiority and their imperial past; more, he does a symbolic penance for the dishonour done to the Muslims (historically and during the trial), by degrading himself as a clown. Forster turns a simple matter of personal grievance, or at the most an expression of Hindu-Muslim rivalry, into an occasion to expose the inherent viciousness of the Muslim people.

Prejudice against Muslims is further brought to light by an examination of other Indian characters in the novels being discussed. This thesis takes off from the assumption that oriental (and other non-western, politically-economically-technologically-backward) cultures are represented in Western literature as being also intellectually, morally and aesthetically inferior and finds that, within this broad category, non-Muslims are depicted in a much more favorable light than Muslims. A close comparison along the line dividing Muslim and non-Muslim characters in Confessions of a Thug, Kim and A Passage to India will clearly demonstrate this.
disparity. It has been pointed out already that Taylor considers Hindu thugs less contemptible than the Muslim ones because the former act out of blind devotion and the latter through conscious deliberation. In other words, Hindu thugs commit evil deeds because they are worshippers of Bhowani; Muslim thugs become votaries of Bhowani because they have a natural propensity for evil, resulting from the amoral framework of their own faith. Ameer Ali characterizes Ganesha, his mother’s killer, as the most abhorrent of the thugs but what he has done is nothing more and nothing less than what the rest of the thugs continually do — viz. sacrificial murder. As one might say, in cold logic, it is all in the call of duty. Once the gory profession is accepted, in principle and in deed, one bloody deed follows another as a matter of course; and the "bunij" or victims are not persons but nameless, faceless, breathing sacrifices to Kali. At least, Ganesha remains true to his vocation while the treacherous Ameer Ali turns an informer — and that, too, to save his skin and not from a belated change of heart. Ganesha’s death, along with that of his companions, is even given a touch of dignity:

They all ascended the fatal drop together -- refused the polluting touch of the hangman -- adjusted the ropes round their own necks -- and exclaiming "Victory to Bhowani!" seized each other's hands, and leaped from the platform into eternity. (Confessions, p. 337)

Ameer Ali, the real sadist, looks on with delight: "I watched Ganesha, and joyed to see that his struggles were protracted beyond those of the others." (Confessions, p. 337). Admittedly, the Rajah of Jhalone is a vicious and hypocritical character; he seems almost as culpable as the Thugs, themselves, whom he harbours in his kingdom in exchange for a portion of their plunder. The captured Ismail exposes him in scorn: "Ay, you were friends and brothers in guilt, and you know it . . . You have deceived me, robbed me, shared my spoils, taken the produce of murder" (Confessions, p. 296). Yet, the fact remains that the Rajah is not a killer himself and simply reaps the benefits of a crime that he cannot stop. Once the British government steps in to
suppress the Thuggee movement, the Rajah works in collusion; he is the foremost instrument in the capture of Ameer Ali and his aged father, Ismail. It is the villainous protagonist of the novel who is evil incarnate because he combines in him the murderous brutality of Ganesha and the dishonesty of the Rhajah of Jhalone; destructiveness and duplicity are the very attributes of the devil.

A gentler character cannot be conceived than the Lama of Kipling's *Kim*: there can also be no doubt that his sweetness of disposition is the legacy of his faith. Buddhism shuns violence of all kinds -- physical, verbal and contemplative -- and is the least egotistical of religions, its aim being annihilation of self and not personal redemption in an after-life. For the boy-protagonist of the novel, he is a sanctuary from the aridness of Anglo-Indian life and the defensive ruthlessness of the Game. Orphaned at infancy and brought up in the streets, Kim accepts the drive for self-preservation as a fact of life and is sequentially amused, puzzled, moved and drawn by the old man's total lack of practical wisdom. From then onwards, his chosen mission in life is to protect the naive and trusting Lama and escort him in his search for a symbolic river of enlightenment. The spirituality of this man is not the subject of contention in this thesis; because only an anomaly or inconsistency can contribute to the argument that Kipling's portrayal of the different religious denominations in India is shaped by personal and cultural bias. What elicits wonder in this connection is the outwardly denied, but boldly present, humanity of the religious monk, who has so far progressed on the road to Nirvana that the material world has no reality for him, except when it threatens starvation or places an obstruction across his Search. Yet, he feels a strong, fatherly love for Kim which quite conflicts with his longing to escape the entrapments of earthly life. Of course, there is the pretense that Kim is only a "chela" sent by divine ordinance to look after the material needs of the holy man so that he may devote himself entirely to his spiritual search. In actuality, it is the Lama who provides for Kim, financing his education at the best school in India for Anglo-
Indian boys. He does this by drawing on funds from his temple at home and accessing these through an organized network of Tibetan monks, a highly mercenary chain that does not quite fit the other-worldly concerns of a Buddhist monastery. However, this pretense on the part of the Lama and this duality on the part of the monastery are selfless and benevolent and, as such, totally admirable. A stony detachment from life and fellow human beings may have religious merit but love, being the essence of humanness, provides the supreme commendation in life and is treated as such in most 19th and 20th century works of literature. And so, for the Lama to "earn merit" is to help fellow humans -- the way Kim does, and the garrulous Brahmin lady of Kulu, who nurses the boy to life and the lonely Woman of Shamlegh, on the Himalayas, who arranges for the frail, old man to be carried down the mountain-side. Assuredly, he tries to attach a religious significance to all these deeds, but it is a transparent delusion and no one fails to see through it to the kind creature he really is. The Lama's religion forbids him to have human associations but he cannot overcome his love for humanity, and certainly not for his devoted "chela." He declares as much himself when Kim's identity is revealed and the British army steps in to claim him:

I stepped aside from the Way, my chela. It was no fault of thine. I delighted in the sight of life, the new people upon the roads, and in thy joy at seeing these things. I was pleased with thee who should have considered my Search and my Search alone. Now I am sorrowful because thou art taken away and my River is far from me. It is the Law which I have broken! (Kim, p. 131)

This realization does little to cure his love, for we see that, even after he finds his river of enlightenment, he wrenches his soul back into this tainted world because he cannot leave the boy behind.

Mahbub Ali is a man of the world and even if he were religious, he would not be barred by that consideration from loving another person, because Islam is a practical, materialistic religion that denies neither emotion, nor self-indulgence. Yet,
Mahbub Ali is the coldest of Kim's friends and associates. It is in him that Kim looks for a surrogate father. He looks up to this powerful man as a rock of stability, since his own life has no center. He admires Mahbub's looks, attire, habits and haunts. When he feels trapped in the British camp, he secretly sends a letter to Mahbub and almost nurtures a desire to be adopted by him. It seems as if he really might be, when Mahbub clothes Kim in rich, ceremonial robes and embraces the delighted boy with a show of affection: "'My son,' said he, 'what need of words between us?'" (Kim, p. 244). However, as the novel progresses, it is clear that his action is only part of a plan to buy Kim's loyalty, since he needs a dependable ally in his dangerous profession, the great Game of espionage; until the end of the novel, the Pathan remains impervious to human feeling. When the need arises, he feeds and clothes Kim (with much munificence sometimes), and even gives moral assurance when the boy is unhappy or confused, but he does it all with an eye to policy -- never through an upsurge of emotion. There are moments when it seems that Mahbub's imperturbable mask is about to crack and reveal a vulnerable heart; for example, when he appears to be jealous of Kim's attachment to the Lama. He listens angrily as Kim declares his loyalty to the gentle Lama:

'Do not forget he made me that I am -- though he did not know it. Year by year, he sent the money that taught me.'
'I would have done as much -- had it struck my thick head,'
Mahbub growled. (Kim, p. 252)

However, this jealousy obviously has its roots in egotism and not in love, because he does not really wish to commit himself to the boy. Kim is quick to recognize the inhumane, mercenary nature of his patron, and their relationship degenerates into a grim cooperation to save each other's skin. He discloses to Mahbub playfully that he had long known about his dangerous vocation and might have exposed him to his enemies, had he chosen to do so. Mahbub retaliates by reminding him with chilling directness, "Then thou wouldst have drunk water twice -- perhaps thrice, afterwards"
(Kim, p. 190). They reach a clear, mutual understanding: "Our lives lie in each other's hand" (Kim, p. 191). The reader looks in vain to discover the man behind the mask, because the mask and the face are exactly alike.

Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, referenced earlier in connection with the predatory instinct of Mahbub Ali finding full play in the Great Game, should be discussed further, in view of his other attributes of characterization, in order to reveal the kind of binary discrepancies of cultural representation demonstrated above. Hurree is the typical Bengali Babu, quite openly despised by British administrators, and snubbed at pleasure. One remembers Macaulay's famous defamation of the cowardly, half-educated, pretentious Bengali. The question is, does Kipling simply create Hurree in the image of that stereotype or does he make the Bengali play the part to perfection, perhaps as a mockery of the official perspective? He is physically repulsive, "a hulking, obese Babu whose stockinged legs shook with fat," (Kim, p. 226) uses commonplace British idioms like "jolly damn well" with annoying frequency, brags about his knowledge of Shakespeare and his M. A. from Calcutta University and makes himself generally tiresome to his travel companions. While witnessing Huneefa's bizarre rites to scare away the devils from Kim's presence, he is careful to keep a safe distance; he even smears his face with ashes to keep away the evil spirits. But is Hurree really a coward? His Arya Samaj faith and his rational, western education have convinced him that supernatural spirits do not exist (they are, in his words, "dematerialized phenomenon" Kim, p. 256); and he knows that the exorcism rites amount to a hoax, since he recognizes the voices of the devils claimed to have been created through ventriloquism. The fear that still clings to him seems to me a frisson produced by the atmosphere surrounding the entire proceedings. A coward does not think of himself as a coward; when Hurree acts the part of a coward, he does it with full awareness of his public image: "Onlee--onlee--you see Mr. O'Hara, I am unfortunately Asiatic, which is serious detriment in some respects. And
**also** I am Bengali—a fearful man" (Kim, p. 320). Even the narrator touches upon the irony of his avowedly timorous nature: "Hurre Babu, that 'fearful man,' had bucketed three days before through a storm to which nine Englishmen out of ten would have given full right of way" (Kim, p. 336). Hurree Babu finds himself in extremely dangerous situations on account of his profession and manages to extricate himself with resourcefulness and admirable presence of mind, so much so that he is chosen to be Kim's guide. Even when he is injured by a rival group of spies deep in the Himalayas, he is more concerned about his professional duty than about his own safety:

"Ten steps would have taken Hurree . . . to the shelter and food of the nearest village, where glib-tongued doctors were scarce. But he preferred to endure cold, belly-pinch, bad words, and occasional blows in the company of his honoured employers." (Kim, pp. 355-6)

It is a question worth considering whether a real coward could have survived in the Great Game. Hurree's official superiors are well aware of his dependable qualities and, while conversing with Kim, Lurgan Sahib pays him a rich tribute, indeed:

From time to time, God causes men to be born—and thou art one of them—who have a lust to go abroad at the risk of their lives and discover news—to-day it may be of far-off things, tomorrow of some hidden mountain, and the next day of some near-by men who have done a foolishness against the State. These souls are very few; and of these few, not more than ten are of the best. Among these ten I count the Babu, and that is curious. (Kim, p. 228)

It is praise reluctantly offered, for the next sentence is steeped in customary prejudice: "How great therefore and desirable must be a business that brasens the heart of a Bengali!" (Kim, pp. 228-9). As for Hurree's pose of the Anglicized scholar, he participates in the role with gusto; when Kim reminds him that they should speak in the vernacular to avert suspicion, Hurree declares jovially: "That is all right. I am only Babu showing off my English to you. All we Babus talk English to show off" (Kim, p. 260). Hurree Chunder Mookerjee plays the part of the Bengali Babu
exceptionally well; in fact, he plays it with such clear-sighted heartiness that he completely belies Macaulay's description of the abject Bengali. It must be admitted that Kipling's portrayal of Hurree is one of robust approval. He is a kind man who tries to cloak his concern for others with words of practical wisdom. When he offers Kim his small medicine-box, conveniently fashioned to look like a betel-box, he makes it seem like just another useful tool for the road: "You see, you are so young you think you will last for ever and not take care of your body. It is great nuisance to go sick in the middle of business. I am fond of drugs myself, and they are handy to cure poor people with" (Kim, pp. 232-3). This gives us one more example of a non-Muslim Indian character who preoccupies himself with the well-being of others, particularly destitute persons who cannot afford medical treatment or do not know of its existence. With Hurree's medicine, Kim cures a sick child, whose illiterate, Jat father marvels at it as a kind of magic.

Professor Godbole of Forster's A Passage to India is a character who religiously avoids making a personal commitment and always wears an inscrutable mask. Whenever he is consulted on any matter demanding a particular stance, he feigns total indifference. For instance, when Fielding, at a loss to explain the shocking turn of events at the Marabar Caves, wants to know Godbole's view of the matter, he gets an entirely non-committal answer: "That is for the court to decide. The verdict will be in strict accordance with the evidence, I make no doubt" (Passage, p. 185). He declares himself to be untouched by the issue simply because he was not present at the picnic; it is plain that he would have reacted in much the same way had he been present. Fielding is unable to read the face beyond the mask: "He stared again -- a most useless operation, for no eye could see what lay at the bottom of the Brahman's mind, and yet he had a mind and a heart too, and all his friends trusted him, without knowing why" (Passage, p. 184). Yet, Godbole's emotional detachment from life and the people around him is hardly an intrinsic quality of his nature. Like
Buddhism, Hinduism cultivates spirituality; it is the Brahmin’s duty to detach himself from the taint of lowly desires and preoccupations and to only contemplate eternal truths. Godbole’s imperturbability is a pose, underneath which exists a man who is benevolent, diffident and even lovable. Apparently, Aziz’s capture has no impact on him; he takes no part in the Hindu-Muslim entente that follows. But then, it soon becomes evident that he too has felt the outrage committed on his countryman, because he suddenly pulls out a resignation letter and leaves his comfortable position at the Government College. He is self-effacing and selfless and entirely committed to his vocation — both religious and secular. His King-Emperor George Fifth High School may be a comic farce but Godbole’s intentions are absolutely sincere:

... the King-Emperor had been converted into a granary, and the Minister of Education did not like to admit this to his former Principal. The school had been opened only last year by the Agent to the Governor-General, and it still flourished on paper; he hoped to start it again before its absence was remarked and to collect its scholars before they produced children of their own. (Passage, p. 311)

Aziz, on the other hand, has no sense of vocation; he works merely to earn a livelihood. While Godbole is inspired by a dream, that of making a standard education accessible in remote, Indian villages, Aziz comes to Mau with the single, self-centered wish to nurse his wounded pride, away from the Anglo-Indians. Godbole is acutely embarrassed by his idleness, one that is forced upon him by the villagers’ lack of interest in modern education; Aziz gleefully takes advantage of the villagers’ superstitiousness and gives up his life-saving skills without a touch of moral qualm:

He had to drop inoculation and such Western whims, but even in Chandrapore his profession had been a game, centering round the operating table, and here in the backwoods, he let his instruments rust, ran his little hospital at half-steam and caused no undue alarm. (Passage, p. 289)
Traditionally, in the pages of literature, the priest and the scholar appear cold in their single-minded pursuit of a non-human goal; the doctor, typically, embodies human compassion, because his vocation constitutes service to suffering humanity. The pen of the British colonial writer suffuses Buddhist monk and Hindu scholar with warm, human benevolence and casts a Muslim doctor in the aspect of a heartless egoist. One remembers Casaubon, the dried-up scholar of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and the parish parson who refuses to bury Tess's baby in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*; though it must be admitted that there also exist in western literature the surreptitiously loving, fallible scholar, like Monsieur Paul of Charlotte Bronte's *Villette*, and countless sensitive men of the church, who can look beyond the religious code and into the heart of the sinner. The difference is, in western literature written about western people, characterization is so diverse that deviation from norm is easily recognized and attributed to the author's specific, creative purpose. For example, in *The Scarlet Letter*, we see Hawthorne's devilish doctor-scholar who tortures his victim to force a confession; but he is a man possessed, and it is clear that the writer deliberately makes him a healer by profession to drive his point that Chillingworth is an aberration. When a western writer portrays a remote culture, he is certainly aware that he cannot avoid the weight of suggestion that his characters are types; if not for anything else, simply because output of that nature is so sparse. Therefore, it is hard to imagine that Forster has created a unique character in Aziz. When one considers other Muslim characters in British colonial fiction, Aziz's indifference to the pain of others seems more a part of a pattern and less a matter of coincidence.

The frightening anarchy that the West locates in Muslim ideology is different from the "attractive" prelapsarian anarchy hunted out by anthropologists in island cultures, assuming always that "anarchy" means absence of laws intelligible or acceptable to the West. The textualized essence of the latter exists outside history, its reality collapsing at the moment of its contact with historicity. Its unthreatening
allure comes precisely from its susceptibility to change. Islam's presence is within history, not only post-lapsarian but also post-Christian, itself resistant to change and laying out offers of change and conversion. Its core is an historicized essence, one that has withstood change, instead of a textualized essence that exists apart from it. It has been pointed out a number of times already that the Western and Islamic civilizations have treaded the same path for quite some distance, albeit not together, but in turns periodically outrunning each other, as on a racing track. In the last stage, the West left its rival competitor so far behind that it could look back at its own struggles to succeed with confident pride, and its opponent's failures with condescension. And so it is that when the British in India compared their hard-earned new values of democracy, separation of church and state, enlightenment, women's liberation, and so on, with the static institutions of authoritarianism, class-difference, fusion of religion and politics, suppression of women, and polygamy accepted so complacently by the Muslims, they felt entitled to look down on the latter in disdain. This is understandable distaste for a stage of juvenile mistakes left behind by one's own self. No matter that the British colonials did not always practice in India the lofty values they treasured at home, relapsing into the same vices they criticized in Indian Muslim; that could be explained away as the contagion of the land. Colonial discourse refuses to acknowledge this historicized essence of Islam. Hence the unitary, inflexible image of Islam.
CHAPTER 5

MUSLIM WOMEN–PURDAH AS STRATEGY AND DEFENSE

Muslim women fare no better than men at the hands of Anglo-Indian writers. They appear as mother, sister, wife, but more often as mistress, slave and courtesan, in the pages of the three novels under discussion, but notwithstanding their distinct roles and diverse dramatic positioning in the plots, they have more or less common attributes and remain entirely predictable. They have extremely limited interests, little depth of feeling, no inspiring ideal and show no development of personality. It is true that one may point out a rather broad range of both positive and negative attributes attached to them, viz. physical beauty, eroticism, intrigue, hypocrisy, equivocations of morality and self-serving passion, but instead of forming one dynamic individual character, these add up to a formula of representation that becomes static by virtue of its repetitious nature. Besides, the complex aura of attraction, secrecy, danger and violence that surrounds these women derives from a base of selfish and predatory impulses, underlying their traditional facade of feminine grace and vulnerability. The combination of patriarchism and colonialism results in extreme stereotypes of portrayal; so much so, that often Anglo-Indian writers lapse into worse crudities of sexism than they seek to expose in Muslim men. A study of Muslim women in Anglo-Indian fiction has to take into consideration a complex scenario of layered responses to the specific conditions integral to the life of Muslim women in colonial India. Prevented from viewing these women in their natural surroundings, British men had perforce to form their images filtered through the notions of Muslim men, and that again coloured by their own acculturized perception
of the latter. Again, the peculiarities of gendered response is such that its cross-cultural ramifications cannot preclude general gender preoccupations within the culture of the observer. It needs to be noted too that curiously no effort is made by Anglo-Indian fiction to explore the nature of real limitations prevailing for Muslim women, despite the fact that the western mind professes to be entirely sympathetic to them as victims of male oppression, and that supposedly sanctioned by religion.

Although culture takes precedence over gender in the fictionalizing forms put into use in their novels, there exists certain common bases between the manipulative schematization of the female persona by patriarchal modes of definition and the principles of reductive domination practised by colonialism. These parallels become increasingly evident as comparisons are made between Anglo-Indian and Bengali Muslim depictions of Muslim women. For instance, the idealization of Daulatunnessa in Meer Mosharraf Hossain’s *Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha* and Anwara in Najibur Rahman’s novel of the same name is no different from the idealization of submissive English women by Victorian men; these female characters are shown to have an inner depth, conviction, fortitude and spiritual fulfillment that can shame the bars that limit their existence, thereby making light of the fact of their limitations. Similarly, women of selfish and shrewish dispositions are heartily condemned in both cultures. It is true that Western literature abounds in examples of women who have either accepted, transgressed, struggled against to overcome or even broken for posterity the restraints created for them by the patriarchal society, that they have refused to let themselves be defined by sexual or domestic roles, and struggled to project their "self" as a piece of composite humanity. However, this was a break of tradition achieved by emancipated western women writers who successfully supplanted in the place of docile characters in English fiction like Richardson's Clarissa Howe, Dickens’s Amy Dorrit and Thackeray's Amelia Sedley, the rebellious figures of Austen's Elizabeth Bennet, Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre and Emily Bronte's
Catherine Earnshaw. In their wake, male writers too were forced to acknowledge in fiction the changing identities of western women. Muslim women, even though they too lived through a multiplicity of experiential roles and had the perspicacity to recognize when they were being oppressed, did not manage to contribute an adequately effective, contentious, public voice to make their total presence more visible. As a result, both Muslim and Anglo-Indian writers were able to deny Muslim women this plurality of being and fix them to shallow, fragmented, self-confining, male-generated images. Kazi Abdul Wadud and Kazi Emdadul Haque are able to look into the more realistic needs of their female characters, the first in the milieu of the peasantry and the other in that of the gentry and fallen aristocracy, but they are cautious enough not to challenge traditional social roles and recommend any sort of behaviour not held acceptable for Muslim women. Their extreme idealization at the hands of Muslim writers like Mosharraf Hossain and Najibur Rahman, and the high degree of lurid romance attached to them by Anglo-Indian writers, equally belie the actual conditions and struggles of Muslim women in British India, but under the double pressures of patriarchal and colonial reductionism, Muslim women suffer the greatest abasement of all in Anglo-Indian fiction. Since the Anglo-Indian male perspective on Muslim women is subject to so many variants, it may be revealing to consider at different stages of this exploration the respective degrees to which the objectification of the Muslim woman in Anglo-Indian fiction reflects the writer's actual conception of her (dependent on his lack of exposure to her), serves his purpose of articulating the parallel image of the Muslim male and, finally, compensates at some unacknowledged level for his fear of losing control over the western woman through the success of the feminist movement.

It has to be admitted that some of this inadequacy of representation stems from ignorance of the domestic ways of sequestered women. While ignorance does not explain distortions, it does explain gaps and omissions. The social history of India in
the colonial era incorporates the struggles of many Muslim women to assert their right to a fuller existence, beyond their prescribed domestic roles, but few of them ventured out in public. Though some tried to break the purdah on principle, many wise women kept opposition at bay by working in collaboration with the purdah, demonstrating that it need not be turned into an excuse to curtail the activities of women. Also, compared to them, Hindu women were decidedly ahead in level of education, self-awareness, and involvement in social work and career. It is therefore partially understandable why there is no recognition at all of the ideological battles of Muslim women in the pages of Anglo-Indian fiction. In contrast, there are a few non-Muslim Indian women with relatively smaller dramatic roles in these works, who convey unmistakable signs of character. Contrary to what these novels seem to say, however, even Muslim women went through a process of intellectual awakening in colonial India. A notable feminist of Bengal under British rule was Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain. She waged a lifelong war against ignorance and prejudice, and showed Muslim women that the path to freedom lay not only in overcoming external shackles but, more importantly, in being able to rid themselves of their own weaknesses and superstitions. She was a pioneer of education for Muslim women and founded a school, where they could obtain a modern, secular education. Rokeya's example, the Indian Muslim version of the New Woman, became an ideal for future progressive Muslim women. In Najibur Rahman's novel, Anwara's happiness and sense of fulfillment is not complete until she has built a school next to her living quarters to teach the young women of the village: "Anwara built a beautiful schoolhouse adjoining her rooms, and she took upon herself the task of teaching the village women here" (Anwara, p. 154). Admittedly, women as talented and determined as Rokeya were few in number and not all were uniformly effectual. However, the fact remains that there were signs everywhere of growing self-consciousness among Muslim as well as Hindu women (diffusion of ideas was unavoidable, since they lived in close
proximity), and it is perverse on the part of British writers who actually lived in India, to pretend absolute ignorance of the aspirations of one group, while giving acclamatory recognition to the achievements of the other.

Ignorance of the ways of Muslim women was certainly more of a deciding factor in the case of Meadows Taylor and Kipling, both in view of the time when they wrote and in terms of the social milieu they inhabited. There was a strict separation of the official and unofficial Anglo-Indian worlds from the various Indian communities; as a British tourist, Forster was not subject to the social taboos preserved by his countrymen in India. He, at least, seems to be have been aware of the burgeoning new woman in Muslim society. Robin Jared William speaks of his encounter with one such woman:

One of the most memorable things about the Hydaris was that Forster was permitted to meet and speak with Hydari's wife, who no longer observed the seclusion of the purdah. He remarks in his diary that Mrs. Hydari 'is the first Mahommedan lady I've seen.' His novel is pervaded by an awareness of the changing status of Indian Muslim women.¹

On the contrary, his novel is not fully expressive of the changing conditions he recognized in fact. A review of the several manuscripts of A Passage to India shows Forster's conscious deletion of the Muslim woman's rising self-awareness. Robert Ligon Harrison's study records this revision, in no uncertain terms: "Aziz's feelings of guilt towards his dead wife are emphasized in MS. A. She had insisted that he complete his medical training in Europe and died while he was still there."² Deprived of educational opportunities themselves, many ambitious Muslim women found compensation in inspiring men, brother or husband or son, to reach for greater successes in education and career. Forster recognizes this wealth of contribution through his depiction of Aziz's wife in his initial manuscript, but later decides to transform her into "just a woman in a sari, facing the world" (Passage, p. 128).
Harrison further notes that "His [Aziz's] communion with her photograph is an addition to MS. A and serves to underline his pathetic sensibility." Forster's reworking of the earlier text of his manuscript shows deliberate intention to shrink the mental capabilities of both Aziz and his wife. There is more evidence here of cultural obduracy than of ignorance.

Without going through an in-depth character analysis now, it will be revealing simply to examine the first impressions created by Mrs. Das, Mrs. Bhattacharya and their companions at the Collector's bridge-party, in Forster's Passage to India. They are educated, intelligent, sensitive and quite articulate, though they cannot help being a trifle gauche in the company of the overbearing Anglo-Indians. They are an enlightened group, and clearly perceived as such by the narrator. In fact, even the haughtier of the officer's wives are taken aback by the discovery that these self-effacing women are widely-travelled and can speak English with discernment. Try as they might to demean them with the servant's lingo and by belittling their European travels, as if they were "the movements of migratory birds," (Passage, p. 62) they cannot but feel their own relative inferiority: "[Mrs. Turton's] manner had grown more distant since she had discovered that some of the group was westernized, and might apply her own standards to her" (Passage, p.62). The unobtrusive way in which Mrs. Das and Mrs. Bhattacharya express their accomplishments show great delicacy of feeling. Muslim women are never given this level of intellectual finesse or such breadth of humanistic interest. The latter are articulated mainly by their physical form, which is more often than not made sexually attractive, and by their acutely conditioned, social behaviour. There is almost nothing said about the physical appearance of the assembled Hindu women, besides a fleeting reference to their bright attire (like "exquisitely coloured swallows" (Passage, p.64). This is presumably because the narrator recognizes that their minds are more important than their bodies.
The single most oppressive evil that Muslim women of the upper classes had to learn to live with was, of course, the purdah. Here too one sees a combination of ignorance and deliberate distortion. Muslim male writers who turn it into a burning conviction and the whole spectrum of "other" perspectives, ranging from the callous eroticizing of Anglo-Indian authors to the studied respect of sympathizers in Britain, all show ignorance of the real conditions Indian women faced behind the veil in orthodox Muslim homes. Purdah was a serious matter, to the men who enforced it, to the women who assumed it willingly, and to the women who suffered it out of compulsion—so much so, that women's lives were often staked to the obsessive zeal of maintaining it. Doctrinally, purdah is intended to give women freedom from their sexual identity, so that they can engage in constructive social activity without attracting undue attention, for Islam allows a woman free movement in the outside world, as long as purdah is maintained in her attire. Undeniably, though, abuse of the system has made it a widely-prevalent, social evil in Indian Muslim society. In colonial India, purdah was the most obvious and visible sign separating upper-class, domestic women on the one hand, and working-class serving women or disreputable harem women on the other, and was accordingly strictly enforced. While some families were primarily interested in keeping up a show of social decorum, other families turned the zenana into virtual prisons. Severe restrictions of clothing, movement, speech and self-expression injured women's health and weakened their minds; in extreme situations, some practices even caused their death.

As testimony to the real price women paid—bodily, psychologically and emotionally—for the dubious honour of being called Ashurjamsparsha, a woman whom even the sun has not touched, we have the writings of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, herself a victim of purdah from the incredible age of five and who later grew up to become Bengal's greatest fighter for the freedom of Muslim women. Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's Abarodhbashini deserves comparison with Mary Wollstonecraft's
A Vindication of the Rights of Women. Both informative and entertaining, her anecdotal Aborodhbashini (Inhabitants of the Prison) documents with amazing candour, the pain and indignity and extreme duress experienced by young women, and even little girls as young as eight, in aristocratic Muslim homes. Not only were they forbidden to show themselves to men, they even had to hide from unfamiliar women visitors who were welcomed into the zenana. She describes one such experience from her own life:

On my fifth year, while we were living in Calcutta, two maidservants came to visit my sister-in-law from her aunt's house in Bihar. They had a 'free passport'—they would walk all over the house, and I would run for my life like any deer-cub, hiding inside closets or under tables. Sometimes my ayah would carry me up to a secluded attic room on the third floor; and here I would remain, without food or water, for the entire day. One day, the two maidservants, having combed the rest of the house, discovered this room too. My sister's son, Halu, ran up to inform me of the danger. Luckily, there was a canvas cot in the room; I crawled under it and held my breath—afraid, lest the sound of my breathing cause those unkind women to look under the bed. There were also some chests, packages and small furniture up there. Poor Halu used all his six-year-old's strength to push these and form a barricade around me.  

She was so afraid that she kept herself hidden for almost four days, with only Halu bringing her small sustenance from time to time. This is obviously an extreme example, but the kind of mentality that allowed such an incident to happen truly existed in many homes. In Aborodhbashini, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain records several other instances where women were afraid to leave burning houses, for fear of breaking purdah; or where women travelling on a train had to have their very palanquins draped in layers of cloth, which were then stitched to prevent slipping, before they were sent on board; or where women hastily took off their jewellery and threw these away along with their keys for thieves to pick up, rather than risk being seen or touched by them. Perhaps the most painful of these real life stories, besides
those about the restrictions imposed on little girls, is the one about Rokeya’s elderly aunt. She tripped on her *burqa* while crossing over a railway track, and her maid, unable to move the lady herself, stood by refusing to let anyone touch her, and allowed her to be crushed under the wheels of a passing train. What the maid did cannot be read as a personal act of cruelty, because she was loyally rendering the service she had been employed for, viz. ensuring death before dishonour for her mistress. In fact, purdah actually came to be associated with social prestige in colonial India. Since only wealthy families could afford to maintain separate living quarters for women, and provide the requisite numbers of maids, veils and accessories, to keep up its impenetrable character, purdah developed into a status symbol for the rich and the high-born.

The above account of the nature of life within the purdah, and the struggle of Muslim women within it, show the extent to which ignorance affected the representation of Muslim women. Now, it remains to be seen how the British outlook on Muslim men affected their discourse about Muslim women. Anglo-Indian writers tend to diminish the moral distance between the home and the harem, presumably as demonstration that this is an artificial division born inside the alleged duplicity of Muslim men; the extreme purity of the home and the open licentiousness of the harem serve to keep apart the opposite poles of their moral inconsistencies. It is a fact that even progressive Muslim writers who look sympathetically on the cause of women’s rights discriminate sharply between domestic and “free” women. Whatever awareness Muslim writers possess about the victimization of women is reserved for the women of the hearth; women outside the purdah are presented as being intrinsically devoid of the finer moral qualities, and never as victims of social abuse. In fact, out of their deference to the purity of the home these writers often cast unveiled women as villains, so that their immoral living is linked to the inherent evil of their own nature. So, Rupashi is made the cause of Daulatunnessa’s death in *Udashin Pathiker Moner*
**Katha:** although she enjoys all the favours of the elderly Meer Sahib, like the classic villain she is jealous of Daulatunnessa's virtue itself. There is a strong suggestion in the text that such envy is typical to her kind:

Rupashi is not educated, nor is she moved by religious sentiment. She is not alarmed at the thought of grave sin--this is the only world she believes in. The after-world will follow when it will. Death is all. Who cares about balancing one's deeds? Who believes in an unseen god? ([Udasin](#), p. 174)

She bribes a maid to poison the Meer's wife. Even though she is not a Muslim, it is clear that Durga is made the prime instrument of Anwara's abduction in [Anwara](#) because, as a Vaishnab woman, she roams about freely from village to village, and her physical freedom is equated with her freedom from morality. Even [Abdullah](#), a realistic novel that concentrates on the evils and excesses of the dying Muslim aristocracy, inflicts sarcasm rather than compassion on the maid, Golapi, who becomes Abdul Khakek's concubine, perhaps through no choice of her own. Such being the general social attitude towards unveiled women, it is clear why genteel women were concealed and immobilized behind the purdah. Now, the extreme zeal with which Muslim men presented the idea of the purity of their women behind the purdah, with the inevitable suggestion that unveiled women of other cultures are therefore less than pure, naturally led Anglo-Indian authors to make retaliatory accusations through their own writing.

To be sure, when Anglo-Indian fiction dissolves the separation between the home and the harem it intends to categorize the cultural differences in perceptions of masculinity of the western and the Muslim male but, as a matter of fact, the duality that Muslim men thrust upon their women characterizes and underscores the split nature of the male perception of women in all cultures. This generally follows that categorical divide between the extreme images of the "mother" and the "whore" (reflected in the Christian moral framework as the Madonna and the Magdalen) -- the
former, the nucleus of the domestic rubric and the preserver of religious and social virtues; the latter, the object of sexual desire and often a threat to those same principles that ensure social cohesiveness. This pattern of male-female relationship is actually global, with few exceptions and very slight modifications, territorially and historically. What it does not take into account is the fact that each single woman usually plays multiple roles at varying stages of her life and in relation to different people. In real life, contradictory feminine images tend to inevitably grow into one another. The accumulation and sheer force of women's self-awareness in the west has gradually made modern discourse sensitive to these nuances of feminine identity and driven underground all the self-beguiling inconsistencies present in male western attitudes towards them. The result has been that western discourse has learned to disguise or negotiate with its intraconceptual disagreements, as opposed to the intractability of Muslim discourse which self-consciously, unambiguously and defiantly clings to traditional patterns of thought.

This accounts for the outward difference of degree in the patriarchism of Muslim and western men. This in turn influences the portrayal of Muslim women, because it serves to complement patterns in the characterization of Muslim men. The element that is inseparable from the characterization of Muslim women and comes up in the wake of different queries is the purdah. How ignorance about the true nature of this practice has prevented Anglo-Indian discourse from making a just critique of it has already been touched upon. It remains to be seen how the Anglo-Indian concept of Muslim men has affected its notion of the purdah. Introduced at a particularly lawless era in history, the purdah has gradually come to have only a minimal relevance in the modern world. However, just as the male-dominated forces of Muslim society exploit this system to repress underprivileged women, colonial writing too contradicts the very rationale for the existence of the purdah, by viewing it as a patriarchal ritual to trap a woman inside her sexuality. There is denial of a whole
world of experience subsisting behind the veil, just because it exists without cognitive
connections with the western mind. For these Anglo-Indian writers, the conjectural
space bound in by the restrictions of purdah is a rarefied one, picked out from the
fullness of mainstream life and suspended solely within the semantics of sexual
desire. What strikes any reader foremost in the depiction of Muslim women is the
eroticization, and a corresponding trivialization, of the purdah. In all three works
under consideration, the purdah exists as a protected space, where an assortment of
morally lazy creatures find refuge from the burdens of living a full life. They rejoice
in their passivity since total subservience, whether to their male guardian or to
traditional institutions, ensures a concomitant evasion of moral responsibility for each
of their individual actions. Curiously, not only do British writers insist on portraying
the distorted version of the purdah system, their imagination seems to exult in
forming lurid pictures of such abuse, both from within as well as from without.
Muslim women are seen to use the purdah as cover for lascivious and predatory
machinations.

There are at least a dozen Muslim women in the three novels under
consideration; not one of them exhibits an awareness of herself outside her sexual and
domestic role, and all without exception try to use the purdah as a reverse-strategy to
trap a man. Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug* thus depicts purdah as the cultural
suppression of sexual desire in Muslim women. Consequently, his female characters
try to work around this restriction by allowing secret passage to chosen men, whom
they view and select from their privileged post of observation behind the curtain. Far
from being a sanctuary from unwelcome sexual harassment, the purdah thereby seems
to afford these repressed women a secret place from where they can fix their lewd
gazes on passers-by. Azima declares as much to Armeer, after he has been lured into
her house by her maid:

I am at a loss how to confess that I was enamoured of you as I saw you
pass my house yesterday; but so it was; my liver turned to water as I
looked on your beauty, and I pined for you till my attendants thought I should have died. (Confessions, p. 144)

Sharfun admits to having a similar experience:

Allah! Allah! once my eyes had fixed themselves on you, I could not withdraw them; and as the hole through which I gazed did not afford me a full view of your person, I partially opened the curtain and fastened my soul with your appearance. You went away, and I fell back on my carpet in despair. (Confessions, p. 192)

Such scenes would no doubt be amusing in a comedy, but Taylor's novel is a serious one. No stretch of imagination can detect irony in the lines given above. The fact that more than one character is shown to peep out from behind restraining curtains suggests that the alleged purity or loyalty of Muslim women in purdah is a myth preserved by artificial restraints, and is not embraced as an ideal by individual women. This is an essential point of difference in the way purdah is perceived by Anglo-Indian observers of Islamic culture and Muslim writers hearkening from within the culture.

As a courtesan owned by the powerful Nawab, Zora occupies a social position with the least possible scope for self-determination. Yet, she uses her very vulnerability as a strength to reinforce her bodily charm. Her weakness cries out for the protection of the youthful gallants whom she entertains with her accomplished song and dance. With carefully contrived dress and demeanour, she achieves an air both sensual and aesthetic, and evokes an ethereal inaccessibility that never fails to lure men into her trap. Here is a detailed description of Ameer's first vision of Zora from Confessions of a Thug:

It [her dress] was made of a dark lilac-coloured gauze, in bands alternately with gold tissue; the bottom trimmed with gold tissue very broad, as far as her knees, upon which there was rich embroidery in gold thread and seed pearls. Around her she had thrown with extreme grace a scarf of the lightest muslin and silver, of the same colour as her
dress; so thin was it, that as she moved it seemed to float away from 
her in the air caused by her motion. (Confessions, p. 65)

Clearly Zora's weapons are fantasy and passion; they serve her well to elude the pains 
of domination. She uses Ameer's infatuation for her to secure him as an escort to 
deliver her from the Nawab's prison. After she reaches the safety of her mother's 
house, she conveniently forgets about him and lets her mother chase him away. As a 
courtesan used at will by her patrons, Zora's reciprocatory behaviour is entirely 
credible. But Taylor errs when he falls back on this same kind of knowledge to 
portray members of the zenana, making them too seem like creatures of deceit, 
intrigue and rank sexuality. Thus, there is hardly any difference in his 
characterization of Zora, Azima and Sharfun -- the first a professed courtesan, the 
second the wife of a nobleman and the third a widowed traveller who seeks Ameer's 
protection on the road. They are all selfish, manipulative and deceptively coy; and 
besides, they all use their physical beauty to entice their victim. Azima acts no 
differently than a common courtesan. There is sometimes added a farcical component 
in the portrayal of the zenana, whereby their adoption of the purdah is no more than a 
pretense, a porous fiction which these clever women turn into a device for cuckoldry. 
Azima turns upon Ameer her whole arsenal of weaponry, real and affected -- beauty, 
adornment, coyness, fragility, suffering, pathos and threat of self-destruction. Having 
described her husband's cruelty to her, she declares with an elaborate theatrical 
gesture: "You will not refuse me protection? If you do and your heart is hard 
towards me, one thing alone remains -- I have prepared a bitter draught, and 
tomorrow's sun will look upon my dead body" (Confessions, p. 144). A fierce hunter 
himself, Ameer is vanquished by a far more cunning predator; he capitulates 
completely: "He who has sent me to you has sent you a willing and fearless slave" 
(Confessions, p. 145). Azima makes a sincere offer of herself to Ameer but Sharfun 
is a superlatively alluring femme fatale ("Zora was beautiful, Azima was even more
so, but Sharfun surpassed them both in as great a degree as they excelled any of their sex I had ever seen" (Confessions, p. 193) playing with a far more dangerous amour, pitched against exposure and death.

As apparent victims of incarceration, Muslim women are initially viewed with empathy, but a close examination of almost all characters of Anglo-Indian fiction invariably opens up the question whether they are worthy of freedom, viz. whether they have a sense of personal dignity that the purdah is expected to violate. What presumably exists, in their understanding, only to act out the literal desire of Muslim men to possess their women in totality, is given universal relevance by being made to articulate the metaphorical desire of western artists. The most outrageous tropes of schematization and fictionalizing are used, therefore, in the depiction of Muslim women to serve the colonial imagination.

Alloula Malek has recently published a collection of postcards sent home by French colonialists living in Algeria, depicting western representations of Muslim women behind the veil. These are torrid and vulgar variations of the odalisque, that tantalizing oriental female form in studied deshabille, that haunted the imagination of the western artist all through the nineteenth century. Muslim women in Algeria and India cannot be assumed to have had shared similar lives behind the public view, and the photographic medium has certain distinct qualities not as directly apparent in the literary; and yet, the points Malek raises about the manner in which the French imperialist mind perceived the rhetoric of denial signified by the veil, elucidates a few common themes that pertain to the Indian scene as well. According to The Colonial Harem, the veil donned by traditional Algerian women set up an affront to the camera, obstructing its truth seeking gaze in a gesture of triple denial, viz. denial of the viewer's desire, denial of aesthetic use, and denial of imperial possession:

The opaque veil that covers her intimates clearly and simply to the photographer a refusal. Turned back upon himself, upon his own impotence in the situation, the photographer undergoes an initial experience of disappointment and rejection. Draped in the veil that
cloaks her to the ankles, the Algerian woman discourages the scopic desire (the voyeurism) of the photographer. She is the concrete negation of his desire and thus brings to the photographer confirmation of a triple rejection: the rejection of his desire, of the practice of his "art," and of his place in a milieu that is not his own.5

As revenge, the photographer constructed an artificial mise en scène, approximating the space beyond the veil with the purchased body of an artist's model, and placed therein every modicum of the viewer's desire. Malek brings the attention of the reader to the brittle fictionality of this enterprise where the very steps meant to establish realism, i.e. the excessive use of tell-tale signs (lavish dress, jewellery, decorative furniture, etc), betrays the intentionality of a wrought imagination. The camera pretends to expose the true picture behind the denial, penetrating as it were the symbolic white-out of the particular, white veil worn by Algerian women; what it does in fact is set up an ignonimous myth, missing entirely the truth of the Algerian women's struggle for personal and nationalistic freedom, with the veil both symbolizing identity and allowing secret transportation of weapons for the liberation forces.

While women were commonly seen in the streets of Algeria, in large groups and albeit disguised and even nullified as individual entities by the uniform design and colour of their veils, upper-class Indian women kept themselves completely outside the perimeters of public vision, establishing thus a greater denial, which in turn produced stronger dynamics of challenge and temptation. Indian women residing behind the purdah, who could choose whom to see and when to see while remaining unseen themselves and who could thereby effect a strange reversal of power, held the same kind of fear and fascination for the Anglo-Indian observer. As writers, they retaliate by refusing to accept this condition as a willed denial; explaining it, contrarily, as forced submission to restrictive cultural norms. They are provoked by the enigmatic presence of Indian women beyond their explanatory gaze, and this
absence of actual knowledge concerning life inside the purdah teases their creative faculties as the *vide or blancheur* of a blank page. So they fill up this void with arbitrary images of wish fulfillment, novelty, intrigue, danger and moral chaos, preserving continuities from their perception of the visible world. They people this fictive space with characters mostly drawn from the available models of mistresses and courtesans, the Muslim zenana being out of bounds for the prying eyes of the outsider. Unaware of the real conditions, deprivations, limitations, problems and also rewards of seclusion experienced by Muslim woman, these writers cannot look far beyond their objectivized presence as an unseen extension of the male Muslim ego, to the complex effects of their multiple levels of subjectivization. Used primarily to complement, counter, abet and consummate the inclinations and machinations of the male characters, Muslim women are made to reflect the raw physicality of Muslim men, their moral vacuity, their inhumanity and their hypocrisy.

Male and female Muslim characters thus present parallel traits in Anglo-Indian fiction; both are suffused with animality and destructive charm. The physicality of Muslim women is given a more potent and sinister signification than the passive availability of mere sexual objects, such as that provided by the picture-postcards models in *The Colonial Harem*. These fictional Indian women initiate desire which they transform, in turn, to manipulative power. They defer outwardly to the rules of subjection, pretending complete allegiance to their male keepers, and indulge in secret subversion for their own personal gain. Most Anglo-Indian writers concentrate on mythologizing and romanticizing the role of Muslim women, like gothic heroines of mystery or horror fiction; at the right cue, these beautiful, weak, imprisoned belles suddenly turn into devouring monsters. Taylor's depiction is particularly influenced by the male perspective and by the requirements of his male Muslim characterization. In *The Confessions of a Thug*, he develops a dangerous feminine mystique through the combined evocation of feminism and orientalism.
Paradoxically, however, his female characters appear to be neither weak and passive, nor pure, these being illusory masks they hold before them to hide their multiple powers of deceit and intrigue. The purdah serves well as a charmed territory, fortified in respectable homes by inviolable domestic rituals and in disreputable harems by aesthetic guiles, and any vulnerable man who steps inside is irresistibly drawn as a prey. Zora, Azima and Sharfun have no other function in the novel than to embody physical desire, thus existing simply to add one more dimension, that of sexual prowess, to the manifold powers of the villain-protagonist, Ameer Ali. The seductiveness of these purdah women is a variant of the alleged predatory instinct in Muslim men; they possess by secret entrapment while Muslim men engage in stealthy chase or open aggression. Within the purdah they wield the powers of charm, mystery, pleasure, desire and death.

Kipling, at least, is honest about his relative ignorance about sheltered women of orthodox Muslim homes; he does not try to depict them in his novel. He keeps his focus exclusively on women in cheap brothels, like Huneefa and other faceless creatures of the night with fancy names like "Flower of Delight," those whom Mahbub calls "Harpies who paint their faces and trap the stranger" (Kim, p. 33). Significantly, all these lowly and scheming prostitutes in Kim are Muslim women; he reserves the nobler, more human characters for women of other religious faith, like the Hindu woman of Kulu and the tribal woman of Shamlegh. Mahbub finds the secrecy and the guile and the intoxication surrounding these female decoys highly useful in his art of espionage. They are skillful players in the game of misapprehension. They create a magical region guarded by superstition, disguise, sorcery and oblivion, a space outside the scope of working-day ethics, where identities may be lost and secured without a betraying trace. Kim walks into Huneefa's lair as an Anglo-Indian school-boy and emerges as a low-caste Hindu boy, transformed beyond detection. In Kim, particularly, female consciousness is set up in
opposition to the male unconscious. Mahbub's drugged and defenseless sleep in the company of the women in the bazaar and Kim's unstoppable loss of consciousness in Huneefa's apartment intensify the uncomfortable air of men being watched unawares from behind the veil.

In The Colonial Harem, Alloula Malek explains how disquieting the gaze behind the veil can be for the male colonial viewer, who takes for granted his exclusive right to appropriate the subject world with his penetrating coup d'oeil. He finds himself caught in the guilty act of visual piracy and imprisoned within the woman's cognition, much like the trapped image inside the camera eye.

These veiled women are not only an embarrassing enigma to the photographer but an outright attack upon him. It must be believed that the feminine gaze that filters through the veil is a gaze of a particular kind; concentrated by the orifice for the eye, this womanly gaze is a little like the gaze of a camera, like the photographic lens.

The photographer makes no mistake about it: he knows this gaze well; it resembles his own when it is extended by the dark chamber of the viewfinder. Thus in the presence of a veiled woman, the photographer feels photographed; having himself become an object-to-be-seen, he loses initiative: he is dispossessed of his own gaze.

The male observer is thrown into a state of perpetual exposure, himself, and is continually frustrated in his desire to unveil and possess an imperial challenge. Meer Mosharraf Hossain's Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha describes a similar situation, where Kenney is objectivized under the watchful look of untold numbers of timorous village women. The tall, white-skinned, golden-haired Englishman is a novelty, a wonder and an intruding strangeness and he is appreciatively, fearfully but also indifferently scrutinized, much as the orient is studied by the colonizing west.

The village people are afraid of the Sahib. Wherever they may be, as soon as they learn that [Kenny] has left his house, they quickly hide behind trees or under bushes by the roadside. If they find no time to hide before he arrives, they salute him trembling and walk away as fast as they can. At the mention of the Sahib, the village women shut their
doors and, hidden inside their home or under the ledges, they regale their eyes with the beauty of his English appearance. (Udasin, p. 5)

While the village men have no means of deflecting Kenney's wrath, the village women are secure behind the anonymity of their purdah, from which shelter they transform his imperious presence into a commodity, a spectacle, and a curiosity. Alloula Malek perhaps makes too much of the power of the guarded vision of veiled women. This is a fragile security, for whenever there is a breach in the purdah, knowledge and power quickly follow along that path of fleeting sight, and force the concealed woman to surrender. Such is the fate of Maina, the beautiful wife of Kenney's coachman, Jockey. Kenney's eyes catch one glimpse of her, and her life becomes forfeit in his hands. Although she preserves the integrity of her believing soul, she is not able to protect her body from becoming sexually defiled.

Colonial writers paint a very sinister picture of Muslim women. When one considers the underlying nature of Muslim women, whether inmates of the home or the harem, as revealed through the fictional screen of British colonial writers, one can hardly see them as victims of an oppressive, male-oriented society. They are all, without exception, envisioned as sly conspirators, capable of transforming their weaknesses into traps for their guardian-adversaries. It has been mentioned already that colonial literature focuses mainly on two aspects of their entity, viz. the physical and the social. It is obvious that male physical strength is greater than that of the female, and so the outward subservience of women follows from this, quite logically. Confinement in the house makes them socially weak, both by restricting communication among themselves and by preventing all kinds of remunerative economic activity. As seen in the case of Muslim men, when potentially resourceful faculties are forcibly reduced to a state of inaction, the suppressed energy is shown to express itself in malevolent behaviour. What begins in the subaltern entity as an impulse for survival, gradually deepens into a subversive act of domination. This
enmity is too deeply embedded and too insecure to explode into open rebellion. The strategy, rather, is a sustained and secret warfare, meant to wear down resistance, the same way that Begum Hamidullah tries to wear down Aziz's resolve to remain single after the death of his wife. Thus, the traditional suspicion of Islamic culture in the West results here in the direct strengthening of the female persona with violent combative instincts.

Forster makes an ambitious and plausible venture into the Muslim *zenana*. He uses a realistic setting, down-to-earth characters and a convincing social encounter. Yet, at the centre of this tame social interchange is the same ploy for possession and mastery. Begum Hamidullah attempts precisely that when she welcomes Aziz into the inner chambers of her household, for she spreads the net of entrapment on behalf of a female relative, who is in need of marriage to a well-born Muslim man. The imposing matron almost manages to persuade her husband and his friend that it is their moral responsibility to save a respectable woman from spinsterhood:

> While the tale was in progress, it convinced the two men, the tragedy seemed a slur on the whole community; better polygamy almost than that a woman should die without the joys God has intended her to receive . . . and how can the man who had denied them to her stand up to face her creator and his own at the last day? (Passage, p. 37)

Aziz has to put up a real fight to get away, but not without a shame-faced promise that he would consider her proposal: "Perhaps . . . but . . . later . . ." (Passage, p. 37).

What makes Begum Hamidullah, and other respected matrons of the Muslim household, so difficult to resist is the fact that she speaks with the voice of righteousness. The power of domestic women who, shut within the purdah, really have no option of going astray, derives from assumptions of purity and abstinence that Muslim men cannot always profess to. These women also oversee, with great earnestness, all the proper rites and ceremonies governing a man's life ("Hamidullah Begum . . . had much to say to him [Aziz] about a family circumcision that had been
performed with imperfect pomp" (Passage, p. 36), and so serve as symbolic pylons ensuring social stability. Erring men can wander into lustful harems, but they always feel secure in the knowledge that they are forever bound to the sacred precincts of their home, through the loyalty of their zenana women. The latter use this power with selfish sagacity. Even though they employ different methods and arguments, Begum Hamidullah's efforts to trap Aziz in a second marriage with her relative and the pact between Sharfun and her maid to seduce Ameer are really similar intrigues with identical ends. Begum Hamidullah's voice speaks for the rest of her community's womankind: "Wedlock, motherhood, power in the house -- for what else is she born?" (Passage, p. 37). Domestic power can be seen as a microcosmic version of imperialism, and the metaphorical hunt of men by Muslim women to safeguard their own presence, partially mirrors the myth of the more devastating hunt of the human race by vindictive Muslim men. Viewed through the distorted lens of colonial prejudice, it appears as if the continuity of the morally-confused Muslim society depends on the successful manipulation of Muslim men within the magic circle of the purdah. The colonial writer precludes the possibility that there might be equal marriages of mutual consent between Muslim men and women, and turns this relationship into a strategy of domination for the former, and a hunt for survival for the latter.

When conflicts arise between social convention and personal desire, Muslim women show themselves to be just as capable of moral equivocation as their men. So Azima professes to be religious, observes purdah in all its forms, invokes the mercy of Allah at every turn, but has no qualm about leaving her husband's home with a stranger. She has long accepted the fact that her husband treats her like a piece of property, but once her eyes become infatuated by Ameer's good looks, she is not willing to take any more abuse: "Sahib, he is old, he is a tyrant, he has beaten me with his shoe, and I have sworn on his Koran that I will no longer remain under his
roof" (Confessions, p. 144). So it is with her God-fearing maid, Kulloo, who is aghast at the idea of an elopement: "Azimabee, this is madness . . . I will not assist you. I was willing that you should have a lover, and helped you to find one; but this is madness" (Confessions, p. 145). We learn about similar shifting of values prevalent among Muslim women in Passage to India. Aziz declares to Fielding how important the purdah is to women of his culture, but he also describes how easily their inhibitions can be overcome. If his wife was living, he could easily have persuaded her to meet the British professor:

'I believe in the purdah, but I should have told her you were my brother, and she would have seen you. Hamidullah saw her and several others.'
'Did she think they were your brothers?'
'Of course not, but the word exists and it is convenient.' (Passage, p. 128)

Thus, Muslim women are shown to be without rooted convictions; their protestations of honour amount to only an outward deference to social propriety. Being believers of the same religious faith, they are just as morally confused as Muslim men.

Fictionality and disguise also enable Anglo-Indian writers to use their perception of Muslim women to come to terms with their uneasy responses to the shifting identities of western women. As rulers of the men who rule the lives of Muslim women, and as progenitors of a language already refashioning the world in its own images, they achieve a form of indirect, circumlocutory possession of the primitive female essence, that by its very extravagant and repetitive nature, compensates for the "un-manned" western male's permanent loss of mastery over the "un-sexed" western female fighters for personal liberty and social equality. Eric Hobsbawm devotes a chapter to the emergence of the "New Woman" in The Age of Empire, and identifies such a possibility as a real concern for European men. :

If emancipation meant emergence from the private and often separate sphere of family, household and personal relations to which women had so long been confined, could they, how could they, retain those
parts of their feminity which were not simply roles imposed on them by males in a world designed for males? In other words, how could women compete as women in a public sphere formed by and in terms suited to a differently designed sex?  

Rapid industrialization, spread of education (particularly schools for girls), and the work demand created by men participating in wars, caused more and more women to leave their homes and become breadwinners for themselves, their children or aged dependents; and with this change, the traditionally undisputed position of men as heads of families became less tenable. As practical necessity drove women to shred traditional myths of inborn weakness, men also were being driven to renege their age-old masculine assertiveness. A dark fear of the inevitable loss of feminity, under these circumstances, for the woman of the west resurfaces in the rank sexualization of the oriental woman in fiction. Especially, the sharp division maintained in the Islamic world between male and female identities, activities and roles affords a welcome imaginative return to the comforting myths gradually evanescent in western society. No matter how persistently it is condemned in public, purdah being a visible, palpable sign of a woman's possession by men is inexhaustively appealing to the dislocated patriarchism of the western mind. Not only does purdah recreate fictionally that separation of private and public space guarded so jealously by Victorian men, it externalizes that supreme figure of total womanly submission idealized by them. We may consider as illustration a few typically Romantic and Victorian heroines in literary forms other than fiction, since the latter as a socially-conscious medium chose more often to expose prevalent social hypocrisies than perpetuate them: Keats's Madeleine performing the rites of St. Agnes' Eve to get a vision of her one true love, Tennyson's pining Mariana of the moated grange, and his Lady of Shalott struck dead by a glimpse of real life. In addition, western imagination has come up with various archetypal myths of princesses shut up in inaccessible towers, some lost in the charmed oblivion of a hundred years of sleep or poisoned and frozen into death-in-
life, all reclaimed by the kiss of their one-and-only prince. All these images draw meaning from the isolation and seclusion of women for the love of one man, no less than does the Muslim notion of purdah. Western writers also manifest an obsession with the provision of polygamy in Islam. Like purdah, polygamy was sanctioned by Islam at a lawless time, to prevent the exploitation of women, particularly widows and orphans of war. Marriage forced upon men the legal obligation to protect and provide for such helpless women whom they would have possessed in any case, and cast away at will whenever they chose to do so. Over the years, unscrupulous Muslim men have abused this very specialized sanction to encourage their libidinous desires, overlooking the fact that in the changed circumstances of the modern world, women have alternative options and do not have to belong to anyone to be safe, as they had to in pre-Islamic Arabia. The fact that polygamy is forbidden in the West does not mean that Western men are entirely free from polygamous desire. In their fictional depiction of the Muslim world, they transfer this desire to Muslim women who themselves crave polygamous union with chosen men of grace and prowess. Having decided that she wants Ameer for her pleasure, Sharfun uses every tool at her disposal in Taylor's Confessions of a Thug to gain her end. She even uses religion to back up her claim: "As for your wife, I hate her not. Does not our law allow you four wives? Is it not so written in the blessed Koran? You cannot deny it. Even I, who am a woman, know it. I would love Azima as a sister" (Confessions, pp. 196-7). Polygamy, generally considered to be exploitative of women, is turned by Sharfun into an instrument for compelling a man to unite with her. By viewing multiple marriages as acts of surrender to passionate, irrational women, western masculinity indulges in a fantasy of gratification without guilt.

Culture and patriarchism are thus seen to combine in forming arbitrary images of Muslim women in Anglo-Indian fiction. However compelling the values of
patriarchism are, a careful comparison shows that culture is more instrumental in these representations. Progressive Muslim men are more sensitive to the deprivations and needs of Muslim women than Anglo-Indian women. Greenberger attributes the inclusion of large numbers of Indian women in Anglo-Indian fiction to the presence of these women novelists: "Both because of the large number of women writers who dealt with India and also because of the general impression of feminity that India gave to the British, the Indian woman assumes a large role in the image of the Indian people." However, these women Anglo-Indian writers, and they were no fewer than men though the names that usually come up are Maud Diver, Alice Perrin, Ethel Savi and Flora Anne Steel, do not paint a more realistic or compassionate picture of the Indian woman, be she Hindu or Muslim. This is surprising because in real life many of these enterprising women chose to involve themselves with social work, an occupation that naturally allowed them to observe Indian society at close range, with all its ordinary day-to-day preoccupations. Obviously, there existed an inconsistency between what they saw and what they insisted on believing or portraying; Flora Anne Steel, for instance, challenged the mores of the Raj to experience India, though she served the empire well with the loyalist bent of her writing: "Although she was conventional in believing British Government was the best thing for India, she knew far more about the country than was considered necessary for a woman ... The local Municipal Council, made up of Hindu and Muslim notables, met under her supervision in her garden." As Inspectress of Girls' Schools in the Punjab, she was directly cognizant of the state of women's education among the Muslims and the serious need for its expansion; yet, her representation in fiction of the Muslim student is satirical and defeatist to the purpose of girl's education, instead of being sensitive to its promise. Hoshiaribibi attends an English school, on scholarship, for sixteen years and comes to accept her continuing presence in the school as a matter of course. She is unable to understand that it is her turn now to teach younger students. When forced
to set up an establishment of her own, she leaves it in the care of her servant, Fatma, who keeps a very tidy school. Pupils are happy for not having to study, and busy mothers are happy to leave their children for a few hours, in a safe place. The women of the Raj, who incidentally were the most staunch supporters of the Raj, echo the typical Raj assumption to declare that the merits of education were completely lost on Indian women. Muslim women were most in need of education and, through Fatma, they are presented not as a disadvantaged and potentially resourceful body of people but as one intrinsically inferior in instinct, intellect, imagination and ethics.

The suppression of intellectual capability and social commitment in Muslim women allows a stronger focus on their sexuality; almost without exception they are depicted as creatures of violent emotion:

The dominating factor of their character is believed to be their devotion to their husbands or to the man they love. They are depicted as being deeply sensual and passionate individuals who give everything they have to the one they love. If that love is not returned in full, the Indian woman can either turn into an animal-like creature wreaking vengeance on her 'betrayed'. Regardless of whether her loved one is Indian or English it is dangerous to cross an Indian woman. Mrs. Steel devotes several stories to the theme of the passionate Indian woman who has been wronged. Lazizan burns down the house of her rival in love and Durga poisons her lover when he decides to marry someone else.  

The above stereotypes, respectively from Steel's In the Guardianship of God and The Flower of Forgiveness, characterize Indian women as being morally deficient, obsessive in their desires, abject in submission and fierce when rejected. In short, even Anglo-Indian women writers are locked in the erotic visions created by their male counterparts. Their portrayal is perhaps set apart from that of Anglo-Indian male writers by a touch of disdain, a defensive reaction to the sense of threat represented to them by Indian women. In Greenberger's words, "The warning is clear to the English--don't get involved with an Indian woman because it is impossible for a
Westerners to comprehend the depth of the passions he has tapped." Sara Suleri makes a more penetrating study of the fears and insecurities that haunted the existence of Anglo-Indian women, whose writing often functioned as a gesture of psychic enclosure to protect them from these threats. One of the most unsettling fears that she uncovers is that of mothers being separated from children. Searching out the hidden trauma that perturbs The Memoirs of Harriet Tytler 1828–1858, Suleri comments:

The narratives of such mothers, however, record with ambivalence the familial decentering of Anglo-Indian domesticity, in which maternity must lease out its progeny to either one culture or other: both precursors and successors of Stanley-Delhi-Force would be fed by Indian breasts and hands before being returned to the educative sustenance of England. The undisturbed unity of Indian homes and the peculiar self-sufficiency of the zenana reinforced Anglo-Indian women's sense of deprivation. Indian courtesans raised fears of a different sort; they produced sexual insecurity in Anglo-Indian women, even while reminding them of their marginal role in the lives of the men they had come to comfort in exile:

If the picturesque turns away in horror at the prospect of the nautch-girl, it expresses less a hidden fear of her sexual power over the Anglo-Indian man and more a hidden recognition that the Indian courtesan provided an uncannily literal replication of the part Anglo-Indian women had been imported to perform.

This is a rash statement for, to be sure, Anglo-Indian women were brought to perform much more than the part played by Indian courtesans, but Suleri's general observation that attraction, envy, hatred and fear of the ways of Indian women coloured the writings of Anglo-Indian women, making them more nuanced than the simple eroticism conveyed by Anglo-Indian men, is a just one.

To return to our earlier question as to whether patriarchism or culture affects discourse on Muslim women, it appears that culture is the stronger influence. In actuality there are strong affinities visible in the nature of perception drawn inwards
to women of their respective cultures by western and Muslim men, which then shows up by contrast the more incriminating portrayal aimed at women of the opposite culture. Even though representation of the western woman, whether in British, Anglo-Indian or Indian novels, is not a prime concern here, it must occasionally operate as a frame of reference. Besides, the example of the liberated western woman, transported to India through western literature, went a long way to inspire the emancipation of Indian women. It is interesting to note how representations of Muslim women in Anglo-Indian fiction subvert the positive influence emanating from models of the western woman, available to them in the pages of English literature, whether this happened through direct perusals, translations or the encouragement of western-educated, progressive Muslim men in the family.

It is the young, progressive Muslim men who were allies of suppressed Muslim woman, not Anglo-Indian women, and not older Muslim women themselves. In educated families, particularly in those with a strong exposure to western ideas, young Muslim women sometimes had staunch allies among male relatives. The story of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, whose brother taught her English when the rest of the household was asleep at night, is well known to every Bengali individual. After her marriage, she found the same kind of support from her husband. Not only did Sakhawat Hossain give moral encouragement to his wife's desire to emancipate young Muslim women, he actually donated his fortune to help her establish a high school for girls. The support given to the cause of liberating Muslim women by progressive men is reflected in the indigenous literature of the times. In Emdadul Haque's Abdullah, we learn of the hero's dream to better his financial prospects, so that he will have ample opportunity for social reform. He desires particularly to promote education for women:

What would [Abdullah] have to worry about when he started to defend cases on completion of his law exams?--if he then wished, he could devote himself to social work. He would dedicate his life to worthy causes like the spreading of English education, and women's
education. Without such social reforms, particularly without the beginning of women's education, Muslim society could not be freed of its superstitious rubbish. Abdullah made a resolution to himself, "If God was willing, he would use his entire fortune to promote the education of women. (Abdullah, p. 14)"

That this is not an empty brag is borne out by Abdullah's unfailing struggle for the rights of his sister and wife. This support from male family members was an invaluable aid, and it is doubtful whether Muslim women could have accomplished what they did without such help. Whereas men largely occupied an adversarial position in regard to the western feminist movement, in India there was a large group of men who actually stood by adventurous women and helped them fight their battles. Hobsbawm does not fathom the extent to which women were in need of being released from their bonds, when he trivializes the support of Indian men as a sign of social vanity:

To take an extreme case: emancipated Bengali men, who wished to show their westernization by bringing their wives out of seclusion and 'into the drawing room', produced unexpected tensions with and among their women-folk, since it was quite unclear to these women what they gained in return for the certain loss of the subaltern, but very real autonomy in that section of the household that was unquestionably theirs.  

In the same vein, Aziz is made eloquent on the subject of lifting the purdah, but his words are driven, as if in echo of Hobsbawm's description above, more by the need to seem emancipated to suit the current temper of the age, than by genuine concern for the rights of Muslim women, even those of his own wife or daughter. Women had reasons of their own to come out of seclusion. It is true that some women enjoyed a great deal of autonomy, even power, in their homes, but the important question to remember in this connection is, how many women? Only older women, in their mellow motherhood, were able to release themselves from domestic oppression.
Not only does culture operate as the primary determinant point of view in the matter of colonial representations of female character, it also becomes one of the principal factors deciding the level of objectivation aimed at the subject of these representations. Non-Muslim Indian women have a far more positive portrayal in Anglo-Indian fiction. The Brahmin lady of Kulu is one of the most memorable characters in Kipling's *Kim*. The reader first meets her on the Grand Trunk Road, where the Lama and his disciple are also fellow travellers. She is easily distinguished from among the Chaucerian (albeit Indianized) medley of travellers, in never-ending passage along this important highway. Her wealth allows her to travel in style, with a whole retinue of carriers and servers, and even though she is neither young nor beautiful, she has a robust zest for life that quickly attracts Kim's interest. The narrator obviously has her in mind when he describes jestingly, but appreciatively, the trend among elderly Indian Hindu women to travel; however, the use of the plural confirms my point, that the livelier personalities of these women are viewed by the novelists as being cultural, and not incidental:

They, being withered and undesirable, do not, under certain circumstances, object to unveiling. After their long seclusion, during which they have always been in business touch with a thousand outside interests, they love the bustle and stir of the open road, the gatherings at the shrines, and the infinite possibilities of gossip with like-minded dowagers. Very often it suits a long-suffering family that a strong-tongued, iron-willed old lady should disport herself about India in this fashion. (*Kim*, pp. 91-2)

Being a high-caste woman, she is subjected to seclusion like any Muslim woman, but her indomitable energy bubbles out of every crevice she can find in society's dead prohibitions. The majority of the Muslim women portrayed by British novelists may seem sophisticated and discreet, and more than happily well-adjusted with their life of confinement, but this is usually because they are either hopelessly inert or maliciously deceptive. The Kulu lady uses every excuse of pilgrimage, family visit and social
obligation to free herself from the four walls of her home and turn to the wide, open world: "The old lady is, above all, intensely human, and loves to look upon life" (Kim, p. 94). From the moment when "a harsh, thin cackle behind the curtains" (Kim, p. 94) of the palanquin alerts Kim about her presence, he knows here is a soul he can trust. In that blunt, garrulous and superstitious old lady, he discovers the universal mother. When obliged to give himself up to the Irish Regiment, he immediately entrusts the child-like Lama to the care of this woman: "Then I will slip away and follow down the road to Saharanpore. Therefore, Holy One, keep with that Kulu woman -- on no account stray far from her cart till I come again" (Kim, pp. 127-8).

She does not stop at mothering her own children and grand-children; she has enough loving care to spare on runaway boys and starving holy men on the road. At the end of the novel, after the dangerous, spying mission in the mountains that almost costs Kim his life, the Brahmin lady nurses him back to health. No natural mother could have shown more solicitude, or felt deeper emotion and she expects from the convalescing boy no less than a real son's recompense:

Thank the Gods as a priest if thou wilt, but thank me if thou carest as a son. Heaven above! Have I shifted thee and lifted thee and slapped and twisted thy ten toes to find texts flung at my head? Somewhere a mother must have borne thee to break her heart. What used thou to her -- son?

'I had no mother, my mother,' said Kim. She died, they tell me, when I was young.'

'Hai Mai!' Then none can say I have robbed her of any right if --. (Kim, p. 395)

And her voice trails off through an excess of emotion. The characterization of the Kulu woman is both noble and moving; the colourful idiosyncrasies of her speech only make her more realistic and her kindness more striking.
In contrast to the Woman of Kulu, with her uncommon capacity for maternal love, is the example of a real Muslim mother, in Taylor's Confession of a Thug. Her role in the novel is reduced to the minimum duty of providing protection and sustenance to her child, a function she is so incapable of performing well that she loses her son to a Thug long before the journey in which the rest of her family meet their fateful end. Throughout his long confessions, Ameer Ali does not recall a single moment of special communion with his mother -- no affectionate word, no tender look and no loving gesture. He cannot describe her face, even though he remembers well the family's maid-servant, Chumpa. Significantly, he does not even feel her absence after she is dead. He is understandably shaken up by the violent manner of her death, and clings on to her body because in life she was the center of his familiar world. However, he rediscovers a new center in Ismail's wife who provides the same services for him: she shelters, feeds and clothes him, her love for the orphan boy is measured only by the richness of the food and attire she lavishes on him. Their is no sign of emotional bonding, no exchange of ideas and no pleasure in each other's company. Neither Kipling nor Forster has created a recognizable maternal character among their fictional flock of Muslim women. Hamidullah's wife is given a leisurely introduction, emphasizing her sense of womanly pride in reigning over her domestic hierarchy, but no reference is made to her as a mother. Aziz occasionally mourns for his wife, who is no more than a romantic idea to him now that she is dead, but as far as her children are concerned, her place is just as well filled by their grandmother: "Aunt, they live most comfortably with my wife's mother, where she was living when she died. I can see them whenever I like. They are such very, very small children" (Passage, p. 36). And that is no wonder, because a mother's function in the Muslim household is seen simply to cater to the physical needs of the children.
Just as there is no true maternal love among Muslim women, so there exists no ideal romantic love, not even an example of pure passion untempered by materialistic motives. But there are at least two non-Muslim women, one in *Confessions* and the other in *Kim*, who appear in very brief episodes but leave moving impressions of romantic love. Kureena, the Hindustani slave of Nawab Subzee Khan is in love with her master and remains loyal to her death. The Nawab is portrayed as a buffoon but he is fond of Kureena and she repays his tenderness with rare devotion. One of the thugs, Surfuraz Khan, takes a fancy to her and instead of killing her with the rest of her party, decides to have her as a mate. Alone in the middle of a horrible carnage, and surrounded still by the murderers, the slave-girl shows no fear for herself; she simply gives way to uncontrollable grief for her slain lover: "Her lips were glued to those of the unconscious corpse, which had so often returned her warm caresses, and she murmured in her agony all the endearing terms by which she had used in their private hours to call him, and implored him to awake" (*Confessions*, p. 169). Surfuraz Khan tries to console her, reason with her and threaten her to no avail. He forces her on his horse, strikes her face with his sword to silence her screams of agony but still fails to subdue her into submission. He finally kills her to prevent detection of the Thuggee band. Kureena's love is so true, that she forever changes the heart of Surfuraz Khan. He gives up his vile profession and spends the rest of his life in penance:

I heard, years afterwards, that he returned to the spot where he had killed the girl, constructed a hut by the road-side, and ministered to the wants of travellers in that wild region, where his only companions must have been the bear, the tiger and the wolf. (*Confessions*, p. 172)

In another such lonely hut, nestled among the towering Himalayas, resides Kipling's Woman of Shamlegh. She is no ordinary hill-woman. She has several husbands according to the custom of her matriarchal tribe, but they cannot satisfy her because they are crude men, little more than beasts of burden, and she has known a much finer
kind of love. Although she has no outward beauty, she has an inner light, and was once loved by an Englishman. He deserted her and left her an embittered person: "My Sahib said he would return and wed me -- yes, wed me. He went away -- I had nursed him when he was sick -- but he never returned" (Kim, p. 376). She informs Kim that once she was a converted Christian; she spoke English, wore European clothes, and played music on the piano at the Mission-house. But that was before her lover had betrayed her. Now she is unhappy but she has not lost faith in herself or in the more enduring values of life. Proud of that buried self that she can neither show nor share with anyone, she steps forward boldly in front of Kim and the Lama, jangles her silver and turquoise jewellery in front of their eyes, and calls herself a woman of substance: "She clenched her hands upon her bosom. . . . But I would not have thee to go in anger, thinking hardly of me -- a gatherer of cow-dung and grass at Shamlegh, but still a woman of substance" (Kim, p. 376). The sight of Kim arouses her sleeping passion and she wants to feel in his embrace what it is to be alive, one more time:

She looked up with a curious smile and laid a hand on his shoulder. 'At least thank me. I am foul-faced and a hill-woman, but, as thy talk goes, I have acquired merit. Shall I show thee how the Sahibs render thanks?' and her hard eyes softened. (Kim, p. 379)

The boy, gripped by wanderlust, rejects her completely. Tempted as she is to repay refusal with scorn, she cannot withhold her kindness from the ailing Lama, and arranges for him to be carried down the mountain-side on a litter: "She has acquired merit beyond all others' said the lama. 'For to set a man upon the way to Freedom is half as great as though she had herself found it'" (Kim, p. 380).

The Muslim women created by colonial writers can neither set their men free, spiritually, nor can they love them with honest, disinterested passion. They can surely make elaborate declarations of love, but that is only to lure men into their own service. Zora uses Ameer to flee from her master and return home to her mother. Ameer recalls their last night together: "I can again hear her protestations of
unalterable love, her entreaties that I would soon return to her" (Confessions, p. 116). The next morning Ameer is rudely chased out of her mother's house. Thus, Muslim women fail to inspire men to be better. Instead, they reinforce their aggressiveness by forcing action upon them and remaining passive themselves. Besides, they painstakingly keep up all the social pretenses that give men proprietary rights over their women, knowing full well that there are devious ways to circumvent real domination. They give men a false sense of control, and Forster has shown readers in the episode with Panna Lal that Muslim men love being made to feel like kings. Women, in the home and in the harem, make men feel like lords. They speak in a low voice, do not engage in open argument, walk behind their men, take their meals afterwards, and affect every kind of subservience. In the harem, men are given an additional psychological boost. Here, they find aesthetic release, an antidote to their failures in the real world. Both Taylor and Forster describe the imagination of Muslim men being seeped with the pathetic romanticism of "the bulbul and the rose" and it is this illusory world that is evoked by the song and dance of the lovely, ephemeral harem-girls. When the men come out of their home and their harem, the myth of regal power and gratification is rudely torn asunder, and they remember once more the ignominy of their fallen, political state. The result is increased frustration and the desire for revenge. In this way, Muslim women are shown to foster violence by nourishing contradictions in the lives and natures of their men.

By now it must have become eminently clear that the purdah was an extremely complicated social institution for Muslim women in colonial India, especially in terms of the transition being made at the time from tradition to modernity. Purdah was not simply a space removed from the real world; it was a distinct and complex world in its own right, with its own instruments of empowerment and repression. Other forms of discrimination and oppression, besides confinement, have existed within the purdah as real curses for a large number of Muslim women before, during and after
British colonial rule. Purdah has provided secrecy, immunity and legitimacy for the
domestic abuse of dependent women by women in positions of power. However, this
has been dictated primarily by the compulsions of patriarchal self-definition, rigidly
held on by both Hindu and Muslim communities in India, and not by strict Islamic
rule. Within the confines of particular households, attitudes of family members have
prevailed over custom, and Islamic laws have been shamelessly distorted to give
institutional support to oppression. Needless to say, oppression of women is
generally more prevalent among poorer, less educated and rural families, and much
less so among more prosperous and educated urban families. And as always, there are
exceptions to the rule. Conditions within the household are hard to document,
especially since they can differ so widely, but some recursive patterns of behaviour
can be identified as typical.

One dominant aspect of the lives of Indian women, both Hindu and Muslim,
has always been the enormous change of status they underwent from bridal
insignificance to hallowed motherhood. The equation of the images of "mother" and
"goddess" in Hindu religion rubbed off a little on Bengali Muslims, through centuries
of cohabitation on the same land. Until the birth of her first son, a married woman's
claim to family allegiance was feeble indeed. As the number of sons increased and as
they grew in age, the mother gradually ascended the ladder of domestic eminence.
The woman unblessed with a son generally lost her domestic anchor, as her husband's
property passed into the hands of his brothers, and ended her days on the charity of
relatives. When the sons began to marry, the mother usually found herself more than
compensated for the ignominy and acute discrimination she had to undergo as a wife,
not only by profound veneration, but also lavish empowerment in the household and
over the lives of its younger members. In some extreme cases, she herself became an
agent of oppression against younger women who married into the family. This
tremendous drama of deprivation and power reversal, causing profound psychological
rifts in a woman's consciousness, can be traced to no other cause than the excessive value placed on the concept of patrimony, in all of Indian culture. Sudhir Chandra devotes a whole chapter in his book, The Oppressive Present, to show how the institution of the joint family exerted moral pressure on dissenting family members:

Having earlier noticed the way organized orthodoxy utilized joint family ties to maintain conformity, we can trace a similar normative ambivalence in the structure of beliefs, especially with regard to the institution of the joint family itself. This was an institution which proved a common site for the interpenetration of the historical/sociological and the biographical/individual.  

An undivided patrimony was a strong centre of economic power, from which were derived all other values of familial stability. Consequently, blood kinship was made the overriding principle of family unity; marriage was looked upon as a necessary corollary to existence and always viewed suspiciously as a disruption. For a bride, whose personal desires were invariably opposed to the interests of the patrimony, to show an inclination for self-fulfillment was nothing short of domestic heresy.

We see, thus, how the common assumption of the oppression of women by men could be curiously inverted in Indian culture, particularly in colonial times, where the mother as emotional nucleus of the patrimony could exploit the moral dependency of her sons, if and when they developed an alternate base of commitment or desire. It is true that a mother could not legally restrain a son wishing to free himself from the patrimony, but she could bring such crushing psychological guilt to bear on him that it could well nigh destroy his whole moral anchorage. In Najibur Rahman's Anwara, Nurul Islam has to divide his patrimony and give away half to his step-mother because of her jealousy towards his wife. She refuses to live with them when Nurul protests against her unkind and unjust treatment of Anwara:

When she heard Nurul Islam's words, his step-mother trembled with rage and hurt, and said, "If I am a well-born woman, I will make you pay for this insult. I swear to God that from today the food and water in your house will be haram for me. Why, have I become so
insignificant as to live like a maid in your beloved wife's home? If I move away, who can take what is rightfully mine? (Anwara, p. 53)

It must be noted here that the writer, while exposing the abuse commonly inflicted by mothers on their sons' wives in traditional Indian families of all religious denominations, compromises with public sentiment by making Nurul's offending parent a step-mother. He could not have escaped strong censure if he made his hero remain indifferent to such burning words from a natural mother. Progressive Muslim writers give positive representations of the "true mother" and the "first wife," while the "second wife," presumably married for carnal reasons, becomes the evil stepmother.

Although the full extent of the moral power wielded by the maternal figure in India cannot be comprehended by the individualistic mind of the west, Hobsbaum seems to have some inkling of it:

Yet within its limits it had given women such individual and collective resources as they had, and these were not entirely negligible; for instance, they were the perpetuators and formers of language, culture and social values, the essential makers of 'public opinion', the acknowledged initiators of certain kinds of public action (the defense of the 'moral economy'), and not least, the persons who had not only learned to manipulate their men, but to whom, in some subjects and in some situations, men were expected to defer. 16

Forster's depiction of the overbearing matron in Begum Hamidullah, an aunt of the hero, comes close to becoming the imperious mother-figure, "to whom men were expected to defer." Indigeneous literatures abound in descriptions of the actual power wielded by mothers in Muslim households and of the often intense subjection of body and spirit women experience as wives.

We see just such a conflict of desire between mother and son in Kazi Abdul Wadud's Nadibkkhe. Here, Moti enjoys the status due to her as a wife, but it is
because her husband is infatuated with her and not because he is aware of her rights. Moti's mother-in-law finds this hard to accept:

Was it to be tolerated, that a little peasant girl had come out of nowhere to spend her days in such luxury and indulgence? Moti's mother-in-law writhed in jealousy to see her son's devotion for his bride. The other cause of her heartache was that the authority mothers traditionally enjoyed in rural homesteads over their daughters-in-law had slipped out of her hands. (Nadibakkhey, p. 93)

In his novel Abdullah, Kazi Emdadul Haque also illustrates several instances of this violation of a young wife's personal rights, through the severely restricted life Halima leads at her father-in-law's house. She is not allowed to visit her parent's home, even when her father sends word from his deathbed, expressing a last wish to see his only daughter. This disappointment and pain embitters Halima's heart against her husband's family, but she is powerless even to express her emotion in their midst. It is only when her brother, Abdullah, comes for a visit that she is able to uncover her suppressed self:

She had cried a lot since the news came of her father's death. Her husband being away from home, there was none to console her, and so she had disburdened her heart by crying secretly. But today, in the presence of her brother, her pent-up sorrow burst out uncontrollably and she stood in front of him, sobbing . . . . "Abba had wanted to see me before he died, but I am so unfortunate that I could not even take care of him those last few days,— can I ever, in this life, forget the pain, Bhaijan? (Abdullah, pp. 31-2)

Halima had learned to read and write before her marriage, but she could not write her own letters afterwards because it was frowned upon by her illiterate in-laws. Even though her husband encouraged her to study, the cumulative pressure from the rest of the house was too strong to resist. In the beginning, befitting the ways of society, she was ashamed to malign her husband's family and made excuses to hide their fault:

When Abdullah sent her letters, she would follow the example of other women in seclusion, and have her replies written by a boy of the house or obtain a letter from a clerk outside through an intermediary maid.
These indirect letters would annoy Abdullah and he would write back reprimanding his sister for giving up her reading and writing. Halima would evade the subject by saying she had no time to study. All these days, she had kept the truth from her brother, but now she was so embittered with the family that she spoke out about a lot of hidden things. Abdullah finally got to understand why Halima did not write letters in her own hand. (Abdullah, p. 38)

Halima is a sensible, spirited young woman with well-developed opinions about her environment; as a child she has been loved, encouraged and nurtured by her parents and older brother. For such a woman to have to submit constantly to people with inferior intellect and taste is a burden indeed. Ironically, she is well matched with her husband, Abdul Kader, who is educated and progressive, but in traditional Muslim families, it is not enough for a wife to please her husband; she has to mould herself to suit the expectations of the extended family. The patriarchal culture of India succeeded in sublimating such deprivation into an ideal of self-sacrifice, to the extent that many women were able to reconcile the discords and inconsistencies of their life, by internalizing this myth as personal desire. A woman's rights are carefully demarcated in Islam, for all stages of her life, and autonomy in her husband's home is a privilege reserved for the wife. The structure of the extended Indian family, and the ideological pressures of the patrimony, are clear violations of this right.

In this narrow domestic situation where a young, dependent woman is persistently pushed to relinquish her self-identity, we see shadows uncannily similar to those of colonial domination. The lives of Indian Muslim women in particular actualize several aspects of such colonial domination, not simply because they experience tradition as forms of confinement but because of the ways their awareness functions within those limitations. Here, there is complete subjection—physical, mental and moral—for not only is the majority presence of an alien family physically overbearing for one individual woman, all the alien habits, customs, behaviour, values, etc of the extended family impose themselves on the new arrivant and cause
perpetual mental defeat for her. What carries the evil of subjectivization furthest is the socially conditioned feeling grafted into the mind of the young wife that it is morally wrong to desire happiness for herself, since she has no meaningful existence by herself. This mental conditioning results in all kinds of exploitation, not the least of which is extortion of cheap, service-oriented, domestic labour. The occasional voice of dissent is effectively silenced by appeal to traditional, social values. One marked point of difference here between colonial and domestic domination is the fact that the weaker entity is unitary and territorially moved to the site of its subjected status; the dominant entity is plural and indigenous to the physical space it inhabits. Consequently, the question of right which in the final analysis derives from possession of territory and material goods, goes to empower the oppressor and the much less apparent right of the oppressed over her own body, opinion, taste and conscience goes unregarded.

If young married women were oppressed by the unjust demands of India's patriarchal culture, unmarried women and widows were twice as much victims of its injustices. Muslim women had very limited choices in life. They had no social or economic security and were completely at the mercy of relatives. In Mosharraf Hossain's *Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha*, Meer Sahib inherits his elder brother's property because the latter does not have a son. He does have a daughter, Shukrunnessa, who gets no share of her father's wealth and is simply left in her uncle's care. Meer Sahib has no particular desire to provide well for her and hastily gives her away in marriage to a penniless, ill-bred man. The novel is peculiarly silent about Shukrunnessa's relationship with her husband, Shah Golam, possibly because this is another paternal guilt weighing heavily on the conscience of the writer. There is a kinder Meer Sahib in *Abdullah* who is devoted to his widowed niece, Maleka, and generally to the cause of young widows like her. He uses his moral influence on well-disposed young men whom he has personally helped to educate, to make them
consider marrying young widows. After Saleha dies, Abdullah marries Maleka, inspired by his ideals. Such instances of widow remarriage were rare and exceptional in real life. Abdullah, obviously written with social reform in mind, gives the matter prominence in order to popularize the idea. Although doctrinally, Islam has always allowed women divorce and remarriage, the patriarchal Muslim communities of India attached an overpowering social stigma to remarriage for widowed women, and divorce was not even conceived as an option for them. Since the oppression of Muslim women generally came from rules of tradition followed privately, and not from legal and religious directives, the British government could make no legislation to improve the lot of Muslim women, comparable to laws against Hindu religious practices, like the abolition of sati.

Thus, some women within the secluded precincts of the home are seen to wield strong influence over men while others remain victims of manipulation. The question then undoubtedly rises, is purdah repressive or empowering? This is too complex a query to be answered simply. By purdah is to be understood not simply physical seclusion, but a voluntary, disciplinary mode binding one's impulses within a prescribed psychic and moral space. Boundaries perform a binary function; they keep out as well as keep in. Therefore, purdah is defensive in addition to being disciplinary. In her celebrated The Veil and the Male Elite, Fatima Mernissi goes back to the original revelation about hijab to reveal the ways this concept has been distorted by patriarchist powers in Muslim society. She asserts that the "hijab—literally 'curtain'—'descended,' not to put a barrier between a man and a woman, but between two men"17, to keep out a lingering companion of the Prophet when he wanted to be left alone with Ayesha. In the process, she examines the linguistic possibilities of the word:

The concept of the word hijab is three-dimensional, and the three dimensions often blend into one another. The first dimension is a visual one: to hide something from sight. The root of the verb hajaba means "to hide." The second dimension is spatial: to separate, to mark
a border, to establish a threshold. And finally, the third dimension is ethical: it belongs to the realm of the forbidden. So we have not just tangible categories that exist in the reality of the senses—the visual, the spatial—but also an abstract reality in the realm of ideas. A space hidden by a *hijab* is a forbidden space.¹⁸

Viewed as a principle of self-discipline, and controlled entirely by choice, purdah is not repressive; it can have a liberating impact on individual women by reinforcing her inborn defenses against whatever she conceives to be pernicious to her well-being. Judged simply as a social code of denial assumed under compulsion, it cannot but be repressive.

The contradictory depiction of the purdah by Muslim and British writers differs specifically on these questions of choice and defense. From the western point of view, purdah is a restriction forcibly imposed on women by men, to preserve the social imbalance in their own favor. From the Muslim perspective, purdah is willingly adopted by women as an article of faith, to protect themselves from various forms of external aggression. In underprivileged communities, where the most marginal civic rights cannot be ensured uniformly for all members, and particularly in societies that are, in addition, ideologically regressive, as Islamic communities generally are, women are often obliged to hide behind the veil for protection. It can certainly be argued that the empowerment of women through education and job opportunities affords better defenses against exploitation, but it is also true that where these are not available, purdah cannot be disavowed as one, among many, means of coping with an imperfect world. Indeed, in backward rural societies dominated by muscle power, purdah is often the only means by which unprotected women protect themselves. The heroine's abduction in Najibur Rahman's *Anwara* takes place only after she allows herself to step out of the impenetrable purdah in which she resides, deluded by the hope of obtaining a medicinal herb to save her husband's life. In
Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha, Maina’s travail begins only when Kenney accidentally spots her in one of his village tours, and uses his power to violate her personal space.

Meer Mosharraf Hossain shows that the desire to dominate not only operates at all levels of personal interaction, public and private; paradoxically, it always leads to a moral weakening of the tyrant, through his escalating compromise with unethical behaviour, and ends in his death or ignominious downfall. T. I. Kenny’s awareness of the limitations of power elevates him over all other characters who exercise power without consciousness. He can have any peasant woman he desires, but when he sees Maina, the wife of his coach-driver, he yearns to possess something that his power cannot reach – he wants her love, freely given. He directs his people to bring her with her husband’s consent, by handsome bribes:

There is a pet bird in driver Jocky’s house. I want that bird. With these words, he started to walk towards his chamber. He took a few steps and then turned back, “Let Jockey have whatever price he demands. I will not take away by force something that is so dear. Nor should you use force to bring it to me. (Udasin, pp. 6-7)

The reference to a pet bird is a veiled allusion to Maina’s name, which is a species of talking bird and also a term of endearment. This delicate ambiguity of expression keeps conjectures in suspension, until Maina herself steps out of narrative concealment to be discovered in her shame. But is it Kenney that shames her? He places a far greater value on her than her husband is capable of. While Jockey triumphantly exchanges her honour for his own empowerment, Kenney offers her love and kindness and protection. Maina does not return his love; her husband’s betrayal fills her with horror, and she simply yields up her body in despair. When she finds herself with child, Kenney sends her a strong drug to abort it, with careful instructions not to exceed the prescribed dose. Maina swallows the entire contents of the bottle, and with her dying breath breaks her tormented silence:

On one side stood the husband, on the other a fierce tiger. The tiger closed in with open jaws, the husband did not protect. Instead, he
lifted [me] into the tiger's mouth. How could I have lived? Where could I have gone? Who would have saved me? I know that God exists; I hear people say that he is the protector of all. Even He did nothing to protect my hapless state. (Udasin, p. 90)

Maina's avoidance of the possessive pronoun "my" in connection with her husband is significant and shows that her soul has disowned him. Jockey is too crude and obtuse to understand his loss; it is Kenney who turns wild with grief. He realizes that he has not been able to possess her at all; instead he has destroyed the object of his desire:

The sahib is so unhappy. He tried to hit me. He struck himself again and again, crying out, "Oh man — what have you done —!" When I told him that I gave you all the medicine, without mixing it in water, he began to tear his fingers with his teeth. (Udasin, p. 90)

Kenny shuts himself up in his chamber for days together, forgets about his work and his battles with his enemies, and grapples with a defeat that never seemed possible. His mental anguish enervates his giantlike, powerful body and in an ironic reversal, he becomes prey to his own persecution:

The same man who ordered pillage from his horseback and watched unmoved while the destitute peasant lost his all, the same whose sin disrobed the women of the hearth without mercy, the same eyes that never lowered in shame, now filled with tears. Tears streamed down his cheeks into his pillow, onto the bed. Who is to understand the meaning of this? (Udasin, pp. 101-2)

The man who strikes terror into the hearts of the helpless villagers crumbles inwardly in secret mourning. He is so demoralized that he becomes half the man he used to be and is easily defeated by the peasants when they rebel against him.

As an alternative way of life capable of ensuring the incorruptibility of the spirit, Meer Mosharraf Hossain develops in Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha an ethics of resistance, one which inevitably ends in martyrdom, and which is directly contrary to the urge to imperialize. It is precisely with this nebulous power of self-sacrifice in
mind that Meer Mosharraf Hossain conceptualizes the broader issues of moral justification in *Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha*, a tortured and confessional autobiography, which also reveals the universality of the impulse for domination. It is the pessimistic view of one whose vanity has been humbled, as the writer's has been on account of his idle, selfish and libertine father. While the male characters of *Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha* are all shown to be susceptible, in varying degrees, to the desire for empowerment and its consequent corruption, women in purdah who are totally committed to their own domestic space are presented as the only persons free from moral taint. Jocky, Maina's greedy and unsrupulous husband, defiles the protective enclosures of her purdah to lead the lustful Kenney to her secret self; violated and shamed, Maina withdraws still further, into death, and attains a final enclosure of integrity, that neither Jocky nor Kenney can penetrate. Denied the privileged option of sacrifice, the two men are simply left to their guilt and to their expiation.

Daulatunnessa and Maina are the only two characters in *Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha* who do not invade space that rightfully belongs to another; on the contrary their own private space is violated by the cupidity of their respective husband. When her husband decides to maintain a mistress, Rupashi, in her own house and with her own money, Daulatunnessa refuses to dignify this invasion by so much as a glance of acknowledgement, allowing its poison to drain out her life. Such outrageous behaviour stains Meer Sahib's honour for posterity. Critics often condemn Meer Mosharraf Hossain for the respectful, ceremonious language he uses to describe his father, but that is an unjust slur. The irony of his depiction is unmistakable. In his preface, the author admits a curious mixture of shame and defiance:

> When there is such dross in my own identity -- the phrase "You are mine" is perhaps no more than a lie. There is no faith in "me" and there is no faith in "you." There is falsehood in the source itself. I am not mine, nor are you yours. And so, the words "your" and "mine" have no meaning at all. There is no one I can call my own. Love
originates in deed and care — the whole world is shaded by selfishness.

(Udasin, p. 1)

He is alternately tormented by his father's faithlessness, and driven to acquit him by denying the existence of faith in the world. Meer Sahib's character is indirectly condemned through association with Jockey, whose mistreatment of his wife passes all bounds. Soon afterwards, drunk with quick prosperity and bribed by a rival zamindar, and possibly too driven by secret shame, Jockey tries to poison Kenney, but he is discovered and killed by the servants at Neelkuthi. Both Meer Sahib and Jockey abuse their domestic power to dishonour and destroy their wives; in an ironic twist of fate, the latter pays for it with his life. The author's filial inhibitions prevent him from blackening his father's portrait beyond the outlines strictly necessary. However, he uses the fictional character of Jockey to mirror and intensify the shame of his treachery. In the same breath, he seems to assert that their vileness originates and grows in the exercise of power. The fact that Meer Sahib gives in without a struggle to the machinations of Shah Golam and Jockey to Kenney's desire, shows that their aggression is reserved only for the helpless. In their own homes their power over their respective wives is unchallenged, and that is where they execute it most recklessly.

Muslim domestic women are shown to be loyal despite mistreatment. Mosharrarff Hossain almost turns Daulatunnessa into a saint, by making her rise above every human failing in love. Anwara, similarly, is almost institutionalized as exemplary womanhood in Anwara. Resignation before the tyranny of power is undoubtedly a defeatist attitude, signifying the writer's disillusionment with the politics of power; paradoxically, his obsession with the feminine ideal of purity is an impossible ideal, much like the masculine code of honour in the imperial rhetoric. This mode of faith preserves social norms against all odds. Kenney, Meer Sahib, Jockey, and all such characters who dispossess others for personal gain, and sacrifice
all moral scruples along the way, themselves suffer eventually through a form of retributive disempowerment. Such a chastened view of empire is clearly derived from a sense of the past; the aristocratic author's identity has been humbled by the misdemeanour of his selfish father; his Muslim identity partakes of the indignity of imperial excess and consequent defeat. Although there is no explicit reference to the Mughul empire in this novel, it is strongly evoked in absentia to serve as living proof of the inherent mutability of power. The example of the Mughul empire, staggering from the backlash of its spiralling institutions of power and extravagant impulses of display, seems to be reflected in microcosmic units of feudal, domestic and individualistic power.

Purdah, then, can be used as a metaphor diametrically opposite to that of imperial rape. In this sense, the concept of purdah is a symbolic gesture of self-containment, a rhetoric of absence meant to deflect the discourse of domination. It may be seen as the feminine counterpart of the male ideal of jihad, which is active and public defense (as opposed to active aggression, as commonly assumed) of the Islamic faith. Richard M. Eaton refers to this double concept of jihad in connection with his discourse on Sufism in Bengal: "It is true that the notion of two 'strivings' (jihad)—one against the unbeliever and one against one's lower soul—had been current in the Perso-Islamic world for several centuries..." Purdah may be seen balanced in this context as the passive and private defense of personal integrity and individual faith. The initial function of purdah, which is containment of transgressive urges within each unit of the self stifles aggression at its basic or primary source, and its concomitant refusal to articulate the erotic will of another dissolves aggression at its secondary or complementary stage. Withdrawal of the self into layers of physical, psychological and moral enclosure extricates it from the tyranny of desire, an obsessive force that destructs both the object of desire and the desiring subject. As a
matter of fact, the Muslim *zenana* maintained its defensive opacity towards the outsider through almost two centuries of colonial rule.

We return once more to the enigmatic question: is purdah repressive or empowering? Commenting on Sheridan's impassioned defense of Indian women recorded in *The History of the Trial of Warren Hastings*, Sara Suleri's *The Rhetoric of English India* brings the reader's attention to the inherent contradiction of viewing purdah both as a fortified battlement and a vulnerable sanctuary. When the metaphor of purdah is extended to replicate the cultural inscrutability of the Indian subcontinent, the sort of excessive glorification of seclusion indulged in by Sheridan suggests a subliminal will to perpetuate this state of insular, incompeteive ineffectuality, by elevating it with the illusion of a mystical, defensive power. Suleri is aware of the debilitating, as well as the empowering, attribute of the veil, and in refuting Sheridan's rhetoric, also opposes the impression of fear and fascination of the kind recorded by Alloula Malek in *The Colonial Harem*:

The will for confinement peculiar to subcontinental women, in other words, suggests a power of its own, making of the veil as much a weapon as the bayonets that attacked it. In attempting to stress the vulnerability of the subcontinent in its feminine manifestation, Sheridan unwittingly depicts his own phantasmagoric interpretation of how empowering it is to be unreadable.\(^\text{20}\)

Those who write about purdah from within the culture know it to be rather a complex, but feeble and self-divided form of defensive strategy, rather than an aggressive means of countering violence. The veil does not endow a women with the imperializing power of a "bayonet;" neither does total cultural insularity allow a country to negotiate advantageously with the dominant nations of the world. The only victory it promises is that of the sacrificial power of renunciation. Anglo-Indian fiction fails to grasp the full ideological implications of purdah, and turns it merely into a device to objectify Muslim women.
CHAPTER 6
UNWILLING BROTHERS--GESTURES OF ALIENATION

The Anglo-Indian aesthetic in relation to Indian Muslims may be adjudged a histrionic retreat from a remembered community of being. It seeks release from associations that date so far back as to be confounded with the very bases that determine each of their respective identities. Such common denominators as monotheistic belief and an invigorating interest in the physical, contemporary world may well explain the outwardly agreeable characterization of Muslims in Anglo-Indian literature, but these very links nonetheless complicate the hidden dynamics of a stance that is found, on examination, to be suffused with intense reactionary antagonism. Consequently, whereas the statement and restatement of cultural difference generally constitutes a comforting preoccupation of colonial discourse, the assessment of dissimilarities between the Anglo-Western-Christian rubric and the Indian-Muslim persona takes on a manic urgency. Mirrored upon the unalterable surfaces of memory, their multiple planes of mythic, historic, psychic and behavioural involvement are pushed to disintegrate into a melange of defense reactionism.

The 1857 Mutiny, which developed in the Anglo-Indian imagination as a predominantly Muslim movement, may be said to have translated this phobia into its own language of panic. Sparked by widespread fear of religious conversion in both Hindus and Muslims, the Mutiny became the occasion of revealing a much greater submerged fear in the Anglo-Indian community, the nightmare of dissolving boundaries. To them, it signified one last instance when the Muslim presence, emblemetized in the body of the emperor, Bahadur Shah, asserted a politically
unviable but metaphorically potent alter-image of empire. While both sides fought to keep out what each perceived to be alien, hostile, destructive and evil, their compulsive, phobic statement of difference disintegrated into disturbingly similar behaviour—aggression, cruelty, fear, panic, pride, ambition, heroics and self-sacrifice. Anglo-Indian fiction is built around a powerful but disguised poetics of denial to disown the foundations of such similitude, although only the episode of the Mutiny and the histrionic literature written on it bring these knotted sensibilities to the surface. However muted they may be, the compulsive reordering of Anglo-Indian self-identity in relation to Indian Muslims, carried out in all other literary situations, touches the imaginative depths of a fear of invasion, conversion and contamination that is reinforced by the constant awareness of a hidden, pre-existing link with Islam.

Recent post-colonial critics have pointed out that cross-cultural relationships cannot be given a monochromatic interpretation because these have complex, dialogic reverberations. Homi Bhabha has particularly challenged the notion of otherness in colonial discourse, reading in its contradictory impulses of possession and rejection an evidence of continual, self-interested and fantasized imposition of meaning on the colonial subject. He considers this characterization to be so suspect that in his formulation the concept of otherness transforms itself from a given to a query, viz. the "The Other Question":

In order to understand the productivity of colonial power it is crucial to construct its regime of truth, not to subject its representations to a normalizing judgement. Only then does it become possible to understand the productive ambivalence of the object of colonial discourse—that 'otherness' which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity. What such a reading reveals are the boundaries of colonial discourse and it enables a transgression of these limits from the space of otherness.¹

Anglo-India's psychological engagement with Muslim India goes beyond this general ambivalence of desire and derision that Bhabha speaks of, a form of dialectics that
can and must proceed from two parallel settings. In many ways, the approach to Islam was for all western nations a return to values left behind and not a venture into the remote unknown; it was also, in terms of the programme of conquest, conversion, reform and reconstruction laid on India's ancient civilization, specifically useful to assess Britain's own colonial scheme in regard to the same land. As a precursor in the imperial race, the Muslim community in India exhibited all the symptoms of success, indulgence, decadence and defeat for the edification of the wary. Anglo-Indian literature uses the psychology of defeat to construct a lesson for Britain's superior strategy of empire. Poised against the Orwellian anxiety over what colonization does to the successful imperialist is the Muslim image of thwarted imperialist desire. Thus, fear of subjection and the anxiety of domination are dialogically played out in the aesthetic re-creation of Islamic identity.

In The Rhetoric of English India, Sarah Suleri too has taken issue with the concept of the "other" in colonial discourse, asserting that it is a difference imposed on the colonial subject to ensure strategic concentration of power on the dominant culture. She disclaims rather that the two entities, colonizer and colonized, are more alike than they are made out to be:

In historical terms, colonialism precludes the concept of 'exchange' by granting to the idea of power a greater literalism than it deserves. The telling of colonial and postcolonial stories, however, demands a more naked relation to the ambivalence presented by the greater mobility of disempowerment. To tell the history of another is to be pressed against the limits of one's own—thus culture learns that terror has a local habitation and a name.

In addition to challenging the facile distinction between strong and weak cultures, Suleri also moves aside from the conventional male-female dialectics of viewing the colonial situation, viz. the imperial rape of the colonized territory, towards an alternative paradigm of male bonding and this possibility is clearly introduced in Forster's representation of the Aziz-Fielding friendship. Cultural differences are
accomodated, even accentuated, in this exclusively male genus of desire and empowerment, through additions of homoerotic nuances. While this psycho-sexual contrivance set up by her effectively recognizes the parallel power that has generally been latent under the semblance of total colonial domination, it does not address the individual dialectics of specific cross-cultural encounters. Such a relationship certainly accepts a sameness of expectations, experiences and desires; however, Suleri makes no attempt to connect this underlying bond with a specifically heightened sense of community that might actually have obtained in relation to particular entities of culture. In her sifting through the layered communities of colonial India, Suleri approaches remarkably close to articulating the special characteristics of Muslim India's encounter with the British presence. However, her intent to present an essentialized relationship that would accomodate the gamut of colonial and post-colonial experiences prevents her from moving too far in this particular direction. This tension-charged bond can be better explained in terms of a fraternity gone sour, than any friendship propelled by homoerotic drives.

Muslim India's existence within the frame of British colonialism presents a situation beset with greater affinities and a correspondingly greater violence of separation than what is perceivable under the categories set up by Suleri and Bhabha. It is true that neither Bhabha nor Suleri has presented the two broad categories, viz. the colonizer and the colonized, as congenial doubles; however, it is also true that in attempting to narrow the alleged gap between them, these critics have not fully explored the intricacies of interrelatedness involved. While they have emphasized the arbitrariness of the dichotomy invariably presented by the rules of colonialism, they have not adequately identified the violence of the separation. And the reason is they have not specifically approached a space where cultural difference is prelocated by a condition of unself-conscious sharing; for example, the kind of pre-historicized religious rootedness to be found at the source of Christianity and Islam. It has been
stated earlier in this text that the relationship between Islam and the West predates the successive colonial history of both cultures and, accordingly, is dictated less by unknown differentials than by defensive reaction to familiar frictions. Islam has a common mythical background with the two dominant religions of the West. As the youngest addition to this Judaeo-Christian geneological tree, Islam shares with that tradition several basic doctrines, including the story of Creation and the notion of original sin. But, of course, there are crucial differences too, notably Islam's rejection of Christ's divinity and an increased acceptance of the mundane. Actually, the dissimilarity is much smaller on the second score because, while a worldly outlook may seem dubious from a Catholic point of view, the secular culture of the West has little use for worldly renunciation.

The point I am trying to make is that there is an undeniable common base to these two widely variant cultures. It has been a persistent tendency in the West, however, to dwell on the differences, or distortions as critics of Islam would like to put it, rather than to acknowledge similarities; Muslim retaliation has taken the form of declaring Islam's late arrival to be a revision and an improvement over Catholicism. While examining British public opinion about Muslims as recently as the turn of the present century in Britain and Muslim India, K. K. Aziz records the following remarks published in a London newspaper:

Professor Monier Williams regarded Islam as 'an illegitimate child of Judaism' and plainly 'a corruption of Judaism and Christianity.' . . . Foremost among these hostile commentators was Malcolm MacColl, who asserted that Islam could be proved to be essentially and historically incompatible with civilization and that the people who adopted it passed under a blanket which arrested their development and made them incapable of progress. 3

While it is true that such comments come from an extreme and vociferous group, they do express an implicit discomfort presumably felt by most westerners at the close association of Islam's historiography with those of Judaism and Christianity. The
slightness of this ideological barrier has resulted in a deep fear of moral encroachment in the West, in a way that remote, pagan faiths have not been able to inspire. Many Westerners have on occasion flirted with ancient, polytheistic religions out of curiosity or for spiritual challenge; however, the conceptual lines of demarcation being as prominent as they are between these faiths and Christianity, such ideological adventures have seldom resulted in deep spiritual crisis. Getting to know Islam, on the other hand, has caused extreme responses—conversion or moral repulsion. In India, as in Africa, much as the British recoiled in horror from barbarous, pagan rites such as human sacrifice practised by some, they were also inspired by their evangelical intention to civilize and redeem these lost souls. Indian Muslims showed no such sign of requiring redemption, and this very absence of dark deeds somehow intensified the western fear of unidentifiable evil in the doctrines of Islam. The Muslim resistance to missionary activity threatened to invalidate the spiritual ministrations of numerous English, French and Portuguese Christian men and women who had pledged their entire lives to this purpose. Rather than admit the ineffectuality of their mission in Muslim communities, these reformers often blinded themselves to the differences existing among the various Indian faiths and pronounced broad generalizations about them. In their inordinate zeal to preach Christianity, they even countered competition from Islam by pronouncing it to be an especially decadent faith.

The shadow of a fraternal double is thus seen to have haunted the embittered connection between these two entities, as they have grown progressively apart. From their alienated vantage-points, they have regarded each other with suspicion and jealousy, and the denial of any resemblance between the two has mobilized the dynamics of their interchange. Both Christianity and Islam share the myth of Abel and Cain, Habil and Kabil in the latter's nomenclature. The fact that fraternal envy leading to fratricide is engendered in the earliest progeny of mankind suggests the
inescapability and depth of conflict latent in the core of kinship. Cain, the first-born of Adam, murdered his younger brother, Abel, out of jealousy because God found the latter's sacrifice of burnt meat more acceptable than the former's offering of fresh fruit. What is operative in this archetypal story is difference in similitude and the spirit of competition. The offering was meant to determine who would possess the mate chosen by both brothers. Thus in the story of mankind is introduced the urge for unlawful possession, and the similar expressions of rivalry are operative in the unlawful possession of political sway over lands and peoples. Christianity and Islam have devised different ways of worshipping and pleasing God and, to each, the claim to be the favoured of the Lord have long rested on the prospective extinction of the other. Fierce and bloody Christian crusades, jihads at the Islamic front, have been fought for centuries, not just to establish the fact of their implacable differences, but to annihilate competition by one destroying the other. And the spirit of the crusade/jihad has persisted long after the actual battles have ended. The impulse of fraternal denial between these two cultures has had to contend with other persistent similarities. Islam too has gone through a period of enlightenment, of scientific accomplishment (in mathematics, medicine, astronomy, etc), and of imperial expansion before becoming disempowered by western imperialism. Never did European powers encounter a comparable adversary on the new lands they discovered in their colonial expansion into Asia, Africa, and the Americas. They could afford, therefore, to take up a genial and paternalistic attitude towards these other weak and backward communities, while they continued to feel suspicious about a like-minded competitor, the role in which their vanquished Muslim subjects, no doubt, invariably appeared since they shared many of the Western colonizer's traits and abilities.

Perhaps this is a far-fetched analogy between a literal falling out of alienated blood brothers and the fictionalized disowning of shared past antecedents for disparate and rival cultures, but there are several elements of tension present in both
situations that make a discursive link psychologically tenable. The brothers (here, the word is used to mean the affiliated cultures, as well as literal brothers) are not exactly twins, but they share certain inherent attributes that impel them to move in similar directions. This, in turn, gives birth to a submerged competitiveness between the two. Success of one rouses the ire of the other, caused perhaps by a sense of self-betrayal, because a brother's success is a reminder of one's own blighted potentiality. Sudden, inevitable defeat precipitates violent behaviour in one who is predestined to the role of the killer and it follows from this scheme that the benign fraternal alter-ego becomes a perpetual sacrificial object. Both cultures use this notion of hallowed sacrifice to cloak and preserve their own structures of domination. It explains the glib association of terrorism with Islam in the western media, and because this narrative belongs to both the Bible and the Quran it has also been used by proponents of an Islamic revival to counter western influences. In Covering Islam, Edward Said quotes Ali Shariati's defense of the Iranian revolution as a derivative of the conflict of Cain and Abel:

Human society was itself a migration, or rather a vacillation, between the "pole of Cain" (ruler, king, aristocracy: power concentrated in one individual) and the "pole of Abel" (the class of the people, what the Koran calls al-nass: democracy, subjectivity, community).^4

Besides a simple case of fraternal rivalry, what we see here is the polarization of two congenital, political impulses—lawful self-assertion and illegal usurpation—and the creation of an oppressor-victim dichotomy. Clearly, the "the pole of Cain" is associated here through the Shah and the Pahlavi dynasty with the values of the West, and "the pole of Abel" with the general populace and their preference for an Islamic alternative. From the perspective of a subaltern nation trying to break lose from western domination, as in the present example, there is a clearer recognition of entanglement and a more conspicuous drive for liberation. The dialectic of kinship and denial is far less apparent in the language of the dominant culture and, precisely
because this is so, the suppressed rivalry takes intense convoluted forms. A close study of relevant fictional works reveals that, within the narrower frame of Anglo-India, the British ruler and the Muslim subject are engaged in a complex, tormented tussle of fraternal rupture. Although no such explicit connection with the Abel and Cain story is made in Anglo-Indian fiction, the sacrificial motif is sustained through the predatory instinct of its Muslim characters. We see a diffuse parallel in numerous instances where the incorruptible innocence at the base of even a culpable British character is set against the latent viciousness in the core of a falsely alluring Muslim personality. There is, however, an interesting twist to the myth in the end; the inevitable defeat of the Muslim in the hands of the heroic British character contradicts the implications of a fratricide that is laden with sacrificial meaning.

After Cain had slain Abel, he was faced with the need to conceal his guilty deed, and from this imperative arose the Christian and Muslim practice of burying the dead. Here, burying the dead also signifies burying the deed and thus marks the inception of secrecy and duplicity. If one may be allowed to digress a little, it is interesting to note that even in the Hindu cult of the Thuggee, the burial of dead victims is a sign of guilt no less than the act of murder. When Kali, incensed by her followers' lack of faith, decided to leave them in possession of their kill, they had to devise ingenious ways of hiding their terrible secret: "I shall no longer protect you as I have done. The bodies of those whom you destroy will no longer be removed by me, and you must take your own measures for their concealment" (Confessions, p. 28). There are worse kinds of murder than the infliction of instant death by strangulation. The special characteristic of the Thuggee, that which made it a practice of surpassing horror was the manner in which the victims' bodies were interred. The skill shown by Thugs in the discovery of secret spots was diabolical, as was the carnage they indulged in, in the complete security of their hideout. The symbolic death that the rival religions of Christianity and Islam have attempted to inflict on one another has
been accompanied by self-serving deceit and the mutilation of the other's body of faith. The text of colonial, and generally cross-cultural, portrayal is likewise the guilty one of duplicitous, virulent verbalization. Its textual violence is hidden under its sophisticated modes of concealment.

While devout Westerners repudiated Islam for presuming to invade and corrupt Christian doctrine, skeptic Western intellectuals looked down in disdain at the extreme religiosity professed by Muslims. To them, this was a sign of mental weakness, of moral cowardice. The sixteenth-century Reformation took the first major step in releasing the European mind from the tyranny of religion; the eighteenth-century Enlightenment carried this process to its logical fruition. One prominent impulse in the history of western Europe is thus clearly seen to be the extrication of the individual human spirit from its emotional dependence on a notion of the divine. In *The Political Unconscious*, Frederic Jameson characterizes the sceptical mind as one advanced in knowledge and experience, the credulous being juvenile by that same standard. The difference is easily located between the imperializing mind of the West and the lesser conceptualizing powers of dominated cultures:

The inner dynamism of such oppositions spring from their incommensurability, their ec-centricity as a weighing of two incompatible phenomena: on the one hand, genuine degraded but existent inner-worldly experience, and on the other, sheer ideal, nostalgia, an imagined wholeness that is part of the existent real only insofar as it is dreamed there and projected by this particular real world, but has no other substance. In Conrad, however, as we have seen, owing to the coexistence of capitalism and precapitalist social forms on the imperial periphery, the term value is still able to have genuine social and historical substance; it marks communities and ways of life which still, for another moment yet, exist, and have not been reduced to the icons and melancholy images of the mainstream of religious aestheticism. 5

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The question is, does Jameson really believe religious values to have genuine substance for certain sub-entities of culture or do they simply appear so to them because of their propensity to admit "sheer ideal, nostalgia, an imagined wholeness" as reality? If we try to apply this theory to Forster's representation of Muslim religiosity as opposed to the secular liberalism of western enlightenment in A Passage to India, we see unmistakable correspondences. Aziz's emotional recuperation in the mosque can surely be defined in terms of all of the three psychical experiences named above, viz. "sheer ideal, nostalgia, an imagined wholeness" and Forster certainly is just as unwilling as Jameson to allow false, religious sentimentality the dignity of "inner-worldly" perception. This scene from his novel can be cited as the one of the most emphatic denials of fraternity built into the rhetoric of Anglo-Indian fiction.

Just as western discourse seeks to be set apart from oriental cultures on notions of spirituality, so does it carefully distinguish aims and priorities along the question of political ambition in western and oriental nations, particularly Muslim. Hunter, the prominent colonial historian who has written at length on the Muslims of India, goes so far as to arouse suspicion and defensiveness against them by inferring latent malignity in Muslims, where he cannot cite actual instances of violence. His withering exposition on their conspiratorial character, The Indian Musalmans, enters a curious detour in the last chapter, called "The Wrongs of the Muhammedans Under British Rule." Here he steps aside from arraigning the active dissenters in the Frontier province and those involved in the Wahabi cause, to examine the grievances of supposedly peace-loving Muslims:

Insurrection and fanatical ebullitions are the natural incidents of an alien Rule; and so long as the English remain worthy of keeping India, they will know how to deal alike with domestic traitors and with frontier rebels. For my own part, once I have opened the case for the Muhammedan community, I shall make no further reference to these misguided Wahabis. But in order that I may afterwards keep silence about them, I shall here quote certain statements by the two Englishmen who, of all the present generation, are the most competent
to pronounce on the connection between Musalman grievances and Musalman seditions. In India, the line between sullen discontent and active disaffection is a very narrow one, and our inattention to the wants of the peaceable Muhammadans in Bengal has enlisted their sympathies on the side of a class whom they would otherwise shrink from as firebrands and rebels.®

The key notion here, of course, is the near juxtaposition of the conditions of "grievance" and "sedition," and "discontent" and "disaffection"; and the qualifying epithets, "Musalman" and "in India", besides drawing an arbitrary judgement about the contentious nature of all Indians, states a stronger prejudice against Muslims. When we place this assumption alongside the fact that Hunter actually considers most of the grievances of Muslims to be no grievances at all, the full impact of his own disaffection comes to light. A cursory glance at his arguments may make him seem sympathetic to the displaced Muslim aristocracy and peasantry of British India, but careful reading of his reasoned defense of them shows that they were simply sulking over lost privileges—monopolies, revenues, positions, etc.—privileges which they had no right to enjoy anyway, having seized them by might from the Hindus. Whether, by the same rule, the British had any right to the monopolies, revenues and honours that they had acquired through force would of course have to be answered by their inherent superiority over the Muslims. If the British had removed Muslims from important positions, it was because their inefficiency, corruption and indolence deserved no better. In accordance with this logic, the people who came to India in search of a land to tyrannize, who under the British simply occupied themselves in searching for imaginary grievances, might very well be searching for seditious moves to restore their former glory. The two successive phases of imperialism in India, the Mughal and the British, motivated and sustained by identical drives for lucrative domination, constitute twin roles in history for the two communities. British historians like Hunter painstakingly build up a defamation of the Muslim character in order to deflect attention from this sign of fraternity.
Anglo-Indian literature reflects the blighted fraternity existing between the two rival civilizations by continually drawing attention to similarity of physique, interest and activities, and at the same time foreclosing total identification, through the placement of an enormous moral distance between them. In his well-documented but rather simplistic work, *The British Image of India*, Allen Greenberger finds partiality among Anglo-Indian writers towards the Muslim community, both in the number of portrayals and in the nature of these representations. One may differ with him on the question of partiality, but the causes he cites for it are persuasive, and these are couched in the affinities mentioned above. First, the "similarities between Christianity and Islam no doubt went some way in making the British feel more at home with the Muslim than with the Hindu,‖ but Greenberger adds: "At least, as important as this, is the image of the Muslims as conquerors. They were an imperial people who, like the British, had captured India from the majority Hindus." Except for the group of low-caste, Hindu peasants converted to Islam in Bengal, the Muslim population of India was derived largely from light-skinned, tall-bodied invaders from the north and west. Racially, they hearkened back to the prehistoric Caucasians, same as the Anglo-Saxon British. They were martial in bearing and active in sports. Greenberger comments, "The Muslim was acceptable on the playing fields or the battle fields and therefore he could be admired." This approval is actually self-admiration, raised on seeing one's own heroic attributes mirrored for inspection. However, the Muslim has too many differences from the western ideal to serve as a completely faithful mirror and is a historical and political antagonist, to boot. Muslims are repeatedly projected as being inadequate to mental challenge, quickly settling for easy answers, instead of accepting the open-endedness of experience, a bold outlook that characterizes the spirit of the West.

Suleri offers a refreshingly new approach to Rushdie's disloyalty to Islam as self-questioning; in her words, *The Satanic Verses* "chooses disloyalty in order to
dramatize its continuing obsession with the metaphors Islam makes available to a post-colonial sensibility." Rushdie has not been able to escape from his cultural identity; he has implicated himself deeper and deeper in the very process of his disavowal, to a point where a critic like Suleri equates his blasphemy, itself, as "a gesture of wrenching loyalty." To extend the metaphor of alienated brotherhood, the western consciousness has become enmeshed in the very act of disowning Islam towards a discovery of its own suppressed images of selfhood. Rushdie, despite his wilful desecration of Islam, is a Muslim and so his gestures of denial have known and unambiguous points of departure. In the discourse of Anglo-Indian writers, already distanced by multiple strands of cultural history, the dual mechanics of self-reflection and self-deflection can be traced back to a conscious defamation of Islam, only through signals that are comparatively indistinct.

It has been pointed out earlier that Muslim characters are generally conceived of as being devoid of a strong moral centre; concomitantly, Islam is represented as a religion of external observances, lacking a moral core. Here lies the essential site of deflection. An essential part of the colonial rhetoric assumes that the code of honour, duty and service, often at the cost of profound individual sacrifice, makes British imperialism benevolent and paternalistic. Not that colonial writers deny betrayals of the code (it is a given factor in Conrad's fiction), but these are exceptions that, if anything, glorify the rule further. In contrast, Muslim imperialism (while it lasted and as it is proven by surreptitious drives to dominate, remaining afterwards in the Muslim consciousness) is represented as being entirely self-serving and destructive, having no higher ideal to ennoble it. One nurtures, while the other kills. The political imperialism of the West is purified by the rigour of a self-reflexive, psychic imperialism -- the domination of its id and ego by the awesome presence of a superego. The Muslim personality is a rampant breeding-ground for the id and the ego, and in the absence of a controlling superego, its urge to imperialize is a
dangerous threat to civilization. Thus the colonial rhetoric, while staking its notion of
honour on a heightened sense of the superego, transfers the western alter-ego (that
product of existing but culturally unacceptable drives) into the consciousness of the
Muslim ego, whose alleged freedom from a restrictive moral code provides shelter for
such denied impulses. The fictional playing out and condemnation of these impulses,
through the behavioural patterns of Muslim characters, is therefore akin to a mode of
self-questioning that is not openly acknowledged. Whether it is at all acknowledged
even at a deeper, disguised level may be worth scrutinizing.

In attaching the stigma of uncontrolled self-gratification to the Muslim
consciousness, the western mind also places within it all the elements of desire,
reserving for itself the ethics of self-abnegation for an ideal. In so doing, it commits a
form of ideological violence that arbitrarily fragments its own psyche, as well as that
of its Muslim subject. The result is a psychotic split, whose hypothetical reintegration
must necessarily unite both cultures in one imaginative whole. Every time an Anglo-
Indian character displays admiration, desire, regret, envy or empathy, even fleetingly,
for any single act of a Muslim counterpart, a door is opened into his secret, disowned
self. An example that immediately springs to mind is Major McBryde's inspection of
the miscellaneous contents of Aziz's pocket-book and drawer, places even more
private than the latter's domestic space; it is no less than a window into his self's
totality. As McBryde pores over this collective "evidence" of Aziz's immorality, he
loosens his moral hold over his own personality. A temporary forgetfulness
transforms the bland face of the officer: "McBryde gave a faint, incredulous smile,
and started rummaging in the drawer. His face became inquisitive and slightly
bestial" (Passage, p. 180). These are symptoms of desire, of excitement on the
threshold of forbidden pleasure. Of course, his official duty as police chief gives him
the pretext to pry into unhallowed things, but there is nothing official about his
gloating response. The underside of his code of honour is momentarily revealed
under cover of his censorious conduct. Not too long after, the reader learns about McBryde's secret love affair with Miss Derek, which brings him scandal and release from an unhappy marriage. Absolute purity is a myth, and even better people than McBryde are worn out by the pressures of moral correctness, to occasionally admit a longing for imperfection. As Fielding listens to Aziz entertaining his other guests, Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested, with scientifically improbable tales of the Mughuls' architectural feats, he is restrained from exposing him by more than courtesy: "Fielding did not even want to pull him up; he had dulled his craving for verbal truth and cared chiefly for truth of mood" (Passage, p. 88). Fielding does not rely on truth of mood when it really matters, e.g. at the trial, where verbal truth is vital, but he desires Aziz's moral indolence whenever he can persuade himself that the outcome will be of little consequence. The earnest Mrs. Moore enjoys Aziz's foibles; he seems to embody an innocence that her own culture has lost. At his mismanaged picnic, she is happy to dispense with punctuality, calculation and precision (the curses of her culture) and invites the prospect that they "shall all be Moslems together," (Passage, p. 144) that luxurious state of being morally unaccountable. Intended as a joke, it expresses nevertheless a desire to escape her culture, temporarily. Comedy, however, soon rolls into tragedy. Her experience inside one of the Marabar caves devalorizes her morality permanently, and the "boum" sound becomes one colossal regret for her carefully measured out life. Adela, endlessly debating her marriage with Ronny, looks upon Aziz as a wonderful creature who can possess without thought, maybe even as many as four wives, and fleetingly betrays a desire to belong blindly, despite everything, to someone -- to be possessed like an imaginary Muslim bride. The novel does not rule out the possibility that her experience in the cave was a hallucination sprung from just such a desire. These flickers of a suppressed self, underneath the imperial posture of superiority, cut across every strategy of denial to establish deep, psychic links with the Muslim's literary image. By casting Muslim characters as
creatures of moral abandon, the imperial rhetoric questions the encouragement of
dark, unacceptable impulses in the western mind and cautions against excessive self-
indulgence. Under multiple layers of denial, at some repressed plane of
consciousness, is the recognition of kinship, both human and cultural, and it is this
disquietude that leads to depicting the Muslim world-view as a kind of Conradian
heart of darkness. It is as if generating sufficient fear of becoming like the Muslim,
even through falsification of his culture, is the surest safeguard against moral
weakening, which is usually a preamble to political defeat.

Even Taylor's narrator betrays complicity in an act that is so far from civilized
normatives of behaviour that its depiction seems to be compelled by no other motive
that the shock of discovery. However, a close reading reveals that not only as story-
teller, but also as police officer and even simply as an Englishman, Taylor betrays
impulses of the very nature that he continually renounces as inhuman. He meditates
the clever hunting and capture of the thugs with the same kind of cold-blooded relish
that Ameer expresses in relating his escapades. In answer to the latter's belief that the
Thuggee profession will never die out, the narrator paints a picture of violent pursuit
almost to himself, that seems more malevolent than desirous of social order: "Men
will get tired of exposing themselves to the chance of being hunted down like wild
beasts, and hung when they are caught" [my emphasis] (Confessions, p. 1). Ameer's
subsequent words underline the fact that the predatory instinct is a universal human
urge left behind from primitive times and now intermittently expressed through
deadly sports, in which the civilized British are no less guilty:

How many of you English are passionately devoted to sporting! Your
days and months are passed in its excitement. A tiger, a panther, a
buffalo, a hog, rouses your utmost energies for its destruction—you
even risk your lives in its pursuit. How much higher game is a Thug's!
He is man: against his fellow creatures in every degree, from infancy
to old age, he has sworn relentless, unerring destruction. (Confessions,
p. 2)
The nineteenth-century catch in this parallelism, one that absolves the average Englishman from even a shadow of the offense that attaches to the Thug, is of course that killing humans is criminal and sinful, while killing animals for food or for sport is quite legitimate. For was not the earth in all its bounty made for man's pleasure? What the narrator seems to be unaware of, however, is that he and Ameer are both engaged in a hunt of fellow men; the only difference is this: one kills without provocation and without legal sanction, the other has the pretext to kill as punishment and along the course of law. As in the case of the police officer in A Passage to India, the psychological involvement in crime of the agent of law, far exceeds the call of duty.

Not only is the Thuggee cult outside law, it is a horror beyond conception and comprehension of the normal psyche. The story of its evil existence is a reassuring manifesto of the counter-existence of the good and the lawful. From this perspective, Ameer Ali may of course be considered to denote not humanity, but evil incarnate. Viewed thus, The Confessions of a Thug reminds one of a work like Moby Dick, where the hero's obsessive urge to kill the white whale goes beyond considerations of self-preservation to be subordinated to an apocalyptic battle against symbolic evil. Yet, the keen horror itself weaves links of compulsive fascination connecting character, narrator and reader in an undeniable kinship. Ameer declares that "Thuggee, capable of exciting the mind so strongly will not, cannot, be annihilated" (Confessions, p. 1). How else can the narrator's mood be characterized except as a keen excitement of the mind, much like McBryde's attraction for the wicked contents of Aziz's pocket? He pushes Ameer impatiently to open the secret door of his misdeeds: "But you must begin your story. I am prepared to listen to details worse than I can imagine human beings to have ever perpetrated!" (Confessions, p. 2). And the narrator is no self-deluded exception; his readers are just as eager to consume every morsel of Ameer's horrific experience: "Certainly; I am writing your life for the
information of those in England, who would no doubt like to have every particular of so renowned a person as yourself" (Confessions, p. 2). No doubt, the narrator uses false flattery to make Ameer speak unreservedly about his life, for the source of interest is not the man but his frightful actions, but the incentive to glean the last bit of information for a hungry audience is unmistakably there. The popular appetite for crime fiction and detective stories, with their stock features of the pursuit, the capture and the kill, in fact cater to an indirect, watered-down satisfaction of the suppressed killer instinct in man. The author's casual presentation of Ameer's demented reasoning inadvertently reflects his own and his readers' unconscious, homicidal savagery. The dichotomy of good and evil fails to preserve itself under the surface. Accordingly, the assumption that one culture, the Indian Muslim is obsessed by evil destruction and the other, the British, committed to its amelioration reveals itself as a false justification for imperial domination.

Unlike Taylor, Kipling is completely aware of his own participation in the semantics of desire disowned by his culture. Kim's character may easily be read as an expression of hidden desire, a longing for the total freedom of an orphan, unencumbered by the obligations of culture, so as to be able to enjoy untrammeled the entire gamut of experience, lawful and forbidden alike. Kipling's English identity, like Kim's Irish one, intrudes upon his natural desires; only it does so far earlier than in the case of his fictional hero, in the persons of protective parents and disciplinary schools in England. Kim's desire, one that must inevitably succumb to race-engendered duty, is translated in images belonging to the Islamic way of life, not coincidentally but to express conditions of extreme abandon. Although he can adjust himself to the meanest conditions of life, Kim has a marked preference for splendour and display—rich, spicy food, resplendent clothes and ceremonious language. His reunions with Mahbub are characterized by veritable orgies of the senses. He gorges himself on wickedly delicious mutton and cabbage curry, dripping with ghee, rice
filled with the aroma of saffron, cardamoms and cloves and greasy sweetmeats of the bazaar. Dressed in Mahbub's gift of silk tunic and pajamas, gold-embroidered turban and leather sandals curled up luxuriously, he approaches as close to a never-never land as is amenable with the realistic setting of the novel. However, Kipling identifies his desire for the outlandish with childhood fantasies of adventure, thereby disowning its appeal to his adult self, which manfully accepts the rhetoric of duty. This transference of desire in time is consistent with the psychological theory of the entrapment of the id in infancy inside the primitive drives of the body. As the personality grows, so the basic instincts are fine tuned in response to social stimuli.

Kipling is not alone in associating life outside the fringes of western civilization with juvenile cravings. It is even remarkable how similar in this respect is the outlook of one steeped in the Indian experience, to the narrow, insular perspective of even a domestic writer like Elizabeth Gaskell. Discussing the use of colonial material in the quiet Victorian novel, Cranford, Patrick Brantlinger shows how the adult prosaic imagination invested in severely restricted characters find respite in deceitful tales of dare-devilry:

Mr. Peter's yarn spinning offers a paradigm of the imperial adventure tale in Victorian society in general. As against the tame, monotonous realms of domestic routines and responsibilities emerges an alternative—daring, distant, charismatic, but somehow also irresponsible and immature. 12

Here, attraction for the remote orient is explicitly associated with adolescence, escape, adventure and fantasy, and not just through simple association. Escape into India is a perpetuation of childhood, and is caused by a congenital desire to evade responsibilities. How does this idea relate to the British who came to India to "escape" unemployment and struggle at home to find a paradise of wealth, ease, luxury and privilege? They easily gave up the hard-earned, proud western values of democracy to practice authoritarianism, egalitarian work ethics to be waited on by armies of
servants and concepts of inalienable human rights to impose racial discrimination. One has to be aware of the breach in strategic outlook existing between British political institutions in England and in the colonies. De Schweinitz speaks about these double standards:

And what could have been more incongruous than the democratization of political processes at home while abroad viceroy and district commissioners governed foreign populations who had little or no say in the matter? . . . The incongruity of democracy at home and authoritarian rule abroad permeated the public mind slowly.  

If British attitudes towards distant subjects were slow to respond to history, they were even slower to acknowledge their own partnership in actions they wilfully chose to associate with orientals alone. The need to play the role of the strong, successful colonial master gave them a handy moral camouflage. It allowed them to "evade" the rigours of justice and fair play and slip back to the same state of decadent and exploitative self-indulgence that were challenged first by the French Revolution and subsequently by the Industrial Revolution. These vices they particularly associated with the Muslim elite of India, and only those among themselves whom they accused of having crossed over to the other side. In actuality, the entire social construct developed by the Anglo-Indian community participated no less, even exulted, in this regressive free play of guilty desire.

The conflict of duty and desire in the evocation of cultural difference is particularly evident in Anglo-Indian treatment of art. While it may be presumed that discussing art in the context of literature takes a few liberties with the conceptual boundaries in existence between them, it must also be remembered that art and literature are simply two mediums of representation, and not entirely disparate in effect. Besides, relevant artefacts are often mentioned in novels in order to articulate indistinct yet significant ideological connections. Art being a distillation of all that is profound and enduring in a culture, the rhetoric of imperialism shows the tendency to
exalt Western art over all others. In Anglo-Indian fiction, it is particularly instrumental in articulating denial through conflict of duty and desire. Muslim art is unambiguously depicted as an expression of uncontrolled desire. Kipling projects Islamic architecture as gaudy, extravagant and decadent, no more than lairs of desire and exhibitions of power:

There is no city--except Bombay, the queen of all--more beautiful in her garish style than Lucknow . . . Kings have adorned her with fantastic buildings, endowed her charities, crammed her with pensioners, and drenched her with blood. She is the centre of all idleness, intrigue and luxury, and shares with Delhi the claim to talk the only pure Urdu. (Kim, p. 170).

Young Kim is mesmerized by their beauty because, raised in the bazaar, he has been lost to his western heritage. The very formlessness, because "fantastic," of the city of Lucknow regales his sense of beauty and speaks to him of a lost era of delectable adventure, especially since a child's imagination worships everything that breaks away from constraints. For loyal Britons, raised to appreciate Western art, Mughal art was formless and decadent. Lacking patronage during the greater part of British rule in India, Muslim artists sank into trivial pursuits; in the words of Percival Spear: "The painters of the Mughal and Rajput schools, whose work had challenged the Italians two centuries before, dispersed to provincial centres and eked out a living by commercial art, and still-life and draftsmen's drawings for Englishmen." Anglo-Indian fiction corroborates this lack of interest in Muslim art.

Forster's aesthetic pre-conditioning makes him utterly blind to the beauties of buildings and monuments he has seen in India; his eyes only choose to be enamoured by western art:

The buildings of Venice, like the mountains of Crete and the fields of Egypt, stood in the right place, whereas in poor India everything was placed wrong. He had forgotten the beauty of form among idol temples and lumpy hills; indeed, without form, how can there be beauty? Form stammered here and there in a mosque, became
rigid through nervousness, even, but oh, these Italian churches!
(Passage, p. 278)

How justified is the complete dichotomy declared between the presence of form in Western art and its characteristic absence in the styles of the East? Forster shows himself to be a true legatee of the cultural heritage that accepts this dichotomy as a given and without question. This brusque dismissal of Islamic art is one of the most outrageous distinctions made between the West and Islam, motivated by the denial of kinship. To declare that Muslim civilization is devoid of form is to forget that the mathematical precision of measurements required to translate abstract form to concrete shape came from the Arabs. Besides the celebration of different forms and styles of Western art, and an acknowledgement of its indebtedness to ancient Hellenic and Italian renaissance influences, one can detect in Western discourse an inexorable effort to prove that no oriental influence has crept into its formation, that Western art is all western and entirely pure. During the long sleep of Europe, the Arabs and Turks took up the lamp of civilization to keep it from extinction; Western scholars give them a grudging recognition as bearers and transporters of ideas, but rarely credit them with having added any contributions of their own. Percival Spear chooses to evaluate the achievements of Islamic cultures, even in other regions of the world, in terms of what they gained from their geographical location:

In the cultural sphere the Arabs of the early Caliphate borrowed heavily from the classical Greek heritage of the countries which they conquered. Plato and Aristotle became familiar names in their thought; indeed, the knowledge of Aristotle was returned to the West at the University of Paris through Arab channels. The Islamic light after passing through the Persian cultural prism, showed a spectrum of elegance, grace, and tolerance not evidenced elsewhere. 15

If Spear was questioned whether a prism could have manifested such colours if they were not the hidden properties of light to begin with, he would probably only change his metaphor, not rethink his position on the essential cultural vacuity of Islam.
Whatever the prejudice, it seems reasonable to believe that both civilizations created legacies of their own. The northern and western expansion of the Ottoman empire brought about a mingling of ideas and artefacts between the Orient and the Occident, which remained in the background, hidden by political animosities. According to Bernard Grun's *The Timetables of History: a Horizontal Linkage of People and Events*, in 712 A. D. the Arabs conquered Seville; and by 715 A. D. the Muslim empire extended from the Pyrenees to China, with Damascus as its capital. Spain and Damascus were two regions where the Western and Islamic civilizations intermingled. The imagination knows no barriers and can also make far distant and quite ephemeral connections. It is to be wondered at why the splendours of Muslim architecture in the Near East, along with the rich tracery of its surface designs, have never been recognized as forerunners of the lavishly decorative architectural styles that flourished in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries? Since Greek and Roman styles are characterized by their classic simplicity, other antecedents must be sought for the ornate structures of Baroque art. If one wants only to recognize the artefacts of medieval craftsmanship as sources of inspiration, miniatures that were later metamorphosed on a grand scale, there are also clear similarities between the intricate Islamic calligraphy found in illumined Quranic texts and the Biblical illuminations preserved in the Carolingian and Merovingian monasteries of Europe. It may also be remembered that Muslims took the blunt and utilitarian Roman arch, a feature of bathhouses, loggias and aqueducts, and pointed it upwards towards heaven to symbolize the soaring of the human spirit towards God. After Europe revived the round arch in the building of Romanesque cathedrals, many more years expired before the pointed gothic arch came into being and was recognized thereafter as a marvel of architectural design.

Jeffrey Heath makes eloquent acknowledgement of the aesthetic capabilities of Muslims in India. And it is his own fascination with the grandeur, as well as the
intricacy, of Mughal architecture that he imposes on Forster's Fielding as he tries to drive a wedge between authorial intention and the viewpoint of the novel's most privileged character:

The Mogul emperors have been the most magnificent and imaginative of all the invaders. A casual reading probably will not reveal Forster's deft criticism of the Moslems, for by comparison with the British, they seem noble figures. The web of art that they threw over India was brilliant and extensive—the diaphanous stone traceries and lattice-work of Jaisalmer, Jaipur, and Jodhpur; the Taj Mahal, the Red Fort, the gardens of Shalimar... But Fielding fails to see that even though the Moguls dominated elegantly, they dominated nevertheless.

Nowhere in Forster's A Passage to India does Fielding seem susceptible to the "elegance" left behind by the Mughals; if anything, he balances his critical good sense against Aziz's impressionable appreciation of their architectural capabilities. Can he be speaking only of the city of Chandrapore or does his imperial disregard extend also to the majestic specimens of Mughal architecture? The austere structure of a mosque or two he does deign to dignify slightly, by calling them "stammerings of form!" It is not clear what sort of nervousness he attributes to the mosque, whether a watered down kind of religious ecstasy, captured far more impressively in Baroque churches, or a far more quotidian fear for the dissolution of empire. Does Fielding see the shadow of death hover around the grand Moghul monuments, recalling the fate of Ozymandias? Or is this finally the nervousness of the last generation of departing Britishers who refuse to acknowledge, but feel it in their bones, that the tide of Indian discontent has risen sufficiently to force them to leave India? The shared nervousness is subconscious; there is still denial at the surface. The fate of the Mughal empire and that of the British empire cannot be the same, because they are organically different in idea, in deed and in aspiration.

The subordination of desire to duty is one of the strongest appeals made by the traditional Muslim culture of India, and reflected pervasively in its literature as such.
It is not simply an ethics evolved for specific political ends, or a self-glorifying code for the aristocracy. It is a stark truth even for the poorest peasants, for whom life offers few choices and indulgences. In a land of deprivation, held together by what is called subsistence culture, the closely-knit social fabric is of greater significance than each individual member, whose death, absence, failure or loss is quickly filled in by the alternate presence of another. This is because sharing ensures the maximum utilization of limited resources, and no private desire is considered precious enough to be allowed to disrupt communal life. Each rebellious drive or desire threatens the equanimity of a fragile, social harmony, and so the impetus for social continuation is compelled through acceptance, compromise and submission. Kazi Abdul Wadud's novel, Nadibakkheyy, is completely descriptive and, despite its central theme involving the conflict of duty and desire, it is not meant as a vindication of the author's culture. Its quiet, tragic tone tells countless tales of repression, where hidden stirrings of the individual heart are rudely brushed away by larger societal and familial demands. The rhythms of nature, the primal events of birth, marriage and death, folk rituals and customs, communal value systems—these form a powerful and permanent backdrop against which weak individuals hesitantly feel out their private desires and quickly conceal them in shame. The novel opens with the innocent attachment of two children at play, Lalu and Moti. When six-year-old Moti falls into the pond, eleven-year-old Lalu dives after her and while they are both being rescued, the boy begins to feel a bond for the girl that he is unable to shake off for the rest of his life. As the story proceeds, their burgeoning adolescent love gets repressed under diverse social constraints. Knowing that Moti's father resolves to marry his daughter into a wealthy family, Lalu leaves his own fields and goes to work in a rich farming district, with a tacit understanding between the two families that he would then be worthy of claiming her. When Lalu returns after half a year, Moti is already married to a rich man's son, in another village. It is as unthinkable for Moti to resist her father's wish
as it is for Lalu to shame his mother by offering himself as an unpromising suitor. Not only do they subordinate their desire to the expectations of family and society, they even desist from expressing their love to one another. As the wife of another man, Moti becomes more than inaccessible to Lalu, who now has to contend with the guilt of still yearning after her, as Moti suffers the torment of not being able to love her husband. When the widowed Moti returns to her village a few years later, obstacles are still not gone. Lalu refuses the bride chosen by his mother, but he cannot bring himself to hurt her by marrying a widow, because the mother's sense of importance is dependent on the achievements of the son. The unspoken love of Lalu and Moti has no hope of fulfillment until the very end of the novel, when Lalu's mother, unable to bear her son's silent suffering, brings them together at her deathbed. This would have been a simple love story with an unremarkable end, if it was not for the extreme reticence shown by all the principal characters. The suggestion that their union is brought about by a dying woman's sudden change of heart, a moment's grace that may not have been, hangs heavy even over the happy ending. Significantly, Lalu and Moti turn their full gaze on each other for the first time, afloat in a boat, in the heart of the river. They are suspended temporarily in a magic world where no one exists besides themselves, to oppose their desire. Even though sympathy is concentrated on the two lovers—for their beauty, grace, perseverance in work, depth of feeling and sense of duty—what is truly eulogized in this novel is the code of honour that surpasses all considerations of human loss. The connotations of this code of honour are more profound than those of the colonial code of honour, because they are bound up with ever-present questions of communal survival and not with impulses of domination. Parents and children, married couples with their extended families, neighbours, servants and dependants, balance their existence along the axis of a shared responsibility. Of course, the balance of power tilts on the side of parents, husbands, and prosperous landowners who employ the landless; but the assumption is
that, having overcome the inexperience and impetuosity of youth, older people are conditioned to reflect the more enduring values of society. Sexual and economic discrimination are too universal to require especial comment in this context. The novel gathers philosophical weight from its insight that the interconnectedness of human action takes an exorbitant toll on the individual spirit. Now, the notion of personal sacrifice for the sake of domestic harmony in an Indian village may not be exactly the same as the public ideal of self-renunciation officially promoted by British colonialism. However, the same principle of subordinating one's own self to the greater need of the community underlies both situations. Like Anglo-Indian fiction writers, Bengali Muslim writers also claim adherence to duty as an attribute of their own culture.

The depiction of Muslim society in its indigenous literature shows that the Anglo-Indian portrayal of Muslims as licentious beings is both uninformed and arbitrary. Does the anxiety of domination have an aesthetic dimension? Do Anglo-Indian writers acknowledge complicity in the crime of reconstructing identities for subject cultures; specifically, in this case, for refurbishing foundational patterns of behaviour for Muslim characters? How aware is Forster, the most self-conscious of the Anglo-Indian writers, that his strategic re-construction of Muslim identity is for the benefit of a western audience? He seems very conscious of the subtle pressures that influence narrative, in the following conversation between Fielding and McBryde about Adela's experience at Marabar:

'But I wanted to ask her. I want someone who believes in him to ask her.
'What difference does that make?
'She is among people who disbelieve in Indians.'
'Well she tells her own story, doesn't she?
'I know, but she tells it to you.' (Passage, p. 179)

Too "finespun" for McBryde, perhaps, but not for the student of literature. Forster's narrative is subtly manipulated by the consciousness of his Western audience for
whom the identity of the rapist, as that of the rebel (amply demonstrated in Anglo-Indian novels about the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny), is instinctively bound with their conception of Muslim behaviour. Although highly sensitive as a critical cue, the dialogue quoted above is also quite evasive; here, Forster clumps all "Indians" together, resolutely refusing to acknowledge how his own narrative specifically distorts Muslim identity to satisfy the expectations of a prejudiced readership.

Fredric Jameson describes the psychoanalytical interpretation of experience as embodying the opposite impulse to the political unconscious. Refering to Northrop Frye's *The Anatomy of Criticism*, he suggests:

Frye's is in this sense a 'positive' hermeneutic, which tends to filter out historical difference and the radical discontinuity of modes of production and of their cultural expressions. A negative hermeneutic, then, would on the contrary wish to use the narrative raw material shared by myth and 'historical' literatures to sharpen our sense of historical difference, and to stimulate an increasingly vivid apprehension of what happens when plot falls into history, so to speak, and enters the force fields of the modern societies.  

Colonial discourse as exemplified in the Anglo-Indian rhetoric of fiction as well as the counter-colonial discourse developed by the Muslims of India, in this analysis can be said to follow the negative hermeneutic of emphasizing historical differences. The undercurrents of affinity, suppressed by the strategies of denial practised by both, point to the positive hermeneutic of the "Ur-text" overlaid by cultural meanings. And yet, paradoxically, the British colonial vision encompassing the troubling civilization it encountered in India inclines towards that primordial wholeness by splitting western and Islamic identities into contrary but, because contrary, in a submerged encoding of signification, also complementary states of being.
CHAPTER 7

DESECCULARIZING THE TEXT OF ISLAM AS COUNTER-DENIAL OF FRATERNITY

The entire first section of *A Passage to India* is called Mosque, from the secluded place of worship where Dr. Aziz, snubbed by Major Callendar and his wife, removes himself to salve his mind. In keeping with the richly symbolic texture of language used by Forster, the word "mosque" attains a larger iconic meaning in this novel by becoming invested with the religiosity of discourse increasingly adopted by Muslims in colonial India, while they strove to project their distinct cultural identity, as a precondition to their struggle for political autonomy. Here, the literal structure of the mosque grows into a symbolic edifice where subjected Muslim India retreats, away from the colonial gaze, to rediscover its own experiential centre. In a world violently dislocated by colonial possession, the mosque functions as the only remaining stable ground from which the Muslim community is able to position its creative links with society. This is space where the usurping "other" posited in nonbelievers can be barred entry or made to "take off its shoes." This is where the Anglo-Indian intruder must be divested of every visible sign of appropriation and made to negotiate with the terms of power dictated by a vanquished culture, offering thereby tacit acknowledgement of its distinctiveness and of its essential cultural inviolability.

In *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson refers to the restorative function of religion, although he refuses to admit that it has an enduring, or truly convincing, effect on the western psyche:
Religion has the symbolic value of wholeness, no doubt; but it is the wholeness of the older organic society or Gesellschaft that it conveys, and not that—in any case surely a mirage—of some fully unified monad. Religion, to the henceforth "religiously unmusical" subjects of the market system, is the unity of older social life perceived from the outside: hence its structural affinity with the image as such and hallucination. Religion is the superstructural projection of a mode of production, the latter's only surviving trace in the form of linguistic and visual artifacts, thought systems, myths and narratives, which look as though they had something to do with the forms in which our own consciousness is at home, and yet which remain vigorously closed to it. Because we can no longer think the figures of the sacred from within, we transform their external forms into aesthetic objects, but also monuments, pyramids, altars, presumed to have an inside, yet housing powers that will forever remain a mystery to us.¹

Specifically, thus, Jameson insists on the exclusion of faith from modern systems of power and economy. Muslims, on the other hand, insist on an alternate system of value that admits faith as an accessory to these. Whatever the extent of individual belief, Jameson speaks for the collective western mind when he defines skepticism as a necessary step towards modernization and clarity of understanding. And so when Aziz is made to believe in the aesthetic structure of the mosque as truly housing inside it a power with which his consciousness feels actually at home, Forster can be safely be assumed to be making a cultural distinction. In presenting Aziz's religious experience as a facile, decidedly non-western tendency to escape into shallow romanticism, Forster loses sight of the possibility that there might have evolved, within the historical milieu he fictionalizes, a self-conscious Muslim resolve to make faith an alternate instrument of regeneration and modernization.

Religious discourse of its very nature deactivates the nonbeliever, and makes him a passive recipient of value; and so, for the defeated Muslim community, Islam provided that much needed space, one not simply of neutrality but also of authority. Chandra, in The Oppressive Present, discusses how the presence of a dominant alien
presence may motivate an insecure community to self-consciously replenish links with its religio-cultural past:

As colonialism progressed, a dual tension with regard to the West and to indigenous culture came about. With the intensification of political conflict against alien rulers, the emotional need for cultural belonging deepened. At the same time, and paradoxically, familiarity with indigenous culture diminished progressively. The state of being organically, and unselfconsciously, related to indigenous culture so transformed that it required consciously designed links for the relationship to exist between individuals and their culture.²

In Jameson’s terms, this marks both a nostalgic and revitalized relationship with one’s past. Chandra’s book refers specifically to the way Indian writers tried to recapture the ancient Hindu culture for the purpose of fostering Hindu nationalism, but the paradoxical situation he describes, of self-consciously grasping cultural mores in the very process of losing them through forced adaptation to a dominant, alien system expresses the predicament of Muslim nationalism as well.

Fearing invisibility from inaction, Muslims began deliberately to cloak themselves in their religious identity, translate their aspirations in religious terms, turn devoted scholarly attention to religious literature, embellish their everyday speech with religious exclamations and take refuge from their failures by putting forward religious excuses. Being a Muslim self-consciously, and not simply as a matter of incidence, meant a constant obligation on the part of each individual to assess his own being in terms of the collective face of Islam. Aziz’s frenzied disclaimer to Mrs. Moore, “Madam! Madam! Madam! . . . Madam, this is a mosque, you have no right here at all” (Passage, p. 42), fed by every hopeless passion of disempowerment, magnifies his own humiliation into just such a socialized grievance. Aziz’s quiet withdrawal likewise expands into a fight for the defence of a sanctuary to assuage Islam’s wounded self-identity. His defensiveness about Islam is discovered to be a retaliatory gesture from being “snubbed,” as his withdrawal from Anglo-India stems
from the anxiety of rejection. His nerves are frayed on discovering an Englishwoman within the mosque's precincts, the experiences of the evening having honed his sensibilities towards a need for political retaliation. In this, at least, Forster has correctly diagnosed the temper of the educated Muslim elite, under cover of the neurosis of Aziz's behaviour. But this last residue of power disintegrates when Mrs. Moore's deference to the faith of a subjected other is eulogized as kindness and not merely appreciated as a due. Indeed, an entire panegyric develops around her to displace Aziz's Islamic sensibility and reinstate in its place the hysteria of "Esmee Esmoore." What might have become a penetrating vision into Muslim India's strategic reconstruction of itself, with the only discursive tool left to it for unfettered use, viz. that of religious symbolism, is aborted to make way for an elaborate case-study of the racial superiority of the British.

The emotional surge towards Mrs. Moore is not an isolated phenomenon. It is a culmination of and an outlet for the scarcely hidden longing, allegedly present in Muslim characters, to be accepted as brothers by the British — reflected in Hamidullah's memory of his stay with the Bannisters in England, his desire to welcome young Hugh Bannister into his home as a son, Mahmoud Ali's bitter awareness of being held at a contemptuous distance as a lawyer, Aziz's stifling demand of total loyalty from Fielding as a brother no less than a friend, are all meant to provide an insight into a secret wish. Such suppressed desire for kinship with the English acts as the prime mover in the behavioural patterns of Aziz and his friends, indicating an implicit sense of their own inferiority. Hamidullah cannot get over the wonder of having actually lived in close contact with an English family: "They were father and mother to me, I talked to them as I do now. In the vacations, their rectory became my home" (Passage, p. 35). He is even proud of the thought of having functioned as a nursemaid for the Bannister children: "They entrusted all their children to me — I often carried little Hugh about — I took him up to the funeral of
Queen Victoria, and held him in my arms above the crowd” (Passage, p. 35). The affection with which he recalls the experience is touching, but he remembers it also as a rare honour conferred upon him; this amounts to a tacit acceptance of the British as a superior race. This is another way in which the denial of fraternity discussed in an earlier chapter indirectly operates to reinforce colonial pretensions.

Far from acknowledging that the Muslim community had evolved its own alternative paradigm of fraternal rejection by embracing religious reactionism, Anglo-Indian literature dwells archly on the special attraction Muslim characters have for close, brotherly friendship with the English. Allen Greenberger devotes an entire chapter to showing how the Indian desire to consort at par with the British occurs as a common theme in Anglo-Indian literature: "Many British writers believed that the problem of personal relations was the problem. They felt that the motivating factor for most Indians was their desire to be accepted by the British as personal friends." Although "the problem" is identified as an Indian problem, and not specifically Muslim, the most prominent examples Greenberger finds to elucidate the situation concern Muslim characters, viz. Dr. Aziz of A Passage to India, Roshan Khan of Flora Annie Steele’s The Hosts of the Lord, Shere Khan of A. E. W. Mason’s The Broken Road and Sher Afzul Khan of Maud Diver’s Far to Seek. Roshan Khan, who "thinks of himself as a proper Englishman while he plays cricket, polo, and tennis, carries a silver cigarette case, and feels uncomfortable in native clothes," does not gravitate towards any particular British friend, but his identification with British culture implies a penchant for a larger brotherhood.

Except for a brief description of the city of Chandrapore, the very opening of A Passage to India precipitates readers into what seems to be the most abiding concern of its Muslim community, viz. "whether or no it is possible to be friends with an Englishman" (Passage, p. 33). Forster’s treatment places this concern at a deeper level of consciousness, for Aziz and his company are entirely at home with
their own Islamic culture; yet, the longing to be accepted by the British on an equal basis is discovered to haunt their imagination and lie especially at the root of Aziz's pride. The young doctor does affect a breezy indifference towards the British among his Indian friends, declaring "Why be either friends with the fellows or not friends? Let us shut them out and be jolly" (Passage, p. 35). When he is suddenly summoned by Major Callendar from his convival company, he even tries to raise his self-esteem by false bravado, declaring that the English would have to accept him on his own terms or dispense with his service: "If my teeth are to be cleaned, I don't go at all. I am an Indian, it is an Indian habit to take pan. The Civil Surgeon must put up with it" (Passage, p. 38). This bravado is short-lived, however, and we are told that he was late arriving at his destination because, in addition to having a flat tyre, he "dallied furthermore to clean his teeth" (Passage, p. 38). Aziz is the most vulnerable of them all to the desire for acceptance by the British, because he thinks he has learned to forge the necessary intellectual links with the West, be it medical science or inspired painting. He is mortified to discover that his intellectual accomplishment is only a convenient tool for the use of Anglo-India, and cannot secure him an emancipated identity.

Muslim writers accept this objectification, and show their unruffled Muslim characters coming to terms with their educational and professional skills being valued as commodity by the British rulers. They realize that, being no longer the privileged ruling class, they must scale the slopes of lost political power by increasing the market value of their professional skills. In Abdullah, Emdadul Haque makes his protagonist profit from the patronage of an appreciative British school superintendent, but he does not let Abdullah make the slightest effort to cross the threshold of professional contact and attempt friendship with his benefactor. In fact, it is Abdullah's unimpassioned acknowledgment of his own limitations and those of his
community, and his sincere but unpretentious efforts to overcome these, that impress the school superintendent:

After a few moments, Abdullah was called inside. As soon as he stepped inside the room, the sahib said, "Well Moulvi, the headmaster did not send me your name, then why have you come to see me?"

Abdullah replied deferentially, "Sir, I have not come to you on any personal matter. I am here on behalf of the local Anjuman..."

"What special interest does the Anjuman have?"

"Sir, the number of Muslim students in the school is rising progressively. Two years ago, there were only twenty-three students, but now they have increased to thirty-eight. Yet there is no Moulvi to teach them Persian. It is the prayer of the Anjuman that a Moulvi be appointed."

"The students here all study Sanskrit; why do they need a Moulvi?"

"They learn Sanskrit because they cannot learn Persian, Sir. If they get a Moulvi, they will all study Persian, and the Anjuman believes that student enrollment will increase in the future."

The sahib thought for a while and said, "Well, all right, you may ask the Anjuman to give a representation. I will consider the matter. Do you have anything more to say?"

"No Sir, I have nothing further to say." (Abdullah, pp. 176-7)

The dramatic situation created here is conducive to the beginning of a personal friendship, for the narrator says in the next line that "the sahib was becoming impressed with Abdullah's competence in English, his courtesy and his respectful but uninhibited manner" (Abdullah, p. 177). Yet Abdullah is loath to say anything further to the Englishman than is strictly necessary. He learns later that the school superintendent was so far pleased with him as to offer him the position of a headmaster in another school, at Rasulpur; he is properly appreciative, but even then shows no desire to make himself personally better known to the Anglo-Indian officer.

Nurul Islam in Najibur Rahman's Anwara is likewise befriended by the British manager of the jute company where he works as a senior clerk. Son of a pious priest himself, the manager admires Nurul Islam for honest devotion to his work and his religious faith. When a group of corrupt company staff take advantage of Nurul's
momentary distraction to rob the safe of eight thousand rupees, the manager has no
trouble believing in his innocence. He tries his utmost to save Nurul from unjust
prosecution:

The kind manager sahib brought out his handkerchief and dried Nurul
Islam's tears. Then he said, my job has a small salary of nine hundred
rupees. I have to send five hundred rupees to England for my son's
education. The two of us live meagrely on the remaining four hundred
rupees; so I cannot help you with much at this time of trouble. Take
this five hundred rupees note, collect the remaining seven and a half
thousand rupees from somewhere and restore the company's treasury.
It will save you from a scandal, and I will see to it that you do not lose
your job. (Anwara, p. 105)

Nurul Islam is touched by the manager's benevolence, but he declines to accept his
gift and goes to jail. The situation is somewhat similar to that faced by Aziz in A
Passage to India. Even though there is no evidence to prove that the doctor has been
falsely accused of assaulting Adela, Fielding instinctively believes in him. The names
of both, Aziz and Nurul, are cleared in the trials that follow. What is significantly
different in the two fictional representations of the western-educated Muslim youth is
the way in which they themselves are made to respond to the compassionate
behaviour of an Englishman. Aziz breaks down the door of fellow-feeling that
Fielding opens half-way out, and tries to possess his sympathies completely. Their
rudimentary friendship seems to expand and envelop his entire consciousness. Aziz's
emotions gather around Fielding more compulsively than they incline towards the
Muslim friends he has known longer, his children or the memory of his wife.
Abdullah and Nurul Islam never view the kindness of their benefactors as a gesture of
personal endearment; they accept it as admirable manifestations of their own
charitable nature. They are always implicitly aware of the fact that the British and they
themselves inhabit distinct cultural worlds. Not only are they free from any delusion
that they might be brother or friend to the English, whatever concession they have to
make to western culture in order to restore their lost place in society, they compensate
by self-consciously projecting their own distinct Islamic identity. Even the unpatriotic Meer Sahib of Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha, a declared friend of the British indigo planter, knows that the relationship is one of convenience and common feudal interest, not genuine personal attachment. The two men pursue their separate lifestyles and have no pretention of a cross-cultural bond.

The two novels referred to above, Najibur Rahman's Anwara and Kazi Emdadul Haque's Abdullah, happen to respectively present from within their own conceptual framework, one idealistic and another realistic picture of Muslim society. Anwara is a highly romanticized tale of personal challenge in a divinely ordained world. True love, duty and piety confront and overcome terrible odds; death of parent, social malice, planned daily abuse, kidnapping, mutual misunderstanding, calumny, imprisonment, near-fatal illness and attempted murder crowd thick around the heads of the two blessed protagonists, Anwara and Nurul Islam. But faith conquers all and so do they. The novel begins with Anwara standing by the riverside, at dawn, just behind her village home. This is a secluded place where she can momentarily relax her purdah, and here she comes face to face with her destiny. Nurul Islam, the hero of Anwara is introduced to the reader in a memorable scene, reading the Quran at dawn from inside his boat. Anwara, hidden behind the trees, is enraptured by his melodious recitation, before a fleeting exchange of glances seals their future relationship. Neglected by her father, abused regularly by her step-mother and befriended only by an aged grandmother, Anwara's imagination settles on Numul as if he were a saviour sent from heaven. Nurul, in turn, fatherless and burdened with an envious, avaricious step-mother, prays to God to grant him a virtuous wife, so that he can spend his life in His chosen path. Surely, this is an unconventional exposition of a romance. The writer's intention, besides creating two exemplary characters for emulation, is to emphasize the mellow and pleasurable aspects of Islam, as opposed to
the stern and ascetic elements held up by traditionalists. By blending religious sensibility with romantic love, the writer humanizes Islam's appeal for the young.

The heroine is young, motherless, a paragon of beauty, wisdom and virtue, and a devout Muslim. She has no means of realizing her desire to be united with the stranger, but her faith makes it happen. Nurul Islam is an employee of a jute company and has come to Modhupur to select and buy the best specimens he can find of the golden fibre. He comes to the house of Bhuiyan Sahib, Anwara's father, to inspect his jute and learns that his daughter has suddenly fallen ill. Nurul has some knowledge of homeopathy, and in the absence of a better doctor, offers to help her with his medicine. When he lays eyes on his patient, he is thrilled to find that she is the same girl he had seen from his boat and takes this as a divine sign that they are meant for one another. On the pretext of applying a cold compress to her head, he cuts off a strand of Anwara's long hair and takes it away with him. Throughout the novel, Nurul's enchantment with Anwara's beautiful, trailing hair becomes the only, sustained figure of sexual feeling, it being sublimated elsewhere into a partnership of powerful religious commitment. When Anwara's father tries to marry her off to a rich but low-bred man, the ceremony is aborted by divine intervention. A terrible storm and other unpropitious signs scare Bhuiyan Sahib into changing his mind. Through the good offices of Anwara's grand-mother, her friend Hamida's father (Talukdar Sahib) and husband (Amjad Hossain), and always the grace of Allah behind them all, Anwara's marriage with Nurul Islam takes place duly.

At Belta, Anwara's new home, Nurul's step-mother becomes her new source of torment. When Nurul tries to defend his wife, she divides the property in half and moves away with her daughter, Saleha. Soon afterwards, she gives her daughter in marriage to her brother's son, Khadem, who turns out to be a profligate. One day, Khadem happens to boast about Anwara's beauty, among his many dissolute friends. Fired by curiosity, a friend named Abbas persuades Khadem to take him to his house
and let him see Anwara, too. From a hidden spot behind the house, he spies Anwara while she is drying her hair in the sun; at all other times, she keeps herself concealed behind impenetrable purdah. From the moment Abbas sets his eyes on her, he resolves to possess her; the only way he can do that is by luring her outside, and he bribes Durga, a corrupt Vaishnab woman, to accomplish this impossible deed. A little before this time, Anwara's husband had suddenly become ill with a mysterious lung disorder. As Durga bides her time, Nurul's illness gets progressively worse, until it almost seems certain that he will die. Anwara begins to be overwhelmed with despair, and this is when Durga closes in with her plan. She tells the young, distraught wife that the only way she can save her husband is by feeding him the juice of a rare plant, which can only be obtained by a midnight ritual at the village cremation site. Anwara's simple religious belief revolts at the idea of pagan rituals, but concern for her husband supercedes all other considerations. She agrees to let Durga guide her to the dreaded spot in the middle of the night. According to plans laid from beforehand, Abbas and his friends seize Anwara as soon as she sets foot outside. The faith of a chaste Muslim wife miraculously saves her from dishonour. The deputy magistrate, coincidentally riding along the same road with Amjad Hossain, happens to come upon the palanquin bearing the unconscious body of Anwara. The rascals are arrested and the virtuous woman is restored to her home. The depth of her sacrifice causes another miracle; Nurul Islam's recovery sets in the same night. But it is still not time for happily ever after. The story of Anwara's abduction is gossiped around the country, and even though most people believe in her innocence, a few make prejudicial remarks. One evening, Nurul Islam overhears his subordinate staff discussing his wife's reputation; they are of the opinion that no woman who has once fallen into the clutches of Abbas, for however short a time, can have escaped violation. The unhappy husband is torn by doubt and stricken by his own lack of trust. His inner torment makes him unmindful of his work, and the same
office employees who vilify Anwara's name manage to steal his key and rob the company safe of eight thousand rupees. Nurul interprets this calamity as just punishment meted out by Allah for his having doubted his virtuous wife. Again, with contribution from Anwara's grandmother, intercession of kind friends Halima and Amjad, and Anwara's never-failing faith in divine justice, Nurul is released from jail and the real criminals are apprehended. With the compensation he receives from the government, he is able to leave his job and set himself up as an independent jute merchant. He asks forgiveness of his wife and is reconciled with her. One other catastrophe threatens to destroy this God-fearing couple. When, according to the village custom, Anwara comes to stay at her father's house for the birth of her first child, her step-mother plans to murder Nurul and acquire his wealth. Even this danger is averted by Anwara's faith, because she is duly warned by a maid in the house. When the gory murder does take place, the victim is discovered to be no other than the killer's son, who accidentally puts himself in the wrong spot. After this horrific deed, all the villainy in the air is purged and the storm-spent sky shines blue eternally for the faithful. Romance is reinstated as Nurul watches his paragon of a wife sitting on a silver settee, drying her legendary hair on a frame of gold.

Abdullah has a simpler, far more realistic plot, and assumes a clinical approach towards its subject. It lays out the structures of Muslim society on the dissecting table, as it were, picking out its diseased parts so as to allow a healthy reconstruction of the body, transfused and revived with the spirit of modernization. The protagonist's in-laws embody all the decaying characteristics associated with the weakening of the Muslim upper classes. Aged Syed Sahib lives in his crumbling, old mansion with an overflowing family of wife, married and unmarried sons and daughters, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, a brood of illegitimate issue belonging to both father and son, managerial staff, domestic servants and dependents of all sorts. Years of idleness and lavish spending have brought the family to near ruin, but it
maintains its illusions of grandeur. Syed Sahib has a pet project at hand, the building of a large, ornate mosque on his grounds that will ensure his place in heaven. The extravagant scheme sucks in so much of the old man's wealth that he periodically has to sell portions of his land to finance it. This causes him no concern, since ensuring his personal well-being in an after-life is more important to him than the worldly needs of his progeny. The only sort of education he tolerates in the house is religious instruction; learning with a utilitarian value he considers fit for only those unpropertied persons outside the genteel class who need to earn a living. Under these circumstances, his elder son, Abdul Malek, is understandably alarmed at the rapid depletion of family property, but the younger son, Abdul Kader (married to Abdullah's sister, Halima), who has taught himself English against his father's commandment, is better equipped to deal with the world. Syed Sahib is devoted to his daughter, Saleha (also Abdullah's wife); he has taught her to be a religious fanatic and refuses to send her to her husband's house, partly because the latter cannot provide her with the comforts she is used to, but more importantly because he considers her life to be too pure and precious to be wasted on mundane preoccupations.

Although an extreme example, Syed Sahib is drawn as being representative of the tottering Muslim aristocrat during the middle phase of British rule in India. As a foil to him is created the character of Meer Sahib, also of genteel origin, but revolutionary in outlook. Instead of living off his land, Meer Sahib engages in diverse commercial activities, not the least of which is money-lending, an economic pursuit strictly forbidden in Islam. The reason why he decides to do something so explicitly un-Islamic is a philanthropic one. Most Hindu moneylenders demand an exorbitant interest on their loans and when poor peasants fail to make payment, their lands, homes and every thing else they possess become forfeit. Early in the novel, we meet an old farmer, Madan Ghazi, who in his better days has spent so much at a son's
wedding that he has run into a severe debt. His fertile lands and the fine location of his homestead, on a prominence by the side of a river, have long been envied by his prosperous neighbours and now his debtor loses no time to try and turn him out of his property. Madan dies from the shock of displacement and humiliation while his son, Sadek, quickly swims across the river to Meer Sahib's house to seek his assistance. The latter repays the loan instantly and rescues Madan's family from destitution. Meer Sahib does other kind deeds with his "ill-earned" money, like financing the education of young men who get no support from their own families. He is an inspiration to these youths who desire a change in their lives. On the pretext of usury, but actually because of his disruptive influence on the younger generation, he is shunned by all the conservative Muslim families, many of whom are directly related to him. The plot of Abdullah is basically a series of struggles between the two opposing forces of progress and reactionary conservatism.

Abdullah and Abdul Kader confront one by one, the several vices corroding the very foundations of Muslim society: class consciousness; sloth; extravagance and display; irrationality; prejudice and envy. They obtain a secular education and a college degree; accept government employment; consort freely with people of all classes, cultures and religions; try to educate their women; practice thrift and help others. When Halima suddenly contracts pneumonia, the two young men (brother and husband) have to fight a veritable war with Syed Sahib to take her out of purdah to be examined by a doctor. They finally have to remove her to the apartment of the kind Hindu doctor who takes charge of her treatment. Halima's life is saved because her father-in-law does not love her and gives up resistance out of disgust, but when Saleha experiences difficulties at childbirth, the doting father refuses medical assistance until the very end and causes her to die. Towards the close of the novel, Abdul Kader too dies of tuberculosis, leaving his wife and children in Abdullah's care. Abdullah himself takes Maleka, a widowed protege of Meer Sahib, for a second
wife and becomes custodian of the latter's vast property. The events of Abdullah are sparse and unremarkable; what gives the novel substance are descriptions of social abuse and the comments, arguments, elucidations and instructions offered by the reformist characters to rectify them.

There was much to deplore in the existing condition of Muslim society. Shorn of political power and bereft of a social purpose, old families wallowed in idleness and empty display. They also liked to live in the past because that was where they found acknowledgement of their social rank, accomplishment and power. Consequently, they resisted all kinds of progressive change, and used religion as the most potent excuse for ideological stasis. Islamic cultural identity had to be dissociated from such a self-defeatist attitude. Reason had to be employed to distinguish between what was truly required of the Islamic faith and what were in fact derivations and corruptions of the faith. Progressive Muslims like Sir Syed Ahmad refused to accept the narrow view of religion "that truth and right conduct were already fully revealed and recorded and that it was merely the responsibility of men and governments to ensure that that truth was protected and enforced." For the youthful Muslim intelligentsia that grew under their tutelage, religion functioned not as a spiritual code but as a distinguishing feature of cultural identity, replete with unmistakably visible signs, to be displayed as badges with pride. In A Passage to India, Aziz, Hamidullah and the Nawab Bahadur are all seen thus to wear their religious identity like a sign, uniting contrary drives towards modernization and religious conservatism, until open war descends on the rival communities in the form of the trial, at which time they withdraw completely into strategic rejection. Forster's novel places Muslim India's impulse for modernization as signalling its approximation to western culture, and not independently as a specific need for the community itself. That is why, when the short-lived illusion of fraternity between the two communities (allegorized in the Aziz-Fielding friendship) is rudely dispelled by
the trial in Chandrapore, the Muslim characters are made to renounce Anglo-India with no alternative programme of their own for social reform. For the real Muslim leaders of colonial India, considerations of reform and identity were inextricably conjoined. As a necessary corollary to this, their combination of progressive and reactionary drives is reflected unerringly in the bold reformist position taken by all the prominent, Muslim fiction-writers of the time. Far from accepting the assumption that Islam stands in the way of progress, Wadud and Najibur Rahman insist on displaying a purified version of Islam, purged of the extraneous limbs and aberrations that had grown around the faith. While *Anwara* is a general tribute to Islamic piety, established through the actions of two exemplary characters, Nurul Islam and Anwara, *Abdullah* addresses itself to several specific problems which led to the degeneration of Muslim society at the time. The author takes several approaches to present a balanced and enlightened view of Islam, conducive to social progress. First, he advocates understanding of religious precepts instead of blind observance. Second, he separates in unequivocal terms what is categorically required in Islam from self-motivated derivations of the faith. Third, he encourages reconsideration of religious canons that might have served well in the past but are not beneficial in present circumstances.

When Abdullah tries to instruct his mother about taking an enlightened view of religion, she flares up against western education: "This is what comes of learning English. It teaches one to argue and not follow the shariat" (*Abdullah*, p. 6). What a deferential Muslim writer like Kazi Emdadul Haque tries to demonstrate through his novels is that one can be *more*, rather than less, devout with reason and common sense. He shows that aged and febrile exponents of orthodox Islam display a negative attachment to religion; they assert their faith by rejecting what is alien to their ideology, instead of positively embracing the teachings of Islam. The newer generation thinks positively and searches out only the primary dictates of their
religion. We see other instances where the protagonist applies reason to understand the value of religious experience. Abdullah tries to make his brother-in-law, Abdul Malek, understand that even a holy undertaking like the building of a mosque can be wasteful extravagance, if there is no real need for it:

Abdullah was amazed to hear about the selling of property for the sake of constructing a mosque. He said, "There is already a mosque in the vicinity, belonging to Abdul Khaleque's family. I don't understand why you need to spend so much money on another mosque."

Abdul Malek spoke with a little sigh, "Each man acts for his own hereafter, brother; that mosque serves the purpose of none other than he who built it; it will do no good for your after-life or mine."

Abdullah replied, "It is superfluous to have a second mosque within range of the aazan sounded from an existing mosque. I don't believe that such works serve a devotional purpose." (Abdullah, p. 29)

Not only does the protagonist's argument come from a base of solid common sense, it is further consolidated by knowledge of established religious guidelines. Learning to recognize what is meaningful necessarily leads to rejection of what is not.

An exploitative practice that developed particularly among Indian Muslims was the veneration of certain families believed to be particularly chosen by God to preach Islam and intercede for the salvation of less worthy practitioners of the faith. These holy families gathered a host of devoted followers, sometimes very wealthy ones, and lived entirely on the tributes collected from the latter. We are told at the very start of the novel Abdullah that the protagonist's father was one such venerated social parasite:

Waliullah was born in the Peer family of Peerganj. In the past they had followers in many villages all around Peerganj and so had lived like nawabs. But now, the number of these followers having gradually dwindled to a few homesteads only, their circumstances were greatly reduced. (Abdullah, p. 1)
All members of such families grew up regarding themselves as "chosen" and felt no shame for their parasitical existence — except of course Abdullah. After his father dies, he refuses to support himself on what he believes is nothing better than "a begging business." His mother is not ready to give up such an easy means of income:

[His] mother complained, "Fye, son, you should not speak in this manner. Your elders have all done this. Is there a more blessed job to be done than teaching those who do not understand?

"Yes, surely this is a blessed vocation, but it cannot be blessed to accept money for it. In fact, it is just the opposite."

"[The followers] are pleased to make these offerings, it is not wrong my son. Such ways exist in all countries and among all races; -- why, do not Hindus have similar customs?

"So what, if they do? Just because others do certain things, mother, there is no reason why we should, too. And really, this Peer-Muridi business is learned from Hindu priest-craft, for our Prophet has personally forbidden us to take money for preaching religion." (Abdullah, pp. 5-6)

The author makes an implicit appeal here to his readers to distinguish between practices that are truly Islamic and those false accretions that have come to besmirch the clarity of Islam. Not only does he reject a corrupt but extremely popular social practice; he also establishes the work-ethics to be an integral part of Islamic teaching.

Even sound religious precepts need to be reconsidered from time to time in the light of changing social requirements; or else they end up doing more harm than good to people. The social ostracization suffered by Meer Sahib is a case in point:

The two groups of people among whom the money-lending business thrived most of all were the Muslim middle-class gentlefolk and impecunious farmers. Such people lived in abundance in Rasulpur, and Hindu money-lenders were swelled up with profit; and yet, Meer Sahib, despite his low rate of interest, could not make his business prosper in that region, for a couple of reasons. Firstly, the upper class individuals in the area were all his relatives, and consequently his ardent well-wishers; and so, they chose to ruin themselves by borrowing money at heavy interest rates from Hindu money-lenders, rather than encourage Meer Sahib's usury and send him to hell. Secondly, they used their age-old and still persisting dominance over
the peasants to convince the latter that whoever, being Muslim, took interest was a sinner and whoever, being Muslim, had a dealing with such a one was likewise a sinner. And that is why it was a grievous transgression to enter his house or to invite him to one's own feasts. Since usury is not considered an offence in the Hindu religion, it could not be wrong to have transactions with them, at times of dire need. (Abdullah, pp. 59-60)

This is a most ill-advised use of logic if there ever was one and is motivated entirely by jealousy. Abdullah admires the undogmatic morality of Meer Sahib, and sees no discord in it with the true spirit of Islam. When his father was alive and paying for his college education, Abdullah used to have ambitious dreams, "but now, he who might have become a magistrate or at least a local attorney, had little chance of obtaining a job of any sort" (Abdullah, p. 7). Disdaining compromise with his ideal of honest work, he leaves college a few months before his graduation, resolving to appear for the examination privately, at a later date. His moral insistence on self-help, his patience through bleak times and his unwavering religious faith earn him a decent livelihood, and the respect of all and sundry. There can be doubt in the reader's mind that Abdullah is meant to be an educative reading experience for the contemporary Muslim youths and their families, but social reform is the not the only issue here. A further point is unequivocally made and that is, Islam can become a vital instrument of progress. By strengthening and inspiring believers from within, Islam can increase the drive for action and self-improvement.

Several other ills of the degenerate Muslim society are traced to practices that are in no way Islamic. Prominent among these are class consciousness and religious bigotry. Syed Sahib adamantly defends these vices against all humanistic and rational appeals. When Abdullah suggests removing his sister, Halima, to Akbar Munshi's home in the town of Barihati, in order to secure better medical treatment for her, the old man gets livid with fury, "What! Akbar Munshi's house? When have they been our kind that I will send my daughter-in-law to his place? Have two pages of English
learning wiped out all your wisdom? How could you even consider taking her there?” (Abdullah, p. 200). On another occasion, he bursts into a rage on discovering that the new Imam who had just led the prayers at a mosque came from a family of serfs: 

"Huh! What a scholar! . . . For fourteen generations, his forefathers have carried around our shoes for us, and will he now stand before a congregation, and do you expect me to perform my namaaz at the back of this fellow?" (Abdullah, p. 220). The rest of the congregation, mostly made up of the unpretentious middle-class, is offended by his crass remarks. One of them boldly challenges the patrician's stance: 

"Syed Sahib, you are being exceedingly unjust. According to our Book, there is no high or low in Muslim society; besides this is a house of God . . . " (Abdullah, p. 221). When the mortified Imam decides not to officiate in that mosque any more, Abdullah personally brings him back with apologies and a most cordial invitation to share his feast on Eid day. Another of his honoured guests is the Hindu doctor, Debnath Sarkar, whose professional care and human kindness gives back Halima's life.

Against a general climate of intense hatred and jealousy between the Hindu and Muslim communities (the novel is set during the turbulent time of the first partition of Bengal, which was welcomed by the Muslims and vehemently opposed by the Hindus), Abdullah and Debnath demonstrate the civilizing influence of a good education. The former, being a school teacher himself, tries to inculcate in his pupils the same spirit of tolerance and fellow-feeling:

I pray to God that you grow up to be truly educated, be real human beings who cease to hate each other; so Hindus and Muslims can regard one another as their kin. Remember this, dear boys,-- I have said this before and I will say it again. Never think of Hindus and Muslims as being separate. Every ill, every suffering, in this country comes from this enmity. (Abdullah, p. 252)

The students, who belong to both communities, come to visit Abdullah as a team and show that they have learned their lesson well. We also see close friendship among Hindu and Muslim youths in Najibur Rahman's Anwara. Abbas, Khadem, Ganesh,
Tilak, Karim and Samsher are much older; they are ignorant school drop-outs, and the spoilt sons of rich, careless parents. In no part of the novel is it hinted that any one community may have a bad influence on the other, the dissolute lifestyle of the above characters being squarely attributed to lack of education. This group happens to be most irreligious, but even deeply religious persons learn acceptability of alien ideas and beliefs from education. Anwara is a village girl brought up in genteel seclusion, but she too is made an ideal example of enlightened religiosity. She prays five times a day with unfailing regularity, but this does not prevent her from pursuing a widely variant course of secular study, on her own. We are told that she has studied history, geography and health science, Michael Modhushudan Dutt's famous epic Meghnadbadh Kavya (The Slaying of Meghnad), and Sitar Banobash (Sita's Exile) from the Ramayana, and diverse poems. The inclusion of literary texts on Hindu mythology in Anwara's reading list is obviously meant to indicate her freedom from religious bigotry. Nurul Islam, like Anwara, is devout (the novel explicitly engages them in prayer on more than a dozen different occasions) but completely free from religious prejudice and superstition. Even in novels where a religious hero with an explicit civilizing mission cannot be identified, a general, diffuse tone of personal piety mixed in with the drive for social improvement inspires the text as a whole. Thus, Shah Golam of Meer Mosharraf Hossain's Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha is a progressive rebel, without being morally fastidious, but he acts out a societal lesson parallel to the novel's religious grain, instead of contradicting it. He is the revolutionary guide who leads to freedom from imperial oppression, while the Islamic values entrenched in the two pious women, Daulatunnessa and Maina, establish a purgative alternative to imperial corruption. Abdul Wadud's Nadibakkhey adopts a muted, secular ethics of economic progress, with the blessings of traditional Islamic piety, although progress or freedom is firmly obstructed in familial relationships.
The fiction of Bengali Muslim writers of the British colonial period are thus seen to be wholly receptive to the progressive ideals of education and free enterprise, even though they modify them within the context of some tenets of Islam. They are poised to expose the ignorance, superstition and selfish indolence that had crept into traditional Muslim society. They also encourage an openness towards individuals and ideas belonging to other societies; and yet, these are deferential texts, because there can be no mistake about the supremacy they accord to the Islamic faith. When they portray a genial Anglo-Indian official or an uprejudiced Hindu professional, it is to acknowledge personal virtue wherever it may exist, and not to offer him as being representative of a superior culture. These works contextualize the excellence of Islam as a given, from which takes off their criticism of its aberrations. The scattered reams of contrary values we see promoted in them are intended to consolidate the rock of Islamic religious conviction, and not to challenge it. Because these texts negotiate with an uncomfortable reality, with arbitrary alien systems as well as decrepit elements within the binds of tradition, they are constrained to set up a heavily mediated schema of perspectives. The narrative persona dances a tactful pirouette between the narrow spaces separating one set of values from another. Emphasis may differ from one novel to another, but as many as six or seven such finely graded perspectives can be gleaned from the general selection. These are: the introspective religious idealist, like Daulatunnessa and Anwara; the inflexible champion of religious institution, learned in old ways, misguided but sincere, like Saleha and Abdullah's mother; the ignorant, unprincipled and self-motivated exploiter of religious sentiment like Syed Sahib and Abdul Malek; the inspired reformer-cum-traditionalist like Abdullah and Nurul Islam; the irreligious sensualist like Abbas; the giddy, undiscriming modernist thrown out of cultural orbit by a blind imitation of western liberalism, like some invitees at Hamida's feast; uninformed believers manipulated by the socially powerful through appeals to religious sentiment, like...
simple God-fearing peasants. The didactic purposes of these texts include setting up
the first for emulation, persuading the second, discrediting the third, locating
inspiration in the fourth, weeding out the fifth, shaming the sixth into retraction, and
educating the seventh. The opposition to corrupted elements of traditional Muslim
society comes from a vantage-point of absolute affiliation to the ideal faith; its self-
conscious dialogue with conflicting philosophical questions, and its willingness to
concede measured steps for fear of losing ground completely, buttress Islam
effectively for future survival. Abdullah turns its discursive-critical gaze mostly
inward, intending reform of Muslim society. Anwara perches its defensive-literary
mechanism facing outward, accepting religiosity as an ideal, without question and
without deviation, and cautiously attacking secularism as an incomplete world-view.

It is evident from more than one remark quoted above that most of these
fictional stalwarts of traditional Muslim culture blame English education for turning
the younger generation argumentative and contentious. Najibur Rahman
demonstrates that this does not necessarily have to be so, through his characterization
of Nurul Islam, but he also warns his readers about the danger of young enthusiasts
misapplying the values of western education to discredit traditional religious belief.
The reader can surmise how serious a problem the author perceives this to be, from
the ponderous five-and-a-half pages exposition on Islamic ideology and practice that
he inserts in his otherwise dramatically fast-paced novel. The episode which gives
occasion for it is a big feast held at the house of Halima and Amjad, where the
village-bred Anwara comes in contact with a group of citified people, eager to prove
themselves modern. The setting is well-contrived through the colourful conversation
of a group of women preening themselves on their exact social importance (being
wives, daughters and sisters of men belonging to different ranks and professions),
where Anwara, being the wife of a mere clerk, is placed by general consensus at the
lowest rung of the social hierarchy. The dramatic tone quickly changes from light
humour to heavy didacticism, as the younger members of this group begin to make
derisive comments about namaaz and other religious observances in Islam. They
opine that Anwara's long prayers are nothing but a ploy to attract people's attention:

Constable's wife: Does it take so long to say the Maghrib
prayers?
Lawyer's daughter: I don't know, sister. Why, we say our prayers,
too! But we don't like to make such a public
show of our devotion.
Deputy-Magistrate's wife: What else is Namaaz good for except to
impress others with an outward show?
Zamindar's wife: What are you saying!
Deputy-Magistrate's wife: That is exactly what I
think. Our Magistrate Sahib has a double M. A..
He says that Namaaz and Roza exist in people's
minds. The real thing is to keep one's mind
turned towards God. He also says that the
purpose of Namaaz and Roza is to purify the
heart. So whoever has purified himself through
learning has no need for other kinds of prayer.

Zamindar's wife: Our children are ruining themselves nowadays
with their English education. (Anwara, p. 132)

This last comment, voiced by the only elderly woman present, is reminiscent of
similar invectives made by parental figures in Abdullah, but here it is made to express
genuine and reasonable concern, instead of prejudice. Although western education is
beneficial in itself, the tool of logical reasoning that it hands over to its pupils is seen
to be ignorantly misused against religious faith. The author sees the need to arm
against the attractions of liberal humanism, not because it is fallible but precisely
because it is so much more obviously acceptable to the modern psyche. It is a greater
challenge to reconcile modern liberalism and humanistic values with Islamic belief,
than to deny correspondences altogether. Anwara's subsequent defense of Islam,
which the author equates with holy jihad, is a meant to be a metaphorical battle
waged internally by all believers to defend faith against the easy allure of secularism:

Halima: Defamation of Namaaz and Roza! Who has done this?
Anwara: I came away immediately on hearing the first person
speak.

Halima: You might have protested and tried to make them understand.

Anwara: Protest could have caused discord.

Halima: It wasn't right for you to walk away fearing a conflict. When you see a blind person walking towards a pit, you should take her hand and put her back on the right track. Also, it was rude of you to ignore the company.

Anwara: I understand that, but how can I have a jihad on such a happy, festive occasion. (Anwara, p. 133)

Halima persuades her friend to return to the guests and give them a lesson on Islam. Anwara's teaching takes the form of a debate; she quotes, one by one, all the customary arguments used against practising Islamic rites, and refutes them methodically. Her counter-arguments may not impress the modern reader as much as they do her immediate audience, who instantly re-convert to a position of total submission. The issue is not how well Anwara answers to these criticisms. The implication for Najibur Rahman's reading public is that it is not enough for Muslims to be devout at heart. Muslims are an imperilled community in British India, politically dwarfed by colonial subjection and also ideologically discredited. The need of the hour is to come forward and defend Islam against calumny, and present a united front against influences that aim destruction to its very foundations.

The question now is whether Indian Muslims would have moved in this direction of desecularization if they were not displaced from their original locations of self-sufficiency. From their position of dominance under the Mughals, through rigorous subjectification under British rule, they were threatened with the further insecurity of minority presence in a future independent India. To escape what could become permanent devalorization for them, they turned to politicize themselves under a blanket ticket of religiosity. All the influential Muslim leaders, like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who saw modernization as the only way to communal salvation, nevertheless hitched a religious programme to their political agenda; otherwise, they could not
hope to make an adequate impact on their followers. P. Hardy, in *The Muslims of British India*, makes note of this strategic appeal to a wide, sometimes even wary, audience:

> That the Muslim upper classes were able to enter into *rapport* with other Indian Muslims was made possible because Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan and others like him conducted the conversation among Muslims in an Islamic religious idiom. However obnoxious some of their doctrines might be to the orthodox *ulama*, the latter could at least recognize that the dialogue between them and Sir Saiyid and his emulators was being conducted in the same language of Islamic conviction. Muslims were not to surrender their souls to the modern world or to lose their distinct religious personality.®

Not all Muslim leaders were interested in modernization; but modernist or conservative, all were reformist in character. They intended to preserve Islamic identity either against internal abuses or against external influences, or both. There were several such reformist groups, and their policies and programmes reflected various shades of opinion. In his article, "British Asian Muslims and the Rushdie Affair," Tariq Modood identifies two prominent groups, the Deobandis and the Barelvis, as having roots in the reformist movement of Shah Waliullah but turning in two separate directions in post-1857 British India. The Barelvis, who took their name from Riza Khan Bareilly, were "part of the tradition of Sufi mysticism and Indian folk-religion"® and were generally cooperative with the British government; the Deobandis, on the other hand, were regressively cautious:

> The Deobandis, taking their name from a school founded in Deoband, near Delhi, came to focus primarily on education and on keeping alive in the seminaries Muslim theological and juristic doctrines. They saw politics as an unequal struggle and tried to be as independent as possible of the British state. Their anti-Britishness took the form of withdrawal and non-cooperation rather than of active confrontation but they took great care to shut out not only British and Hindu influences but also Shia.®

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This excessive preoccupation with religious doctrine and dogma came not necessarily from a spiritual craving but from anxiety of extinction? The dislocation of Indian Muslims from positions of political and social prominence was so rapid that they felt they had to put up blind barricades to safeguard their very survival. Only religion seemed to have a sufficiently powerful and meaningful appeal to serve as that required barrier.

What was originally simply inert nostalgia and regret for the past gradually developed into an energy that caused diverse individuals and groups to rally around a unifying principle. It was made to produce an impact on the present and the future of the Indian Muslim community. Homi Bhabha comments on the importance of transforming such idle consciousness of the past into creative activity, in his introduction to *The Location of Culture*:

> The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living.

Called upon to build just such a bridge of the 'past-present,' we have seen how Muslim fiction-writers likewise have had to couch their social criticism in properly deferential but self-conscious religious language, carefully converting nostalgia to necessity. Abdullah, the hero of Kazi Emdadul Haque's novel of the same name, wears these distinguishing marks of dress, language and manner with proper consciousness of heritage and also profits professionally from it. He is singled out by the Hindu and Bengali headmaster of the local school, not as any candidate for a teaching job but as a threat and a challenge, an outstanding Muslim applicant qualifying for a government minority quota:

> As soon as Abdullah entered the room, the headmaster stood up from his chair and heartily shook his hands. Then, with wild gestures
and a most contorted [Urdu] pronunciation, he spoke the following words—"Come, Sir, have a seat! Where are you coming from?"

Abdullah replied with great humility—"Sir, I am a Bengali, you can speak Bengali with me."

The headmaster lowered his head and glanced at Abdullah over the spectacles balanced on his nose, and said -- "Oh-ho! So, you are a Bengali?

Well, well, your dress made me think that you had probably come from Delhi or Lahore, or at least from Dhaka or Murshidabad. It is only men from the Nawab families in these regions who happen to wear such clothes!"

Abdullah remarked with a smile -- Why, Muslims everywhere tend to put on *achkan* and pyjamas ...

"Why no, Sir, I have found that [Muslims] here do not even bother to wear a cap. But then, these people are... er... low-born, of peasant stock; where are they going to find such fine clothes?"

Abdullah agreed, "So it may be, but all genteel [Muslims] dress in this manner ..." (Abdullah, pp. 137-8)

We learn from this conversation that there was an emergent generation of educated urban elites, beneficiaries both of traditional class and culture and of modern English instruction, who deliberately chose to parade a specific physical look and demeanour, identifiable with Islam. Commenting on the emergence of a new group of young men trained by Sir Syed Ahmad's Aligarh College, Hardy says:

Islam for them was a matter of cultural rather than of religious conviction. Whatever the founder's real intentions, Aligarh became an institution for coming to terms with the British-created world on a footing of equality, rather than for questioning the world from burning religious conviction.10

Those who did not have the required resource or skill to bargain with the British government for privileges could be as religious as they chose, unseen and unheeded.

This deliberate, systematized process of desecularization, that began as Muslim India's search for a potent identity, also gave birth to a divisiveness in its vision for the future. It injected contradictory impulses towards progress (held

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synonymous with modern western culture) and reactionary stasis (associated with classical Islam) into its political agenda, a conflict which gained such destructive violence over the years that it exists today as a major threat to the Muslim self-image in South Asia. We see in them a conflict of two parallel apperceptions of the history of their culture, closely analogous to Fredric Jameson's view of the synchronic and diachronic aspects of history, as formulated in The Political Unconscious:

Above and beyond the problem of periodization and its categories, which are certainly in crisis today, but which would seem to be as indispensable as they are unsatisfactory for any kind of work in cultural study, the larger issue is that of the representation of History itself. There is in other words a synchronic version of the problem: that of the status of an individual "period" in which everything becomes so seamlessly interrelated that we confront either a total system or an idealistic "concept" of a period; and a diachronic one, in which history is seen in some "linear" way as the succession of such periods, stages or moments.\(^{11}\)

For Indian Muslims in British India, progress and reaction in turn became both synchronically and diachronically justified. The specific time frame occupied by their struggles to establish their nationalistic rights gave authorization to whatever progressive measure was required for its success, even if this meant a compromise with values generally perceived as being opposed to Islam; the need then arose to disavow that there was in fact such antagonism between Islam and progressive ideals. The reactionary impulse towards Islamic symbolism as a means of asserting identity can be said to have been determined by the synchronic need of a particular era; and the diametrically opposed, rejection of Islamic symbolism in the pre-independence nationalistic struggle of Bangladesh proves that it could indeed be so. Finally, a balanced agenda of needful progress and defensive reaction asked to be diachronically absorbed into a timeless concept of Islam, one that would endure through the specificities of successive periods.
For such a view, however, religion has to be taken in a very wide sense, considering what it "allows" and not what it "requires." The new Muslim intelligentsia that evolved in British India, motivated to empower their community as well as emancipate themselves, subordinated religion to a politics of reform and so they were able to resolve the hidden paradox in the progressive reactionism of their dual programme. When they advocated a self-conscious religious presence, the audience they meant to impact was an uncomprehending, hostile 'other' who had to be made cognizant of Muslims as a political entity. Subsequently, as the birth of a separate homeland for Indian Muslims removed the need for such a segregated cultural statement, Islamic idioms ceased to function as politicized signs and became more and more literal in their application to a believing audience. The reason why the conflict between progressive secularism and an Islamic identity intensified after the end of colonial rule is because the intellectual elites of the independent nations of the sub-continent absorbed more indiscriminately than ever before the progressive ideas of the West, and learned to renounce the idioms of traditional Islam. In so doing, they left a powerful repository of psychic and emotional drives in the hands of less educated, less capable and less accommodating political opportunists, to be wielded as a weapon of terror over an ever-increasing poverty-stricken, illiterate population. However, the enlightened Muslim leaders of British India were able to reconcile the opposite impulses of self-advancement in a modern, technological world and a defensive, cultural reactionism to the west, well enough to project a convincing and acceptable notion of nationhood to the departing British rulers. Sudhir Chandra perspicuously argues that it is quite possible for these two apparently contradictory impulses to be temporarily reconciled in the nationalistic consciousness:

There is admittedly a schematic simplification in this description of the modernity-tradition polarity. During its development, especially after it shed its earlier nomenclature of "Westernization", the modernization approach has acquired the sophistication to recognize the complexity of actual human and social situations. It is, for example, willing to
recognize the coexistence of change and persistence and realize that the same person, group of persons or movements may be both progressive and revivalist, reformist and reactionary, secular and communal, and so on.\textsuperscript{12}

The above characterization applies wonderously to the enlightened Muslim leadership of colonial India. These men embraced an Islamic aesthetic, and an Islamic discourse, but could stand back from total immersion in the Islamic point of view to contemplate the practical advantages of westernization and peaceful coexistence with the Hindu majority of India. Their rational and reformist outlook contrasts sharply with the unenlightened, regressive stance adopted by militant Muslim leaders in the present world.

Islam's denial of kinship with the west resides in the insistence that religion and worldly success do not need to be separated. P. Hardy too identifies such an opposition as the essential schism separating Islamic ideology from the west:

Westerners were successful because they were adaptable and dynamic and had learned to separate the laws of the State from the laws of the church. Law for them was a social convenience and as human needs and intentions changed, so could the laws. In the century since the French Revolution Western man, at least in Protestant countries, had assumed to an increasing extent that social problems were soluble by the application of will and intelligence to the social environment. Religion could only inculcate a spirit; to prescribe a detailed and mandatory code of conduct was beyond its sphere. Such assumptions were against the spirit of classical Islam, because they introduced a dualism into the universe and denied the omnipotence of God.\textsuperscript{13}

There are several reasons why Muslims pursue such incompatible values into an unworkable marriage. The most apparent reason is the fear that worldly success without religion will corrode social values. As perceived by Muslims, an individual's complete autonomy from religion cannot be judged simply as a private matter; it also weakens those moral rivets that determine socialized behaviour. There is as much fear in them of becoming too rational, utilitarian and individualistic through
cooperation with the British as there is fear in the western consciousness of becoming indolent and sensually decadent like the Muslims. This fear colours the characterization of Mrs. Kenney in Meer Mosharraf Hossain's *Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha*. His unflattering portrait of Mrs. Kenny, doubly repelling against the idealized portrait of Daulatunnessa, undermines the balanced representation of culture he achieves with his male characters. Since women are customarily cast as defenders of social values, Mosharraf Hossain's depiction of these two women can be read as direct, conscious comments on their respective cultures. He makes Mrs. Kenney epitomize the selfishness of what he understands to be western womanhood, to drive home his point. While Daulatunnessa allows her husband to squander her own fortune for his selfish pleasure, Mrs. Kenney evaluates her marriage only in terms of what it can offer to herself. When Kenney sends her to England to facilitate his secret plans about Maina, she parts from him joyfully. However, once there she discovers that she cannot live without the luxuries she has become used to in India:

> Mrs. Kenney felt great annoyance from the moment she set foot on the soil of her birthplace. There, no hand was lifted or head bent in salutation. No forehead touched the floor in reverent salaam. No one stepped aside for her. Rather they brushed past with no acknowledgement of her importance. There were no servants, no cook, no bearer, no sweeper. What shame! All jobs had to be done with one's own hands. (*Udasin*, p. 91)

She decides to leave immediately: "It does not befit me to stay in such a harsh country. I shall leave as quickly as I can and never consider coming here until my dying day" (*Udasin*, p. 94). Her letter to her husband conveys a beautiful lie: "Separation is too painful. My lord, I cannot bear it any longer" (*Udasin*, p. 94). Husband and wife deceive each other in their own ways. Mrs. Kenney can use her charms to manipulate other men, too. When she comes to learn that the Hindu zamindar, Pyari Shundari, has made a plan to kidnap her, she invites the local magistrate to her house in anticipation. She adorns herself for the occasion, wines
and dines him lavishly, and gives him every beguiling attention. True enough, when
the attack does take place the same night, the magistrate's eye-witness report of the
incident reflects the lady's plan to perfection. The magistrate makes no effort to verify
any evidence, whatsoever. Mrs. Kenney's actions are dictated by reason and
practicality, the same values that form the cornerstone of western culture.

An alternative and better world-view is presented through the values of Muslim
characters. Daulatunnessa shuns worldly success, and rules her life by the precepts of
her religion. She endures in silence the injustices of her faithless husband, and
refuses to compromise in any form her own faith to him. Undoubtedly, this is an
extreme form of idealism, easily interpreted by western standards of behaviour as
weakness and lack of proper pride. The author views this outward defeat as self-
purification and moral victory over injustice; he goes so far in his idealization of his
mother as to make blasphemous comparisons with the Prophet's wives: Bibi Khadija
(who had given herself to other husbands before she married the Prophet) and Bibi
Ayesha (who had once come under suspicion, though mistakenly) and his daughter,
Bibi Fatima (who had expressed jealousy at her husband's remarriage). The author
makes her an example of selflessness, to demonstrate that in Indian society,
particularly the Muslim *zenana*, women reconcile their spirits to the limitations of
their existence by acceptance of just such an idealism. Their truth is to the ideal, to
the principle, or to the institution, and not to the undeserving partner in marriage.
Despite the outward injustices, defeats and sufferings brought on society by
intitutionalizing the code of submission, as opposed to the west's code of domination,
Muslims wish to preserve the honour that goes with the sacrifice. Najibur Rahman's
*Anwara* presents a clear, down-the-line dichotomy between moral, compassionate and
religious characters and immoral, selfish and irreligious characters. The villainous
characters, i.e. the two step-mothers, their conniving brothers, Khadem and his
friends, Nurul's corrupt office-staff and Anwara's father are never shown to pray or
indicate in any way that they have what can be called a religious sensibility. Instead, they are ruled entirely by considerations of material gain, selfish pleasure and vanity. They are all clever and capable and yet there is no crime, including murder and abduction, to which they will not stoop to indulge their greed, either for gold, or for sensual pleasure, or for power over others, or simply for vanity. They are disquieting examples of what can happen through the single-minded worship of reason and materialism, the driving forces behind western progress. Hence the need for religion to pull back the reins, when moral and humanistic values seem about to be destroyed. Whereas Kazi Emdadul Haque's Abdullah shows that it is possible to be blindly religious, and at the same time greedy and inhumane, Anwara simplistically and categorically demonstrates that religion causes excellent moral behaviour. Hence the refusal to banish Islam from worldly occupations, and fear of the entirely secular culture of the west.

Islam's political advantage has always depended on the human component, having the fastest growing conversion rate in the modern world, and religious discourse is one of the strongest means of moving vast numbers of people to act in unison. The spectacle of Hajj affords the most convincing demonstration of this truth. Conversely, the appeal of western civilization is in the freedom it allows to individuals to act against the common will. It is able to cope with the social pressures derived from diversity because of its rich material resources and efficient technology. Akeel Bilgrami holds the lack of industrial progress responsible for the high political profile maintained by religion in Islamic countries:

The historical antecedents, which we sum up in such omnibus words as 'The Reformation,' and which might have made possible the withdrawal of religion into the more private realm, are missing in Islam; and that in turn is due to, or at any rate tied to, an absence of an all-round industrial revolution in Islamic countries.
Economically and educationally backward regions must compel a certain degree of social conformity, if only to afford the most economic distribution of scarce resources. Other social grievances can on occasion be mediated by religious sentiment. Jameson discusses instances in history where there has been a "displacement of emphasis" from the central causes of revolutionary struggle to religious self-definition, even in a western country, viz. "the seventeenth-century English revolution, in which the various classes and class fractions found themselves obliged to articulate their ideological struggles through the shared medium of a religious master code." The orthodox Islamic vision of society has this same homogenizing tendency in regard to believers. It tends to overlook pluralities of culture and thought, expecting identical response among all Muslims to any given experience. Islamic movements, claiming to be "colour-blind," and "class-blind" too by the same token, tend to dissociate themselves from groups fighting against specific social evils, e.g. racial and class oppression. Islam's sexual conservatism and regressionism places its mainstream politics against feminist struggle, although many scholars like Fatima Mernissi, are coming forward now to reinterpret Islam from a feminist perspective and to establish an alternative or parallel ideology. Islamic believers incorporating, as they do, a whole spectrum of cultures and experiences, the Islamic world is beset with such contradictory impulses. To the stark necessity of governing such a diverse community of people through the encouragement of conformity can be added the egocentric demand of maintaining an opposite front in relation to the West. Muslims promote desecularization out of a logical fear that they may not be able to compete with the West on a wholly secular front.
CHAPTER 8
BETWEEN DEFERENCE AND DISAVOWAL:
SITUATING THE COLONIAL TEXT OF EMBARRASSMENT

The singularity of belief, the duality of inter-cultural perception, and the plurality of disbelief are each reflected in the nature of the fictional texts that give them form. If we take the relative complexity of narrative and conceptual points of view to constitute one of the principal criteria of differentiation in the categorizing of fiction, we can identify some essential patterns of deviation among the three kinds of texts in observance here: the traditional Muslim text (with a penchant for pre-colonial values); the Anglo-Indian colonial text and the Muslim post-colonial text. Singleminded faith produces a unity of perception that is perhaps not able to comprehend a multi-faceted experience; and so we see that the deferential texts of conforming Muslims discussed above tend to project a monolithic vision of society, despite their desire to unite the contrary values of tradition and modernity. Formed in the tradition of the social, didactic 18th century English novel, they subordinate realistic portrayal to the promotion of religious values. Cutting across the diverse range of the nineteenth and twentieth century colonial novels, whether realism, impressionism or symbolism, is the device of the double point of reference. The acquisitive texts of Anglo-Indian writers are necessarily bifurcated, first into the visible mirroring of an alternate culture, and second, into a disguised sub-text of cultural conquest. Finally, in texts of disavowal written by a dissenting Muslim like Salman Rushdie, the presence of dis-belief as a core factor in literalizing living experiences initiates an unending proliferation of images, sustainable only by the
ancillary art of negation. Here all the major attributes of the modernist novel--
breakdown of faith, play on language, inconclusiveness, etc. combine to articulate the
special quality of post-colonial dislocation. All three modes of fiction use
colonization as a figurative base, but they vary in the ways they make political
subjugation express the tortured relationship between aesthetic freedom and mental
servitude. The colonial Indian novels equate their religious rhetoric with nationalistic
and revolutionary drives, and thereby with the notion of freedom. However, they
show little awareness of the loss of conceptual freedom incurred within the
unquestioning precincts of religious faith. Anglo-Indian fiction traces the political
subjection of Indian Muslims to their own entrapment in self-debilitating desires,
conveniently overlooking the history of several centuries of Muslim political
ascendancy, and their own covert participation in the play of desire. Rushdie's tragi-
comic novels, repudiating religious faith, place freedom not so much in any particular
ideology but in repetitive acts of disavowal and renewal that prevent any form of
tyrranny from settling in.

Determining the text of deferential Muslim literature is explicit
acknowledgement of the sacred inviolability of the revealed Quranic text. All four
Bengali novels discussed above do obeisance, in various degrees, to both the benign
and the admonitory presence of God, as envisioned by Islam. Of these, Anwara is the
most openly celebratory of religion, administering quick rewards and punishments to
its characters, in accordance with readily recognizable promises and warnings
extended by Islam, to supplement its elaborate reasoned preaching. Religion takes a
backseat in Nadibakkhey, existing but not intruding into the industrious lives of its
simple-minded peasant characters; prayers and rituals may lend a certain quiet grace
to their days, but their strongest preoccupations are with the unpredictable workings
of nature, the failure of a harvest or the sudden death of livestock. However, since
submission is the keynote of the novel, it can be regarded as Islamic in that sense.
Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha and Abdullah take a mildly rebellious stance, but their contention is with abusive social practices, not with basic religious precepts of Islam. This fixture to an idea, viz. total religious submission, severely circumscribes the fictional world of the novels in question—stifling imagination, curtailing diversity, discouraging individual effort, minimizing choices, and ultimately precluding alternative visions of the world, which is the prime prerogative of art. To affirm that art loses its dynamism when it is employed unimaginatively in the service of religion is not the same as promoting art for art’s sake. It may be cogent to remember here that the Renaissance humanists, Dante and Milton, may have ultimately served the cause of the Christian faith by introducing challenges for its basic tenets; but their creativity was fostered by refreshingly new ways of looking at religion, and not by blind acceptance. Dante presumed to people Heaven, Hell and Purgatory according to his own standard of judgement, setting aside the nature of divine judgement prefigured in religious teachings. Milton’s avowed purpose, to justify the ways of God to man, was quite revolutionary in the context of the times; in fact, the very idea that there should be such a need is blasphemous. Among the four Bengali novels being discussed, Meer Mosharraf Hossain’s work tries occasionally but mildly to strain the limitations of religious doctrine and make an alternative statement of moral value. That boldness of thought undoubtedly contributes to his sudden, creative insights into tragedy.

Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha, Anwara, Nadibakkhey and Abdullah, all invaluable as mirrors for the Muslim society in colonial India, cannot nevertheless be classed as great literature. They do not offer any strikingly novel insight into religion. On the contrary, their features of representation which, developed, might have produced a high degree of fictional realism, have been marred by their blatant descent into religious didacticism. An occasional flash of inspiration perhaps lifts up portions of these texts to artistic excellence, as when Mosharraf Hossain depicts the intense sorrow, despair and horror of betrayal within Maina, which makes her turn away in
contempt, not from her molester but from the husband who gives her up in return for Kenney's favour. She lovingly confides to Jockey's second wife as if she were her own sister, for this husband is not even worth her jealousy:

Sister, you have not understood your husband; I have, since a great many days now. Likewise, I have come to know many others. He will surely come under trial one day. He will come into the hands of that greatest Judge, who rules us all. There is so much to say, but I have no time left. Let me only say this, my sister--do not ever trust your husband.

(Udasin, p. 89)

The frame of the deferential novel and the Islamic code of behaviour it embodies give Maina little scope for action or independent judgement; yet, the certainty with which she denounces her husband just before her death, a time for submission and forgiveness, is nothing short of heroic. The artistry of Nadibakkhey lies in its skillful projection of rural life, ranged like a series of photographic stills, with man and nature in close communion. The novel is deficient in dramatic effects, but the pictorial quality of some of its scenes, with their attention to form and colour and detail, approaches the sensual appeal of painting. There is the happy picture of Lalu returning from the fields at sundown, worn out with toil but smiling and buoyant in step, his rough plough adorned with the water-lilies he has picked for Moti. Also memorable is his silent grieving for her, with his dusty, travel-weary body stretched out on the earthen floor of his hut, bloodshot eyes and matted hair hidden behind the crook of his elbow. The touch of the insightful writer can be observed in Emdadul Haque's abstract recreation in Abdullah of the decaying house of Syed Sahib, with images of stagnation, corruption, ignorance, unreason and ineffectual vanity, symbolizing the disintegrating Muslim aristocracy. There is hardly any concrete description of the place, but the force of suggestion is very strong. Abdullah's hesitant steps in the old mansion, partitioned off into small segments to accommodate its overflowing inhabitants, his disgusted comments about the crowds of smelling, unwashed servants, negligence towards children, slovenly habits of the inmates, their
irrational addictions and taboos, and the general air of sloth, conjure up the picture of a dark, dirty and sprawling house, its very bricks crumbling with age and airless damp. However, these creative successes are few and far between. Anwara, the work with the most transparent religious purpose among the four, has the least show of imaginative spark; it is filled with high drama, often of the melodramatic kind, interspersed by long stretches of unrelieved preaching. The stark singularity of belief that is integral to the Islamic world-view, and which is powerful as spiritual faith, results in the most deadening kind of rigidity when transported to the domain of creative writing. Such singularity of portrayal differs on the one hand from the dual strategies of colonial literature, and from the exhilarating multiplicity of vision proceeding from post-colonial release, on the other.

Confronted with the temporal imperatives of a foreign governance, Muslim writers of colonial India try to recapture through their vision of eternity an alternative frame of meaning, where submission is enjoined only before a transcendental power, and to which the proudest institutions of human power must acknowledge defeat. Since spiritual deference is not demeaning like political servitude, religion provides an antidote to their ailing ego. Not only that, it further brings them the reassurance that worldly power is temporary, and that the English will not triumph forever. So these Muslim writers supplement their rhetorical questioning of power bases with recognition of that highest location of power beyond the overreach of imperialism, which is divine omnipotence. It has been mentioned before that, with recent memory of the Muslim fall from power in Indian politics, Muslim literature during British rule hesitates to align worldly power with inborn human abilities. Compared to the other Muslim writers discussed here, Meer Mosharraf Hossain is sadder and more subtle in his treatment of the transcendental, concentrating on piety as a reward in itself, and reserving the dread omnipotence of God to act out, slowly but unfailingly, divine retaliation for evil ways. However, this does not prevent the narrative of Udasin
Pathiker Moner Katha from playing on the baffling semantics of relational power, for dramatic and ironic effects, as well as to display the workings of hubris in men. When, frightened by Kenney's interest, Maina tries to step back into concealment, the strong man turns himself into a supplicant. Astride his horse, he indulges in a bizarre form of mating dance to lure her into his psychical domain:

Kenny comes before the abode of a poor farmer, and cracks his whip on the horse— but he pulls back the bridle, signalling a halt. The perplexed Oiler is forced to rear up, backstretch and do all the tricks he knows. The clatter of hooves, the rush of the whip, and the "Hut-hut" sounds in Kenny's English voice, cause many to hide and silently watch the antiques of the sahib's horse. Kenney's white eyes, too, begin to move around in search of something, but his eyes cannot see her whom they long to see! His horse stands in the same spot that it had on the first day... Many peasant wives push aside the weave of their matted walls to watch the horse. But that face for which Kenny is about to ruin his blameless, thousand rupees worth horse, does not come within his evil sight today. (Udasin, p. 5)

In the beginning, Kenney's graciousness before Maina is willed submission rather than forced submission, because he is at the height of earthly prominence, and his intention to woo her and tempt her husband with money, rather than carry her away by force, seems the luxurious whim of one who cannot be refused, the largesse of an affectedly magnanimous king. In the end, Kenney's submission is forced by Maina's death, establishing the supremacy of the heavenly ruler.

The story illustrates the limitations of human empowerment in, where the rich, ruthless and unrelenting English landowner, Kenney, is ultimately vanquished by mysterious powers emanating from the lowest of the low within his dominion. He is overcome externally by the combined force of the destitute peasants united by a dubious Shah Golam and broken inwardly by moral rejection from Maina, a woman who has no power to resist him physically. Kenney's defeat is a clear manifestation of poetic justice; the hand of God intervenes to right the wrongs of the world. The very helplessness of the human before the transcendental is what constitutes hope for the
oppressed. Villain though he is, Kenney is a far superior man than the treacherous Jocky, and so Maina's moral battle against him is to be read as the Muslim woman's personal assertion of religious faith, rather than her specific faith to the husband to whom she is linked only by incidental fate. Religious faith is triumph for the omnipotent God but optimism, finally, for the socially and politically downtrodden. By making material success and domination accidental accruements to life, signs of grace easily given and easily taken away, human power sources are shown to be in continual motion and complicated further by internal reversals and subversions. The only fixed referent for power is the divine presence. The desecularized discourse of Islam hence continually defers to an unknown void where human endeavour has to cease and be replaced by faith. This is a repetitive motif, suggesting security, permanence, assurance of the kind that Aziz derives from the ninety-nine names of God, the magic number signifying unchanging circularity and infinity. In all four Bengali novels discussed above, human effort is celebrated to a large extent but in the final analysis, divine providence determines the end. They are informed therefore by the rhetoric of submission, the other name for Islam, whereas western colonial writing is impelled by the rhetoric of action. Western secular discourse presupposes hierarchical patterns of power based on relational merit, where the question of divine presence is considered irrelevant, and triumph is unambiguously translated in human terms.

The deferential novels under discussion have a greater utilitarian than aesthetic value. They demonstrate the psychology of Muslims coming to terms with their subject status under British rule. Religious submission also absolves them from the need to act for themselves; it allows them to rationalize their inaction. Also, as compromises become necessary to survive in this new society, religion is used by reformists to coax people to act, and as they rise to face this challenge of modernity, they search to find a comforting anchor that will hold them back from straying too far.
Only religion can provide a strong enough mooring against the winds of change. Abdullah attacks the fatalism of Islam, illustrating the maxim "God helps those who help themselves;" he shows that Islam can become a partner to progress, instead of being an obstacle to it. This makes the deferential Muslim literature propagandist in character and more so because, in the larger sphere of national politics, it becomes a signature of defiance, and the mark of freedom. The post-colonial sensibility represented by Rushdie dissociates religion from the possibility of freedom. Uncompromising, himself, on the principle of freedom because betrayed by the fact of freedom, Rushdie rejects religion for placing curbs on the freedom of thought and social ethics. Rushdie declares in "Is Nothing Sacred?"

And events in history must always be subject to questioning, deconstruction, even to declaration of their obsolescence. To respect the sacred is to be paralysed by it. The idea of the sacred is quite simply one of the most conservative notions in any culture, because it seeks to turn other ideas -- Uncertainty, Progress, Change -- into crimes.

What Rushdie seems to overlook here is that it was a demand of history that the ideas of "Uncertainty, Progress, Change", capitalized by him as if these were sacrosanct, be re-examined in the context of colonial domination. The concepts of progress and change, signifiers of freedom for the post-colonial mind, actually served to shackle the revolutionary impulses of enchained communities; these were precisely the excuses used by colonialism to compel obedience.

A disavowing Muslim author like Salman Rusdie is caught between his assurance of personal, individual attainment and his inability to escape from the remembered aesthetics of his spiritual belonging. He scorns submission, conformity and acceptance. His value in the canonical field of literary dialogue is ultimately defined by his betrayal of the unalterable cultural links with his past. How justified is he in constructing his personal fame on the betrayal of the many, who have incidentally built in part the base of his identity? Wayne Booth, examining the
relevance of ethical criticism in modern times in *The Company We Keep*, raises a number of cogent questions concerning the freedom of writer, reader and subject; one of these asks, "What Are the Author's Responsibilities to Those Whose Lives Are Used as 'Material'?" Rushdie's use of the lives, beliefs and discourse of Muslims certainly comes within this query. Booth is not satisfied with the answer commonly given, which is that "art justifies all—indeed, the novelist who engages wholeheartedly in the act of creating an ethical world is 'leading the ethical life,' and besides, you are a bad reader if you assume that any event or detail in my novels comes from real life."

He elaborates, "Are there limits to the author's freedom to expose, in the service of art or self, the most delicate secrets of those whose lives provide material?" Booth, of course, is speaking here of the stripping of individual privacy, whereas Rushdie is guilty of exposing a whole community. The latter divulges no secret; his subject is religious and cultural sentiment, which causes literal-minded believers to respectively quake with fear and squirm with embarrassment, in out-of-context exposure, before exploding in righteous anger. And does this act of insensitivity make Rushdie irresponsible? Does responsibility consist simply in respecting privacy? When privacy threatens to create a secure space where social evils can be perpetuated through the force of religious sentiment alone, cannot the suggestion of alternative ways of perceiving truth constitute a different form of responsibility? It can, and it does, through the shock therapy proceeding from Rushdie's outrageous maligning of Islamic practices.

The sacrilegious and defiant voice of a disavowing Muslim writer like Rushdie is itself a mode of reactionism, a mocking laughter on the rebound from the inflexible, joyless, unitary and prescriptive modes being increasingly imposed on the text of Islam, which in the process of exalting religion ultimately dehumanizes the believer. While revelation is an act of God, tradition (even religious tradition) is a human derivative, and so even devout Muslims need have no real trouble accepting
Rushdie's verbal extravaganza with outrageous and pluralistic images of Islam. Passive belief locks the imagination inside a circumscribed space, haunted by fear of divine retribution and thus crippled for creative activity. The Muse is identified in *The Satanic Verses* with Al-Lat, the force opposite to God. Exposing the trick of Abu Simbel that leads the Prophet to the confusion of the satanic verses, Hind tells the Prophet: "If you are for Allah, I am for Al-Lat. And she does not believe your God when he recognizes her. Her opposition to him is implacable, irrevocable, engulfing. The way between us cannot end in truce." Does this mean that Al-lat believes in the Prophet's God when he *does not* recognize her? Art acknowledges divinity when it is not the controlling authority. A religion whose inception resides in its Prophet's impossible feat of reading the unreadable is ill-advised to fear the free and the unmentionable, that which is blasphemy, for what is truly divine revelation will outshine ordinary poetic inspiration. By placing on the same platform the Prophet who recites Verses and the poet who recites verses, Rushdie presents the vision of art and the vision of religion as parallel ways of embracing life.

It is possibly futile to argue that Islam itself is not as restrictive and intimidating as it is made out to be by its militant vocationists, as long as Muslims themselves choose not to address, for the purpose of weeding out, the excesses of its fanatics. The irreverent laughter of blasphemy throws out a challenge that can surely be interpreted as a cleansing act, a surpassingly bold maneuver that cannot be achieved within the perimeters of fainthearted belief. To the many more Muslims who dislike fanaticism than the few who take part in its idiocy, Rushdie is a welcome alternative to the monolithic image being pressed upon them. Akeel Bilgrami tries to search out this clear-sighted angle on Rushdie's work:

So the charge of insult must turn entirely on the mode of expression, the bawdy, irreverent treatment of sacred themes in certain passages of the novel. And here I can only repeat what I said earlier: well known literary techniques employed to provoke the imagination are a special case, and they are not carriers of insult in the author's voice.
In fact, the voice is the author's; it is the object of insult that is a fictional representation and as such not sacrosant. Muslims are now trying not simply to rehabilitate Rushdie within their midst but also to take pride in his enormous achievement to send shock waves through the whole question of identity in the Islamic world. In doing so they are called upon to resolve that ultimate query whether or not Rushdie has been irreverent to Islam, and the result sometimes seems no better than equivocation. The strategy is to qualify his representation with such props as to make it harmless, and Rushdie's recent words of compromise have made their job easy.

Rushdie vehemently refuses the role of the reformer who has any responsibility to the community he uses for the articulation of his art, but he cannot extricate himself from the identity he was born with. It is his Islamic identity, in the final analysis, that ultimately gives meaning to the extravagance of his verbal defamation and which is fashioned into a commodity, to be manipulated, marked and marketed in the discursive channels of the West. How credible is Rushdie's claim to total separation of identity from the experiences of his past, and towards complete spiritual autonomy? Even if his answers, or non-answers for that matter, are located outside the confines of Islamic ideology, his (at least the adolescent unbeliever's) questions have surely spawned within its narrow, warm, closed-in experience. And that is the location from which Rushdie derives his authority for speaking in the idioms of Islam. He certainly fights against such an association, voicing an inconsistent desire to be a writer without country, while at the same time dipping not only into his past in Bombay, but also his present as a Muslim, Indian immigrant in England for his material.

Rushdie holds up the body of Islam, that is its culture, to ridicule in Midnight's Children just as he wrestles with its spirit a few years later in The Satanic Verses. In Midnight's Children we have another Dr. Aziz, trained to be a physician in Germany;
however, unlike Dr. Aziz of A Passage to India whose western education has barely touched his exterior, professional self, Dr. Aadam Aziz is a man torn by the conflict he sees between Islam and western enlightenment. When he tries to pray, he almost hears his friends taunting him: "Ingrid, her face scorning him for this Mecca-turned parroting; here their friends Oskar and Ilse Lubin, the anarchists mocking his prayers with their anti-ideologies." With his characteristic brand of sacrilegious humour, Rushdie makes Aadam Aziz hit his nose against a stone under the prayer rug and that puts an end to all future prayers:

But it was no good, he was caught in a strange middle ground, trapped between belief and disbelief, and this was a charade after all... And he was knocked forever into that middle place, unable to worship a God in whose existence he could not wholly disbelieve. Permanent alteration: a hole. (Midnight, p. 12)

There is no serious ideological issue at the base of this religious conflict, as there is in The Satanic Verses. At this phase of his writing career, Rushdie is primarily interested in establishing his affinity with western culture, and in the same vein asserting his distance from the unthinking, conditioned behaviour ordinarily expected in Indian Muslim culture. And so, he arbitrarily intends to disjoin the unified vision of Islam, to show up its inner lack of coherence, just like the body of Naseem Ghani viewed piecemeal through a hole in a sheet, to make a travesty of purdah and a parody of maidenly virtue.

So gradually Doctor Aziz came to have a picture of Naseem in his mind; a badly fitting collage of her severally-inspected parts. This phantasm of a partitioned woman began to haunt him, and not only in his dreams. Glued together by his imagination, she accompanied him on all his rounds. (Midnight, p.)

He uses the perspective of the perforated sheet to endlessly fragment and rearrange the traditional face of Islam, a deceptive strategy because the sum of the various parts is different from the actual totality.
Since belief is singular, Rushdie symbolizes disbelief in plural images which abound in changing identities, multiple deflections from the narrative core, and a series of negations: Aadam Aziz's inability to believe or disbelieve, Naseem Banu's silence, Nadir Khan's and later Ahmed Sinai's impotence, false and elusive identities, deliberations of Cooch Nahin (nothing), stories trailing into silence in mid-sentence, multiple associations that scatter into meaninglessness, digressions that fail to reconnect. Midnight's Children lacks a centre. The centre it begins with, viz. the promise of nationhood, personified in the babies born at the stroke of midnight on the momentous day of independence, dissolves into corruption, violence, madness, mutilation, incoherence and death. The mad narrator is the sole survivor trying to make sense of this cacophony. The Satanic Verses is also contrived through multiple fragments, but here the parts come together; they mirror each other and reconnect in meaningful patterns, perhaps to signify the re-emergence of faith. Abu Simbel says: "Why do I fear Mahound? For that: one, one, one, his terrifying singularity. Whereas I am always divided, always two or three or fifteen" (Verses, p. 102). And the Archangel Gibreel tells us: "To be born again, first you have to die" (Verses, p. 7). Is this meant to signify the death and rebirth of faith?

The gaps and contradictions in Rushdie's sense of self become evident from many of his own statements. For example: "To the Muslim community at large, in Britain in India in Pakistan and everywhere else, I would like to say: do not ask your writers to create typical or representative fictions. Such books are almost invariably dead books." *"Your writers"? If Salman is a writer who does not belong with the Muslims, why this identification with their scribes? He ends the article on such a wistful note that one wonders about the sentimental detachment he professes at other times from the associations he has left behind: "And I feel sad to be so grievously separated from my community, from India, from everyday life, from the world." 9 Which human assemblage does he refer to by the term "my community" if not the
Muslim one? Is he at the helm of a growing spiritual Muslim diaspora alongside the worldly, physically-dislocated and by now populous Indian diaspora, who seek release from the crude identity that falsely accrues to them?

Even Rushdie's blasphemy serves to refashion or restate his kinship with a renounced world-view. His text of disavowal reflects a number of truths: choice of Islam as a determinant subject, self-conscious reworking of the discourse of religion into secular literature, a hidden purpose for propagating what is generally surmised in academic circles to have outlived its usefulness, viz. the otherworldly discourse. Instead of choosing to remain outside faith, Rushdie chooses to decentralize the unchanging rituals of faith; and through the drunken carousal of Pamela Chamcha and Jamshed Joshi, he throws a question to his deeply alienated generation: "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (Verses, p. 176) How, indeed, at such strange times? Sara Suleri discovers this deep-seated faith at the base of Rushdie's trivialization of Islam:

The desire to desecrate must here be disaligned from a more simplistic perspective that ponders whether or not Rushdie has been 'offensive to Islam'; instead, it perversely attempts to be read as a gesture of wrenching loyalty, suggesting that blasphemy can be articulated only within the compass of belief. In the context of such ambivalence, Rushdie performs an act of curious faith: his text chooses disloyalty in order to dramatize its continuing obsession with the metaphors Islam makes available to a postcolonial sensibility."

In unison with Suleri's diagnosis of Rushdie's irreverence towards the Islamic text, one may ask at what point does the right to blaspheme translate itself into the need to blaspheme? That need originates in the classic Faustian impulse to counter denial of any sort, the most forbidding denial being the concept of sin. Hence the temptation to break out of the confines dictated by orthodox religious belief. For a religious tradition like Islam, that has so far rigidified its precepts as to become synonymous in modern times with ideological stasis, the only step outwards into creative freedom
may be a step into blasphemy. Blasphemy can become a possible bridge between belief and disbelief, a safety valve of sorts for the inquiring mind; whatever its initial purpose, its verbal violence can dispel intellectual claustrophobia and, by thus allowing an invigorating freedom of thought, prevent complete estrangement from faith. It humanizes the language of religion, dislocating it from a position of fixed ideality, so that it can be made to serve the changing needs of a developing, palpable consciousness:

Much of its narratological referents imply a historical regression, so its engagement in the cultural reality of religion assumes a similarly quaint sweetness, positing denial in order that a new strategy of acceptance may then ensue. As a consequence, for readers both familiar and unfamiliar with Islamic culture, one of the most seductive imperatives the *The Satanic Verses* exudes is an acute consciousness of its own status as blasphemy.\(^{11}\)

Of course, Rushdie denies admission of blasphemy:

To put it as simply as possible, *I am not a Muslim*. It feels bizarre and wholly inappropriate, to be described as some sort of heretic after having lived my life as a secular, pluralist, eclectic man. I am being enveloped in and described by a language that does not fit me. I do not accept the charge of blasphemy, because, as somebody says in *The Satanic Verses*, 'where there is no belief, there is no blasphemy.'\(^{12}\)

Suleri cleverly inverts the above adage to declare that because there is blasphemy in his writing, Rushdie *is* a believer.

Indeed, the philosophical distance between *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses* does appear to be greater than the temporal space that separates the two novels. It seems as if Rushdie has experienced his spiritual Odyssey in the interim years, questioning both his belief and his betrayal. In *Midnight's Children*, religious faith is categorically aligned with betrayal of one's self and of an enlightened nationhood; it is associated in Saleem Sinai's mind with the regret he feels for the loss of his sister, who moves to Pakistan and becomes a celebrated singer. As Jamila
allows herself to be transformed into the Bulbul of the Faith, "her character began to owe more to the most strident aspects of the national persona than to the child-world of her Monkey years" (Midnight, p. 314). Such simple correspondences, however, are not available in The Satanic Verses. There are many streams in the sea of stories, as Rushdie so beautifully illustrates in Haroun and the Sea of Stories, and they flow in all directions. The different plots in The Satanic Verses cut across each other with delusional fluidity. The faith that is repudiated in the anti-history of Jahilia and bounced around in the deranged backstreets of Proper London, is reinstated in the allegorical pilgrimage of the butterfly-maiden, Ayesha. Saladin Chamcha experiences the most disquieting depths of disillusionment in England, the "promised land" to which he gives all of his loyalty, and which keeps him an exile in its unlustrous fringes. The self-assured mockery of a backward people that enlivens the language of Midnight's Children and with which Rushdie washes his feet clean of the betrayal that is India turns into a profoundly sad mockery of his self, as he opens his eyes to find a much greater betrayal that is England. He is not accepted into the centre and the result is an increasing sensitivity towards his past in India, held in the motif of remembrance that repeatedly cuts across the characters' every effort to break free. The trauma of betrayal produces a split in his personality between himself and Gibreel Farishta. While Chamcha remains obdurate against spiritual regression, Gibreel wrestles with the nightmare of his lacerated faith.

It is surprising that the Islamic world reacted so sharply to a novel that is so humble in its barest essence; the pain of self-flagellation flickers in its every page. If there are instances of betrayal, there are many more signs of return: the repudiation of the satanic verses, the capitulation of Mirza Abu Saeed, Saladin Chamcha's move back to becoming Salahuddin Chamchawallah, the path through unending metamorphosis to the singular end of acting out one's destiny, the homicidal Gibreel Farishta's final rush to expiation and death. While any attempt to characterize
Rushdie as a re-born Muslim believer would be leagues off the mark, it is clear that he recognizes the force of the other-worldly dimension to human life, and his indissoluble Muslim past recurs in Islamic symbols.

It did not seem to me, however, that the ungodliness, or rather my post-godliness, need necessarily bring me into conflict with belief. Indeed, one reason for my attempt to develop a form of fiction in which the miraculous might coexist with the mundane was precisely my acceptance that notions of the sacred and the profane both needed to be explored, as far as possible without pre-judgement, in any honest literary portrait of the way we are.  

The nostalgia of one still unable to believe hovers over the awesome constancy of the faithful, and the kind of faith that makes Ayesha of Titlipur lead her rapt followers into a suicidal act of surrender gains legitimacy from the realization that the kind of enlightenment for which Saladin Chamcha has renounced his faith does not truly exist. What is there in its stead is Brickhall, the underside of London, racism, police brutality.

Does this curious acknowledgement of faith emerge from a pessimism embedded deeper in the knowledge that religion is not the only form of tyranny known to human civilization? The mind is never free from the totalizing influence of the idea, any idea, however clarified this idea may be from visible marks of tyranny. Thus, even a perfectly democratic impulse like liberalism can be overzealously and too indiscriminately exerted to produce rifts in social loyalties. Rushdie addresses this fear, though he hastens to add that this is the mildest form of despotism human civilization can be confronted with:

Do I, perhaps, find something sacred in after all? Am I prepared to set aside as holy the idea of the absolute freedom of the imagination and alongside it my own notion of the World, the Text and the Good? Does this add up to what the apologists of religion have started calling 'secular fundamentalism'? And if so, must I accept that this 'secular fundamentalism' is as likely to lead to excesses, abuses and oppressions as the canons of religious faith?
Anuradha Dingwaney informs readers as to how aware Rushdie is of this runaway power of the mind; she particularly calls attention to Rushdie's use of fragments in *Midnight's Children* as a deliberate attempt to rein in that dangerous prolixity:

In fact, I would argue that the logic of writing "alternate histories," as Rushdie envisions this task, is intimately tied to the imagining or daydreaming mind imposing its vision on the world and arguing for its greater validity. However, much as Rushdie's writings call upon the persuasiveness and empowering force of the imperializing mind, Rushdie is too astute and self-conscious a writer not to be open to the dangers implicit in this strategy. Hence the counterclaims and methods that deconstruct this strategy of empowerment; hence his emphasis on fragments, on the contingency of his vision, and, more important, his ambivalence toward precisely that which he draws strength from as a writer.  

Now, how do apprehension for the imperializing mind and the corresponding anxiety of verbalization relate with the challenge these hold for religious thought? Whether Rushdie does or does not claim a greater validity for his alternate pluralistic visions makes no difference in the possibilities he opens up for the re-examining of religious faith in a world of increasing materiality.

The energy of verbal extravagance spent, do we see in Rushdie the endless repetitive parable of the prodigal son, only unrepentent, returning to rediscover new channels of repudiation? The Islamic world, even while reacting with anger and threatening extinction, has no choice but to restore endlessly his legacy of religio-cultural indoctrination, which he then continues to vend in outrageous dissipation. Hence the return—again, and again, and again. The power of Rushdie's art as well as his involvement with the culture of Islam lies precisely in his protean capabilities of reemergence, something that his minor imitators are not able to achieve. A case in point is the shallow, artless and politically motivated Taslima Nasreen of Bangladesh, who tried to build up her image as a writer in Rushdie's shadow, to the point of plagiarizing the title of his novel, *Shame*, in the only work that has made her known
internationally: Lajja. The parable of the prodigal son, though with the simplicities of
the parable form multifariously worked into the complexities of a post-colonial
consciousness, is paralleled in Saladin Chamcha's successive returns to Changez
Chamchawallah's mansion in Bombay's Scandal Point—hoping to find reconciliation.
He comes away hurling abuses at his aging father, but years later finds his legacy
waiting for him—his father's fortune and his father's forgiveness. His defiance appears
to have sprung from inner assurance, from a need to check the limits of kinship.
What implication does the parable of renunciation and return have for the rootedness
of Islam in Judaeo-Christian theology? That process of rupture is complete; where
identity is fixed in difference, the only direction of growing is away and apart. But for
the disavowing Muslim, the direction of growth changes back to the beginning, to the
need of Saladin Chamcha to rediscover his soul in his birth-tree, to the walnut that
remains rooted inside his father's compound while he spends his life in blind
imitation, through his vertiginous transformations on the TV screen and his mad
scramble for a foothold in the distant Ellowen Deewen of his childhood dreams.

Situated between the deferential text of the conforming Muslim and the
prodigal text of the disavowing Muslim is the apologetic text of colonial Anglo-
Indian discourse. Colonial discourse cannot be submissive because it is the language
of domination, nor as openly or as radically critical as the discourse of selfhood,
because it is too easy to demean what is "other," and twice as much suspect. The
"other" has to be left to expose itself, without being denounced outright. In keeping
with other forms of cross-cultural interchange, colonial literature employs the
strategies of diplomacy to retain verbal possession; it constructs an elaborate show of
courtesy and, under the pretext of giving, yields no ground at all. The subaltern world
is avowedly the dominant frame of reference, the centre of focus, the determining
agent of action, but girding the whole novelistic design in invisible loops is the
primacy of the privileged, western code. Sudden substitutions of one code of values
for another results in the subaltern protagonist's repeated slipping into bathetic inanities. Consciousness of this arbitrary design, this artifice, this fictionality of setting contrived to ensure the self-betrayal of the "other" constitutes the guilty subtext of colonial writing. The apologetic strain is of course indistinct under the narcissism of colonial archetypes like Taylor and Kipling, the former the first-hand official voice of Anglo-India and the latter its fondest beneficiary; it surfaces under the conscious effort of a detached, visiting writer like Forster. Forster's twin perspectives, his representation of the otherness that is India, and more specifically is Muslim India, on the one hand and his parallel presentation of western culture on the other, fail to add up to a single, balanced view. They converge, instead, on a vision of life that is riddled by mystery, incomprehension, misinterpretation and hallucination—in his expressively prosaic word, it is "a muddle."

Forster's self-conscious method weaves its way through shifting alliances to search out the correct, balanced stance abrogating both the arrogant official and the "vague sentimental sympathetic literary man" (Passage, p. 69). His language develops through repeated twists of declaration and retraction, nervous loops of explanation, concession, qualification and reservation. As a result, the line between praise and condemnation becomes curiously blurred. This strategy is most noticeably applied in the characterization of Dr. Aziz. The general consensus of critics seems to be that Aziz is an extremely sympathetic portrayal of the progressive Indian youth. Even Nirad Chaudhuri, who is frankly repulsed by him, has been led to express genuine annoyance at this unwarranted partiality towards a Muslim:

But Mr. Forster's more serious mistake was in taking Muslims as the principal characters in a novel dealing with Indo-British relations. They should never have been the second party to the relationship in the novel, because ever since the nationalistic movement got into its stride the Muslims were playing a curiously equivocal role, realistic and effective politically, but unsatisfying in every other respect.
Chaudhuri advances his own explanation for this favourable treatment: "But I think I know why Mr. Forster would not have a Hindu. He shares the liking the British in India had for the Muslim, and the corresponding dislike for the Hindu. This was a curious psychological paradox and in every way unnatural, if not perverse." Earlier in the same article, he makes this vitriolic comment: "On the other hand, Mr. Forster is too charitable with the Indians. Aziz would not have been allowed to cross my threshold, nor to speak of being taken as an equal." Who, might one ask, is Forster being charitable to? Not, I presume, to the chimera named Aziz, who has been welcomed into an abstract home belonging to a fictional Fielding, in the illusory world of *A Passage to India*? If Nirad Chaudhuri has not slipped into the critical heresy of affective fallacy, he has made a very "curious" observation, indeed. For Forster has certainly not been charitable to the Muslim community in British India, by representing them in the persona of those whom Chaudhuri himself denounces most emphatically, thus: "Aziz and his friends belong to the servile section and are all inverted toadies." The reason why I have quoted so amply from Nirad Chaudhuri's "Passage To and From India" is to demonstrate the tricky elusiveness of Forster's narrative, that has left even a seasoned critic like him confused as to whether Dr. Aziz is a credit to his Muslim community or not. The latter certainly enjoys the pre-eminence of the protagonist, but the higher his elevation, the more visible is the exposure of his faults and sharper the indignity of his fall.

And Forster is well aware of his strategy. The tea-party that brings together at Fielding's residence a group of heterogeneous (men and women, young and old, British and Indian, Hindu, Muslim, Christian and atheist), liberal individuals, near strangers but well-disposed towards one another, creates the proper setting for discovering the real Aziz. This is where he begins to shine: he responds warmly to Fielding's easy hospitality, showing neither deference nor arrogance, and entertains Mrs. Moore and Adela with courtesy and sincerity. Forster allows Adela to be
impressed by the veneer of western enlightenment that has touched the young doctor, but follows with a narrative aside that quickly puts him in his place: "She supposed him to be emancipated as well as reliable and placed him on a pinnacle which he could not retain. He was high enough for the moment, to be sure, but not on any pinnacle. Wings bore him up, and flagging would deposit him" (Passage, p. 89). The categorical nature of this denial makes the reader wonder whether it expresses undercover his rancour on being shaken off by Masood as anything more than a friend. Disappointment takes the form of repudiation. There is a clear suggestion here that the "wings" are not his own; possibly they are the borrowed aids of his western learning. Aziz's refusal to understand the heights he is permitted to scale with his borrowed wings turns him into the "typical," westernized Indian. There is an unmistakable change in the narrative's tone and mood even before the appearance of Ronny Heaslop on the scene, and so the change is not caused by the intruder. Heaslop is true to his role, the stiff-lipped Anglo-Indian official ignoring the coloured subjects of the crown with proper disdain. It is Aziz who goes into the most unpredictable convulsions of emotion, and the narrator dramatizes in gloating detail his pathetic resolve to be included in the company of the Britishers, whether they would have it or no:

Ronny was tempted to retort; he knew the type; he knew all the types, and this was the spoilt westernized. But he was a servant of the Government, it was his job to avoid 'incidents', so he said nothing, and ignored the provocation that Aziz continued to offer. Aziz was provocative. Everything he said had an impertinent flavour or jarred. His wings were failing, but he refused to fall without a struggle. (Passage, p. 93)

If Forster has chosen to let Aziz fly before, he is determined that he should flounder now, and so the queer Muslim continues to be "impertinent towards Mr. Heaslop," "greasily confidential to Miss Quested" and "loud and jolly towards Professor Godbole" (Passage, p.93). The distasteful impression Aziz leaves upon the readers
here is made stronger not only by the pleasant convivial aspect he has worn at the beginning of the scene, but by Aziz's usual affectation of finesse. We have been informed earlier that "Aziz detested ill-breeding" (Passage, p. 77). This, after he has broken his appointment with Panna Lal and lied to cover his fault: "It was not offered as truth and should not have been criticized as such. But the other demolished it—an easy and ignoble task" (Passage, p. 77). No reader, western or otherwise, can be willing to accept good-breeding on such terms. There are few supposedly appraising epithets used about Aziz that do not fall back upon themselves to mock him ruinously. And yet, the narrative does not take a straightforward line of censure; it adheres faithfully to the language of equivocation, befitting the dual perception of colonial discourse.

The restraint, the disguise and the hesitation are symptomatic of the unease of an alien consciousness, unequipped to engage with a contrary value system and at the same time unwilling to implicate its own in a politically unstable field. For example, Forster "dodges an allusion to Islam while mentioning the boundlessness of the Marabar Caves" in MS A. Colonial discourse needs to bear against the onus of ignorance (by the use of culture specific signs), alterity (by heightening correspondence), dominance (by creating enclaves of power neutrality in an otherwise power structured text), malevolence (by generating multiple sources of empathy) and narcissism (by obliterating marks of self-signification). Thus, the artistic credibility of novels like The Confessions of a Thug, Kim and A Passage to India depends to a great extent on their ability to simulate scenes, dramatic and linguistic peculiarities, behavioral differences from models that are foreign but real, nonetheless: as examples, one may cite descriptions of street and bazaar scenes, clothing, gestures, mannerisms, and particularly the Arabic exclamations that dot the speeches of Ameer Ali in Confessions of a Thug, Mahbub Ali in Kim and the Nawab Bahadur in A Passage to India. The particular expectations of an marginal consciousness must be
subordinated to a universal set of values, searching out sameness and possibilities of contact surmounting differences, so as to ensure just representation. Right and wrong, truth and falsehood, humanity and cruelty, are the broad choices within which the details of cultural behaviour are examined. Thus the negative impact of Ameer's cruelty, Mahbub's selfishness and Aziz's meanness of spirit cannot be read as impositions of an alien will. Characters have to be shown with their defenses down, 'at home' in their own surroundings, outside the range of an artist's version of the Orwellian thinkspeak camera. Pains are taken to assure the reader of the complete truth of Ameer's confessions, to distinguish Mahbub's spontaneous behaviour in the bazaar from his rehearsed horse-dealer role in the company of Creighton Sahib, rate Aziz's vituperations against the British in front of confederates over his professionally correct behaviour towards his superiors at the hospital. Sympathizers are raised from among the dominant, authorial group—a patient and self-effacing police-officer-cum-narrator, an affable Colonel Creighton, an absolutely fair-minded Fielding, an insightful Mrs. Moore—to suggest that the optimum qualities of the subaltern characters have been searched out in good faith, and not left buried under prejudice. All evidence of narcissism must be buried, and every narrative precaution taken to prevent the novel from degenerating into a form of shallow, opinionated personalized survey.

In spite of all these effort towards universality, the colonial narrative cannot forego the claim to being itself the culture-specific voice of its own time and place. Talal Asad, in a discussion entitled "The Concept of Cultural Translation," points out the inextricability of the anthropologist's medium of communication from the existing rules of his own culture:

'Cultural translation' must accommodate itself to a different language not only in the sense of English as opposed to Dinka, or English opposed to Kabbashi Arabic, but also, in the sense of a British, middle class, academic game, as opposed to the modes of life of the 'tribal' Sudan. The stiffness of a powerful established structure, with
its own discursive games, its own 'strong' languages, is what among other things finally determines the effectiveness of the translation. The translation is addressed to a very specific audience, which is waiting to read about another mode of life and to manipulate the text it reads, according to established rules, not to learn to live a new mode of life.

Among other things, Asad is of course examining the hazards of literal translation in anthropological studies, while the issue involved here is the transference of cultural values through the non-denominational strategies of imaginative portraiture. The images of Muslim India that ride on the medium of these fictional works are translated in the process of encoding and decoding that must inevitably precede their consumption by the English readers they are intended for.

The relative ease with which the writer of fiction is able to cross over boundaries can work both ways: inhibit just representation by frequent shift in perspectives, or produce such complete textual immersion in the subject (an artistic fusion parallel to Keats's "negative capability") as to jeopardize the privileged status of the colonial viewpoint. Theoretically, at its most effective representational stage, colonial writing may be imagined to operate from the collapsible brink of an endangered identity. In attempting to glean the truth about an alien culture, the author must perforce enter into an experience that threatens to engulf his own inscrutability. The challenge is to maintain a precarious path between familiarization and impenetrability and to preserve the dominant discourse of selfhood from the Hydra-heads of cultural alterity; to venture into the thick of seductive dangers and pluck the golden apple without being devoured by that many-headed monster. The fear of "going native" was a haunting disquietude for the British in India. For the artist, too, immersion in an alien, "lesser" culture in the interest of faithful representation can mean relinquishing one's place among the culturally "pure." Total clarity of perception, and subsequent faithful representation, can only be achieved by the complete sacrifice of alterity, a choice which is not just unavailable in colonial
semantics but is also a theoretical impossibility. And yet, intercultural discourse has
to create fields of common signification, or at least construct a semblance of it, in
order to make itself plausible. The hidden text of embarrassment is contained within
the fragility of such a semblance or illusion.

Edward Said credits anthropological writing as having a greater awareness
than novelistic writing of the distance between the impulses of political domination
and scientific curiosity, in his article "Representing the Colonized." In fact, he
identifies the embarrassment proceeding from this consciousness as the motivating
energy behind such studies. The neutrality of what he calls scientific discourse is
made unwieldy by the imbalance of political power in different areas of the globe:

In the recent works of theoreticians who deal with the almost
insuperable discrepancy between a political actuality based on force
and a scientific and humane desire to understand the Other
hermeneutically and sympathetically in modes not always
circumscribed and defined by force, modern Western anthropology
both recalls and occludes that problematic novelistic prefiguration.

As to whether these efforts succeed or fail, that is less interesting
matter than the very fact that what distinguishes them, what makes
them possible is some very acutely embarrassed if disguised awareness
of the imperial setting, which after all is all pervasive and unavoidable.

The "embarrassed if disguised awareness" of this institutional subversion, strongest
where an Islamic presence is involved (as the general body of Said's writing gives
ample evidence of, particularly his denunciation of western journalism in Covering
Islam), raises uncertainties in the very goals of these projects to understand another
culture, which in turn de-authorizes the language such projects employ. It is not
merely scientific inquiry that comes up against the impossibility of resisting political
structures; imaginative literature also stumbles over its paradoxes. The underlying
unity of conception is continually disrupted by two wholly disparate sets of rules, and
the deference that must necessarily be paid to the value-system of the subject culture

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in colonial literature fails to cohere because of the author's inclusion in the enclave of power to which the subject must be in complete subservience in real life. To put it in the words of Edward Said, "The real problem remains to haunt us: the relationship between anthropology as an ongoing enterprise and, on the other hand, empire as ongoing concern." In addition to disparities of a political nature, there is also that matter of authorial dictatorship which turns conventions of aesthetic submission into an embarrassing lie. Fiction is the arbitrary imposition of pattern on to the formless material of life, and however much the techniques of artistic possession are disguised, the imperialism of the author is a fact not to be denied. Jeffrey Heath, in an article called 'A Passage to India,' discusses the plurality and artificiality of fictional constructs, calling attention also to the conflict this can raise, with the ethical question whether "he should have restrained himself" in this egocentric play, while at the same time purporting to make representations of a colonial setting:

It is evident that the novel's major scenes have all been spawned from the germinal moment in the womblike cave when the visitor first imagined. Perhaps he should have restrained himself, for as soon as his mind ceased to be a blank, he got himself involved in the endless train of story and the indeterminate play of signification. As the narrator slyly observes, as in some puzzlement, "This arrangement occurs again and again... and this is all." The self-conscious fictionality of the text consists of a series of "arrangements" neither mandatory by the nature of the subject nor accidental, but designed after a hidden blue-print of opinion.

Forster confronts this myth and lays it bare, through the literal embarrassment of Adela, Mrs Moore and Fielding caused by the official discourse of Anglo-India, and through their realization of how cultural meanings swerve away from one another. These three characters try to believe in the possibility of closing the gaps of incomprehension, or of indifference, and thereby replacing myth by reality. However, in doing so they are confronted with barriers that even their personal magnanimity
cannot excuse or accept. They are left with no choice but to make compromises with their own beliefs. According to Harrison, "In MS A, Fielding is seized by racial revulsion when Aziz mentions Miss Quested's breasts; in the book he only considers the remark in 'bad taste.' Forster has to tone down Fielding's response at the expense of diluting his sensibilities, in order to ensure the courteously correct and tactful stance of his own writing. His comment about the Fielding's intellectual generosity in matters of friendship can be stretched to include a similar attitude towards the colonial subject:

Fielding was a blank, frank atheist, but he respected every opinion his friend held; to do this is essential in friendship. And it seemed to him for a time that the dead awaited him, and when the illusion faded it left it him an emptiness that was almost guilt: 'This really is the end,' he thought, 'and I gave her the final blow.' (Passage, p. 254)

Surely, respecting every opinion "a friend" has is essential to inter-cultural understanding, but perhaps it is an experiential impossibility. It already introduces a lie, the willed negation of disbelief. Tolerance, a compromise of belief and disbelief, is a mode of condescension under the garb of respect. Fielding's well-meaning and apologetic derision of Islamic culture, for being so blindly accepting of religious codes, removes it a double measure of distance from western culture. To the twentieth-century liberal humanist, religious faith itself is sign of intellectual passivity; so, belief in a "lesser" (as the Quran, in so far as it is opposed to the Bible, undoubtedly is, even to a nominal Christian) text-bound religion is doubly so. Professing respect for what he does not respect compromises the colonial writer's moral integrity at a deeper level than the acknowledged social plane. Consciousness of that transgression weighs down the otherwise self-congratulatory discourse of Anglo-India. At the end of this chapter, Fielding knows that something else besides Mrs. Moore is dead, viz. his friendship with Aziz. It is immaterial who has given the final blow, but Fielding alone, in touch with the consciousness of the narrator, is

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aware of the emptiness and the guilt of having imagined a false correspondence where it does not exist, no less for having committed a heresy against its rules. After the final altercation between "friends" is over, this discourse of shame is retrieved through a complete reversal of ideological centres. Fielding's return to the Anglo-Indian Club is not simply an expeditious step to restore appearances, it parallels the shift in narratorial allegiance that unmistakably occurs at this point. Difference between the two cultures is reinstated without disguise and Fielding's disillusionment with Aziz comes from across a space of uncharted alterity. At one point, communication breaks down completely.

Forster demonstrates the inability of colonial discourse to approximate either deference or disclaim, gestures available only to the natural-born. The language of alterity must operate within the subtleties of suggestion and evasion. This brings us back a complete circle to the original tropes of mystery, indeterminacy, discontinuance and deceit that have always been imposed on the colonial subject. Only now the elements of mystery, indeterminacy, discontinuance and deceit are seen to be connected just as much with the perceiving mind of the colonizer as with the colonial subject. Such indeterminacy, however, is not as open-ended as it might seem to be. James Clifford, in Writing Culture, alerts readers to the historical and sociological grids that determine dominant patterns of thinking:

But whereas the free play of readings may in theory be infinite, there are, at any historical moment, a limited range of canonical and emergent allegories available to the competent reader (the reader whose interpretation will be deemed plausible by a specific community). These structures of meaning are historically bounded and coercive.28

Anglo-Indian novels are bound by the range of interpretation available and acceptable to the centrally-positioned, imperially-minded British community for whom they were written. But within those boundaries their interpretation stumbles across blank spaces, ambiguous textures and shifting patterns that reveal more about concerns of
self-identity than an interest in representing another culture. As demonstrated through analysis of the historical image of Muslims, the essentializing of contemporary Muslim culture, individual stereotypical characterization of Muslim men and women, employment of various distancing and denial strategies and the effects of polarization achieved through the reactionary response in Muslim discourse, this anxiety of self-projection shows itself to be most apparent in Anglo-Indian fiction's representation of Islam.
EPILOGUE

The intriguing truth about the nature of these Anglo-Indian depictions is that while they falsify the image of Muslims in British India, they come uncannily close to groups of fierce Islamic militants who have pushed themselves to public view in the past two decades. The effectiveness of colonial rule is sometimes measured in the way the acquired territory and people become transformed to merge with their redefined image in the discourse created by the ruling power. While it is undeniable that a certain amount of bigotry has always been present in Muslim societies, it has reached such alarming proportions only in the post-colonial era. The loss of political power, and the insecurities that resulted from it, began a slow process of psychological hardening for Muslims, that has led finally to the extremism of Islamic fundamentalism in South India today. They have changed most dramatically under western colonialism and its aftermath; in the process of reacting to the extreme, reductive character attributed to them by colonialists, they have ironically allowed themselves to slip into that very same image, stirring up distrust and distaste for Muslims all around the world. Self-styled defenders of Islam have sprung up who refuse rational dialogue and issue death-threats to unbelievers. However these militants constitute only a small section of the Muslim community world-wide; even Salman Rushdie, himself a victim of the most publicized death-threat made in the modern world, makes the necessary distinction between what Islam is and what it is culled out to be, by different people:

It needs to be said repeatedly in the West that Islam is no more monolithically cruel than, no more an 'evil empire,' than Christianity, capitalism or communism . . . To be a believer is not by any means to
be a zealot. Islam in the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent has developed historically along moderate lines, with a strong strain of pluralistic Sufi philosophy.¹

And yet, it is a general tendency in the West to judge all Muslims on the rhetoric and action of these few. By concentrating publicity on the actions of Muslim fanatics and ignoring the far greater numbers of Muslims engaged in sober, developmental activities in various corners of the globe, even working in close cooperation with the West when common goals are in view, the West is in fact contributing to the hatred stirred by Muslim fanatics themselves. Edward Said's Covering Islam documents numerous instances of how the western media systematically misrepresent the Islamic world. Given this kind of discriminatory climate, moderate Muslims can only ensure their acceptance within the folds of civilization by remaining invisible as a cultural entity or by visible dissociation from the Muslim community. Whenever any incident (like the bombing of the World Trade Center building in New York) draws attention on their Muslim identity, they face the risk of accusation, condemnation and ostracism by the western "custodians" of liberalism. Rather than submit to being stigmatized as illiberal terrorists, moderate Muslims are increasingly choosing to disown their cultural affiliation. As a result of this, only those Muslims who are actually militant and anti-liberal openly align themselves to the Islamic culture and are then enthusiastically acknowledged by the West as true representatives of the Islamic world. Strangely, thus, the collective Western mind and the forces of Islamic fundamentalism (two highly acrimonious entities) are locked in a profoundly successful collaboration to misconstrue, marginalize and, finally, to silence the several subdued voices of reason which exist in the Muslim world alongside the rhetoric of reactionary politics.

During British rule in India, Muslim orthodoxy consisted mainly in private resistance to modernization; and besides, a strong counter-current existed to break down these defenses. And there was a true tradition of Islamic enlightenment there,
before the advent of the British, in the Persia-based civilization where religious belief was not a matter of public concern and which nurtured a healthy proliferation of art and culture. This kind of imaginative freedom gave birth to alternative spiritual experiences, like the mystical creed of sufism. This same artistic and tolerant tradition spread into India under the Mughals. This is not to say that political discrimination did not exist against non-Muslims during the Mughals; what is being affirmed is that there was no effort to cast Muslims themselves into a single, inflexible mould, in the manner of contemporary programs of Islamization practised here and there in the Muslim world. The diversified culture of colonial Muslims gradually and self-consciously suffered becoming homogenized to serve the purpose of resistance to political domination. Mounting insecurity under British rule, and subsequently the prospect of coming under sway of the majority Hindu population of independent India, motivated colonial Muslims to rally around a unifying principle of identity. However, this nationalistic enthusiasm was simply a topical response to a specific political situation, and enlightened Muslims never lost their sound, healthy and humanistic self-awareness. Kazi Nazrul Islam, the greatest Bengali Muslim poet, and ranked by many next only to Rabindranath Tagore in undivided Bengal, embodies in his own persona the harmonious coexistence of Islamic sensibility and enlightened humanism. He not only married a Hindu lady, he even encouraged her to retain and practice her own religion. His poetry draws material unreservedly from Hindu myth and Islamic legend and his language allows itself to be Sanskritized, Persianized and Arabicized as often as his Muse dictates. His divine poetry swings between profound love and fearful defiance. Kazi Nazrul Islam was such an expansive, imaginative and daring personality that even his fragmented self was enough to inspire a whole nation. And so it was that Bengali textbooks in East Pakistan printed his poetry, omitting references to Hindu mythology; and intellectuals in the fledgeling republic of Bangladesh retaliated by turning a blind eye to its Islamic allusions. As the national
identity of Bangladesh stabilized, balance returned to the appreciation of Nazrul's versatile work. The temperate Muslim philosophers, writers, reformists and politicians of colonial India were able to synchronize contradictory impulses in their cultural make-up for the sake of a vision. Post-colonial intellectuals, having adopted uncritically the discourse of the colonizers, have driven an artificial wedge to widen that unobtrusive gap. The modern fundamentalist image of Islam may be said to be a product of three influences: viz. actual colonial domination, lingering marginalization of discourse, and continuing economic disadvantage. After the birth of a separate homeland for Indian Muslims, political domination by an external power (for forms of internal domination proliferated) ceased to be a factor, but the other two forms of diminution persisted.

Post-independence carry-over of the above conflicts have produced tensions within the Muslim community. Dichotomies have intensified between the socially privileged, western-educated ruling elite and the underprivileged, illiterate masses; between the regressive politics of religion and the progressive impulses of education and reform. Independence did not bring well-being for the general population, and their reaction has been to identify by association education and economic privilege with secularism and westernization. There has followed identification by converse inference of subaltern rights with religion. This is clearly an example of displacement and dislocation of grievance, where economic and discursive oppression have been transferred to a religious plane. Muslim identity in the South Asian region has thus become a tortured, contradictory and self-divisive phenomenon. What Edward Said characterizes as the "logic of identity" in "Identity, Negation and Violence" degenerates here on this question of Muslim religiosity into an illogic of identity. In the following dichotomous explanation of identity, Said lists "religion" as one of the dominant and central instruments of social affirmation. But religion can also accommodate the more extreme and deviant patterns of social behaviour that
struggle for authenticity, which he then includes under the blanket term, "fundamentalist religion:"

In the contemporary contest between stable identity as it is rendered by such affirmative agencies as nationality, education, tradition, language and religion, on the one hand, and all sorts of marginal, alienated or, in Immanuel Wallerstein's phrase, anti-systemic forces on the other, there remains an incipient and unresolved tension. One side gathers more dominance and centrality, the other is pushed further from the centre, towards either violence or new forms of authenticity like fundamentalist religion. In any event, it produces a frightening consolidation of patriotism, assertions of cultural superiority, mechanisms of control, whose power and ineluctibility reinforce what I have been describing as the logic of identity.  

Said thus identifies two significant facts about religious fundamentalism: one, that it is marginal and counter-societal, and second, that it has a "frightening" proximity to feelings of patriotism, cultural pride and unity, affectivities that are normally perceived as positive for collective identity. The question is, how marginal is Islamic fundamentalism actually perceived to be, either by the power centres of the Muslim world itself or by the West? While certain fanatic acts are condemned here and there by individuals and groups, governments of Islamic countries rarely take a firm stance against the consolidated force of Islamic fundamentalism within national boundaries. Governments have their electoral concerns. Akeel Bilgrami explains in "Rushdie and the Reform of Islam" why even progressively inclined governments of Muslim nations give in to the discourse of religious conservatism:

But even these governments use the language of religious legitimation for their very existence, and in doing so they are continually vulnerable to the quite powerful Islamic opposition surrounding them which keeps them under constant pressure through charges of hypocrisy and insufficient conviction. There is the constant threat that segments in the society, alienated from the governing elites, will get behind this opposition.
Masses of uneducated believers do in fact "get behind" and strengthen forces of religious extremism, because they are unable to distinguish between the stable religious identity Said speaks of and the excesses perpetrated by fundamentalists, whose close identification with the notion of the sacred confers on them a kind of immunity. Even secular-minded people often find themselves drawn into the rhetoric of religious bigotry on multinational issues, for xenophobia is a dark but integral component of patriotism. So, along with reinforcing stable identities, religious fundamentalism also has quite the opposite effect of disrupting the affirmative identity of Islamic nations. This negative identity then finds world-wide notoriety. It is the silent majority of moderate Muslims who fail to attain central significance.

The formidable split on the question of Muslim identity described above came to a head in the much publicized Rushdie affair which forced these two divisions of the Muslim community to acknowledge each other. Muslim extremists hailed Ayatollah Khomeini's death-sentence on the writer of The Satanic Verses, while Muslim intellectuals, especially immigrants in western countries, writhed in shame at these excesses. There has been much ill-humoured banter of words in the years following this incident on the issue of Muslim intolerance, and it has not died down entirely after two whole decades. Akeel Bilgrami, Rustom Barucha, Tariq Modood and Aga Shahid Ali are some modern Muslim intellectuals who have addressed this controversy. Faced with the precarious imperatives of self-definition and the definition of their faith, intellectuals themselves are split along the degree in which they choose to identify with the cause of Islam. As Akeel Bilgrami aptly points out:

Moderates do not promote reasoned responses to skeptical questions, and thereby they repudiate the procedures of argument and debate that a reformed Islam must strive for. They promote instead a turning inward to a protective and perpetually defensive stance against what Muslims perceive to be pernicious Western skepticism and permissiveness.
Aga Shahid Ali's article, "The Satanic Verses: A Secular Muslim's Response" is exactly the sort of protective and defensive reaction that Bilgrami warns against. Ali is full of dramatic ideas about ways Rushdie might have incensed Muslim fundamentalists without being offensive to moderate Muslims, as if that were the be all and do all of the artist's intention. He is grievously disappointed that "Rushdie has missed a great opportunity" and chosen to be less effective than he might have: "Wouldn't it have been more useful to bring Muhammad into the twentieth century to expose the abuses of a Khomeini?" But Rushdie is not writing novels made to order, and that is that. However limited Ali's response may be to The Satanic Verses, he voices the anxieties of a great number of Muslims when he declares:

But Rushdie has managed to make even nonpracticing Muslims feel hurt and angry, leaving many of us with little to defend except his legal and aesthetic right to write the novel, leaving many of us with little to be impassioned about except his right to live and to write as he pleases.

The two questions, then, that are invariably linked in the minds of even moderate Muslim intellectuals, and which prevent them from forming more decisive and effective assessments are: whether or not Rushdie has been offensive to Islam, and whether or not Muslims should have reacted the way they did. This is not tactical equivocation but a genuine dilemma, for to admit that Rushdie has been offensive to the Islamic faith, and then, to assert that Muslims should not react at least with mild ire to such abomination, seems no less a betrayal of a Muslim's identity than Rushdie's own transgression.

As Tariq Modood points out in his article, "Muslims, Race and Equality in Britain: Some Post-Rushdie Affair Reflections," the Rushdie affair was an essentially South Asian Muslim phenomenon: "It seems to have escaped many people's attention that the anger over The Satanic Verses is not so much a Muslim response as a South Asian Muslim response." The migrant Muslims of Bradford and elsewhere who
reacted most violently to *The Satanic Verses* have roots in the Indian subcontinent. What this incident did, besides bear witness to the majority South Indian Sunni sect's particular devotion for Prophet Muhammad, is serve as a catalyst to bring into focus the various sociological rifts among the Muslims of this region. While the tendency of post-colonial Muslim resurgence has been to merge local diversities towards a political re-definition of identity based on a world religion, the general populace has become subject to the usual diversification, fragmentation and plurality of experience inseparable from contemporary life, e.g. industrialization, migration, westernization, ethnic integration, etc. Cultural hybridity is a legacy of the modern post-colonial world and Aamir Mufti, in an insightful discussion on the technical conventions of pastiche and parody used in *The Satanic Verses*, "Reading the Rushdie Affair: An Essay on Islam and Politics," shows how Rushdie pays just acknowledgement to this hybridity of the modern South Indian Muslim experience. Individuals and groups who have renounced their religious orthodoxies in the light of these diverse experiences cannot be dismissed as non-Muslims—if anything, they are the ones most empowered to speak globally and persuasively on behalf of the Muslim community. In the inexorable growth of modern Muslim fundamentalism, South Asian Muslims are once more being faced with new homogenizing patterns, another set of stereotypes, akin to British colonial stereotypes, imposed upon them with political motives.

A liberal, humanized, pluralistic Islam is just as much under attack today as it has been during colonial rule. And as a result, while representations of most cultural variables are simply perceived as alterities, representations of Islam and those of Western enlightenment are now, even more than traditionally, ranged in terms of polarities. Although much of the reactionary conservatism of Western nations has a religious overtone, it is motivated principally by resentment against large-scale immigration of Asians and Africans; in other words, it is kept in place by racial and
economic considerations. Islamic fundamentalism is inspired, among other things, by the fear of total sexual freedom encouraged in principle by western liberalism. Thus, even on this issue of religious reactionism, the Islamic world and the West are impelled by opposite drives, since the massive spread of Islam in Europe is a strong counter to measures of racial segregation, and the West, collectively, has no desire to turn back the clock on the sexual revolution. Rushdie's handling of such contentious themes in *The Satanic Verses* is both sensitive and complex. As a South Asian Muslim emigrant writer, he stands at the point of confluence of the two cultural trends and challenges this senseless polarity.

For the majority of Muslim readers, their furor against Rushdie has been for a diasporic Indo-Anglian writer for being blindly and servilely imitative of the Anglo-Indian heritage. He is being slowly rediscovered now as the boldly innovative and revolutionary voice from within his essentially Muslim heritage. His daring inventiveness promises to release the Muslim image from colonial dialectics of reductionism and reactionism, and advance it towards post-colonial plurality and freedom. Not only is Rushdie himself an emanation of India's colonial past, so are the rising spectres of inter-communal as well as intra-communal violence at work within South Asia's Muslim community. If we need to go back to the point of departure where self-defeating schisms began to emerge in the definition of the Indian Muslim, one that gradually pushed them into a stance allegedly opposed to enlightened liberalism, the reconstruction of Muslim identity in the rhetoric of British India must be the most fertile ground to search for one.
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EPILOGUE

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GLOSSARY

aazan—the Muslim call to prayer
Abba—Muslim name for father
ashurjamsparsha—untouched by the sun
atchkan—long, coat-like, formal attire of Muslim men
Bhaijan—respectful mode of address for older brother
burqa—long, loose outer garment with veil, worn by purdah women in India.
hajj—annual pilgrimage of Muslims, held in Mecca
hijab—Arabic word for curtain; purdah
Imam—religious leader who conducts prayer in a mosque
jizyia—tax levied by Mughals on non-Muslim subjects
maghrib—prayer said just after sunset
murid—devotees of cult leaders
namaaz—Muslim prayer
peer—cult leader
roza—ritual fast, normally observed during the month of Ramzan
Shahzada—prince
shariat—religious law; Bengali derivation of "shariah"
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APPENDIX-A

PLOT-SUMMARY: MEER MOSHARRAF HOSSAIN,
UDASIN PATHIKER MONER KATHA (RECOLLECTIONS OF AN
INDIFFERENT WAYFARER)

_Udasin Pathiker Moner Katha_ opens with a description of Shalghar Madhua, the home of an Englishman, T. I. Kenney. Another name for the place is Neelkuthi (_Neel_—indigo; _Kuthi_—house), a generic name used for indigo estates. It is a site of feverish activity. The novel describes crowds of workers, their bodies dark blue and dripping wet from the sap of the crushed indigo, labouring through the stench of the rotting plants. Kenney's administrative staff, who function as aids to his tyranny, wait for him to emerge from his living quarters on the upper floor of Neel Kuthi. Also waiting to take Kenney on his morning tour are the groom with his horse, _mahut_ with his elephant and several bearers with his palanquin. No one can predict Kenney's wishes and remain in a state of constant vigilance, and that is the source of his power.

Kenney descends from his rooms and gets on his horse. For the third day in a row, he rides to one particular village, conspicuously searching for a face that he has accidentally seen in one of his previous tours. He is disappointed and vents his anger on his horse. He then takes aim at a _maina_, a species of talking bird owned by his driver, Jocky. When Kenney's men implore him to spare its life, he expresses a wish to possess the bird, at whatever price Jocky is willing to part with it. Maina is also the name of Jocky's wife.

Kenney returns home to send a letter to his friend, Meer Sahib of Shawnta, an adjoining estate. This friendship is both a discordant and ambivalent feature in the
story. Kenney is a villain, an oppressor, a foreigner and in short, the enemy; yet he is a loyal friend of Meer Sahib and treats him with respect and genuine concern. In contrast, Meer Sahib is betrayed by his own people, especially his protege and adopted son-in-law, Shah Golam. After the death of his older brother, the younger Meer Sahib becomes sole owner of Shawnta. An indolent, pleasure-loving man, Meer Sahib leaves the care of his state in the hands of his Hindu manager, Debi Prasad. Soon after he marries his niece, Shukrunnessa, to an obsequious and unscrupulous fortune-hunter, Shah Golam. Impressed with Shah Golam's industrious nature, and disarmed by his elaborate protestations of respect, Meer Sahib virtually turns over the estate to him. The estate prospers and Shah Golam begins to plot against his benefactor. Like Lear, Meer Sahib errs in believing that he can enjoy the rights of ownership without the obligations.

Meer Sahib receives Kenney's letter requesting a band of lathiyals (professional fighters who excel in wielding lethal bamboo sticks) to help him attack Shundarpur, the estate of Pyari Shaundari, a proud Brahmin lady. She is the strongest of the local Indian zamindars, and the narrator describes Kenney's aggression against her as the fight of the bull and the tigress. Until now, the Englishman has not touched the villages of Shundarpur. Besides the strength of the estate, he has been wary of the manager Ram Lochan who is a skilled litigant. Now, his swelling fortune has made Kenney overly ambitious.

Suddenly word spreads in Shundarpur that Kenney is arriving with his men to denude the fields of their paddy-crop, and plant indigo in its stead. Pyari Shundari's tenants fly to her for protection. The proud lady looks upon the prospect as a personal affront to her sovereignty, more than as a calamity for the poor peasants. Thus the strife that follows does not have the straightforward pattern of Indians fighting to protect the interests of the poor and of the land, against a foreign enemy. Each of the principal actors in the drama is urged by a selfish motive. Kenney is driven by lust
for power, Meer Sahib by a lame desire to enjoy life and avoid trouble, Pyari Shundari by Brahmin pride and Shah Golam by a quest for popularity and material wealth. Only towards the end of the story is Shah Golam allowed to attain the stature of a revolutionary hero, when he leads the local revolt against forced indigo cultivation.

Pyari Shundari's lathiyals arrive in the fields while it is still dark. However, the dawning day reveals that Kenney's men have already taken strategic positions on the land. As Kenney's lathiyals stand guard, his farmers cut off the paddy and replant the fields with indigo. After this is done, Kenney personally arrives on the scene to lead the attack against Pyari Shundari. Her men are routed, and robbed to the last shred of their possessions.

Meer Sahib learns of the incident and even though he is saddened by his own role in the matter, he makes no protest. The author notes with bitterness his father's selfish will to protect his own estate and his own honour, at the expense of his countrymen. With no powerful adversary to deter him, Kenney's oppression of the villagers rises everyday. He begins to force people to write away their lands to him. It may be noted that the author makes a clear distinction here between the British government (with its respect for law) and individual Englishmen with commercial interests in the country. Kenney has to procure legal documents to establish his claim to the land he continues to seize from the defenseless villagers. Those who refuse to oblige him are imprisoned in his warehouses to suffer a slow death.

Pyari Shundari receives word from a secret informer that Kenney has offered a reward for her capture. To add insult to injury, he has vowed to wash her with English soaps and dress her in English gowns and keep her as a mistress in his mansion. These are words specially calculated to offend the honour of a Brahmin woman, and arouse her ire. Pyari Shundari rises to the bait, and makes a counter-pledge to humiliate Kenney. She orders the capture of Mrs. Kenney, whom she would use as a personal maid. She remembers the former deceased landlord of
Shawnta, who had the moral courage to stand up to the English. She dismisses the younger Meer Sahib as a coward and takes upon herself the role of her people's saviour.

When Pyari Shundari's men arrive at Shalghar Madhua, Mrs. Kenney is lost in delightful contemplation of her life in India. In England, she would have had to work for a living but here she lives the life of a princess. She is rudely shaken out of her reverie by the loud cries of the attacking lathiyals. With Kenney away from the estate, she realizes that it would be more advisable to use cunning rather than force. She charms her enemies by using gentle, pleading words and showers a fair amount of money over their heads. At the sight of money, the lathiyals forget their mission and fall upon each other for the loot. After they leave, Mrs. Kenney directs her servants to wreck some of her disused furniture and other belongings and construct a scene of robbery. Kenney's cruel and wily manager, Haranath Mitra, adds the finishing touch by beating up Meer Sahib's messengers who were waiting to meet Kenney at Shalghar, and makes it appear to be the job of Pyari Shaundari's men. He then files an official complaint with the magistrate.

Meanwhile, at Shawnta, Shah Golam has been conspiring with Debi Prasad to usurp Meer Sahib's property. The arrival of the magistrate and his men on their way to Shalghar provides an opportune moment for him. Meer Sahib is lost in his customary evening's entertainment: song, dance and merriment. Taking advantage of a lull, Debi Prasad informs him of the incident at Neelkuthi. Meer Sahib instructs him to extend all assistance to the magistrate and himself proceeds to Shalghar to pay his respects to Mrs. Kenney. Finding the coast clear, Shah Golam enters Meer Sahib's vault, wins over the guards and steals a box that he believes contains all of the estate's deeds.

The magistrate's criminal investigation takes the exact course planned by Mrs. Kenney. Kallo and Banshee, the wretched messengers critically injured by Haranath's
orders, become the chief evidence against Pyari Shundari. Kenney's manager makes sure that these men never return to their families to expose the truth.

The fabricated case against Pyari Shundari stands thus: break-in, looting, three murders and ten to twelve injuries. She is not cowered by the thought of consequences. She renews her pledge to fight Kenney to the end, even if it means losing her entire fortune. She reproves her men for their incompetence, reminding them of Kenney's brag that he has come from England with nothing more than a cane and a hat. If Kenney has grown so large by his own endeavours, why cannot the men of the soil raise themselves in the same way?

Kenney comes to see Meer Sahib and informs him that Pyari Shundari is planning another attack on Shalghar Madhua. The latter lends him more lathiyals, but secretly pays tribute to the spirited lady who dares to challenge an opponent as strong as Kenney. Before embarking on a trip to view his distant estates Meer Sahib hands over most of his deeds to Shah Golam. The latter discovers to his dismay that he has stolen the wrong box after all.

Another drama now unfolds at Shalghar Madhua. According to informers, this is the night fixed for the second attack on Neelkuthi. Mr. and Mrs. Kenney spend the evening in ostentatious mirth. They sit side by side, sipping drinks, playing music and conversing but there is an air of foreboding and anxiousness through it all. A letter arrives that seems to impart good news. The trusted servant, Sanaullah, puts together a few clothes and toiletries, and after a hasty meal Kenney secretly leaves the house in a palanquin. The rest of the household believes him to be spending happy hours with his wife. Mrs. Kenney now redoubles the festive atmosphere upstairs. She dresses carefully, lights the chandelier, brings out her best silver. Soon another palanquin quietly enters the house. The visitor is no other than the magistrate, with his retinue of disguised men. Mrs. Kenney rushes to meet him and escorts him to her room. No one except Sanaullah is aware that the magistrate has replaced
Kenney by his wife's side. Pyari Shundari has offered a reward for Kenney's head. If the magistrate's head gets cut by mistake, that will rid Kenney of his enemy easily.

Sure enough, the attack takes place in the middle of the night. There is a fierce fight. The magistrate becomes a first-hand witness. At first, the men are tenacious, but when they recognize the magistrate, they lose their nerve. They kill one policeman in self-defense and Pyari Shundari is pitched against the power of the East India Company.

Kenny's next adversary is Bhairab Babu. He is not interested in fighting with lathiylas. He is determined to outwit the clever Englishman. Kenney means to take advantage of the Sunset Law to turn Bhairab Babu's lands forfeit to the state. He plans to intercept and rob the revenue on its way to the government coffers.

Relatively at ease, Kenny's thoughts now turn to more pleasurable things. He turns his wife's mind back to England and suggests a trip home. After she leaves, he spends three whole days in his bedroom. Although people get the mistaken notion that he is missing his wife, Kenney has a new liaison. Maina has been installed in Mrs. Kenney's room and Jocky has become a favourite of his dread master. All the other employees at Neelkuthi try to get into the good books of the master by pleasing Jocky. His homestead is enriched with fancy buildings and livestock and Kenney personally encourages him to take a second wife.

Jocky renews links with a kin residing in Shundarpur, Pyari Shundari's village. At first it seems as if Jocky is merely carrying out the will of his master, but Maina begins to suspect foul play. She warns her husband of the consequences of double-crossing Kenney, but Jocky has become overly confident.

Meer Sahib becomes gradually ill. Kenney comes to visit his friend, sees Shah Golam trying to force some medicinal substance into him and suspects that he is being poisoned. His intervention and treatment saves Meer Sahib's life. Kenney
warns his friend to be wary of the young man and is duly warned about the intelligence of Bhairab Babu.

Jocky's greed passes all bounds. He accepts Pyari Shundari's bribe of five hundred rupees and rich gifts for an unspoken service. Maina warns him again. And then she complains of a pain in her abdomen and sends Jocky to fetch medicine from Kenney. A neighbour comes to comfort her and communicates to her the rumours that have spread in the village. Jocky is known to be impotent, but his wife exhibits all the signs of carrying a child. Maina does not answer but her tearful silence gives away the truth. When Jocky returns with the medicine, she takes an overdose and dies.

Mrs. Kenney is completely disillusioned by "Home." She hates the egalitarian values of England and longs to return to her position of privilege at Neelkuthi.

Pyari Shundari is ruined by litigation. She is barely able to save her estate, but she loses all her trusted men. They are either jailed or transported to penal islands.

Meer Sahib goes to visit his sister at Showli. Before leaving, he hands over his remaining deed to Shah Golam. He never returns to his estate as master.

Kenney grieves bitterly for Maina. His spirit is broken. Mrs. Kenney returns from England to find her husband a changed man.

Jocky's second wife reproaches him harshly for betraying Maina. Pyari Shundari's agent pushes him to do the job for which he has accepted her bribe.

As a favoured servant, Jocky has access to all the rooms at Neelkuthi. He slips into the dining room and mixes poison into the tea-pot, but fails to put back the lid properly. Sanaullah suspects something is wrong and informs his master. Kenney dips a piece of bread in the tea and offers it to his dog. In an hour, the poor creature dies in great torment. Kenney sends his men to fetch Jocky and raze his home to the ground. He finally turns him over to the magistrate, who sends him into exile.
Bhairab Babu is also a patron of art and music, but his is a subdued, classic taste as opposed to the raucous and sensual taste of Meer Sahib. It corresponds to the unperturbability of his nature. When the time comes to transport the government tax to town, Bhairab Babu devices an elaborate arrangement. Large bags of gold are attached to both ends of seven or eight sturdy poles, and these are carried on the shoulders of as many stalwart bearers. A large group of men accompany them for added protection. On the way, a Vaishnab beggar, joins them. He is actually Kenney's informer. He sings apparently harmless songs to amuse his companions whenever they stop to rest, but they are signals to the rest of Kenny's men who are stalking them from a distance. At the appointed time, the final signal is given and the raid is successfully executed.

When the bags are opened in Kenney's presence, they are seen to contain nothing besides vast quantities of lead. Bhairab Babu has managed to trick Kenney with an elaborate show and send his revenue before sundown on an alternative route. Not only that, he makes a complaint in the magistrate's court about the robbery and demands restitution. He wins the case. In the courtroom, Bhairab Babu reprimands Kenny for the tyranny he has practised on the poor villagers and then gives him back the fourteen hundred rupees he has had to pay as reparation. Kenny acknowledges the superior intelligence of his rival and admits defeat.

Meer Sahib returns from Showli but Shah Golam and Debi Prasad do not allow his boat to dock at Shawnta. He is too indolent to put up a fight. He wanders around for six months and then marries Munshi Zeenatullah's daughter, Bibi Daulatunnessa, who is a rich heiress. She is the author's mother and a large portion of the rest of the book concentrates on idealizing her.

Meer Sahib has not overcome his vices and now squanders Daulatunnessa's wealth on dancers, courtesans and idle companions. He even dishonours his wife by
keeping a mistress, Rupashi, in her own home. This same Rupashi takes the help of a maid to poison Daulatunnessa, until she sickens and dies.

The peasants finally see the wisdom of uniting against their common enemy, the cruel owner of Neelkuthi. Shah Golam leads the local Indigo Revolt, and Kenny is humbled by a labour boycott on his plantation. It is demonstrated quite forcefully that all these years he has actually derived his power from the same people he has tyrannized. Ill, lonely and deserted, the big man dies a tragic death.
The heroine of the novel is Anwara, a young motherless girl of uncommon beauty and accomplishment. She is pious and well-read, and her behaviour is exemplary at all times and to all people. When the novel starts, Anwara is seen at the riverside performing her ablutions for the morning prayer. On a boat nearby sits a young man reciting from the Quran. Anwara listens enraptured and is soon joined by her friend, Hamida. Now the young man overhears the two girls conversing. He learns about Anwara's unkind stepmother and about her intended marriage. Just before Anwara enters the house, she turns back and their eyes meet. This extraordinary meeting gives both a sense of being tied by a special destiny.

The young man, Nurul Islam, is an employee of a jute company and has come to Modhupur to select and buy the best specimens he can find of the golden fibre. He comes to the house of Bhuiyan Sahib, Anwara's father, to inspect his jute and learns that his daughter has suddenly fallen ill. Nurul has some knowledge of homeopathy, and in the absence of a better doctor, offers to help her with his medicine. When he lays eyes on his patient, he is thrilled to find that she is the same girl he has seen from his boat and takes this as a divine sign that they are meant for one another. On the pretext of applying a cold compress to her head, he cuts off a strand of Anwara's long hair and takes it away with him.

At the instigation of his jealous wife, Anwara's father arranges for her to marry a rich but low-bred man. Anwara's grandmother understands the girl's weakness for Nurul Islam and tries unsuccessfully to make her son change his mind. However, a
terrible storm and other unpropitious signs on the day of the formal engagement scare Bhuiyan Sahib into breaking the match. A few days later, a chance meeting between Nurul Islam and Amjad Hossain (Halima's husband) leads to Anwara's marriage with the former. Amjad suddenly falls ill and Nurul takes him home and nurses him back to health. When Amjad's father comes to fetch him, he negotiates the marriage formalities and soon after Nurul and Anwara are married.

After the wedding, Anwara moves to Belta. Here, but she is well-loved by Nurul's widowed aunt, but his step-mother becomes her new source of torment. The former had intended Nurul for her brother's daughter, and resents Anwara bitterly. She teaches her daughter Saleha to malign Anwara's parents, knowing that this would hurt the poor girl most of all. When Nurul learns about this, he reprimands Saleha and openly tells his stepmother how displeased he is with her attitude. The latter gets into a rage and the very next day divides the family property in half and moves away with her daughter, Saleha.

In order to win back her brother's support, Nurul's stepmother marries her daughter to her brother's son, Khadem, who turns out to be a profligate. One day, Khadem happens to boast about Anwara's beauty among his many dissolute friends. Fired by curiosity, a friend named Abbas persuades Khadem to take him to his house and let him see her from a hidden spot behind the house.

From the moment Abbas sets his eyes on her, he resolves to possess her. Since Anwara never steps out of her house alone, he bribes Durga (a corrupt Vaishnab woman) to find a way to lure her outside. A little before this time, Anwara's husband suddenly becomes ill with a mysterious lung disorder. As Durga bides her time, Nurul's illness gets progressively worse, until it almost seems certain that he will die. Anwara begins to be overwhelmed with despair, and this is when Durga closes in with her plan.
She tells the young, distraught wife that the only way she can save her husband is by feeding him the juice of a rare plant, which can only be obtained by a midnight ritual at the village cremation site. Anwara's simple religious belief revolts at the idea of pagan rituals, but concern for her husband supercedes all other considerations. She agrees to let Durga guide her to the dreaded spot in the middle of the night. According to plans laid from beforehand, Abbas and his friends seize Anwara as soon as she sets foot outside. The faith of a chaste Muslim wife miraculously saves her from dishonour. The deputy magistrate, coincidentally riding along the same road with Amjad Hossain, happens to come upon the palanquin bearing the unconscious body of Anwara. The rascals are arrested and the virtuous woman is restored to her home. The depth of her sacrifice causes another miracle; Nurul Islam's recovery sets in the same night.

The story of Anwara's abduction is gossiped around the country, and even though most people believe in her innocence, a few make prejudicial remarks. One evening, Nurul Islam overhears some of his subordinate staff saying that no woman who has once fallen into the clutches of Abbas, for however short a time, can have escaped violation. The unhappy husband is torn by doubt and stricken by his own lack of trust. His inner torment makes him unmindful of his work, and the same office employees who vilify Anwara's name manage to steal his key and rob the company safe of eight thousand rupees. Nurul interprets this calamity as just punishment meted out by Allah for his having doubted his virtuous wife.

While her husband is in jail, Anwara herself becomes an instrument in apprehending the real criminals. Pressed by economic hardship, she is reduced to selling her valuables. One day, a fisherman's wife tries to buy an expensive silk saree from her. This arouses her suspicion and she informs Amjad about this, who in turn informs the police. The captured fisherman tells the story of how he recovered stolen treasure from the pond outside the jute office; he also identifies the real criminals.
Nurul is released from jail, and he asks forgiveness of his wife for having doubting her.

With the compensation he receives from the government, he is able to leave his job and set himself up as an independent jute merchant. He becomes so prosperous that Anwara's parents become envious of him. Nurul happens to carry a huge amount of cash to Modhupur for a business transaction. He asks Anwara's stepmother to put away the money in a safe place; she plans to murder Nurul in his sleep and acquire his wealth. A maid overhears this conversation and informs Anwara; that night she makes her husband sleep with her in the nursery. Her stepbrother ironically takes Nurul's place in the guest-room, and is killed by his own mother.

Nurul Islam's business continues to thrive. He builds a large house and a mosque, and grows into an important person in the community. Anwara brings his stepmother back to live in the big house. They have a large celebration and feast the whole village. All their relatives and friends rejoice with them.
APPENDIX-C

PLOT-SUMMARY: KAZI ABDUL WADUD, NADIBAKKHEY (ON THE HEART OF THE RIVER):

The novel opens with the innocent attachment of two children at play. Eleven-year-old Lalu sits still trying to catch fish, while six-year-old Moti keeps pouring water down a small hole trying to force out a crab hiding inside. She walks repeatedly to the pond's edge to fill her little pitcher and suddenly she falls in. Lalu dives after her and for a while it seems that both of them will drown. A farmer, Kalu Khan, working among his sugarcanes hears their screams and rescues both children. They have always been close but from this day onwards, Lalu begins to feel a bond for Moti that he is unable to shake off for the rest of his life.

Moti's father, Jameer Sheikh, is filled with trepidation when he comes home and hears of the accident. He has already lost two children and tells his nephew Lalu not to take her along on his adventures. Lalu himself is very protective towards her but it is not easy to keep Moti away from him. A few days later, all the village children gather in a Hafiz Chowdhury's mango grove, where they are allowed to pick fruits dropped by the season's first big storm. It is a fun-filled event for them and Lalu does not have the heart to leave Moti behind. He watches over her jealously, as she runs after the falling mangoes. Moti and another little girl, Puthi, chase after one large mango, and as soon as Moti picks it up, Puthi begins to cry. Her brother, Dukhey, snatches the fruit out of Moti's hand and gives it to Puthi. Lalu runs up and snatches it back, and the two boys fight until Lalu comes away a winner.
In five more years these childhood games give way to more serious pursuits. Lalu is now a strong agile youth and works in the fields with Moti's father. They walk back one evening to Jameer Sheikh's house and sit down to rest, while Moti waves a fan over them. Her parents talk about her marriage. Moti's mother wishes for a rich groom, but her father expresses his desire that Moti will be married to Lalu and stay near her parents all her life. These words seem to transform the entire world for the two young people. Their inner excitement and joy make them awkward with each other. Lalu returns home with a new sense of his importance.

For the next two years, Lalu begins to work doubly hard to make himself worthy of Moti's hand. But a peasant's life is controlled by natural calamities. He loses all his crops when his fields are flooded and both his oxen sicken and die. He has to find food for the whole year and earn enough money to prepare for next year's harvest. He has no choice but to go away and work in other fields. He accompanies a group of young men to the rich farming district of Bakherganj. He departs with much sadness but also with a lot of hope.

Moti is also troubled by Lalu's absence. She can only count to twenty and knows that two times twenty days have to pass before Lalu can come home. Jameer Sheikh makes up his mind to arrange their wedding immediately on his return. A chance circumstance changes the entire situation. Fatik Mondai, son of Erfan Mondal of the adjoining village, happens to see Moti on his way to a relative's house, and proposes to marry her. The Mondai family is prosperous and owns more than a hundred acres of land; for Moti's mother this is a dream come true.

When the matchmaker arrives to finalize the wedding, Lalu's mother reminds Moti's mother of her dead husband's wish to unite their two children. She also mentions Lalu's deep affection for the girl. Now that her daughter has a rich suitor, Moti's mother scornfully rejects the idea of having Lalu as a son-in-law. Jameer Sheikh, however, is filled with foreboding. He remembers his promise to his dead
and dear friend and fears that, unless he is forgiven himself, this breach of promise will bring misfortune upon his daughter.

Moti's mother spends lavishly for the wedding. She takes out a large portion of her year's stock of rice and prepares simple delicacies for the guests. She makes her husband slaughter two goats for the wedding-feast. Neighbours, young and old, swarm to her house to help with the work and share in the festivities. At the centre of all this joyous bustle, Moti mourns for Lalu and dreads her coming union with a man who is no more than a name to her.

In Bakherganj, Lalu is filled with a strange foreboding and is anxious to return home. He has worked hard planting the paddy, but he can barely wait now to bring in the harvest. His friends force him to remain, and after a month and a half they all return home together.

Lalu does not bother to pick up his share of the rice, and runs to Moti's house. Moti's mother informs him of her marriage. Lalu enters his own home a broken man. His mother comes home from a neighbour's house and is stunned to discover the silent depth of her son's grief for Moti. A host of feelings—concern for her son, jealousy for his devotion to Moti, humiliation on being spurned by her parents—vie with each other in the old woman's breast as she looks after Lalu and goes about her chores silently.

Moti is envied by all the womenfolk in Ilishmarir-Char, her new home. Her husband, Fatik, is an amiable pleasure-loving man and his present fancy is fixated on his bride. While most peasant women have to do with the bare necessities of life, Fatik buys her fine clothes, soaps and fragrant oils. Fatik's mother is sorely vexed by his infatuation. Instead of being happy, Moti too is pained by all this attention. She feels like a stranger in her husband's home is only happy when her father comes to visit her.
Jameer Sheikh suddenly dies and Moti loses this last link with her past life. Ever since his return, Lalu has avoided Moti's parents but now that her father is dead he feels obliged to look after her mother. He starts to till Jameer Sheikh's fields and bring in the crop to his wife. One day Moti's mother prepares some sweets and rice cakes and requests Lalu to take them over to Ilishmarir-Char. Lalu hates the prospect of meeting Fatik, but he cannot resist the temptation of seeing Moti again.

Lalu has a long, tiring walk in the sun before he can get to his destination. At first he moves on with a light heart. He tries to paint pictures in his mind of Moti's present life. Gradually his mood begins to darken as he wonders whether, as it is the custom in village homes, Moti is mistreated by her husband and his family. Perhaps her mother-in-law does not give her enough to eat. At this thought, anger wells up in his simple heart. He asks himself why he should carry such a burden in the sun, if it were not for Moti. He dashes the earthen pot to the ground and throws away the sweets and cakes to a group of vultures, and continues on his way.

Lalu is given a warm welcome by Fatik and his family. In spite of his hidden resentment, Lalu cannot help being impressed with the prosperity he sees all around and the personal courtesy that is shown to him. When he meets Moti in the evening, he can only stare in amazement; she is taller than he remembers her and, draped in finery, seems to belong to a different world. And then he looks at her pale, thin face drenched with weeping and he knows that he is still dear to her. The thought that Moti is not happy fills him with a strange contentment. He spends a wakeful night in the guestroom and, on an impulse, quite discourteously leaves before the family is awake.

Lalu returns to Gopalgaon and begins to work with new vigour. His mother is encouraged to think that she can now make him marry and start a family. To broach the subject, she first informs him that Dukhey has abandoned his mother and sister because they quarrel with his wife. She then suggests that he marry Puthi, Dukhey's
sister, since she is well-known to them and besides, it would be an act of kindness because Dukhey's mother cannot afford to find her daughter a good husband. Lalu does not answer, and his mother takes this to signify assent. She quickly finalizes plans for the wedding with Dukhey's mother, but when she questions her son about a date for the wedding, he replies that he cannot marry Puthi. He promises to find a suitable groom for her. Lalu's mother is mortified.

Lalu now takes upon himself the task of reconciling Dukhey and his mother. He calls on him and explains that it was unwise for him to leave his widowed mother and unmarried sister. Any harm to them would reflect on him, and people in the village would speak ill of his family. Dukhey is touched by Lalu's sincere intention to help him and from then on becomes a devoted friend. He returns to his family and finds his mother less inclined to fight with his wife.

At this time news reaches Gopalgaon that Fatik Mondal is seriously ill. Dukhey takes Moti's anxious mother to Ilishmarir-Char. In his last days, Fatik feels a new kind of attachment for his wife. The unspoken and ungratified love of Moti and Lalu seems to have opened an unknown world of perception for him. His sensuality is completely gone and in its stead he only feels respect and solicitude for his wife whom he has never really possessed. Moti, too, for the first time looks at him closely enough to see a heart.

When Lalu hears of Fatik's death, he sends Dukhey to Ilishmarir-Char again, this time to fetch Moti and her mother. He sees no reason for Moti to remain there now that her husband is no longer alive. He knows only too well how miserable life is for a widow in her husband's home. Fatik's mother and brothers take away Moti's jewellery and nice clothes before she leaves.

As in olden days Lalu and Moti live next to each other, but they cannot recapture the easy friendship of their childhood. Lalu cannot marry Moti without his mother's blessings; the latter remembers her humiliation on the day she had spoken to
Moti's mother about this match. She has no intention now of accepting a widow for her son's bride. But the old woman gradually falls ill and Moti nurses her diligently while Lalu is away working in his fields. Just before she dies, Lalu's mother joins the hands of the two young people.

Moti goes to visit her maternal uncles in another village. Moti's mother sends Lalu to bring her home. As they ride slowly back on Lalu's small boat, they know that all the barriers between them are gone forever.
APPENDIX-D

PLOT-SUMMARY: KAZI EMDADUL HAQUE, ABDULLAH

Abdullah, first published as a book in 1933, has a simple and realistic plot. The novel begins with the death of the protagonist's father, Waliullah. Waliullah's family is believed in the locality of Peerganj to be one chosen by God to preach religion and thus entitled to live on contributions from devotees. Abdullah, however, looks down on the family livelihood as a polite form of beggary; it has always been his intention to obtain a college degree and enter the legal profession, thereby putting an end to this shameful existence. His father's sudden death puts an end to this dream because he must now become the breadwinner of the family. His mother advises him to solicit financial help from his wealthy father-in-law, Syed Sahib, before giving up hope completely and much against his will Abdullah goes to pay him a visit.

Syed Sahib of Iqbalpur represents the dying Muslim aristocracy of Bengal at the turn of the twentieth century. He is conservative, ignorant, idle, arrogant and selfish and his huge, old house is a den of sloth and vanity. His older son, Abdul Malek, and only daughter, Saleha, accept his out-dated values unquestioningly but his younger son, Abdul Kader, is a progressive young man who insists on adapting to the changing socio-economic conditions under British rule. Abdullah learns from his sister and Abdul Khalek's wife, Halima, that the latter has quarrelled with his father over his education and left his home permanently. Syed Sahib, having disowned his son for presuming to learn English and look for a job, has no intention of helping his son-in-law continue his education. Rather, he advises Abdullah to take up his father's occupation.
In the village of Rasulpur resides Meer Sahib, a free-thinking and enterprising elderly man who is positioned against Syed Sahib in the novel; the plot of *Abdullah* is basically a series of struggles between the two opposing forces of progress and reactionary conservatism, represented by these two men. Contrary to the practice of genteel Muslim families, engages in commerce to increase his landed wealth. To encourage others to improve their lot by small businesses or simply to help people at times of crisis, he lends out money at a low interest. Since usury is strictly prohibited in Islam, Meer Sahib's envious relatives and neighbours use this excuse to shun his company. Many sons of these conventional families, however, look up to Meer Sahib for counsel because they recognize in him a guide to a better life. Meer Sahib is a boon to poor peasants. He renders a great community service by lending money at low interest, because most Hindu moneylenders demand an exorbitant interest on their loans and when poor peasants fail to make payment, they seize lands and other assets belonging to these defaulters.

An old farmer named Madan Ghazi in nearby Palashdanga runs into such grievous debt that his creditor, Digambar Ghose, arrives with a large band of men to take possession of his home and all his lands. Added to the calamity of losing his property is the horror of having his family shamed. For the patriarch of a Muslim family, the prospect of having his daughters forced out of their seclusion and left on the streets is too terrible to contemplate. Madan Ghazi throws himself across his threshold to prevent the disaster. Soon he hears wailing from within the house; his son, Sadeq, unable to protect the family from ruin, has jumped into the river apparently to die. This last blow is too hard for the old man and he dies instantly. Sadeq however is not dead; he swims across the river to Meer Sahib's house for help. The latter rushes to Madan Ghazi's home, repays the loan and saves his family.

Abdul Kader moves to Barihati in search of a job. Barihati is a predominantly Hindu town. The Muslim section of the town is inhabited by poor people who work
as guards and bearers in various offices. Genteel Hindus are well educated, hold respectable jobs and live in better areas. Abdul Kader finds an ally in Akbar Ali, a low-grade official in the government collectorate, but he too is obliged to reside in these shabby surroundings, because Muslims are not welcome in the better neighbourhoods. Abdul Kader braces himself to accept any meagre job and live in any quarter for the sake of becoming self-sufficient. Akbar Ali introduces him to the magistrate, Mr. Corbett, who is pleased to see a zamindar's son trying to work for a living. Even though better-qualified Hindu candidates are available, Corbett decides to appoint Abdul Kader as an apprentice Sub-Registrar.

Meanwhile, Abdullah returns home with his sister. Halima's father-in-law did not allow her to visit her dying father, on the pretext that he could not arrange for a proper travelling companion. She comes now to console her grieving mother. However, Syed Sahib declines to let his daughter, Saleha, go and live with her husband because she is not used to any hardship. Abdullah now has no source of income. His mother offers to sell what little jewellery she has; Halima offers to lend her brother her own small savings. Abdullah accepts the loan and plans to go to Calcutta to look for a job. Just before he leaves, he receives a letter from Abdul Kader bearing the good news of his appointment.

Abdullah passes a few fruitless months in Calcutta. When Halima's loan is almost depleted, Abdul Kader writes to his brother-in-law about a forty-rupees-a-month job opening at the government school at Barihati. The advertisement is specially for a Muslim undergraduate. Abdullah immediately proceeds to Barihati and calls on the school headmaster. The Hindu headmaster does not like the idea of appointing a Muslim teacher, and tries to desist Abdullah from applying for such a lowly job by appealing to his family prestige and flattering him with better job prospects. Being a sensible man, Abdullah pays no attention to these words; he puts in his application and is duly appointed.
While Abdullah and Abdul Kader are struggling to make ends meet, there is a great feast in Iqbalpur. The occasion is the visit of Haji Barkatullah of Sharifabad, father-in-law of Abdul Malek. He is a rich man and, having recently returned from pilgrimage to Mecca, he has come to impress Syed Sahib with his princely, pious presence. It is whispered around that Barkatullah's affectations spring from a need to cover up his dubious origin. It is said that his grandfather used to be a humble police constable. One day, while he was at his ablutions for the dawn prayer, he chanced to discover a murder. The murderer was an affluent bandit and, caught with the dead body, he offered the policeman a huge bribe of one thousand rupees. The man he sent to fetch the money brought back a fortune in gold by mistake. Barkatullah's grandfather bought an estate with the treasure and became a zamindar overnight. Now his family is one of the most revered in the vicinity.

Barkatullah chides Syed Sahib for neglecting his proper duties, particularly for failing to finish construction on the mosque he began to build some years ago. Syed Sahib's family pride is wounded. He has already diminished his assets considerably by selling pieces of his property whenever he has seen any need to spend money. Now he decides to sell some more of his land to complete the project. To save his face before relatives, he wants to do this secretly. A shrewd Hindu landowner, Bholanath Sarkar, takes advantage of this secrecy and offers only seven thousand rupees for lands worth many more times that value. When Syed Sahib goes to the Sub-Registrar's office to transfer the deeds, he discovers that the official is no other than his own younger son. Abdul Kader persuades his father not to sell the land; instead he takes a loan of three thousand rupees from Bholanath Sarkar, against those same lands, promising to pay back sixty rupees month including interest. Syed Sahib now has the means to finish his mosque, complete with marble floor, pillars, stone carvings and minarets.
Abdullah and Abdul Kader look in vain for a house to rent in Barihati. The former lives in the school's boarding house for Muslim students, while the latter lives with Akbar Ali. Two landlords promise to let out their houses to them; one, a Muslim employee at the civil court, is pressed by his superiors to rent it to one of their relatives and the other is forbidden by the local people to allow a Muslim tenant within a Hindu neighbourhood.

Abdullah is more successful at work. He is popular with his students, and even his colleagues give him grudging appreciation. When the Divisional School Inspector comes to see the school, Abdullah pays him a visit. He conveys to him the request of the local Anjuman that a Moulvi be appointed by the school to teach Arabic and Persian to the Muslim students. The British official is impressed with Abdullah's comportment and his arguments, and gives him proper assurance.

By now, Syed Sahib's mosque is complete and there is a huge celebration at Ikbalpur to mark its opening. The entire family and near relatives are gathered in the ancient homestead. Abdullah arrives with his mother and sister, and Abdul Kader comes also. The gap between the older and younger generations seems to have widened even further. Halima has accepted many wrongs in the past but now she is filled with dismay to see her mother-in-law lavish attention on rich relatives and blatantly insult those who are less fortunate. Rabeya, a neighbour and relative, is not allowed to sit and eat with the family.

Two days later, Halima falls ill. Syed Sahib does not believe in doctors and only an old medicine-man is allowed to treat her. Her condition gets worse and Abdullah insists on bringing in a qualified doctor. After a long struggle, Syed Sahib gives his consent. Debnath Sarkar, the Assistant Surgeon of Barihati Hospital, is invited to attend Halima. A comic scene develops when he arrives to check his patient. Halima is kept hidden behind a curtain the entire time. Abdullah takes his sister's temperature, and answers the doctor's questions about her symptoms. But
when the time comes for the doctor to check her heartbeat, Syed Sahib refuses to allow it. In desperation, the doctor attaches the stethoscope to his ears and asks that someone else hold the other end against the patient’s chest. Abdullah instructs Saleha to do so but she is too inept to hold the instrument properly. All the women in the house take turns but the only sound that the doctor hears is the shuffling of hands and rustling of clothes. The doctor requests Abdullah to hold the other end, but he tells the doctor that while Halima stays in this house even he cannot touch his sister.

So the second challenge for Abdullah is to remove his sister to Barihati. Syed Sahib refuses to consider such a preposterous suggestion, and the idea that she might stay in Akbar Ali’s house enrages him beyond reason. When Debnath Sarkar hears of this objection, he offers to vacate his own apartment and let Halima move in with her family. Abdullah now pushes aside Syed Sahib’s objections and leaves for Barihati with Halima, Saleha and his mother. Once they are settled in the doctor’s apartment, Abdullah is able to exert his will. He insists that the doctor should be allowed to examine the patient as necessary, and both his mother and Abdul Kader have to give in to his decision. The doctor diagnoses Halima’s illness to be pneumonia and prescribes some injections.

Abdul Kader goes to Calcutta to procure the medicine, and when he returns he finds that his father has arrived from Iqbalpur. Syed Sahib reprimands his son and son-in-law for dishonouring his family by exposing Halima in front the doctor. Now he is adamant that he will not allow Halima to bare her skin and take an injection and resolves to take her back with him. Debnath Sarkar then suggests that Abdullah can push the injection in his stead, and shows him what to do. Finally, Halima is able to receive proper treatment for her illness. Syed Sahib cannot endure the free mixing of classes among the Muslim community in Barihati and he can put up less with breaches of respectable conduct in members of his own family. He leaves in anger,
and takes Saleha away with him. The same day Rabeya arrives with her husband and takes up the responsibility of nursing Halima back to health.

With proper treatment and adept nursing, Halima recovers quickly. This happy time coincides with Eid-ul-Fitr, and the family celebrates with a thanksgiving feast particularly in honour of Debnath Sarkar. They are full of admiration for the progressive values of the doctor. Whereas other Hindus shun the presence of Muslims, the doctor has no scruple about eating in the company of his Muslim friends.

After the holidays, Abdullah is transferred to a school in Rasulpur and promoted to the post of headmaster. He takes leave of Akbar Ali, Abdul Kader and his devoted students and rides a train to his new post. After a few mishaps on the road, Abdullah arrives at the residence of Meer Sahib. There he finds Maleka, who has lost her husband and has come to live with her uncle. Meer Sahib tells Abdullah that he intends Maleka to remarry and discourses at length against the social prejudice against such marriages.

Now that he has a better job, Abdullah wishes to bring his wife to stay with him. With that intention he first goes to his mother to ask for her permission. Abdullah’s mother is not willing to let Saleha go alone and decides to go and live with them at Rasulpur. Syed Sahib does not allow to Saleha go at all, because he does not approve of Abdullah’s unconventional ways. He particularly opposes her travelling on the train with diverse strangers.

Abdul Kader is transferred to a better post at Manzilpur, and he takes Halima to live with him. He tries to do some community work but encounters stiff opposition. His plan to start a madrasah where English, Bengali and mathematics would be taught besides the regular religious instruction shocks the society elders. Abdul Kader satisfies himself with giving private tuition to willing students.
With the approach of the rainy season the boats begin to ply again and Abdullah plans to bring Saleha home during the puja holidays. But this time tragedy strikes. Saleha had developed complications in her pregnancy and, having failed to receive proper medical care, dies before Abdullah is able to see her again. Her death inflicts a double blow to him. In Muslim law, the dowry is payable to the bride and can be claimed by her family when she is dead; now, Syed Sahib demands the twenty-five thousand rupees dowry from Abdullah. Abdullah's parents had conceded to this large amount because, in normal circumstances, the dowry is not actually claimed by anyone and genteel families often name high figures to enhance their social prestige. Despite hard work and thrifty habits, the young man is almost ruined. He collects his savings, mortgages whatever land he has and borrows the rest of the money from Meer Sahib. Meer Sahib spends a large portion of this amount to celebrate his grandson's circumcision.

Shortly afterwards, Abdul Kader dies of tuberculosis. Syed Sahib does not scruple to lay a claim on his five thousand rupees life insurance policy. He spends this amount on boosting his social image and buys a rich wedding gift for a friend's son. Then he too dies of old age, and Halima and her children become wholly dependent on Abdullah.

Meer Sahib plans a marriage between his niece Maleka and Altaf, one of the many young men whom he has supported through college because their fathers were not willing to do so. Now that his education is complete, Altaf's father wishes to reap its benefits. He wants his son to be appointed as a Deputy Collector; when the young man becomes a Sub-Deputy, instead, his father blames Meer Sahib for making him false promises. On the day of the wedding, Meer Sahib is informed by a letter that Altaf will not marry his niece. This ingratitude, concern for Maleka and humiliation before the wedding guests cause Meer Sahib to fall seriously ill. Abdullah comes
forward to marry Maleka, whom he has always admired, and becomes custodian of Meer Sahib's vast property.