

BELONGING AND NOT BELONGING:

Understanding India in novels by Paul Scott, Ruth Praver Jhabvala
and
V S Naipaul

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is essentially about the "how" and "why" of the Indian experience as documented in novels by Paul Scott, Ruth Praver Jhabvala and V S Naipaul. The study points to the difficulty of arriving at any conclusive definition of the country and its people. I show that differences in attitudes, responses or behaviour are both overt and subtle, and depend upon whether the writer or the character identifies with the situation or community with which he or she interacts. It is the individual's sense of belonging or not belonging to his or her own group - be this along racial, cultural or gender lines - that accounts for the differing perspectives evident in these novels. The points-of-view of the outsider and the insider can therefore be seen as mutual comments upon the other.

Since the struggle between belonging and not belonging becomes acute when the old meets the new, focus is centred on communities experiencing change. These include the British in India, West-Indian Indians and westernised Indians. Despite their differences, all three communities share similar reasons for either an acceptance or rejection of the 'Other'. The thesis argues that the need for emotional stability compels allegiance to the traditional group, while the desire for individuality encourages surrender to the new. The former nurtures a sense of belonging while, it is argued, that the latter is perceived as the hallmark of those who do not belong. Tensions arise when both these needs demand to be met. What I show to be ironic in this struggle between belonging and not belonging is that those things which individuals overtly reject are often unexpressed parts of their personal psyche. The barrier between "them" and "us" is therefore very fragile.

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List of AbbreviationsNovels by Paul Scott:

<u>CSF</u> or <u>The Corrida</u>	=	<u>The Corrida of San Feliu</u>
<u>MW</u>	=	<u>Mark of the Warrior</u>
<u>AS</u>	=	<u>The Alien Sky</u>
<u>Quartet</u>	=	<u>The Raj Quartet</u>
<u>JC</u> or <u>The Jewel</u>	=	<u>The Jewel in the Crown</u>
<u>TS</u>	=	<u>The Towers of Silence</u>
<u>DS</u>	=	<u>The Day of the Scorpion</u>
<u>DSp</u>	=	<u>A Division of the Spoils</u>
<u>SO</u>	=	<u>Staying On</u>

Novels by Ruth Praver Jhabvala

<u>EI</u> or <u>Esmond</u>	=	<u>Esmond in India</u>
<u>BP</u>	=	<u>A Backward Place</u>
<u>HH</u>	=	<u>The Householder</u>
<u>Gurudeva</u>	=	<u>The Adventures of Gurudeva</u> by Seerpersad Naipaul

Works by V S Naipaul

<u>SE</u>	=	<u>The Suffrage of Elvira</u>
<u>MysM</u>	=	<u>The Mystic Masseur</u>
<u>Mr Biswas</u>	=	<u>A House for Mr Biswas</u>
<u>AD</u>	=	<u>An Area of Darkness</u>
<u>FC</u>	=	<u>Finding the Centre</u>

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INTRODUCTION

The paradoxical experience of both belonging and not belonging has always been a part of tribal consciousness in North East India despite the local peoples' strong sense of kinship with the land. While the North Eastern hills are politically part of the greater Indian land mass, their peoples are culturally isolated from the Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist identities which dominate the rest of India. The widespread acceptance of Christian monotheistic doctrines which bear a closer affinity to local religious belief than the superficially apparent polytheistic nature of Hinduism, served to further widen the gulf between this part of India and the rest of the country, reinforcing the concept of "Them" and "Us". From his home in the hills the Khasi therefore both literally and metaphorically 'looks down' upon the peoples in the plains. The bravado implicit in this attitude however conceals a predicament that disturbs the complacency of isolation.

It is my personal history as a Khasi that has dictated my approach to the novels included in this study. It is in the works of Paul Scott, Ruth Praver Jhabvala and V S Naipaul dealing with communities struggling to achieve equilibrium amidst cultural change that I see the reflection of a personal struggle to come to terms with a changing world, while retaining a measure of cultural identification with some part of India, as seen in the novels of R K Narayan.

This study primarily explores the relationship between those who belong and those who do not, as exemplified in the novels of Paul Scott, Ruth Praver Jhabvala and V S Naipaul. It is within the framework of this relationship that we examine both the need to belong and the urge to remain distinct from the dominant group. As a sense of

belonging and not belonging becomes acute in situations involving cultural change, focus is centred upon communities which have experienced various degrees of displacement. The first is the western community in India including the British, who ruled India until 1947, and Europeans who are either visitors or permanent residents of the country. The second is 'the westernised-Indian community whose lifestyle is the product of both traditional and western influences. The third community is that of the dispossessed Trinidadian-Hindu community in the West Indies, in whom the attenuation of inherited cultural identity has been brought about by migration and a vulnerability to western influence.

The experiences of the westerner are documented in the works of Scott and Jhabvala. The predicament of the westernised-Indian is recognised by all three authors, while Naipaul deals exclusively with the Trinidadian Hindu community. In order to show how westernisation and dispossession have altered the Indian's viewpoint, references are made to the works of R K Narayan, whose novels describing the lives of the ordinary Southern Indian, trace change but still offer the rooted insider's point-of-view. The differing perspectives which emerge can be attributed to the struggle or the absence of a struggle between belonging and not belonging, not only in the characters, but also in the writers themselves.

This thesis begins with a summary of British preconceptions of India - a knowledge of which is crucial to an understanding of British/western attitudes to the country. It is because of the multiplicity of western responses to India and the consequent inadequacy of presenting a single narrative viewpoint, that Scott makes use of a multi-angled narrative technique to unfold the sequence of events in The Raj Quartet. This technique also takes into account

the different shades of opinion amongst the Indians. Consequently, life under the Raj emerges as a multi-faceted entity where conflicts and contradictions agitate ponderous complacencies.

Where the Anglo-Indian community is concerned, the various accounts reveal the presence of those who belong to the group because they uphold the official party line, as well as those who challenge the status quo. For instance, in Brigadier Reid and Robin White the Deputy Commissioner, we have examples of characters already made familiar by E M Forster in A Passage to India. Reid's concept of the British role in India strongly echoes sentiments voiced by Forster's Ronny Heaslop, who believes that the British are in "India to do justice and keep the peace ... I am out here to hold this country by force ... We don't intend to be pleasant" (pp:62-63). In contrast, Robin White is reminiscent of Fielding who is regarded as a "disruptive force ... happiest in the give-and-take of a private conversation. The world, he believed, is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of goodwill plus culture and intelligence ... He had no racial feeling" (pp:73-74).

In making the above distinction between those who want to be seen to belong to the group and outsiders whose attitudes set them apart, Scott suggests a close link between the literal and the figurative. What he sees as a feature distinguishing the outsider from the group becomes an important theme in the Quartet while possessing universal relevance. Characters who cannot see what is before them or, even worse, choose not to acknowledge the evidence of their senses, are very often people with little awareness and understanding not only of India but ultimately of themselves. Such people like Brigadier Reid, Ronald Merrick and the minor women characters in The Raj Quartet, are generally found to belong to the group. In contrast, characters like

Daphne Manners, Robin White and Miss Crane who see what is around them are also the individuals who look within themselves. They are the outsiders who break away from the community because self-inquiry gradually leads them to question the premises and assumptions upon which their societies rest. Together they expose the vulnerabilities and ironies in the certainties which bind the group together.

What however must also be pointed out is that, although narrative sympathy in The Raj Quartet runs in favour of the outsider, who is able to see what others cannot or do not see, he or she is not infallible. However well-meaning the outsiders in Scott's novels may be, their judgement is swayed by personal experience and, ironically, they are seen to be as much the products of their social and political history as are the members of the group from which they distance themselves. An example of such a paradoxical relationship between the group and the individual, occurs in one of Scott's early novels - Johnnie Sahib, published in 1952 - testifying to Scott's early and abiding interest in such relationships. It is through the conscious and unconscious interaction between the outsider and the group that we can therefore measure the residual hold of the latter upon the individual who no longer appears to belong - an enigma which is also central to the struggle of characters in Naipaul's A House for Mr Biswas. It is because such a situation transcends social and geographical specificities that its importance is acknowledged early in the thesis.

It is to illustrate the tensions and conflicts resulting from the enforced recognition that belonging to a group is no longer sacrosanct, that the relationship between Daphne and the young Indian, Hari Kumar and public reaction to it, is examined in detail. Established as a misfit in her own society, it is not surprising that

Daphne should be attracted to another outsider - Hari Kumar. His anglicised background has alienated him from the Indian community, while his Indian origins make him unacceptable to the British community. In fact Hari Kumar is an extreme example of the nowhere man or woman - a figure which dominates a great deal of post colonial fiction. By refusing to keep within the designated boundaries of the group, Hari and Daphne undermine the inherent power of social taboos to keep communities apart and distinct. By refusing to act like those who belong, the outsider is therefore seen as a threat to the cohesiveness of the group who wish to present a united front.

What The Raj Quartet points out is that the need for an inviolate cultural identity is especially important to the British, aware of their vulnerability as a minority community in India, and it is in this context that one understands how white segregation and conservatism can be the frightened reaction of any exiled community threatened by an unfamiliar and insidiously dominating environment. Examples of paranoid behaviour parading as 'civilised' behaviour can also be seen in the Hochstadts, a German couple who feature in Jhabvala's novel, A Backward Place which is set in post-independent India. This proves that the modern European mind still retains a fearful image of the Orient.

The threat to the British community materialises when Daphne Manners is raped by a gang of Indian ruffians after they have watched Hari and Daphne making love in the Bibighar Gardens. As the image of rape or what appears to be rape, has previously been used by Forster, its recurrence underlines the importance of its connotations in relation to Britain's idea of itself in India. Where the British are concerned, the horror of this incident is intensified by the fact that, as The Raj Quartet points out, the British government likes to present itself

in the personification of a caring, maternal figure. The horror of rape therefore operates on several psychological levels, and from the British point-of-view is seen as an Indian violation of the British community's benign image of itself.

White condemnation of what becomes known as the Bibighar incident, is essentially racist in nature and seen as a justification of British prejudice. However what is ironic about the strength of the verbal castigation is that it comes mainly from women whose overt hostility hides a secret fascination for the "Other". This combination of fear and fascination, seen in Scott's novels, exemplifies the paradoxical nature of western attitudes to India - a theme which is also explored by Jhabvala who, like Scott, gives particular emphasis to western female reaction to the dark races. In doing so however, both authors establish a link between the social position of women and their reaction to the threat posed by other cultures.

What is ironic about the paradoxical attitude towards Indians seen in the British community, is that it also characterised early Aryan attitudes to the dark aboriginal inhabitants of India, and influenced their behaviour as the conquering settlers in India. The strenuous effort on the part of the fair-skinned Aryans to preserve their own culture by maintaining a strict distance from the aboriginals, was in fact a means of disguising their fearful fascination for the dark natives of India. Colour prejudice which in India today is generally linked to caste, is as much an Indian failing as a western one. The Hindu's psychological horror for a black skin is graphically described in Naipaul's short story 'One out of Many' (in In A Free State). Hindu society with its emphasis on caste and colour distinctions was thus a

perfect mould for British class structures and prejudices, and helps to explain the persistence of the love-hate relationship between the two peoples.

The thesis then moves on to examine Indian communities whose lifestyles continue to be dominated by western social practices despite political independence from Britain. I begin with an examination of the Hindu community in Trinidad. Indentured by the British to work on the sugar plantations in the Trinidad, they are depicted as a community struggling to retain their ancestral customs while vulnerable to western influences. This is illustrated by examples from The Mystic Masseur, in which Naipaul shows how, like the early Aryan invaders of India, and their later successors - the British - Trinidadian-Indians also assert their inherited cultural identity, in order to counter the psychological disorientation occasioned by an unfamiliar environment. As a westernised observer, Naipaul is able to see his community in a way that it does not see itself. Detachment however does not preempt a sympathetic understanding of the predicament of those caught in a struggle between the old and the new. Pathos blends perfectly together with comedy in social portrayal by one who both belongs and does not belong to the community which he perceives as struggling between similar polarities. Ultimately however it is the west which triumphs. The protagonist Ganesh Ramsumair progresses from the status of mystic masseur to that of politician parading under the assumed name - G Ramsay Muir. Like Naipaul, Jhabvala also records the adverse effects of westernisation on the Indian's sense of identity. Westernised Indians in Jhabvala's novels perpetuate a little Raj of their own, leaving unbridged the gulf between the elitist world, originally occupied by the colonisers, and the life of the ordinary Indian. As they make up only 3% of

India's population, the proportion of westernised Indians does not seem very high. But if this figure is translated into actual numerical terms and if one considers the political and economic power they wield within the country, 3% of nearly 900 million people is not a figure to be easily dismissed.

As a western observer, Jhabvala does not belong to the anglicised community in India. But by virtue of the same fact, she is particularly equipped to recognise any signs of western emulation among Indians. She dwells at length on the Indian 'craze for foreign' - a phrase which, in An Area of Darkness, Naipaul notes Indians use about themselves with no self-irony. In her portrayal of the Dayals in Esmond in India, Jhabvala provides an example of a family whose lifestyle exemplifies an apparent careful blend of east and west, superficially providing an image of composite cultural perfection. But Jhabvala looks through this consummate exterior to expose the cultural exploitation necessary to sustain this impression of sophistication. Like Naipaul, Jhabvala makes use of discrepancies on social occasions to highlight the absurdity in the Indian's automatic recreation of the British colonial era. What differentiates the Indian community in Trinidad from westernised Indians in India, is that it is possible to detect the lack of a sycophantic attitude towards the west in Trinidad, but not in Jhabvala's account of modern India. It is through a concentration on external detail and an exploration of the characters' obsession with appearance, that Jhabvala builds up a picture of a class of people who live life solely on the superficial level as they move between two cultural worlds - a predicament of which they are totally unaware.

An irony which the thesis then points out is that, although the 'craze for foreign' is more overt among Indian communities, examples from Jhabvala and Scott's novels show that there is a corresponding 'craze for foreign' in the westerner's approach to India. It is this which explains why the Englishman, Esmond Stillwood turns out to be the mirror image of the Indian Har Dayal in the use both men make of the 'other' culture to enhance their image of themselves. Similarly, the Hochstadts 'involvement' with India in A Backward Place, is solely due to an egoistic desire to project their intellectual knowledge of the country. There are however less exploitative reasons for the presence of other westerners in India. Characters like Daphne Manners, Sister Ludmila, and Miss Crane in Scott's novels, and Judy, Etta and Clarissa in Jhabvala's A Backward Place gravitate towards India, because literally and metaphorically they are homeless in Europe. As they no longer feel they belong in Europe, India fulfills a deep-seated need. But for some of them, fulfilment proves illusory for it is seen to be the lesser of two evils. Theirs turns out to be a double exile - physically exiled from their native lands they cannot at the same time feel emotionally at home in India. Like Scott's Hari Kumar, they are forever doomed to inhabit the nowhere land between two worlds.

The poignancy of a plight such as theirs, is movingly evoked in Scott's Staying On, documenting the life of the Smalleys, an English couple who, socially, had never been on a par with British Society under the Raj. They are the social outcasts who cling to their own social group in order to stake out some kind of identity. Unlike many of their acquaintances however, their financial circumstances compel them to stay on in India after independence eking out an existence which, now more than ever, cannot recall the glories of a bygone era.

It is through a description of the shabby surroundings in which the characters often find themselves, that Scott, like Jhabvala, conveys the despair of those for whom India becomes the burial ground of bright hopes. The absence of choice in the lives of both Jhabvala and Scott's characters, strongly suggests the element of Fate, and it is this which links the preceding discussion to the concluding chapters of the thesis. It is in the individual's struggle against this powerful but invisible force, personified by society and the family seen in some of Jhabvala's novels and short stories, and especially in Naipaul's A House for Mr Biswas, that the crisis of belonging and not belonging hitherto expressed in cultural terms, is dramatised on a smaller arena although with similar unsettling effect.

Before examining Naipaul's, Jhabvala's and Narayan's portrayal of the extended family however, it is useful to compare and contrast their representations of poverty - a subject that one cannot ignore in any discussion of India. The reason for what may appear to be a digression is to show how the similarities and differences in authorial perceptions of poverty, can also be seen in the ways these writers approach social and family issues dealt with in the succeeding chapter. The discussion on poverty therefore invites the reader to observe the particular criteria guiding each author's representation of Indian family life. Close attention to narrative detail reveals the contrast between Naipaul's bleak vision of poverty amongst Indians and Narayan's accepting attitude of similar situations. Rooted in Indian soil, Narayan's non-judgemental stance untroubled by foreign standards is that of an insider who also possesses the ability to transform any stereo-typical responses to these situations. In her earlier work,

Jhabvala's assessment comprises a combination of both these approaches, defining her status as the sympathetic outsider - a position she maintains in her early portrayal of the extended family. However, what seems to be a distinct virtue in Narayan's work also turns out to be a limitation. The soothing effect of his transcending vision of poverty fails to address the real causes of social poverty, so clearly perceived by the two outsiders. This chapter recalls how the wish to see or not to see, discussed in relation to the British view of India, is dependent on whether the writer belongs or does not belong to the community he or she is writing about.

It is Narayan's sense of belonging that makes him categorically affirm the nurturing qualities of the Indian joint family. However, Naipaul's status as the dispossessed Indian as much as his personal experience, leads him not only to challenge this assertion, but the idea that Hindu society is primarily a male-dominated institution. Part of the reason for Mr Biswas's tussle with the Tulsi family, is the powerful role of the maternal figure who incidentally also features in Jhabvala's novels and short stories, but not in Narayan's work. It is in A House for Mr Biswas, more so than in Jhabvala's fiction, that the strong matriarchal figure demands and receives implicit allegiance, especially from the daughters. It is in this novel that we see 'tribalism' in women at its most acute.

In addition to cultural and geographical displacement, Mr Biswas also has to contend with the disorienting effects of a matriarchal set-up that seeks to devalue the position of the husband/son-in-law, whose subsequent resistance to Tulsi domination merely helps to confirm their opinion of him as the outsider. Mr Biswas finds himself having to confront not only his mother-in-law but all the other female members of the Tulsi family, who are unwilling to acknowledge his

individuality. While gender warfare celebrating female triumph is unmistakably overt in A House for Mr Biswas, Jhabvala's Esmond in India and Get Ready for Battle deal with the more subtle ramifications of female domination. This accounts for the difference between Mr Biswas and those male characters ensnared in similar engagements in Jhabvala's fiction. The latter are blissfully unaware of being manipulated and metaphorically emasculated. Yet in drawing attention to the subjugated male, both Naipaul and Jhabvala do not suggest that female solidarity has positive implications. In fact, as far as Jhabvala's novels are concerned, there is little evidence to support a sense of female togetherness. Many of her women characters tend to be loners although the author does see why a strong, supportive female network is an important social feature in India.

Unlike Naipaul, Jhabvala therefore does discover favorable aspects in Indian joint family life which is indicated through a contrast, both overt and implicit, between western and Indian family life in A Backward Place. Moreover she articulates the unspoken crisis of women on whom society has forced a stereo-type role, and is especially sympathetic to the painful experiences suffered by maternal figures helplessly caught in the transition from old traditional ways to modern westernised lifestyles.

Thus where both their male and female characters are concerned, both Jhabvala and Naipaul locate their individual experiences in terms of a need to belong or not to belong to a group. The painful consequences of such a conflict can best be seen in A House for Mr Biswas. The irony of Mr Biswas's struggle against the Tulsis is that while he does not wish to lose his individuality in a uniform family identity, he is simultaneously aware of the comforting aspect of being part of a larger dominant group. In essence the novel suggests how the domestic

situation can be seen as a possible explanation for both the success and defeat of the ma-bap (mother-father) philosophy under the Raj. It was a philosophy that accurately reflected a local need - that of the individual for the sustaining knowledge of parental presence (ma-bap). Yet it is also the individual's resentment of these guarantors of credibility which marks the first step towards independence thus sparking off that eternal struggle between belonging and not belonging.

BRITISH PRE-CONCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

Before a close examination of Scott's novels it is important to identify the various attitudes to and ideas about the country that governed British policy in India and determined British conduct in India. An examination of the novels subsequently reveals that a character's acceptance, rejection or questioning of these attitudes determines his or her position within the British community or outside it. The most common notion governing the Anglo-Indian relationship is that it was an exploitative one: Britain used the material resources of her colonies to augment industrial power at home. This parasitic approach has not, however, always informed British attitudes to India. In his book Britain and India: The Interaction of two Peoples, M E Chamberlain refers to the earliest images of the East and of India in English literary works. He quotes examples from the works of Spenser, Shakespeare, Marlowe and Dryden, which show how the East became a "synonym" for fabulous wealth and power. He concludes that "The Elizabethans clearly did not doubt that they were in touch with great and powerful civilisations, at least as ancient as their own, and possibly more skilled and sophisticated" (p.15).

Even before William Hawkins, captain of the trading ship The Hector, landed in Surat on India's west coast in 1608, marvellous accounts about India had captured the imagination of English explorers. Evidence of this can be seen in Hawkins' expectations of the country as he made his way to Agra where he presented his credentials to Emperor Jehangir. Hawkins was prepared "to find rubies as big as pigeons' eggs, endless stands of pepper, ginger, indigo, cinnamon; trees whose leaves were so enormous that the shade they cast could cover an entire family, potions derived from elephants' testicles to give him eternal youth" (1).

Hawkins' vision of India's fabled wealth was of course not totally without foundation. Sir Thomas Roe who arrived in India seven years later left descriptions of the magnificence of Jehangir's court and person: "On his head he wore a rich turbant with a plume of herne top ... on one syde hung a ruby unsett as bigg as a walnutt; on the other side a diamond just as great; in the middle an emeralld like a hart, much bigger. His shash was wreathed about with a chayne of great pearle rubyes and deamonds drild" (2).

Royal splendours such as these, imagined or real, have continued to impress the imagination of both westerner and Indian alike providing raw material for the writer in the twentieth century, who along with the reader is still curious about the grandeur of Indian courts. The novel of nostalgia dealing with the bygone glories of Indian princes therefore forms a significant part of Indo-Anglian fiction. There is, for instance, Kamala Markandaya's novel evocatively entitled The Golden Honeycomb (1977) dealing with the rulers of the fictional state of Devapur.

As the narrative itself declares: "The Palace is indeed a place of unfolding delight for child and grown-up alike ... Local craftsmen are responsible for the finely carved brackets and columns, for exquisite marble traceries and the delicate gold-leaf gilding ... Marble and stone combine to ravish the eye. The same quarries, the same stone, yield different textures from weathering, different colours from red-rose to garnet to gold" (p.45). As in the extracts from the writings of the two Englishmen - Hawkins and Roe - there is in Markandaya's novel a similar absorption with objects of materials signifying wealth.

But as Chamberlain suggests it was not only the material wealth of India that attracted western curiosity. Vestiges of Elizabethan admiration for Indian civilisation continued well into the eighteenth century and beyond. There were Englishmen who believed that British policy should not attempt to interfere in the customs and traditions of the local population. This group was composed of men like Sir Thomas Munro (1761-1827), Sir John Malcolm, (a close associate of Lord Wellesley) (1798-1803), Monstuart Elphinstone (1779-1859), Lord Ellenborough (Governor General from 1842-1844) Sir Charles Metcalfe (provisional Governor-General 1835-36).

In their varied official capacities within the British administration, these men encouraged an understanding of the native point-of-view. Munro believed that British administration "should leave the natives so far improved from their connection with us, as to be capable of maintaining a free, or at least a regular, government amongst themselves" (3). Elphinstone in particular encouraged Government funding of native education, simultaneously making it clear that "religion should be left out of the schools or the Brahmins would be frightened". He was also always in favour of the greater employment of Indians (4).

These men upheld the 'Conservative' approach to India and were strongly influenced by Edmund Burke whose speech on the impeachment of Warren Hastings contained an acknowledgement of the validity of Indian culture. "But god forbid that we should pass judgement upon people who framed their laws and institutions prior to our insect origins of yesterday" (5).

The eighteenth century however, also saw a change in the British view of India. Chamberlain goes on to refer to the Evangelical stance adopted by Charles Grant. In his Observations on the State of Society

among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain particularly with respect to morals: and on the Means of Improving It (Written Chiefly in Year 1792), Grant testifies to the entrenchment of the worst kind of smug prejudice. Pomposity is thinly disguised by world-weary acceptance that: "Upon the whole, we cannot avoid recognising in the people of Hindostan a race of men lamentably degenerate and base; retaining but a feeble sense of moral obligation" (p.49). This view then led to the policy of "westernisation" in India, which Lord Cornwallis (1786-93) put into practice by introducing the Permanent Land Settlement in Bengal. This economic measure which "fixed" the land revenue due to the Treasury, embodied the principles of the English landed aristocracy. He also followed a strict policy of "excluding Indians from the higher posts in government" (6).

Moreover, the Industrial Revolution in England soon undermined the conservative approach to India. A new policy spearheaded by the Liberals began to assume more power in Britain. The Liberals who were influenced by the Utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill 'propounded an authoritarian government aimed at providing justice on Western lines to the people of India. The advocacy of Free Trade, the spread of Western education and the emphasis on rationality and "just rule" formed the plank of the Liberal policy towards India' (7). Unlike the Conservatives the Liberals did not envisage a time when British rule in India would cease.

This secular aim was reinforced by the work of the Evangelicals like Charles Grant (mentioned above) who felt that India's salvation lay in the drastic alteration of her prevailing religious system. Finally, all these views were easily subsumed by the growing Imperial sentiment which saw India as the source of all the raw materials needed by British industry. The Industrial Revolution which changed social and

economic life in Britain could only march forward if the East India Company's charter was abolished, the Company's monopoly on trade brought to an end, and Free Trade won the day. A new strain of British administrators trained at Haileybury, (founded in 1809), and imbued with a sense of Imperial "responsibility" - was then sent to govern India, whose people, they believed, were happy under British rule.

It is important to stress that these differing attitudes to India did not succeed and replace each other. They co-existed in varying degrees of influence. For instance while Charles Grant, the evangelical spokesman, may have urged a change in the social and religious structure through the introduction of Christianity, he opposed the introduction of other western ideas into India. He was against the Imperialist design to affect the economic aspect of Indian society by the adoption of Free Trade, the ultimate aim of which was to replace Indian manufactured goods by those imported from Britain. The imperialist, on the other hand, wanted to westernise India but did not particularly wish to see the spread of Christianity, which was seen as a potential for "creating undue complexities for British rule by upsetting the prevalent stability in Indian society" (8). The irony of this imperialist reservation is that while the result of the introduction of Christianity is no longer a problem for the Imperial ruler, it is still the cause of the Indian Christian's sense of social and cultural displacement within India today.

The India of Paul Scott's novels is thus an India governed by men both consciously and sub-consciously affected by all these conflicting views about the Englishman's position in the country. Scott describes the struggles of the different types of English men and women, trying to justify their presence in India not only to themselves and their governments but to the new India that began to emerge - an India

illustrating an irony that the hardened Imperialist found hard to stomach. "Indian nationalism and English democracy, were joined together in a common argument, one serving as an explanation for the other"(9). As Major Frank Milner in The Alien Sky vividly phrases it: "We've taught 'em to read and write a la bloody Whitehall so's they can write us our marching orders" (p:16). This initial irony is but one of many that accompany the evolution of the Anglo-Indian relationship.

Scott's novels can be seen as a reflection of the political and social atmosphere of the times, not only because they reflect the above historical attitudes but because they also take into account the distrust between the two communities which deepened after the Mutiny of 1857. It was the violence perpetrated by both communities that destroyed any chance of there being any general long-lasting trust between the two communities. Yet as history affirms, there were times when the two communities did come together in trust and affection. On a more universal level, through Scott's treatment of the interaction between the two communities we can see how the Anglo-Indian relationship can be seen as a paradigm for emotional engagements involving the "Other".

1. Larry Collins and Dominic Lapierre, Freedom at Midnight, p. 10.
2. from W Foster (ed.), The Embassy of Thomas Roe in India, 1615-19, (London 1926) quoted by Bamber Gascoigne in The Great Moghuls, p. 150.
3. Philip Mason, The Men who ruled India, p.95
4. Mason, p.22

5. Henry G Bohn, (ed.), The Works of Edmund Burke, 1867), Vol VII, pp.43-47.
6. Udayon Misra, The Raj in Fiction, p.15
7. Misra, p.18
8. Misra, p.25
9. Francis G Hutchins, The Illusion of Permanence, p.190

INTRODUCING THE OUTSIDER

Paul Scott's novels invariably dramatise the outsider's presence in society. Such an individual threatens those who wish to either preserve that which is, or to reinstate old certainties, be they political or social. It is possible to cite a variety of reasons from the novels to explain why outsiders are perceived as threats by the dominant group. These reasons are relevant not only to the political situation of the time but can be seen as possessing greater universality of application. A difference in moral and political thinking, the transgression of social codes and boundaries, an apparent waywardness of behaviour which sets all standards of decorum at naught, or a deeply ingrained sense of personal conviction, are but some of the factors disrupting deeply ingrained states of psychological equilibrium. Emotional security is especially important to those for whom it is reassuring to be seen to belong to a dominant group, as this is inextricably linked to the definition of their personal identity.

It is in an early novel that one can discern what becomes Scott's abiding interest in the struggle between the dominant group and the individual who breaks away from the fold. We see in Johnnie Brown, the hero of Johnnie Sahib, (1952) a leader whose unorthodox talents inspire his company of Indian soldiers. He is a man who relies less on the letter of the law than he does on striking out on his own. As one of his Indian subordinates, Jemadar Moti Ram, points out, "One obeyed Johnnie Sahib at all times, because Johnnie Sahib spoke and acted from the heart" (p.92). Jemadar sees that Johnnie is a contrast to Taylor Sahib who was "a cold man. He was formal and correct and because this was so one obeyed his orders. But, how long could the influence of a cold man last?" (ibid). Through Jemadar's reflections, Scott

identifies an attitude which sets men like Johnnie Brown apart from his compatriots in India. Here we have a man who is not prepared to be the mere cipher of an administration, which depends on the uniform application of its policies, to ensure a sense of British solidarity in India. Indeed it is the personal relationship which he builds up with his men that is important to Johnnie. "I may be a lousy administrator, Major, but I command my men. My blokes belong to me ... The men don't work for the war. They work for me" (pp.101&102). On the most basic level Johnnie appears to be insisting upon the importance of personal rapport between a superior officer and his subordinates, a process which ensures his men are loyal to him and not to the impersonal machinery of government. He, in turn, feels they belong to him. There is a bond between them which disappears when the personal element is removed.

There are however several issues relevant to the British presence in India which can be gleaned from Johnnie's assessment of the working relationship within his company known as Section Three. The consequence of Johnnie's attitude immediately isolates him and his section from the more mainstream style of administration. He is an outsider, whom the Major regards as a man "who could not be shaped into a pattern for the sake of pattern" (p.12). Yet ironically enough in regarding the men under his command as "belonging" to him, Johnnie espouses the 'ma-bap' (mother-father). principle dear to the staunch paternalistic members of the British administration, to whose methods he professes not to subscribe. While he is keen to protect his own sense of apartness from British military administration in India, his passionate declaration inadvertently makes him a part of that overall "pattern" of British policy in India. Likewise the Major who is keen to upbraid Johnnie's individual approach secretly regrets that where

his own career is concerned "his every action is dictated by majority will ... he was suddenly afraid because he felt there was no loneliness equal to that which comes when a man realises he no longer exists separately as a man; that to rule demands sacrifices ... that he has sacrificed; and is now nothing" (p.66).

Both Johnnie and the Major therefore illustrate the underlying irony in the struggle between the individual and the group. Their words and their thoughts reveal that for both of them the attraction of that which they reject continues to exercise its fascination. The Major who assesses Johnnie but also turns his scrutiny upon himself, is the kind of observer one constantly comes across in Scott's novels. The nature of their observations seems to stress an authorial awareness that both those who belong to the group and those who prefer to stand outside it, are each defined by the other.

Furthermore what is interesting about the definiteness of Johnnie's succinct pronouncements is that they are an indication of Scott's intention to uncover the hidden personal reasons for the more public policies practised by the British in India. The repeated use of the personal and personal possessive pronouns, is revealing. As Johnnie's men are happy under his command, it would appear that his frequent use of 'I' and 'my' is not a sign of an inflated ego. Instead we find that this apparent absorption with the self indicates an insecurity, which his air of relaxed authority effectively disguises. It appears that Johnnie needs his men and the assurance of their loyalty to him for "Even, he told himself, even if things went wrong, there was always the section, the men who were part of him and belonged to him in a way

nothing in his life had ever belonged" (pp.27-289); [underlining mine]. It is not surprising then that he should admit to the Major that "The section's the only thing you could take away from me that'd hurt" (p.101).

Johnnie's job in India therefore possesses a deep psychological significance. It is at this point in the novel that one can then appreciate the poignancy of earlier narrative references to the fact that "Johnnie hated eating alone" .. and when forced to do so "tried to shut his mind against his loneliness" (p.23). While his superiors regard him as a maverick, Johnnie is but one in a long line of Britishers for whom, consciously or not, a job in India became a means of achieving salvation from a personal predicament. It is precisely because he feels he does not belong anywhere that Johnnie clings to the thought that his men belong to him. So although his words may assert his authority over his men their underlying implication suggests that he would be lost without the affirmation he receives from the rapport he creates with Section Three. The narrative therefore exposes the illusory nature of his tough independent image. It is in connection with Johnnie's unconscious dependence upon his men to bolster his own sense of security, that Scott then examines the pitfalls which accompany a situation where personal vulnerability unconsciously stimulates the driving force behind individualistic behaviour. So important to Johnnie is his relationship with his men that he is blind to the fact apparent to the Major who observes that "It's you who's working for them now. You don't command them anymore, ... They command you" (p.147). The relationship ironically becomes one in which the ostensible ruler has now become the ruled.

Although Johnnie Sahib is the story of an individual, the novel is an appropriate introduction to Scott's handling of the complex relationship between Britain and India. We are asked not to accept the superficial but to look beneath the public face exuding confidence and efficiency and to see the human being behind the mask. We are thus made aware of ironies mocking the barriers human beings erect around themselves to preserve a space to nurture that fragile sense of personal identity. Most importantly we see how Scott uses the outsider to question the dominant group's sense of its own validity.

However, in order to understand why the individual, inhabiting two worlds but at home in neither, is both perceptively and movingly depicted in Scott's novels, one must refer to Hilary Spurling's comment about Scott's personal life. In Paul Scott: A Life, Spurling states: "It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that he could not have written the books by which he will be remembered ... if he hadn't remained essentially an outsider ... to the day he died ... British India enabled him to look back to see a pattern in his past, to make sense without rancour of the world in which he grew up" (p.2).

As Hilary Spurling then recounts, Scott's parents belonged to two different social worlds, and throughout his life Scott was continually aware of his mother's struggle to gain social credibility which first birth and then marriage conspired to deny her. As his mother remained a dominating force for most of Scott's life, her frustration and displacement must have had a considerable impact upon her sensitive son. Having observed his mother's predicament, he then as a writer, personally experienced systematic rejection himself. It was not until the closing months of his life that the British Literary Establishment recognised his talent by awarding him the Booker Prize in 1977 for

But Scott was then dying of
Staying On. . /cancer/ ^{and} the prize was small recompense for years
of being condemned to hover on the fringes of a world into which he
had long sought admission.

It is therefore a logical development that an imminently independent
India where political and social boundaries had to be realigned,
should become a source of absorbing interest to Scott. India just
before 1947 and after is an historical period particularly troubled
by the unease and tentativeness found in relationships between the
dominant group and the outsider. It must however be emphasised that
although it is reasonable to expect that it is the British in India
who deserve the label of outsiders opposed by the local Indians,
Scott's outsider is not necessarily one who comes from outside the
Indian group. Very often such an individual is one who no longer feels
he or she belongs to the group to which he appears to belong. It is
obvious that Scott's personal and professional experiences are
reflected in the pain and intense questioning that accompanied and
succeeded British rule in India.

TO SEE OR NOT TO SEE

It is through his narrative technique that Scott addresses the question of belonging and not belonging which, as we shall see, is an important factor determining the bias in a character's perception and representation of events. Discussing the use of historical events in My Appointment with the Muse, Scott is aware that "he must be constantly on the alert for the weaknesses in my interpretation of facts" (p.57). He refers to the Jallianwallah Bagh Massacre in Amritsar in 1919, where General Dyer ordered his soldiers to fire upon unarmed Indians because he was convinced they were engaged in seditious activities against the British Government. Due to the Indian outcry Dyer was cashiered. But the public disgrace he suffered was compensated for by the widespread sympathy he gained from his compatriots, who rallied round him and collected £26,000. Thus what was an atrocity in the eyes of the Indians was obviously judged otherwise by his sympathisers whose first consideration was not a sense of justice but a show of British solidarity. In such a situation Scott recognises that he "must try to see things ... from Dyer's point of view - from the point of view of the ladies who collected £26,000, and from the point of view of the unfortunate men and women and children whose sufferings roused them emotionally, perhaps, to take an intensely narrow and personal view which in turn led them to take unjust or unworthy actions, themselves" (ibid). Scott therefore believes that the historical novelist must consider a wide range of views, for these are the convictions which have guided and determined the course of human history.

Scott's reference to the Jallianwallah Bagh incident is pertinent to his concerns as a novelist and the techniques he adopts in telling the story of Britain's relationship with India. Given Scott's reflections

on "point-of-view" above, which implicitly suggest that high standards of objectivity should motivate the historical novelist, he is obviously aware that there are or can be as many versions of history as there are people. The multi-angled narrative used in The Raj Quartet differing from a concentration on the single male-consciousness in earlier novels like The Mark of the Warrior and The Alien Sky, is therefore in keeping with his approach to history. The kind of narrative adopted manifests his intention to give a voice to as many varying shades of opinion as possible.

However arriving at a dispassionate and widely acceptable view of history is not easy. As Edward Thornhill in The Corrida of San Feliu muses, truth defies definition. Thornhill compares Art to the Corrida, whose signification changes according to the onlooker. It can be regarded as "a comedy of sexual deviation or of woman's wiles .. the fight the bull puts up, the fight the torero tries to conduct and the fight the spectators think they are seeing" (p:201). Thornhill himself wonders what he sees in the corrido, "a succession of slightly varying images? dramatic representations of my own endless struggle to transmute the raw perpetual motion of life into the perfect immobility of art? (p.202).

What concerns Thornhill here is the question of interpretation, echoing Scott's own caution when writing about India. Just as the corrido can symbolise different experiences according to the onlooker, so also can any experience of India. Thornhill identifies that aspect of interpretation which determines the way truth is portrayed - the question of point-of-view which Scott believes the novelist dealing with history cannot ignore. This is especially crucial when we consider that what the spectators think they are seeing ultimately

forms part of their description, and is as important as what they are seeing. Consequently we learn as much about the spectator as we do about the spectacle.

This feature of narrative reporting is repeatedly illustrated in the representations of India contained in Scott's novels. Very often characters succeed in telling their own story, while ostensibly engaged in telling the wider story of the British in India. Moreover, if like the narrator in The Corrida, one believes that "in going about their business and describing their circumstances to each other and to themselves, people are endlessly inventive" (p.74), then only a multi-angled narrative would be able to provide a comprehensive, although not an absolute account of the truth. In Scott's novels the different viewpoints act as mutual commentaries on each other and on the characters with whom they are associated. Thus we can see the relevance of Scott's reference to the Jallianwallah Bagh incident for it is an example of how a particular point of view can totally condition individual response to an event, and depending on the British or the Indian outlook, can yield a different version of history.

In addition, the incident illustrates the irony in a situation where the states of belonging and not belonging come into play. Scott's sympathy for the Indian cause is clearly reflected in The Raj Quartet and where the Jallianwallah Bagh incident is concerned, is expressed through an unpublicised gesture made by one of the characters, Mabel Layton. She is someone whose family connections with India make her seem a reassuring repository of "certainty, self assurance, total conviction" (The Towers of Silence, p.193). But against the wishes of her family and community this symbol of the Establishment "sent money to the funds the Indians raised for the widows and orphans of the

people Dyer shot", while refusing to give anything for Dyer's cause. (TS,p.138) Naturally when someone openly regarded as the mainstay of the community acts contrary to the convictions of the group, the consequence can only rock the very foundations of their belief.

While Scott's personal views about British presence in India expressed in the Raj Quartet persuade us to support the justification for Indian outrage against what they see as the murder of their own people by agents of a foreign government, Scott implies that there is also a reason - though not a justification - for Dyer's action and the support he received. Both were prompted by the strength of British feeling that they belonged in India. Thus while we can see the injustice behind British behaviour we can understand why they did it. Only a narrator willing to interpret all, or as many points of view as possible, can provide an adequate context for the event.

In relation to the question of a single interpretation, let us now examine in more detail the result of Scott's choice of a personal point of view in The Alien Sky - that of the American businessman, Joe Mackendrick. He is a self-confessed outsider - a man who does not belong. Mackendrick describes himself as "someone who stood outside them all, beyond them" (p.50). It is in this novel that we begin to see the hazards and limitations of relying upon the single narrative vision. The presence of an American who has no political or economic stakes in an India ridding itself of its political yoke, creates an expectation that his account will naturally be free of bias. But the narrative soon proves that the American's assessment of himself is far from accurate. He is as much a victim of his own personal history as he is of his country's political history, and both these factors cloud his judgement of current events.

Mackendrick's declared reason for being in India is to weigh up the

prospects for the sale of agricultural machinery. It is however Mackendrick's personal quest that brings him into contact with the British in India. His wish is to meet Dorothy Gower the woman with whom his brother Dwight once had a love affair. He soon finds out that Dorothy Gower's husband, Tom, is the victim of Indian antagonism, which culminates in the burning of Ooni, the model village Gower had pioneered.

Narrative evidence cautions the reader against accepting Mackendrick as a reliable observer. He prides himself on his sense of judgement and believes he can see "purpose and pride in the shape of his [servant's] mouth and chin, the light of passion in eyes which set him above men of his kind" (p.12). But the narrator informs us that "Bholu was small, at first glance shiftless like a man who is at home on the fringe of holiday crowds whose pockets his fingers lightly explore" (ibid). Mackendrick's estimate of Bholu couched in terminology grandiose in effect, therefore seems ludicrously inaccurate and exposes the American as a man unwilling to sift the evidence of his senses - a fact that is confirmed by his refusal to deduce anything from what he personally recognises is the "familiar sulkiness" in Bholu's voice (ibid). When we are subsequently informed that there is nothing particularly unique about Bholu whose only interest is the prospect of "how soon he could make his getaway" (ibid), narrative deflation of Mackendrick's powers of observation is complete.

The narrative continues to draw attention to Mackendrick's 'blindness' and the indictment is at its most crushing in a situation which does not even call for any processes of discrimination. When he does see Bholu in the market he refuses to believe the evidence of his own eyes. "For a few moments they looked at one another, and Mackendrick turned and went along the way he had come. It couldn't have been

Bholu, he thought. Bholu is not here" (p.113). It is therefore not surprising that, later in the novel when Ooni is set on fire, Mackendrick fails to make the connection between a missing three ton lorry and the arsonists. He had seen the lorry parked close to his own jeep (p.227) and later had glimpsed it behind a deserted house in what seemed to be a "sleeping village" (p.130). Unlike Steele, Gower's assistant, Mackendrick did not realise that the lorry had been the arsonists' means of transport.

If we now examine factors external to the novel, we will see how the course of American history has had its effect on Mackendrick, giving rise to an ambivalence of attitude to the British. He uses the image of the ostrich with its head buried in the sand and the rest of its body exposed to danger, to convey his perception of the current British 'position' in India. He sees "them with their heads in the sands, their rears ripe and ready for the boot" (p.50). His words convey contempt and satisfaction but no trace of concern for the Indians, who should really be the only ones expressing satisfaction at British withdrawal. One naturally begins to suspect that his satisfaction is born out of a personal hatred for the British. Moreover, given Mackendrick's failure to correctly gauge the evidence of his senses, his description of the British predicament is ironic. His accusation, that they deliberately blind themselves to what is going on around them, is not so different from his own refusal to draw any conclusions from what is blatantly obvious.

While Mackendrick's comparison of the British to ostriches burying their heads in the sand can be interpreted as proverbial American flippancy towards the British as empire-builders, his words expose a lack of objectivity both in relation to himself and those he criticises. Like the Indians the Americans have experienced British

dominance and therefore share a fundamental resentment of the colonisers. Yet American aggrandisement against the American Indians and the Black Slave Trade is no less culpable, fuelling suspicions regarding the coarseness of the image and the strength of feeling directed at the British. What heightens Mackendrick's pleasure is not the mere end of British rule in India, but sub-conscious American rivalry in the sphere of empire-building. The success - albeit receding - of another competitor at the same game is not a picture which Mackendrick, the American, views with any delight.

Mackendrick's satisfaction at British withdrawal from India may lead one to believe that he could not possibly have any sympathy for the ruling race. Ironically however, he does sympathise with Tom Gower and finds the Indian call for Gower's exit incomprehensible. As far as Mackendrick is concerned, Gower's vision has transformed the village community at Ooni into a self sufficient unit. To Mackendrick, the westerner, Gower stands for social and economic progress - a state of affairs that should merit gratitude not expulsion for the benefactor.

In his reaction Mackendrick displays the unconscious prejudice which Edward Said identifies among westerners who studied the Orient. They genuinely believed that they knew what was best for "subject races" who "did not have it in them to know what was good for them" (1). What Mackendrick also demonstrates by his sense of affiliation with Gower's hopes for Ooni is yet another European tendency. This consists in the fact that "for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of his actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second" (2). The coloniser can only see in terms of what he believes is his role in the Orient. This being "the assumption that ... the Orient ... was in need of corrective study by the west" (3). He is

consequently blind to the presence of another point of view expounded in the novel by an Indian named Gupta.

Gupta informs Mackendrick that Gower's efforts to instruct the villagers at Ooni in methods of farming, cottage crafts, hygiene and sanitation, do not make the Indians wish to see Gower's stay in the country prolonged. While Gupta recognises Gower's intentions at Ooni as instances of "well-meant advice" (p:46), he also exposes the damage such a policy can cause. Firstly, to offer people solutions is to constantly remind them that not only is there something wrong with their system, but that they are incapable of alleviating their own wretchedness. This is what Gower himself realises is "benevolent despotism which passes for racial understanding" (p.82). Secondly in a criticism directed at Gower but exposing the 'insensitivity' inherent in western philanthropy, Gupta says: "To this place you bring our young peasants, you bring them and teach them methods they cannot hope to ... emulate when they return to their villages" (p.124). If one then turns to Mark Tully's commentary on an India that has been experimenting with western economic 'solutions' for nearly forty-five years since gaining independence in 1947, it would seem that Gupta's criticism still holds true.

In No Full Stops in India, Tully regrets the Indian elite's obsessive love affair with western ideas of development which he sees have not provided a release from poverty. "We [in the west] must be aware that our way of life is encouraging thinking and policies which increase poverty and instability in the less prosperous parts of the world ... India must keep abreast of all the latest knowledge, but it must adapt that knowledge to its own problems, it must build on its own traditions and beliefs" (p.12).

The state of affairs that Gupta would like to see is that Britain

should "Buy our goods from us. Sell your goods to us. Accept us as a nation among nations. Be extending the hand of friendship - we will place our own in yours. But do not let that hand hold a knife to probe our ills. We have our own knife" (p.47). Here Gupta seems to be echoing a sentiment attributed to Mahatma Gandhi - "I would gladly borrow from the West when I can return the amount with decent interest" (4).

The themes of seeing and blindness, whether literal or figurative, are repeated in The Raj Quartet, and are closely linked to the perspective which a character naturally has or, like Mackendrick, wants to adopt towards India. As a consequence the various accounts of the action in the Quartet reflect either what is seen or what is ignored, which in turn reflects the character's involvement or distance from the country and the people he or she is talking about. It is not surprising then that Daphne Manners who loves and wishes to understand India refuses to take her spectacles off because she "wanted so much to see everything there was to see" (Jewel in the Crown, p.99). Consequently, a gesture that gives plausibility to her character is loaded with symbolic significance. Racially Daphne is as much of an outsider in India as is Mackendrick, but the difference between the two can be measured by their attitude towards the country and their own assessment of themselves. As we shall see later, Daphne's awareness of herself in relation to her country's social and political history, the humility she displays in self-inquiry, markedly distinguish her from Mackendrick whom the narrator accuses of "arrogance" (The Alien Sky: p.12). While the imperviousness underlying Mackendrick's observations can be excused on the grounds that he is a visitor to the country, it is not easy to make similar allowances for men like Brigadier Reid who live and work in India (The Raj Quartet).

Sustained by the then pervading assumption that western influence in the East must necessarily be "corrective", Brigadier Reid's memoirs simply project this assumption and reduce Indian life to a generalised abstraction. "I could not but feel proud of the years of British rule. Even in these turbulent times the charm of the cantonment helped one to bear in mind the calm, wise and enduring things. One had only to cross the river into the native town to see that in our cantonments and civil lines we had set an example for others to follow and laid down a design for civilised life that the Indians would one day inherit" (JC,p.290). The words which follow this declaration further serve to reinforce and explain the stance which he adopts. Although he admits to having experienced 'the "feel" of India,' and "a sense of oneness with the country", this does not turn out to be an identification with Indian aspirations. Instead it is "a feeling of identification with our aspirations with it" (p.290). As with Gower and Mackendrick, India is seen as a country that cannot control its own destiny.

What emerges from Reid's words is his belief that the British and the Indians inhabit mutually exclusive worlds - the one bearing the marks of 'civilisation' and the other devoid of it. The native town is defined only by implication as an opposition to the western ideal - it is the 'other'. However, it must be pointed out that generalised imprecision seems to be an inherent feature of Reid's description. Though he refers to the charm of the cantonment, he does not define its virtues but is content to speak of the "calm, wise enduring things". But there is further significance in this relationship between what is apparent and what is implied. The fact that Reid does not list the features of the native town signifies two things. On one level, it means that he expects the reader to share his assumption

that the description lies in the implied contrast, thereby conveying the arrogance of hitherto unshaken conviction. The other explanation however is that he does not describe it because he cannot. And he cannot do so because he has never been there and therefore does not know anything about it.

The extent of Reid's contact with the local Indian population is confined to his professional execution of duty. Significantly enough, such action does not even take place in the town but only on the Mandir Gate Bridge between the town and the cantonment (JC, pp.300-301). Literally and symbolically therefore Reid does not cross the bridge between India and Britain. His recollections following his favorable account of British rule in India then clearly explain why contrary to current evidence, it was possible for him to believe in this illusion. As a soldier Reid's accommodation happens to be in rooms overlooking the 'maidan', (p.290) a Hindi word meaning a cleared expanse of ground. As a young man he recalls exercising his horse on the Mayapore maidan, and "practising shots with Nigel Orme". Later as Brigadier he also "elected" to live in the artillery mess in "the old guest suite which overlooked the maidan" (p.294).

The narrative allusion to the maidan is not fortuitous, for previous narrative reference to it reveals that it is "sacrosanct to the civil and Military", a strict English preserve where "the British held their annual gymkhana ... their Flower Show ...[and]... cricket week" ... Indian attendance on the other hand, was regulated by invitation or by an inner picket of poles and hessian ... which effectively conveyed ... that something private was going on" (pp.171-172). Through words like 'sacrosanct', 'regulated' and 'private', the narrative emphasises the British policy of maintaining a strict distance from the Indian population, of whom they could then have had little knowledge. It is

therefore not surprising that given this lack of contact Reid could not describe the native town. In fact the only Indian the Brigadier does have any contact with is his horse, which significantly enough possesses the unmistakable upper crust name of Rajah!

The determination on the part of the British to ignore the obvious is enshrined in the picture The Jewel in her Crown. The picture shows Queen Victoria surrounded by "representative figures of her Indian Empire: Princes, landowners, merchants, money lenders, sepoy, farmers, servants, children, mothers, and remarkably clean and tidy beggars" (p.26). Several ironies operate within this icon. Although India was regarded as the Jewel, it is the British Empress who is depicted as being honoured. Further, the word 'remarkably' in relation to the description of the beggars, points out an irony which obviously escapes the artist's awareness. It is hardly a compliment to the great Empress Victoria if a representational picture of her subjects should include beggars, however clean and tidy they may appear to be. Moreover, these 'representatives' cannot represent anything for they are mere tokens used by the artist to project a British view of British rule in India.

It is appropriate therefore that two missionaries whose lives are removed from the pomp and servility projected by the picture, expose the falsity of the artist's representation of British rule. Miss Crane recognises that social snobbery had banished her to live life on the "periphery" of the "charmed circle of privilege" (p.15), and Barbie Batchelor suffers the same fate. It is these women, who have been forced to look upon but not enter into the society of which they are a part but to which they cannot belong, who are capable of being detached about it. Their status as outsiders, unlike those among the British who feel they belong in Anglo-Indian society, makes Miss Crane

and Barbie recognise that certain truths about India have been left out of the painting - truths which they see are unpleasant and cannot be easily transformed into presentable figures in a painting. To Miss Crane the truth about India consists in the prevalent "poverty, disease, misery, ignorance and injustice" (p.30). Similarly Barbie in The Towers of Silence points out to Inspector Merrick that, because the picture does not include the "unknown Indian", it "isn't finished" (TS, p.388). The unknown Indian whom Barbie refers to is Hari Kumar, relentlessly persecuted by Merrick who believes that Hari is one of a gang guilty of raping Daphne Manners in the Bibighar gardens.

Although it is the picture that is described as an "allegory" by one of Miss Crane's guests (JC, p.32), the allegorical message surmising the relationship between Britain and India is contained in that part of the narrative involving Hari Kumar and Daphne Manners. The allegory in the latter is closer to the truth about British rule in India than is the picture which gives a blinkered view reassuring to the rulers. Compared to the title of the novel - The Jewel in the Crown - the caption on the picture suggests greater intimacy and a more personal relationship achieved through the substitution of 'her' for 'the'. This immediately narrows down the sphere of reference to include only the [symbolic] mother and the [symbolic] son, thus flattering the Indian into believing that he enjoys a special relationship with the Queen. That there were Indians who strengthened this particular British assumption is confirmed by Kamala Markandaya's novel The Golden Honeycomb, where the Indian ruler Bawajiraj II is actually content with being a vassal of the British Empire. And, as was noted earlier, it is because the British saw their presence in India as a

maternal power, that the horror of an English woman being raped by an Indian or Indians assumes nightmarish horror and produces vile reaction which is explored later in the thesis.

For purposes of the present discussion however A Division of the Spoils reveals the ironic reality of the Indo-Anglian relationship. While the idea of being a maternal power may appeal to the British, Guy Perron points out that where the English are concerned it is India which had "helped to nourish the flesh, and warm the blood of every man in the room" (A Division of the Spoils: p:103). Words like 'nourished' and 'warm', which are functional attributes of a mother, belong to India and not to England. The roles of Provider and Beneficiary are therefore reversed. In the light of such a situation the words which Barbie Batchelor uses to apprehend the horror of Merrick's action could equally describe British ignorance of the damage colonising caused India: "And that would be terrible, wouldn't it? If he had got it wrong but is always going to believe he didn't" (TS,p.183).

The deductions made about the painting and the Hari/Daphne affair therefore cannot be divorced from British perceptions of India and what they see as their maternal role in the country, which ensures happiness and is acknowledged by Queen Victoria's subjects who duly pay her homage. The artist responsible for the painting is someone who is either unaware of the misery or, worse, chooses to ignore it in the same way as do the viewers who admire his work as a true account of British rule in India. Whatever may be the reason for the omission it means that some form of blindness is necessary to sustain British illusions that their occupation of India is marked by absolute contentment, for the painting is born of the imperialist conviction that Indians were happy under British rule. Again we are reminded

that, as with Brigadier Reid's memoirs, the truth lies in what has been left out, providing a useful comment on the way the British wished to view their control over India and the condition of their subjects.

That Scott associates India with the provider and with nourishment is highlighted by incidents connected with Miss Crane and with Robin White, characters who hold an independent view of India detached from majority British opinion. Although Miss Crane is a missionary who in her own words is "one Englishwoman who admired and respected [Indians]" (p.11), believing that India should be independent, she feels that care in India can only come from her. As a conscientious teacher, she is determined to do her duty by the children of Kotali, making sure that they are safely driven home during the anti-government riots. She ignores the well-meaning advice of her servant Joseph and her Indian colleague Mr Chaudhuri and is determined to get to Mayapore, even after hearing disturbing reports about political troubles spelling danger to the white community.

In her selfless courage she is laudable, but while she is able to see that the children are in danger, she cannot accept genuine Indian concern for her safety and well-being. It is only after Mr Chaudhuri persuades her that she accepts the chappattis and dal offered by the village mothers as an expression of "kindness and hospitality" (p.61). She is someone who treads the path of reason denying the joyful gratification of instinct.

The beginning of the novel informs us how she devotedly dedicates Tuesday evenings to entertaining Indian ladies of Mayapore to tea. She does this to show that she is someone who "appreciated Indian qualities" (p.11). She has a reason for her act. Similarly in the later situation of the chappattis and dal, reason tells her that if

"she stayed for the food ... her determination to be on her way might weaken" (p:60). What the narrative then implies through the cessation of the tea parties, is that her self-conscious attempts to bridge the gap between two communities is futile, for the careful thought and preparation she gives to the occasions are symptomatic of (unintended) patronage, absent in the hospitable gesture made by the Indian village women. Ironically, without realising it, the villagers are fulfilling an immediate need - Miss Crane admits that tense situations make her "ravenously hungry" (p.60). These two versions of hospitality therefore highlight the contrast between spontaneity and reasoned behaviour, in order to provide an insight into ordinary but meaningful human interchange.

Like Miss Crane, Robin White, (the Deputy Commissioner), is also given a similar lesson in timely generosity. White counters Brigadier Reid's prejudice that Indian life is bereft of the calm and order associated with British life, by stating that the Indian naturally respects authority and is "emotionally predisposed against violence", otherwise "how else could we have ruled millions with a few thousand" (p.349). Unsurprisingly, the Indian lawyer Srinivasan describes White as one who stood for "opposition ... not opposition in Whitehall. But opposition here" (JC, p.202). This is confirmed further when White "challenged tradition" (p.255) by inviting the Indians, Srinivasan and Desai, to the (White) Gymkhana Club, "a private institution no outsider could enter"(p.196). However it is not so much what the Indian Srinivasan says about White that singles him out as an outsider in his own community, but it is through an analysis of his recollections that we can measure how different he is from men like Brigadier Reid.

The tangibility of White's accounts ^{testifies} to the fact that he is someone who sees India. It is a tribute to Scott's honesty of vision that White does not paint a rosy picture of life in India. He admits that in the course of duty he "was fed to the teeth with village accountants who cringed and tahsildars who presumed and cringed all in the same breath". It is when he is "ready to cry with frustration and inadequacy ... [his] bowels in a terrible state", that the discomfort of his experience is wiped clean away by an unexpected intervention. A middle-aged woman came to his "bedside and spooned up a helping of curds ... held it out and made me eat, just as if I were her nephew or son and needed building up". He sums up his recollection of this incident as "getting ... the scent behind the smell" (p.347). The reference to the mother/son image recalls Scott's intention to once again show India as a maternal provider.

White's recollection of his personal experience of Indian care is based on concrete memories: "black hands" spooning up "white curds"; the bowl of unfinished curds "covered with a cloth, on a brass tray .. and a flower on the tray next to the bowl" (ibid). The impression that Robin White actually "sees" what is before him is demonstrated by the fact that he remembers the visual details concerning the incident. That he is aware of the difference between him and the old woman is demonstrated by his reference to her 'black' hands, but it is more the pictorial quality of the situation that contains an immediate appeal. The vivid contrast of colours produced by the black hands spooning out the white curds, the suggestion of freshness in the flower placed on the brightness of the brass tray transcends any racial implications the scene may have. This is reinforced by White's apprehension of the old woman's caring aspect and sensitivity, suggested not only by the appropriate nourishment she offers, but in the way she makes sure the

bowl is not left uncovered and then leaves behind a flower on the brass tray. This final delicate offering is a subtle touch of artistic sensitivity, not so much a tribute as a symbol of natural human response which knows no barriers of race or office. It is clear that Robin White, unlike Brigadier Reid, is alive to every aspect of his Indian experience. As Srinivasan confirms, Robin White is alive to the responsibility of seeing rather than overseeing or overlooking the India that lies before him. "Robin ... looked at the servants when he spoke to them" (p.202). He is like Daphne Manners who wants to see all that there is to see. Daphne however goes even further. Her gesture of engaging with India is literally expressed through her physical union with Hari Kumar in the Bibighar gardens.

What these characters have in common is the fact that they are all rebels who challenge political and social boundaries, but while the women's involvement with the Indians is far more personal, our lasting impression of White is that of a British official whose analysis of the general Indian psyche is fair but detached. Yet interestingly enough the women realise that they too are products of their time. Denied visible positions of authority under the Raj, women are seen to be far more attuned to the inner dynamics of their own and their community's behaviour than are most of the male characters. To protect Kumar from the wrath of the British establishment after the Bibighar incident, Daphne instructs him not to disclose the fact that they had been together. Later she realises that this was an arrogant display of cultural chauvinism: "Even in my panic there was this assumption of superiority, of privilege, of believing I knew what was best for both of us" (p.452). Her confession does not differ greatly from Miss Crane's earlier analysis of her attitude to Mr Chaudhuri in times of crisis: And in my voice ... there - always there - the note

of authority, the special note of us talking to them, which ... always sounds like taking charge" (p.57). This again is in keeping with the fact that she assumes control during the disturbances at Kotali.

Scott however does see a more humane reason for this automatic assumption of the authoritarian role which can be interpreted as a colonial sense of "responsibility". This is confirmed by Miss Crane and Srinivasan's perception of Robin White. Miss Crane feels that the British sense of being in charge is due to the fact that they "have an obligation and a responsibility [and] in this present instance her main responsibility is seventy miles away in Mayapore" (p.58). Similarly, Srinivasan realises that Robin White "did not feel superior to them, (the Indians) only more responsible. It was his sense of responsibility that enabled him to accept his privileged position with dignity" (p.202).

What however unites these three characters is the fact that in their approach to Indians they represent various stages in people's attempts to bridge the gulf between "them" and "us". In Miss Crane we see the reasoned approach, in Robin White we see fairness, and in Daphne we see a character who stands up for her feelings, without waiting for social and political sanctions. She is someone who is not willing to wait for "a bridge to be built ... It is as if she said to herself: ... life is not just a business of standing on dry land and occasionally getting your feet wet. So long as we stand like that we are not living at all ... So jump in and ... even if we drown, at least for a moment or two before we die we shall be awake and alive" (p.151).

Tragically enough however, it is because Daphne does not wish to remain a mere observer, but decides to cross the bridge between the civil lines and the native town, that she ultimately loses her life.

To Daphne, the Bibighar incident was the dissolution of two personalities to form a new unified entity - "this was not me and Hari..it was us" (p.433), but within the narrative, the Bibighar affair becomes a catalyst which articulates and deepens long-standing divisions between the two communities.

1. Edward Said, Orientalism, p.37
2. Said, p.11
3. Said, pp:40-41
4. from The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi, quoted by Mark Tully in No Full Stops in India, p.12

THE BIBIGHAR AFFAIR

As has already been noted the narrator's choice of a sexual experience involving an English girl and an Indian man is a situation already made familiar by E.M. Forster's A Passage to India. Both novelists show how allegations of 'rape' arise from a British sense of outrage at the Indian's violation of clearly demarcated social enclaves. But the obvious differences between the two has to be acknowledged. Until the incident in the Marabar caves, the relationship between Adela Quested and Aziz in Forster's novel is platonic in nature, while the love between Daphne Manners and Hari Kumar in the Quartet leads to sexual union. In Forster's novel Adela Quested claims to have been raped by the Indian doctor Aziz, but what happens in the Bibighar gardens is only later fictionalised by the British community as such, for the narrative makes it clear that Daphne Manners and Hari Kumar love one another.

Narrative compassion for the plight of the two lovers in Scott's Quartet is evident in the poignant description of their love seen through the eyes of Lady Manners - Daphne's aunt. Watching the silent tears roll down the cheeks of Hari Kumar when he learns of Daphne's death, Lady Manners felt "a corresponding wetness on her own - tears for Daphne, that were also tears for him; for lovers who could never be described as star-crossed because they had no stars. For them heaven had drawn an implacable band of dark across its constellations and the dark was lit by nothing except the trust they had in each other" (DS, pp.302-303). While the description of their misunderstood and misrepresented love has mystical overtones, there is no doubt that their relationship is earthbound and this is underlined by the petty concerns of those who pass judgement on it. By choosing a partner from

outside their own communities, both Hari and Daphne have automatically conferred outsider status upon themselves and are no longer regarded as belonging to the community.

Forster on the other hand uses the Aziz/Adela 'relationship' as a means of exploring the mystery and ambiguity of the Indian experience, where the borders dividing illusion from reality constantly blur as "nothing is .. identifiable" (p.92). Hence the note of uncertainty when Adela attempts to explain a collision involving the Nawab Bahadur's car, Initially she is prepared to "believe" that they had hit a buffalo, but she then shifts ground saying, "Unless it was a hyena" (p.95). That the experience could have been either unearthly or illusory thus defying identification is then proffered by Mrs Moore who 'shivered, "A ghost!"' (p.100). It is the old lady who understands the "uneasiness" which Adela experiences in India, where she feels she has "got everything out of proportion" (p.101). As Adela later confides to Fielding, she could not understand this condition which was "nothing as solid as sadness" but can be best described as "living at half pressure" (p.219). It is because she hates mysteries (p.79) and wants "events presented ... in a logical sequence" (p.219), that she seeks a cause for the mysterious effect which India has on her. And for awhile the 'rape' in the Marabar Caves provides her with a valid reason, although even then she is not sure. Thus what the narrative makes clear is that although Adela fervently expresses a wish to "understand India" (p.83), it is the mystery of herself in India, and by extension that of any westerner who does not belong in India, that she is really trying to unlock.

Given the differing concerns of the two novelists it is not surprising therefore that Scott should use the garden as the scene for the 'rape' and that Forster uses the cave. While Forster's aim is to preserve the

ambiguity of experiencing India, Scott brings things out into the open. The narrative acknowledges the fact that social prejudice cannot be easily ignored as it continues to dominate the outcome of the relationship, and this acknowledgement is implicit in the ironic use of the word 'Bibighar'. In The Jewel, the garden where Daphne and Hari make love, and where she is subsequently raped by the local roughs, is named after the 'Bibighar', which literally means 'the house of the Bibi'. For the couple it is a place of both joy and desecration - elements which form part of the story surrounding the house called the Bibighar and are connected with the origin of the word itself. The following will then make clear that Scott makes greater ironic use of Anglo-Indian social history than does Forster.

The house was a voluptuous son's idea of a travesty deriding another icon of love built by his father for a singer of classical music, for whom the older man had "conceived a passion" (JC, p.75). The son built the Bibighar where "he kept his courtesans", mocking the purity of his father's love for the singer - pure in the father's absolute faithfulness to her and in the fact that their love was never consummated (p.75). The unsavoury aspect of the Bibighar story then ties in neatly with Anglo-Indian connotations of the word, for in Anglo-India "Bibi" was the name for the White Sahib's mistress. "The bibi-khana [or as in this case the Bibighar] was the place where the lady was kept - the lady being the planter's mistress" (1). Although the house built by the prince's father fell into decay, it was rebuilt by a Scotsman named MacGregor who then, according to the European version of the story, burnt the Bibighar considering it an "abomination" (p.75).

The Indians however have two differing versions of the story. The first is that MacGregor burnt the Bibighar "in a fit of jealous rage"(p.150), when he discovered that his Indian mistress secretly met her Indian lover, in this house. The second is that he had planned to move his mistress into the Bibighar because as he told her "I am going to Calcutta to bring back an English wife", whereupon the girl left with her lover, and MacGregor, in an apparent fit of pique, "ordered the Bibighar to be burned to the ground and then utterly obliterated" (ibid).

Despite the differing European and Indian versions for the destruction of the Bibighar, the stories do have one feature in common. The reasons preferred by the two communities to account for the destruction of the Bibighar are both based on moral or social prejudice. The European version is an expression of their community's disapproval for debauchery which they associate only with the Indian prince and not MacGregor. The Indian version however exposes a sordid side of MacGregor's character ignored by the Europeans and succeeds in destroying the high European moral note. But the Indian version is by not by any means free of prejudice. By stating that MacGregor's Indian mistress preferred an Indian lover, and by deriding MacGregor as a man driven by jealousy when rejected, the Indians too manifest a tendency to be racially malicious. For the narrator to then associate innocents like Hari and Daphne with the word Bibighar, implies wry narrative acceptance that the 'social deviant' cannot escape the force of majority opinion. Moreover, within the context of Scott's attempt to differentiate between the local and the outsider's points of view, we can see that the presence of the European and Indian versions of the story testifies to the difficulty of arriving at an absolute truth.

A further departure from the Forsterian episode is Scott's introduction of a bunch of drunken Indian ruffians as the agents actually responsible for the rape. It is because of this that Daphne makes Hari promise to deny he was ever with her and hopefully save him from being wrongfully accused of a crime he did not commit. Here again there is a possibility that a historical event influenced Scott. During the political upheaval caused by the Indian Mutiny of 1857, Nana Sahib the Indian ruler of Kanpur offered British men, women, and children safe passage to Allahabad by boat. However, "firing began in confused circumstances. Of those who escaped the men were shot, the women and children imprisoned in a building known as the Bibigarh ... When it was known that British troops were approaching, sepoys were ordered to fire into prison and kill them. The sepoys are said to have fired at the ceiling and the prisoners were hacked to pieces by the local roughs" (2).

Like its historical counterpart, the fictional Bibighar is only a temporary refuge from the anger of the opposing community without. The uncertainty regarding what actually happened in Scott's Bibighar mirrors the confusion and lack of uncorroborated allegations made about the Bibighar of 1857. Apart from Daphne, Hari, the narrator and Lady Manners, who reads Daphne's journal, no one really knows what happened in the Bibighar gardens. Thus nothing is proved against the "local roughs" who, in Scott's novel as in history, succeed in thoroughly confusing the issue.

Scott's novel, unlike Forster's, reveals that ultimately it is the Indian Hari who lives on to suffer the consequences of an atrocity perpetrated by his own countrymen, while the rape in A Passage to India ends with Aziz's acquittal after Adela volunteers her own humiliation when she retracts the rape charge against him. Forster's

novel implies that the Indian is more a victim of White prejudice. The way Scott ends his novel however suggests that the departure of the British does not necessarily imply an end to Indian suffering. This difference is due to the way the two men are portrayed by the two novelists.

Forster's Aziz is a man who is proud of his cultural roots, even tracing them back to his ancestors' pre-Indian days. Hari Kumar on the other hand has never been given a chance to know his Indian roots. As a child he is taken to England to study at a prestigious public school called Chillingborough, spending his school holidays with an English family, the Lindseys. This was to help realise his father's driving ambition to see his only son succeed on the same terms as an Englishman. Brought up to feel like an Englishman, Hari has to return to India to live as an Indian, when bankruptcy causes his father to commit suicide. Naturally Hari is devastated. The plight of the westernised Indian is a theme that runs through a great deal of modern Indo-Anglian fiction. Both V S Naipaul and Ruth Praver Jhabvala explore the ironies of a dilemma that, like Hari Kumar's, is a consequence of political and historical factors.

However, despite the differences in the way Forster and Scott use a cross-cultural encounter, their novels prove that both authors have seized upon the effectiveness of using this motif - it is the kind of situation that demands attention. In the context of Anglo-India's mutually exclusive social worlds expressed through Brigadier Reid's memoirs, a sexual relationship involving two apparently exclusive communities naturally shakes long-standing certainties, which define each group. Reid expresses the deeply ingrained sense of racial superiority among the British which had become "more widespread than at any time before or since. A process that had begun in the 1840s was

accelerated" (3). On the other hand, white racial supremacy was matched by an equally strong sense of superiority among the Hindus, who considered all members of the ruling white race as untouchables. Joan Allen's gardener dashed an earthenware bowl to the ground after she had touched it: "touching it I had made it untouchable for him, and so he broke it" (4). •

Similar prejudicial behaviour is referred to in Kamala Markandaya's novel The Golden Honeycomb when the author describes how the Brahmin Minister "bathed and changed: it is his custom after the hurly-burly of audience [with the British Agent] to rid himself of the scent of natives and feringhi (but especially feringhi), which is apt to clot his nostrils"(p.6). As Markandaya's explanatory footnote clarifies, 'feringhi' is the Indian word for European, with overtones of the Hellenic 'barbarian' in later Indian usage.

It is interesting to note the use of words like 'custom' and 'scent'. The former immediately establishes the world of traditional ritual with which Brahmins, the priestly caste, are especially associated. There is a sense of contrariness in the use of the word 'scent' to refer to that which unpleasantly clots the nostrils: one somehow cannot expect a scent to be repugnant. Yet Markandaya does use the word in connection with both the natives and the 'feringhis', suggesting that as far as the Brahmin is concerned the two groups are one and the same.

This of course is understandable if one remembers that a Brahmin is conscious of the fact that he occupies the highest tier in the caste-hierarchy, and his pre-eminent position is maintained by his strict adherence to rules governing nearly all areas of experience ranging from food to marriage. Raja Rao's Kanthapura, set against the background of Gandhi's vision of an independent India free of

untouchability, describes the poignant struggles of a Brahminic grandmother, trying to come to terms with what she sees as the inevitable ritual pollution resulting from her beloved and only grandson's wish to reform Hindu society in accordance with Gandhian ideals. When the young idealist Moorthy eats the food offered to him by the pariahs, his old grandmother is inconsolable, for this is an act of defilement that dooms both the present and succeeding generations of their family. The Brahmin, if he is orthodox, therefore has a responsibility to be sensitive to the possibility of anything that might taint his spiritual purity and compromise his position.

In an uncertain world where sensitivity to underlying political and racial tensions must be acute, the association of the word 'scent' with hunting is also applicable. In the animal world survival is ensured if one has a highly developed sense of smell. One can smell one's food and be nourished; or smell one's enemies and escape before being struck down. In Markandaya's novel the Brahmin is punctilious about ridding himself of the 'feringhi' smell, for he does not wish to confuse those who wish to hunt down or drive out the British. The Brahmin is careful not to be scented as prey by his own people.

A cross-cultural relationship, blatantly defying social boundaries in an environment such as this, therefore cannot but uncover the latent fears and prejudices in those whose complacency is rudely disrupted. Scott develops the Forsterian motif so that it ultimately becomes a focus for the social and psychological preoccupations not only of Anglo-India but of humanity in general. Sex as an act is imaginatively accessible because it is a human activity, but when it involves two people from different communities then it suddenly becomes unacceptable. The credibility of the societies and the races involved is threatened by the loner who seeks satisfaction elsewhere.

Thus it is not the act that is wrong but that it is not performed within and according to the rules of the community. The fact that an act of love is literally devalued to the level of lust by a gang of Indian ruffians, the fact that many in the white community describe the sexual act between Hari and Daphne as rape, can only be explained in terms of the social preconceptions of the time.

1. Charles Allen (ed), Plain Tales from the Raj, p.66
2. M E Chamberlain, The Interaction of Two Peoples, p.94
3. Philip Mason, The Men who ruled India, p.287
4. Allen, p.26

FEAR AND FASCINATION

It is in keeping with Ronald Merrick's extreme view of the relationship between the white and black races, that as Deputy Inspector of Police he arrests Hari and five other Indian men, because he does not want to believe that they may have been innocent of raping Daphne in the Bibighar Gardens. It is only from a racist point-of-view that Merrick can view a relationship such as the one that exists between Hari and Daphne, for as far as he is concerned, the only emotion which can possibly exist between the British and the Indian is a thinly disguised "contempt" of the former for the latter. (DS, p.308) Further, his racism goes hand-in-hand with sexism, for he also believes that "A dark-skinned man touching a white skinned woman will always be conscious of the fact that he is - diminishing her. She would be conscious of it too" (p.226).

What appears to be a crude assumption on Merrick's part is not totally without foundation. History records that, "In the seventeenth century the East India Company encouraged the growth of a Eurasian community as a support for English activities ... Army officers and civil servants had children by Indian wives and mistresses" (1). These alliances - legal and illicit - have nearly all been between English men and Indian women under the Raj - few have been between Indian men and western women.

While one may condemn Merrick's implication of white racial superiority, it is possible to find that British attitudes to race are also held by Indians. Merrick's opinion that an alliance between a white man and a coloured woman is more acceptable than that between a coloured man and a white woman, is echoed by Hari Kumar. He informs Captain Nigel Rowan, the governor's aide, that "Lady Chatterjee was

incapable of accepting immediately that a white girl could treat an Indian like a man" (DS,p.259). She betrays the attitude which Daphne observes belongs to English women who look upon Indian men as "eunuchs ... whose colour is their main distinguishing mark" (JC,p.427). Kumar's interpretation of Lady Chatterjee's reservations about his relationship with Daphne ironically shows the effects of westernisation even on an Indian woman alive to the tensions of two opposing cultures. Her acculturation has therefore led her to view intimate relationships between an Indian man and an English girl from a western perspective.

Despite the fact that these overt practices and attitudes succeed in reinforcing the gulf between two communities who think in terms of "them" and "us", Scott does point to a discrepancy between the apparent and the unconscious underlying reality. It is a discrepancy which relates to any consideration of the opposing "Other" in situations where a minority that does not belong confronts the alienness of their surroundings. For instance, a superficial examination of the English memsahibs' tirade against Daphne's rape and pregnancy, reveals a powerful revulsion which initially appears to be in keeping with prevailing racist and sexist attitudes.

Disgust is expressed in no uncertain terms: "Personally if it had happened to me, I would have had a public abortion outside their bloody temple and thrown the filthy muck to the pie-dogs. Or made them stuff it down their priests' throats". Yet this public condemnation is at odds with the fact that the white women have been seen "watching young Kumar". He may think he has become "invisible to white people", but he is certainly not invisible to the white women in the pharmacy (JC,p.161). The stronger the latent attraction for the mysterious unknown, the more venomous the expression of disgust. Ultimately what

these women fear most is the intensity of their own feelings which contradicts their declared opinions. And as Mohammed Ali Kasim, the Muslim voice of reason, tells his son, "frightened people shriek the loudest and fire at random" (DS, p.71). Although Kasim is specifically referring to the Jallianwallah Bagh incident, his words transcend the specific.

That fear of and fascination for the unknown are closely linked can be seen even in a situation possessing none of the taboo associated with the Bibighar affair. Miss Crane's incursions into "the native town had frightened her", but her loathing of its "narrow dirty streets, its disgusting poverty" soon shades into a subtle touch of fascination of which she is not conscious. Her gaze shifts from "the verminous dogs, starving mutilated beggars" to the "fat white sacred Brahmani bulls" (JC, p.18). In the sensuous description of the fat Brahmani bulls, one can sense the inner struggle between a puritan Christian view and repressed sexual instincts challenged and overcome by these objects of torpid excess, venerated by an alien religion. It is the confident power emanating from what appears to be superficially unattractive that attracts Miss Crane.

Miss Crane is like Miss Tuhy in Jhabvala's short story "Miss Sahib", who, like Scott's character, has decided to stay on in India after British withdrawal in 1947. Like Scott, Jhabvala depicts India as a country that exposes suppressed sexuality. The title of the story itself immediately conjures up visions of the prim and proper spinster, and it is obvious that because Miss Tuhy is a spinster she dwells upon thoughts about "the sensuality of the East" (A Stronger Climate, p.172). Like Miss Crane her thoughts linger over the burgeoning and stimulating aspects of the Indian scene. Her "English

fellow teachers" had said "It was ... the climate; and of course the food ... all those curries and spices that heated the blood". Miss Tuhy wonders if her own "thin inadequate English body" would have been different had it "ripened" in the Indian environment like the "developed" bodies of the young Indian girls (ibid). Deprived of companionship she lives vicariously through the imagined sexual exploits of the Indian girl, Sharmila, at whose door she listens at night without feeling in the "least bad or guilty" (p.173).

Finally, unfulfilled and impoverished she turns against India, although earlier on in the story we are told that it was the contrast presented by England that had persuaded her to return to India. In England she had noticed "There was no sun, the grass was not green, the flowers not bright enough...Even physically the English looked cold to her, with their damp white skins and pale blue eyes" (p.164). But all she experiences on her return is disillusion. And then those aspects of Indian life which she had recalled so fondly in England and about which she had fantasised, are negatively perceived. She remains shut in her room to avoid the "ugly yellow heat haze" and now finds the food "too spicy for her and too greasy" - its smell is as unbearable as Sharmila's "heavy, perspiring body" (p.180).

The intensity underlying the feelings of all these women testifies to a deeper disorder which escapes their consciousness and is articulated in their perceptions of India. The feelings of muted fascination awakened in Miss Crane at the sight of the corpulent Brahmani bulls manifests itself in disgust in the same way that the obvious and more powerful attraction felt by the other English ladies for Hari Kumar results in crude and violent condemnation.. Likewise Miss Tuhy vents her personal frustrations on India. It seems that the greater the temptation and the desire to succumb to the attraction, the greater

the need to disguise this weakness by maligning the country which inadvertently exposes socially ^{undesirable} tendencies. What the reaction of these women demonstrates is that the "Oriental Other" forces them to confront feelings within themselves which are normally not allowed to see the light of day. Jhabvala however also reveals how European women have yet another way of dealing with the horror of being in India. They escape into the world of the imagination in order to nourish a much more pleasant, much more tolerable sensation of India. Safe in this cosy world, their expression of the horror which still lies dormant is considerably watered down and polite.

In Jhabvala's Esmond in India, the Englishman Esmond conceals his private disenchantment with India from his European acquaintances, and exploits a traditional image of India held in the west. He takes advantage of his wife, Gulab's, absence from social gatherings by implying that "real Indian ladies from the best old Indian families, still stayed secluded at home, which thrilled his foreign friends by giving them a glimpse of the India they thought they had so far missed ... of veiled women sitting together in marbled courtyards where perhaps a fountain plashed and a sprightly maidservant engaged them in bantering conversation in between singing love lyrics" (p.34).

As a result of Esmond's selective disclosures relating to his life, his western acquaintances not only weave fabulous tales about his 'Indian' background, but actually believe that these tales are true. The ease with which such deception and counter-deception is practised and accepted, thus making the act of recognising truth a precarious process, is demonstrated through a deliberate narrative blurring of fantasy and reality. When we are told that these women are given "a glimpse of the India they thought they had missed", the narrative seems to suggest that their imaginings have been translated into fact.

Western credibility and wish fulfilment is conveyed as a 'truth' which, in its evocative description, can even mislead the reader. The use of words like "veiled" and "perhaps", with their suggestion of mysterious romance and speculation, are not only a welcome anaesthetic to the western women in the novel, but prove equally effective in numbing the reader's critical perceptions.

The narrative aim however, is not to foster romantic notions for these are deflated by a description of Esmond's flat. Unlike the fond imaginings of the western women, there is no marbled courtyard in Gulab's home, and she herself admits that it "was not very clean ... Esmond picked things up here and there, her brassiere, an old blouse" (p.36). Moreover she is definitely not attended by a servant playing the flute. Her attendant is a young boy from the hills who "did not seem to understand what was said to him. He stood stupidly in the doorway and stared at Gulab and Ravi (her son)" (p.14).

Narrative intervention to clearly establish the gap between western imagination and local reality therefore contrasts strongly with Esmond's carefully devised cultural incursions which are instrumental in reinforcing the spirit of the masquerade. "He taught them what they wished to learn ... He had worked out a complete course on Indian culture, which was very useful to ladies who were only in the country for a short time but wished to take strong impressions back with them" (p.33).

Yet these ladies delude no one but themselves, for yet again the narrator reveals that they need to escape into the world of romance as a protection against the horror of living in India. The stories they weave around Esmond and about India are neurotic attempts to nourish their fantasies about their presence in India. Their weariness,

however, cannot be entirely suppressed and is all too evident in their thoughts: "It was perhaps a little overwhelming - so much noise and smell, so many beggars, such very narrow lanes" (pp.60-61).

The polite ladylike language is an ironic contrast to the intolerable truths which the women identify but do not allow themselves to feel. It is the subdued expression that ironically indicates the supreme effort involved in making light of the real, disturbing "strong impressions" that these women feel threatened by. While in Scott's novel the fear and abhorrence underlying western experience of India spews out in harsh invective, the carefully controlled expression in Esmond is another means of disguising similar powerful feelings.

Ironically we later see that it is for the same reasons that Esmond perpetuates the romantic view of India. He too finally admits to himself that "He was so tired of it all: the ramshackle huts ... the old men who sat on broken stringbeds and puffed at their hookahs, the dirty bullocks, the dirtier dogs ... the hordes of naked brown children ... There was no romance about life in India" (p.202).

It is in another of Jhabvala's short stories - "An Indian Citizen" - that we see how India to the westerner symbolises disorder which the narrator implies ironically reflects the turmoil within the outsider himself. Dr Ernst is another of Jhabvala's poignant portraits of the European stranded in India. He is "scrupulous about maintaining everything absolutely neat and clean and scrubbed" ... because he did not want to give in to that "chaos which seemed perpetually to lie in wait for him" (pp.142-143). Dr Ernst is reminiscent of Esmond who tries to impose the mark of his own scrupulous personality on his flat. In fact the description of the flat as Esmond has designed it to be, could very well be a description of Esmond himself for "the flat

was its own neat modern cosmopolitan self". It stood for symmetry and order with its "bright table mats, the painted drinking glass, the earthenware plates of a rich dark green" (pp.32&33).

Yet Esmond realises that it is Gulab, his Indian wife, who has "succeeded in superimposing her presence so that all the time ... he was aware of it ... weighing him down, swallowing him up" (p:39). Gulab's "heavily concentrated perfumes" are described in timeless terms . "Jasmine ... rose, khas, lilac, sandalwood ... spread a thick pall heavy and ancient" (p.17), while Esmond's version of the flat is referred to in terms denoting fashionable but ephemeral trends - "it looked rather like a beautifully photographed full-page advertisement in an American magazine" (p.33).

The narrative suggests that though the westerner makes strenuous attempts to impose what is visibly a European control over his environment, he is powerless against the insidious power that is India. Predictably, like the other westerners described above, Esmond too strikes at Gulab who in his eyes personifies the essence of India, that challenges the romantic notion he once cherished. Once he believed that her "beautiful eyes [were] full of the wisdom and sorrow of the East" (p.166). But now 'He shouted aloud, "Animal!" and then grabbed her upper arm and began to twist the flesh ... He felt it soft and full in his hand and he twisted harder and harder' (p.164).

Esmond's use of the word 'animal' implies that he considers Gulab belongs to a world untouched by 'civilising human' influences, one that differs from his own. In fact the narrative soon confirms this when he contrasts the virtues of his "cool" and "rational" English mistress Betty with Gulab's "primeval mind" (pp.164 & 165). In Esmond we see the persistence of those Anglo-Indian prejudices manifested in Scott's Brigadier Reid, who also believed that the English

"cantonment" with its "calm, wise and enduring things", was an example to the chaotic "native town" (JC,p.290), which is a symbol of his rigid stereotypical vision of India. Unlike Esmond, however, Reid does not literally set foot in the native town, and therefore keeps confrontation with the savage mind at bay.

Ironically however it is Esmond who is the animal if one equates being animal-like with the exercise of our baser instincts, for by any standards of human behaviour, his violent act is inexcusable. Jhabvala therefore shows how the Indian experience removes the 'civilised' veneer protecting European sensibility. As Anita Desai reflects, India is a place where "one sees life as it is, without masks, costumes or cosmetics, stripped bare, in the raw. In the west, life is well cushioned, well masked and dressed and painted and made tolerable and comfortable" (2). Similarly, Daphne Manners concurs: "we northerners have learned how to make suffering aseptic and non-contagious" (JC,p.469). Both Scott and Jhabvala therefore try to define the "other" less tangible but equally real world of their own psyche which those who do not belong in India are forced to confront.

It is important to point out that Jhabvala is also aware that modern westernised India now manifests a significant change in attitude concerning sexuality. The West is now the land of promise. For instance, despite the fact that everything in England is "very pleasant and companionable", Nalini in "A Course of English Studies" is "disappointed" (3). This is because "what she had expected from the place, what everything she had read had promised her, was love and a lover" (p.71). Similarly, Shakuntala in Esmond is infatuated with Esmond, who is "slim and graceful ... pale with golden hair and a fine pointed chin. He looked ... like a poet" (pp.64-65). To her he is the epitome of mystery and romance - the "unknown Englishman who had come

so suddenly and taken Gulab away from Amrit" (Shakuntala's brother) (p:64).

Here the irony has a double target. While Jhabvala shows how western cultural images like the pale Shelleyan figure now influence westernised India, there is also a subtle allusion to a similarity with the erstwhile Orientalist approach to India. Like the venerated Orientalist, these apparently empty-headed girls have arrived at their conclusions through books. As Edward Said comments: "the Orient studied was a textual universe by and large; the impact of the Orient was made through books and manuscripts, not as in the impress of Greece on the Renaissance, through mimetic artifacts like sculpture and pottery" (4).

As a result the reality which awaits Jhabvala's characters and the Orientalist is equally absurd, though naturally there is a touch of sadness where the girls and their relationships are concerned. Said refers to a report where the first view which early-nineteenth century German Orientalists had of "an eight-armed Indian statue cured them completely of their Orientalist taste" (5). Where Nalini is concerned, the decline from the sublime to the ridiculous is inevitable although initially registered only by the narrator and the reader. The answer to Nalini's dreams turns out to be an unprepossessing academic - married and anxious. Dr Norman Greaves, was "rather short ... and thin, and exceptionally pale, his hair was pale too, and very straight ... of an indeterminate colour" (p.72). Despite Nalini's charms, Dr Greaves obeys convention and does not leave his marital home. Like Nalini, Shakuntala's affair with Esmond will also end in loneliness, for he considers it only as a part-time dalliance. The world of the imagination ultimately serves no one well.

Scott and Jhabvala therefore explore the fears and fantasies which the 'other culture' sparks off in an individual and are often manifest in both their negative and positive responses to it. That which is expressed reveals as much of the unconscious as it does of standard cultural opinion. In fact what both the westerner and the Indian think the other country is all about is far more valid to them than what the country really is. This is why, as Jhabvala's work shows, hopes and fears have been the motivating forces that have driven both Indian and westerner alike to seek a concrete reflection of the images they have of each other's country. She however focuses more upon the westerners, who, once they have experienced India, lose themselves in the void that exists between illusion and reality. Forster's wistful understanding of India is therefore still true now as it was when he wrote A Passage to India. "She calls 'Come' through her hundred mouths, through objects ridiculous and august. But come to what? She has never defined. She is not a promise, only an appeal" (p.136).

1. Kenneth Ballhatchet, Race, Sex and Class under the Raj. Imperial attitudes and their critics, 1793-1905, pp:96-97)
2. Kunapipi, Volume VI, Number 3, 1984, Anita Desai interviewed by Kirsten Holst Petersen, in India in 1984), p.84
3. How I Became a Holy Mother and Other Stories, p.70
4. Said, p.52
5. Said, p.52

THE NEED FOR DEFENCES

To return to the "memsahibs" in Scott's novel, however, it is important to point out that their denunciation of Hari and of Indians in general, constitutes a comment on social structures under the Raj. The Quartet reveals that fiercest verbal denunciation came from women who did not enjoy a socially privileged position. Unlike Daphne who could naturally claim an upper class upbringing, these women had got where they were because the Raj gave "quite ordinary English people the chance to live and work..like a ruling class" (DSp,p.370). As Ballhatchet confirms of the British working in India "few of the covenanted service were of aristocratic birth, but all lived in an aristocratic style" (p.97).

It is because their sense of exclusiveness is acquired and therefore fragile, that these women need social rules to preserve their sense of social unassailability. Consequently, when Daphne declares her allegiance to Hari Kumar - a member of the 'inferior' race - thereby admitting him into sacrosanct territory, the power of the taboo as an agent to keep the outsider at bay is challenged. This accounts for the violence with which the women express their opposition to this threat posed to the status quo. In contrast Lady Manners, though saddened by her niece's death, does not condemn Kumar. The social insecurity which afflicts the other English memsahibs is after all not a malaise from which she suffers.

The reason why certain women so strongly felt the vulnerability of their positions was due to the peculiarly male-dominated nature of the Raj, where men were "closely integrated" [with India] but women did not have a specific role to play in the country. This is why the system of 'honours', which like rules of social behaviour, succeeded in conferring a sense of superiority, became very important. "In the

rather lonely life of the memsahib it became a very great thing for her to think that one day she would become Lady So and so. In those days it mattered terribly because there was not an awful lot else"

(1).

The extent to which they "mattered terribly" is indicated by Scott in an exposure of social pretensions, dealing with the behaviour of the British women working at the hospital towards Lady Chatterjee when she arrives to visit Miss Crane. Despite the intervention of her friend Dr Mayhew, the resident consultant, the ward-sister promptly proceeds virtually to throw Lady Chatterjee out of the ward. Lady Chatterjee herself appears more amused than hurt by their behaviour. She is able to see through their churlish behaviour. "Being Lady Chatterjee, the widow of a man knighted by their own King, that made it awfully serious, something they had to take a stand over, quite apart from the personal jealousy they might feel at not being Knights' ladies themselves" (p.91). Unlike the women who insult her, Lady Chatterjee is born into a life of privilege. Her Rajput antecedents are impeccable. She is not only "the widow of a prince but the daughter of one. Her education began in Geneva and ended in Paris" (p.83). The knighthood bestowed upon her second husband seems but an extra bonus. Her life epitomises all the worldly success that the English ladies can only dream about.

Yet ironically the novel also shows that all this is not sufficient to guard her from the pain inflicted by social insult. Lady Chatterjee reveals that the incident at the hospital did make her "upset and angry" (p.89). Her humorous recollection of the experience can therefore be seen as part of the brave show she presents to the world - a show which makes Daphne comment in a letter to her aunt: "It's difficult ever to get Lili to talk about the things Indians have to

put up with, but that doesn't mean she doesn't feel badly about them" (p.377). Lili Chatterjee is presented as a contrast to the shallow thoughtless women, whose attitude is even more unforgivable when it is pointed out that "Miss Crane had only had two visitors the whole time she'd been there - the chaplain and Mr Poulson who really saw her officially" (ibid). Obviously the women's dislike and jealousy of what Lady Chatterjee represent took precedence over Miss Crane's needs. That Lady Chatterjee is able to see beyond the racist behaviour to its cause singles her out as part of that group of 'good' characters in the Quartet who, despite any personal hurt, are always willing to seek and understand the hidden reason for any attack. She is reminiscent of the Indian lawyer Srinivasan who, as the following incident reveals, also sees the general behind the specific.

Srinivasan tells the unseen narrator of a crass incident involving "BOR" types. These men once emptied chamber pots into a hotel pool and then used the emptied pots as candle holders to present a little parody of the Indian festival of lights - Diwali. Srinivasan places this gross violation of cultural sentiments by the outsider in a wider historical context. He interprets it as a gesture of the "one time under-privileged people ... against the social forces that no longer work but used to keep them in their place" (JC,p.202). Indians therefore became the easy target for bitterness engendered by a social system unconnected with the country itself.

This does not mean that the Indians themselves are innocent. It is this same psychology of resentment which is at work when Lady Chatterjee's servant, Raju, addresses Hari in Hindi when the latter is entertained at dinner by Daphne Manners, who is a guest at Lady Chatterjee's house. In Raju's eyes the social occasion has invested Hari with significance. Another Indian has suddenly become part of

them - the "Sahib log", the elite. It is through Hindi therefore that Raju hopes to remind Hari not to forget his station. Raju's pettiness however is all to no avail, for the anglicised Hari speaks and understands little Hindi. Neither the Indian nor the British communities can pass smug judgement on the other, for both are equally responsible for social systems fostering destructive attitudes.

What the above incident illustrates is the way the Raj became an environment which enabled a low-caste Indian like Raju to exact some form of revenge upon members of his own race for the continual social humiliation he has to suffer. A more light-hearted version of a similar socially revealing episode is described by Naipaul in The Mystic Masseur, when at the governor's party local members of the Legislative Council silently appeal to the waiters for help with the "eating drill". 'The members looked at the waiters who looked away quickly. Then the members looked at each other. The man in jodhpurs muttered, "Is why black people can't get on. You see how these waiters behaving? And they black like hell too, you know"' (p.208).

Though the satisfaction gained by those who serve may be considered either hollow or petty, such acts do disturb the upper caste Hindu's sense of superiority, as the following example illustrates. Had her inherited wealth and social position been a source of psychological security, Lady Chatterjee would have remained unperturbed by her frequent encounters with racism, the behaviour pattern that predominantly seeks to stress the (imagined) inferiority of the person attacked. But the Raj's own set of honours and the respect which these automatically inspire, began to constitute a threat to the unquestioned belief in the paramountcy of upper caste Hindus. Moreover, what is more damaging in Lady Chatterjee's case is that the threat is expressed by one of their own kind.

Lady Chatterjee's late husband Sir Nello was always referred to by his head gardener as the "Chota Sahib" to distinguish him from the British burra Sahibs. As Lady Chatterjee explains "Burra means big, and chota means small ... Nello always laughed, but I think it hurt him a bit" (p.87). It is here that we see both the poignancy and irony of the situation. The honours that accrue to his status are not sufficient to prevent the upper caste Hindu from feeling socially vulnerable. Moreover the blow to his self-esteem is even more acute as it is delivered by that very section of his own people whose traditional support gave him his sense of superiority in the first place. An alien culture within his own country therefore came to deny the upper caste Hindu the position of superiority which all along had been his by divine right. The outsider therefore subtly disrupts the social hegemony of the upper castes. The western concept of snobbishness based on tenuous yet traditionally powerful sanctions took root easily in the Indian soil, where the environment already nurtured institutions like the Hindu caste system which accept distinctions between human beings.

But while the British exposed the complacency of upper caste India, the results were not reformatory. The Raj did not redress social imbalances and remained an environment in which hurt was often answered by hurt. Lady Chatterjee, who at first appears to be more amused than hurt by the racist conduct of the English women, is no different from Raju when defending herself against the snobbish conduct of the English ladies. As Miss Crane informs us, Lady Chatterjee often posed questions to the English ladies, calculated to expose their "lack of breeding". Lady Chatterjee too was "a bit of a snob" (p.42).

Daphne Manners however manages to retain her sense of reason. Like Mohammed Ali Kasim, she looks beyond prevailing political and racial theories in order to understand the impulses governing anti-social behaviour. She sees that lying at the root of British contempt for the Indian is "that old primitive savage instinct to attack and destroy what we didn't understand because it looked different and was different" (JC,p.428). Daphne's train of thought echoes Miss Crane's assessment of her presence in India, and her despair that her life's work has been futile. Miss Crane feels she has failed to prove that "fear was evil because it promoted prejudice ... that ignorance was bad because fear sprang from it" (p.30). We can see that ignorance, fear ('what we didn't understand because it looked different'), and evil ('attack and destroy') are the labels provided by Miss Crane to match Daphne's description. As Miss Crane does not specify which race suffers from ignorance and fear, it would be safe to assume that her opinion pertains to both communities. Together these characters form a centre of rationality, which contrasts strongly with the mindless behaviour of those spurred on mainly by ignorance and fear.

Daphne then turns to the Indian situation and points out that the Indian meanwhile has "many centuries ... to go back to trace to its source their apparent fear of skins paler than their own" (ibid). Indian history has taught the Indian to be in awe of those with a white skin. The successful invader - whether he has been Persian, Greek or British - has always been fair-skinned.

As has already been mentioned, fair-skinned invaders from north-west India looked down upon the dark-skinned aboriginal inhabitants whom they enslaved or forced further south. It is ironic that among the Aryans too there is evidence of that same fearful fascination for the dark-skinned aboriginals as seen in western encounters with the orient

dark-skinned aboriginals as seen in western encounters with the orient (2). Contempt for a dark skin therefore runs deep within Indian society. As a result we can see the validity of yet another of Merrick's comments on colour prejudice. He notes that "The Indians themselves have this prejudice about paleness. To them paleness denotes descent from the civilised Aryan invaders from the North, a black skin descent from the primitive aboriginals ... There is this connotation paleness has of something ... superior. Capable of leading" (DS,p.226).

For Merrick to voice such an opinion is in keeping with what we know of his racist attitude, but it is ironic to see that Daphne with her reasoned awareness of the causes underlying the animosity between the two races, should herself demonstrate this British/white assumption of superiority. This is most clearly seen in the example referred to earlier where after the Bibighar incident she tells Hari what to do. "believing I knew what was best for both of us" (JC,p.452). Merrick's assertion that the white race exercised "the dominant role" (DS,p.226) is ironically demonstrated by Hari Kumar himself who is not free of the burden of a colonised nation.

Hari mechanically believes in British superiority and is resistant to the idea of an Indian doing an Englishman's job. An Indian judge in court elicits the following response from him: "For the first time Hari found himself asking: What is an Indian doing sitting there, fining that man, jailing this woman, sending this case up to the court of sessions? ... When he paused to consider this resistance he realised that he had responded as a member of a subject race" (JC,p.269). Kumar's Indianness, like that of many Indians, is not only a question of the colour of his skin - it is a question of automatic attitude. Trapped in the rigidities of his own caste system, which

forbade any challenge to distinctions inherited at birth, the Indian saw no reason to resist racial distinctions imposed by the British regime, especially as the latter had political muscle to recommend it. The Indian therefore inadvertently colluded in the consolidation of British racist attitudes towards India, which turned out to be a mould into which British prejudices fitted perfectly.

The superiority of a white skin over a dark one is still a widespread opinion among Indians about Indians. This is why the sentiment 'Black is beautiful' did not originate in India and paradoxically enough is a western concept. Matrimonial columns in Indian newspapers and magazines blatantly advertise either the availability of a fair-skinned bride or groom, or the need for one, consequently ensuring that a fair complexion is preserved through succeeding generations. While this may be an unwelcome illustration of the caste system, where the more desirable castes like the Brahmins possess a lighter skin, it is as Chaudhuri perceptively suggests "the common ... the original sin of all the peoples of European origins. The Hindus only systematized and practised it first, as the first people of European origins confronted with the threat to a fair complexion from the dark" (3). Where both the early and late Aryans (the British) are concerned, a fanatic insistence on the superiority of their own 'colour' can therefore be seen as a frightened reaction on the part of those who do not belong within a country they sought to dominate.

However, while the Indian may equate beauty with a fair skin, he is in awe of blackness and darkness. The Goddess Kali, the Black Earth-Mother, is worshipped by some Hindus and placated by human sacrifice. She represents the fierce aspect of "Devi or Mahadevi (the Great Goddess) ... [whose] ... duality may be traced to the pre-Aryan

goddess, who was both bringer of fertility and exacter of living sacrifice". She was thus a sinister combination of life and death capable of both attracting and repelling her devotees (4).

An incident in Naipaul's novel In a Free State illustrates this mixture of fear and fascination which informs the Hindu's attitude to blackness. Culturally disorientated in Washington, Santosh, the diplomat's servant in "One Out of Many", is both attracted and repelled by the Negro maid whom he refers to as the hubshi. To him she is "Kali, goddess of death and destruction, with a red tongue and white eyeballs and many powerful arms". What she regards as playful amorous dallies are to him a spiritual lapse - "I fell" (p.36).

The depth of Hindu horror for a dark skin becomes understandable when one examines Santosh's thoughts. From the Hindu point-of-view, he has now denied himself any chance of improving his karma. Having lost his honour through sexual indulgences, he has now engineered for himself the worst Hindu fate imaginable. He fears that in the after-life he may not merely be "born a cat or a monkey", but a "hubshi"! (p.39) His subsequent symbolic washing cannot free him of his inner sense of spiritual taint brought about by intimate contact with the dreaded hubshi. The black person is as much a symbol of the feared "Other" to the Indian, as he or she is to the European.

In the context of the above discussion which discloses the ironies underlying the struggles faced by culturally-threatened communities, Merrick's arrogant opinions about racial superiority now seem less of a personal grudge. However, what is ironically revealing about Merrick as the exponent of white solidarity is that he himself is someone aware of the fact that his own social background makes him a misfit in that section of the Anglo-Indian community within which he works and socialises. He confesses to Sarah Layton, a member of the upper class

that he was "a boy from an elementary school who won a scholarship to a better one and found it difficult later not to be a bit ashamed of his parents and very much ashamed of his grandparents ... I wasn't the same class ... It comes out in subtle ways ... in not knowing the places or the people your kind of people know"(DS,p.387). Merrick is thus separated by achievement from the class into which he is born and by a lack of social 'privilege', from the upper class with whom he comes into contact.

It is because Merrick does not feel he belongs to any group that he is so insistent about territorial and moral boundaries. "You have to draw a line ... to be able to say ... This side of it is right. That side is wrong. Then you can have your moral term of reference. Then you can act. You can feel committed. You can be involved. Your life takes on something like a shape" (pp.223-224). Merrick is an example of the man who does not belong but wants to. Floundering between two worlds, he sees that belonging to a specific group will give his life a 'shape' - an entity with recognisable boundaries. Perhaps it is because he is left out in the cold that Sarah describes him as a man "chilled by an implacable desire to be approached, accepted" (p.227).

Although Merrick specifically refers to a 'moral term of reference', it is clear from the Quartet that that which passes as moral is determined by the particular social and cultural viewpoint. Therefore one can extrapolate upon Merrick's point of view and state that the possession of a strong sense of personal identity is dependent upon the cultural context. However the need for a well-defined cultural context as a pre-requisite for a sense of personal identity, is not the wish of this Englishman alone. We can see evidence of this in the lives of Indians both at home in India and abroad in the West Indies. Where the Indian is concerned the position is even more complex for

contact with the west and geographical displacement has confused his attitude to inherited cultural tradition. Such an Indian is a creature whose life manifests the resistance and capitulation, the humour and tragedy of having to consciously and sub-consciously grapple with the powerful effects of social and historical pressures.

1. Allen, p.82 & pp.101-102
2. Chaudhuri, 'The Children of Circe' in The Continent of Circe
3. Chaudhuri, Circe, p.161
4. Veronica Ions, Indian Mythology, p.94

WHEN THE OLD MEETS THE NEW

Naipaul's The Mystic Masseur is a novel that explores an individual's journey from one culture to another. In its examination of Hindu practices in Trinidad and in the Hindu protagonist's search for an identity, the novel focuses on themes that are explored more extensively in A House for Mr Biswas. The 'hero' Ganesh Ramsumair grows up in a remote Trinidadian village from where his father is eager to send him to "Queen's Royal College" - the seat of western learning. Having made this decision the old man has "Ganesh dressed in a khaki suit and a khaki toupee and many people said the boy looked like a little sahib". The father, meanwhile, accompanies his son wearing "his visiting outfit: dhoti, koortah, white cap, and an unfurled umbrella on the crook of his left arm" (p.19).

Dressed as they are the two provide excellent graphic material for historical and symbolic comment. The old man in his Indian clothes represents traditional ways, while the boy in his western outfit is witness to the impact of 'new fashions'. The amused laughter which greets their appearance in the town, exposes them as unsuspecting victims of a cruel joke played by time. Father and son are anachronistic figures in the city to which they have journeyed equipped only with the villager's view of the world, and to comprehend the pathos behind this incident it is necessary to see what this view is.

The reason why the villagers agree upon the suitability of Ganesh's outfit to mark the transition from a humble village to the glory of the town college, is the association of Khaki with colonial authority. Khaki was a colour ordered for all those who went out from England to serve in India, and the topi was considered an essential part of the English gentleman's wardrobe. A "tropical outfit" included the "usual

khaki shorts and jackets ... The men were also issued with topees" (1). But what was favoured by the British in their colonial heyday is now obsolete and can only excite derision sharpened by resentment against colonial exploitation.

Where the old man's choice of personal attire is concerned, it is important to understand that he is responding to the occasion in a manner befitting a true Brahmin. The acquisition of learning forms part of a Brahmin's caste obligation, and so Ganesh's enrolment at the college is the first step in the boy's intellectual and spiritual development. Hence it is fitting that the old man should dress himself in a way any proud, traditional Hindu father would have done on such a momentous occasion. As Narayan records in The Talkative Man, an outfit such as the one chosen by the old man, would not have been the wrong choice in an Indian context. A "kurta, a ... dhoti and a neatly folded upper cloth over my shoulder". was good enough to even "face the emperors of the earth" (p.45), and therefore why not the local educational representative of the ^{King} of England.

Removed from an Indian setting, however, the outfit becomes a reason to ridicule Ganesh's father, who now appears to be the only one unaware of the fact that he is no longer in India but in Port of Spain, Trinidad. This unawareness is also the reason why he continues to speak in Hindi, abusing the amused spectators roundly in his native tongue. But gaddaha, (jackass), so "rich and expressive" (p.20) when vocalised in Hindi, falls harmlessly upon the uncomprehending Port of Spain crowd. Even worse, it adds to the clownish spectacle the old man presents. His frustration culminates in the principal's office where he is reduced to gesticulating with "his white cap and umbrella", vainly attempting to communicate with the Englishman. To further accentuate the lack of composure in the old man, the principal is

portrayed as a calm and sensible figure, who is initially "patient" then "firm", but is finally exasperated by the incomprehensible antics of the villager. Enraged, Ganesh's father mutters "Gaddaha! Gaddaha!" (p.20), but with just as little effect.

The pride with which father and son plan their outfits, encouraged by the approving comments of the villagers, unaware of how incongruous they would appear once they leave the village, now only seems charged with pathos. Ganesh's lie in response to the spectators' merriment - "I did tell you not to dress me up like this" - reveals his instant recognition of the ridiculous picture both he and his father must present.

It is a tribute to Naipaul's narrative skill that he succeeds in preserving the humour inherent in the incident, while deepening our awareness of the potential for pain whenever a hiatus develops between old and new, India and the west, parent and child. The overriding impartiality of narrative vision testifies to the presence of an author who has himself travelled across cultures and is therefore able to see through both Indian and western eyes. We therefore experience compassion for Ganesh and his father, but we also recognise that, considering the circumstances, the English principal's reaction is wholly reasonable.

The journey from the village to the town symbolises a journey from innocence to worldliness. It is the means whereby Ganesh realises that what belongs in India and continues to retain its validity in the Trinidadian village where cultural allegiances are still homogen^eous, loses its significance in the town where other cultural influences prevail. It is the less-than-awed reaction of an 'other' culture to the observance of traditional ways, that makes those who observe tradition question the inherent significance of their cultural norms.

Outsiders to the community therefore become the agents who indirectly effect a change in cultural practice. It is here that we see the beginnings of that 'unease in the old dispensation', which either develops into a cultural rigidity to counter the agents of fragmentation, or can lead to the attenuation or disappearance of the orthodox view.

While those who embrace change reject the old and those who do not keep the new at bay, the object of both these exercises is the same. These apparently opposite reactions are aimed at achieving equilibrium in an unsettling environment and are different aspects of the need to belong. Let us first examine the absence of change as seen in Ganesh's father. The old man's preference for traditional Indian attire is in keeping with his continued observance of the Hindu ritual of visiting Benares - the Hindu seat of learning in India. In accordance with orthodox Hindu custom Ganesh's head is shaved, he is given a little saffron bundle and instructed to "Go to Benares and study". Whereupon Ganesh begins 'walking briskly away from Fourways. As arranged Dookhie the shopkeeper ran after him, crying a little and begging in English, "No boy. No. Don't go away to Benares to study". Finally Dookhie, tired of pursuing the boy, interjects: "Cut out this nonsense, man. Stop behaving stupid. You think I have all day to run after you? You think you really going to Benares? That is in India, you know, and this is Trinidad'" (p.21).

Considering they are in Trinidad, the Indian's insistence on this ritual seems like an irrational desire to cling to tradition for its own sake. Yet the incident reveals the co-existence of contradictory responses to a new environment. Firstly, where Ganesh's father is concerned, the incident implies that he is unable to accept the fact that going to Benares, (India), is impossible in Trinidad - a self-

deluding exercise which Ganesh partly helps to sustain. However, we also have Dookhie's blunt statement that going to Benares in Trinidad is symptomatic of "behaving stupid".

From the above it appears that men are nostalgic idealists, and it is the woman Dookhie who accepts the reality of the new situation. This is a distinction that often emerges in Jhabvala's and Naipaul's novels. Evidence that women are tough realists is already apparent in 'B. Wordsworth', a short story in Miguel Street. There too the young narrator's mother dissociates herself from the dreams of her son and his friend 'B. Wordsworth' who wants to write "a poem that will sing to all humanity" (p.44). While the child is filled with wonder, his efforts to sell one of B Wordsworth's poems to his mother is met with a brutal refusal: "Tell that blasted man to haul his tail away from my yard, you hear" (p.41).

In being down-to-earth, these women characters in Miguel Street and The Mystic Masseur are the precursors of Shama in A House for Mr Biswas, whose practical approach to chaotic situations is often a source of silent wonder to her husband. But this impression that women more readily accept and adapt to changing realities is not sustained. The down-to-earth Shama and her sisters display a slavish devotion to traditional observances set down by their mother - a process which discredits their husbands' position. This development in Mr Biswas is not however a volte face but is related to yet another aspect of belonging - the woman's need to be seen to belong to her gender group - a theme that will be more thoroughly examined in a subsequent chapter. What, at this point, is relevant about the sisters' traditional subservience to their mother's wishes is that, by it, they are expressing a need for the security engendered by group identity, which is also what Ganesh's father's cultural practices signify.

His attitude becomes understandable if we refer to a situation in Anita Desai's novel Bye Bye Blackbird, where an Indian expatriate in England asserts: "Our house is full of children. You have heard them singing our Punjabi songs? We may live in exile here, but we work hard and we eat well and we live in our own way" (p.135), [underlining mine]. Unable to feel they "belong in the new environment, immigrants compensate for their uncertainty by recreating the kind of atmosphere that once made them feel they belonged and sure of themselves. The implicit deprivations of the spirit in the expatriate's statement, however, poignantly undermine the overt assertions of material success.

In the context of traditional observances, it is useful to examine Nirad Chaudhuri's pertinent theory explaining why early Aryan settlers in India "passed over regions which had some of the grandest scenery in the world and chose instead ... the dullest and flattest part of the country" (2), and why having done so they then favoured a particular architectural style in Northern India.

According to Chaudhuri this "clinging to the plains" was due to a nostalgia for the plains of south-eastern Europe which, he believes, had once been home to the Aryans in the course of their migration to India. It is also this same recreation of the past that accounts for the flat-roofed huts of "sun-baked clay" found in "...the villages of the Gangetic plain". (p.138). Chaudhuri states that it was not until he "saw a picture of a reconstruction of the earliest agricultural settlement known to history ... found at Qalat Jarmo in Mesopotamia", that he came to understand the presence of dwellings which seemed so ill-adapted to India's climate: "Men built as if they were still in the Middle East" (ibid). Chaudhuri's recognition of ^{stasis} within

change throws light upon a community's need to emphasise the visible aspects of its own identity in an unfamiliar and threatening environment.

If we now turn to An Area of Darkness, we will see how later descendants of the ancient Aryans continued this process of "re-building" their old homes in the New World. Referring to his grandfather's house in Trinidad, Naipaul describes it as a "heavy flat roofed oddity, whose image I was to see again and again in the small ramshackle towns of Uttar Pradesh" (p.30). Naipaul interprets his grandfather's rejection of "every colonial style ... in Trinidad", as an inability to accept the new environment and the changes it occasioned. Though he had "abandoned India ... he denied Trinidad"; in short, "he ceased to see" (ibid). The visit to Benares in The Mystic Masseur now seems more than ever an aspect of this same denial and blindness.

However, even within the Indian cultural context untroubled by the anxieties of displacement, one can identify the response of the exile within the home country. It is the size and diversity of India that has made Indians aware of their own distinct roots and traditions. All his life the Indian has had to live alongside 'foreigners', and this has made him conscious not only of his own separateness but of that of the person outside the community. Though the following statement refers specifically to the Indian in Trinidad, Naipaul is actually articulating the unexpressed but instinctive realisation of every Indian.

"Doubtless they ... had their own things. We ate certain food, performed certain ceremonies and had certain taboos; we expected others to have their own. We did not wish to share theirs; we did not expect them to share ours. They were what they were; we were what we

were. We were never instructed in this" (AD: pp.30-31). While India had the physical space to sustain this policy of cultural segregation over many centuries - a persistence which became its own validation - Trinidad did not. In the New World the cultural norms of an Old Civilisation can only be perceived as a strange and amusing anachronism.

Yet Trinidadian-Hindus are not so unlike the British in India, who also made strenuous attempts to create a home from home. Evidence of English style churches and houses bearing English names adequately substantiate this point. For example, we have Mabel Layton's 'Rose Cottage' (Scott, TS), and the Minnies' 'Honeysuckle Cottage' (Jhabvala, Heat and Dust, p.33). The interior of homes were English havens designed to soothe the exile from home. "At the windows, which kept the darkness at bay, hung chintz curtains, a homely, English touch like the three-piece suite, dressed in plain loose covers, in position in front of the empty fireplace" (Scott, The Mark of the Warrior, p.24). As one of Charles Allen's interviewees points out, English housewives used to "buy printed linens and things in England and bring it out", and "English gardens were terribly important", even though they could have had "the most marvellous gardens with orchids and all sorts of things" (3).

Beautiful though English gardens are, it is the implication behind the speaker's words that is significant, for it betrays an attitude common to those who do not belong. Like the early Aryans, the British ignored what is 'naturally' beautiful, in their attempt to recreate an accurate reflection of the homes they left behind. Thus the gardens which failed to survive "the first blast of hot weather" (*ibid*) are brief and poignant reminders of England, as is the "three piece suite permanently in position in front of an empty fireplace" - fires being

unnecessary in the Indian heat (MW,p.24). As Harriet Haig, the English governess to an Indian prince, realistically acknowledges, "Dickens, remote but reassuring in Kalipur ... an occupation possibly outmoded, an occupation for oneself rather than an exercise for one's pupils" (AS,p.35), [underlining mine]. Though her reflections are personal and concern but one aspect of being British in India, the reasons she discovers for herself are easily applicable to exiles anywhere - none more so than Trinidadian Hindus who insist on visiting Benares in remote Trinidad.

Thus we see how the assertion of national identity reinforcing the sense of belonging to a group, becomes a means of achieving psychological security in an unfamiliar environment. But The Mystic Masseur also records local vulnerability to western influence, which leads to change. These changes, which Naipaul appropriately presents in a tragi-comic light, are as confusing for Ganesh as is the lack of change in his father.

Sensing that the amusement in Port of Spain was caused by his father's apparent Indian identity, Ganesh tries to salvage his reputation by spreading "...a story that he was really called Gareth" (p.20). Unfortunately his lifestyle continued to be Indian, and above all "his accent remained too clearly that of an Indian from the country" (ibid). Ganesh's bluff is consequently easily exposed, plunging him deeper into the embarrassing plight from which he sought to escape in the first place. His lack of knowledge, not only of his own limitations but also of what he perceives as being English, is shown to be pathetically inadequate.

The cosmetic measure of changing his name can be interpreted on several levels. In terms of the effect of colonisation on the countries concerned, this device indicates the desperation among

colonised peoples who wish to belong to what they perceive as the culture of power. It is also a narrative means which draws attention to the split brought about by colonisation between the indigenous/private world and the public/western world - a split which demands the donning of masks to deceive the observer and, even more tragically, oneself.

Through Ganesh, Naipaul points at the dilemma of colonised people who, while under the hold of a traditional way of life, also feel drawn towards western culture. This is because the widespread range and adoption of the latter seemingly proclaims a power that makes it so attractive. Unable to shrug off old allegiances but experiencing the force of the new, the individual attempts to satisfy the demands of both, only to produce an imperfect projection of both ways of life. That this is not a problem confined to the West-Indies is confirmed by a reference in Dom Moraes' book From East and West, in his description of a Pakistani home in England. In the book the author makes an insightful and compassionate comment on expatriate communities, who often unconsciously project a wish to be seen to belong to the dominant culture of the west. As with Ganesh's outfit, attention is drawn to what is visually discordant.

Viewing the homes of Kenyan Asians in Bradford, Moraes points out that "In Pakistan they would probably have large beautiful houses, with Kashmiri carpets and low tables; in Bradford ... from an English point-of-view each one's house betrayed a failure of taste - horrible wall-paper or pictures, mass-produced furniture (pp.30-31). Moraes however concludes that "The presence of the wallpaper, the pictures, the furniture seemed to me to indicate a desire to assimilate" (ibid). His remark is a significant comment on the psychology of those who can

see they do not belong but want to. Sadly however, like Ganesh, the attempt to appear to belong accentuates rather than negates their condition of not belonging.

1. Allen, p.44
2. Chaudhuri, Circe, p.134
3. Allen, p.88

A CRAZE FOR FOREIGN

While at this stage, it is still possible to sympathise with Ganesh, Jhabvala's Esmond and The Householder create a different effect. Attention is drawn more to social pretension and less to human vulnerability. In most of her novels Jhabvala deals primarily with the wealthy westernised upper and middle classes in India whose lifestyles comprise a careful blend of east and west. They are perfect examples of the families described in Naipaul's article "Jamshed into Jimmy" (in The Overcrowded Barracoon), where "The head of the family has been educated at an Indian or English public school and at one of the two English universities ... [The parents] will be called Daddy and Mummy by their own children. Their furnishings will show a happy blend of East and West ... so too will their food (Indian lunch followed by Western-style dinner), their books, their records (difficult classical Indian, European chamber music) and their pictures (North Indian miniatures, Ganymed reproductions of Van Gogh)" (p.58). What Jhabvala seeks to point out, however, is that although western influence appears to be superficial, its impact on Indian society is of deeper significance. Because of their lifestyle, westernised Indians have become foreigners in their own country, unaware of their confused cultural identity. It is through the author's concentration on external detail, through characters obsessed with appearances, that Jhabvala defines both the morality and predicament of such Indians. It is through a description of their environment that Jhabvala makes her characters known to us. In Esmond in India, Har Dayal and his family lead an affluent and comfortable existence. Their home is an oasis in contrast to the surrounding countryside where "Imperceptibly - dust into dust - village and shops faded into desert landscape" (p.116). That the Dayals inure themselves to harsh reality is not only

implicit in this contrast but in the fact that they are nearly always seen in their homes. When they do venture outdoors they do so in the protective comfort of their cars, or, if further afield, as when Shakuntala visits Agra, she travels in a specially hired "beautiful maroon-and-cream-coloured coach" - not in one of the overcrowded buses used by the general public (p.116) .

The opulence of their house is apparent throughout the novel and is reinforced by images of natural luxuriance. For example, one of the rooms was "filled with early morning sun ... All the vases were overflowing with flowers fresh from the garden ... [which] was like an extension of the room: sunlight and flowers. Only instead of rugs and cushions and bolsters there was the smooth stretch of well-watered lawn" (pp.7-8), [underlining mine]. It seems fitting that such an atmosphere of abundance should be accompanied by a sensuous love of comfort as is made evident by the rugs, cushions and bolsters.

Both the master and mistress of the house are described in terms which underline their wealth. She is always immaculately turned out in "exquisite silk saris" (p.20), and on the one occasion that she entertains her husband's friend Ram Nath, she is positively regal in her "purple sari of Benares silk with a deep silver border" (p.69). Har Dayal, seen in the garden in his "golden dressing gown" (p.8), can also be heard murmuring in "a voice like honey" (p.11) with a laugh "sometimes called silvery" (p.23). The imagery is rich and sweet complementing their elite lifestyle.

Contrast the above with Narayan's pared down description of a non-westernised Indian and his strictly functional home. Looking at himself in the mirror, Raman in The Painter of Signs contemplates writing a poem "about a man who looked into a mirror for the first time and collapsed with a groan. But I'm not so bad. One has to get

used to appearances" (pp.15-16). Unlike Har Dayal, Raman does not try to cultivate a debonair impression. He suffers the natural discomforts common in the tropics. "He went home and straight to his room, where he peeled off his shirt and vest, which had become sticky on this hot day" (p.15). Further, his room is "without table or chair. He had a mat and a roll of bedding; when he wished to sleep, he unrolled the bed, but when he wanted to read, he sat reclining on the rolled-up bed". (p.17).

As Raman is not exactly wealthy the above is doubtless an extreme contrast to the Dayals' home. But even if we consider the home of a well-to-do individual like Jagan in The Vendor of Sweets, we will see that mention is only made of those aspects of the interior serving a functional purpose. For instance, little is said of the "front room" except that it had "a nail in the wall" on which Jagan hung his "upper cloth" (p.13). Further, even the more expansive description of the bathroom is far from flattering. It was a "shack ... beaten out tin was fixed anyhow to a wooden frame to serve as a door on rusty hinges; the wooden frame was warped and the door never shut flush, but always left a gap through which one obtained a partial glimpse of anyone bathing". This structural defect was justified by Jagan's father on the grounds that "no one is expected to live in a bathroom", which like "everything in this house had the sanctity of usage, [and] was the reason why no improvement was possible" (p.13-14). It is the pyol - "the open brick platform under the windows, on which the household slept in summer" - that is constantly mentioned in Narayan's novels (e.g. Waiting for the Mahatma: p.4). This open space comes to function as a metaphor for the more open communal life familiar to the ordinary Indians in Narayan's novels.

The different worlds to which Raman and Har Dayal's family belong are not only suggested by the descriptions, or the lack of description, in the novels concerned, but can also be seen in their occupations. Raman is a humble painter of signs but like their father Har Dayal, the sons Amrit and Raj have been educated at Cambridge. Shakuntala, the daughter, has recently completed a degree course, which has given her a taste for English Romantic poetry, and a fascination for Liszt and Sibelius.

Although Madhuri, Har Dayal's wife, shows little interest in western music and poetry, she is nevertheless not impartial to other western tastes. When she plans each day's menu she makes sure that "English food was always served at lunch-time, Indian food at dinner" (p.43). (Jhabvala's fiction therefore corroborates one of Naipaul's observations on westernised Indian families quoted earlier - even if in reverse order. This in turn leads us to speculate on the significance behind the way westernised Indians choose to end their day. Perhaps those who finish the day with an Indian meal are families who feel their rootlessness more, and wish to end with a sense of security stemming from traditional observances. Those who prefer a western meal perhaps feel secure in their concept of themselves as inheritors of the Raj).

A reference is also made to Madhuri's partiality for "Olde English Soap" (p.11). Perfumed with soap and talcum powder she then reclines on her "chaise-longue" waiting for the appearance of her elevenses: "hot chocolate in the colder weather, iced lime water in the heat, every day at eleven o'clock sharp" (p.20). The recreation of a boudoir atmosphere is unmistakable and the ultra-English, ultra-traditional

nature of her habits is emphasised by the subtle reference to 'olde' (not 'old') English soap and the insistence that her drink be served at eleven o'clock sharp.

Woven into the 'glowing' description of the Dayals' lifestyle however are subtle threads of criticism which detract from the apparent perfection of such an existence. The Dayals' easy acceptance of a bountiful situation is questioned through a seemingly minor narrative detail. When the gardener arrives with "more flowers from the garden", Shakuntala remarks: "There are no more vases" (p.11). Any intended rebuke of the gardener is too mild to be taken seriously. In fact the incident seems to be more a rebuke of a lifestyle that remains blithely unconcerned if flowers are unnecessarily picked, provided there are enough vases to hold them. The abundant blooms are as 'natural' to the Dayals as the "gracious, spacious garden with lawn of succulent green" (p.154). Yet it is the narrator who points out that the latter always appears so because "the gardener had had the hose on all day" (ibid) - a profligacy which occurs at a time when the withering effects of the sun's heat makes "of sky and earth one vast bowl of dust" (p.116). Together these details point to the selfishness which sustains the well-groomed grounds as it does the personal appearance of the Dayals. In their desire to live a 'beautiful' life, the Dayals are unaware of the mindless and unnecessary exploitation which they endorse.

Interestingly enough, this situation was common in the lives of the English households during the Raj. In Charles Allen's Plain Tales, one of the memsahibs recalls her morning duties. "One would go and do one's flowers which were always there, an enormous pile ... Where the flowers came from I don't know" (p.106). There is that same sense of complacent thoughtlessness conveyed by these words as was present in

Shakuntala's innocuous remark directed at the gardener. Both women are not particularly bothered about where the flowers come from, as long as they are fulfilling their duties as Society's ladies. The visible elegance in their lives hiding an ugliness to which they are blind, recalls the narrative indictment contained in Scott's painting, "The Jewel in her Crown", commemorating the contented reign of Queen Victoria shown sitting on her "golden throne under a crimson canopy" beneath a sky from which shone a "radiant sun" (JC,p.27). As in Esmond, attention is drawn to the colours and accoutrements of wealth and power and the brightness of existence is assumed. But both novels are intended to make us see that the radiance of existence is illusory. Both the British raj and the Indian elite can believe that life is untarnished, simply because they blind themselves to harsh realities without, and spiritual distortions within.

As Jhabvala underlines, a well-cared-for appearance does not imply a contented spirit. The description of the perfumed, elegant Madhuri relaxing after her bath appears in conjunction with that of "a blue parrot put out to enjoy the early morning sun on the veranda ... [It] pecked at a chili stuck through the bars of his brightly polished cage" (p.11). The link between the lady and the bird is obvious, conjuring up the familiar metaphor of the pampered woman imprisoned in her gilded home. Although Madhuri is not physically interned, she is a slave to the regimented patterns of her lifestyle, evidence of which is found throughout the house.

Har Dayal's desk is "highly polished, and on it were laid out in a precise and orderly manner a silver paper-knife, blotting paper in a crimson leather folder .. Books bound in heavy leather with bright and

precise gold lettering stood row upon row in glass-fronted cases" (p.67). Immaculate precision is the hallmark of Madhuri's style and her attention to detail extends to ensuring that her servant wears a sari with a tasteful pattern - "white ... with a blue border" (p.11). We also discover that the cushions and bolsters intended for comfort are not used. Nowhere in the novel do we find the family relaxing in each other's company. It is not people who sit on the cushions but it is the cushions which "sat plump and tight and smooth" (p.123). It is not surprising that it should be in the unpretentious household headed by Gulab's mother, that cushions do fulfill their intended purpose. When Gulab visits her mother's house, Uma "thrust pillows under her to make her soft and comfortable" (p.87). Similarly in Narayan's The Painter of Signs, we find that Raman uses the roll of bedding - one of two pieces of furniture in his room - either to sleep on or to recline against. In contrast, Madhuri's home is richly decorated but purely ornamental.

In fact the only 'use' which Madhuri makes of the cushions in her house, is as a means of drawing attention to herself. On the occasion when Ram Nath visits her, "she sat on a wide, low divan which was piled high with cushions and bolsters" (p.69). The cushions contribute to the picture of regal dignity she wishes to convey as she "sat ready to receive" her guest "in the drawing room" (ibid, underlining mine). She does not lean against the cushions for comfort. When Ram Nath does arrive he "sat very still on the edge of a chair, his hands in his lap, and his feet close together" (p.71). He is obviously ill at ease for Madhuri makes no effort to welcome him or his wife Lakshmi who pays a visit on a separate occasion. There is therefore a

contradiction between the impression of relaxing ease initially presented by Madhuri's home and the reality of stern household injunctions.

The indictment is made worse by the snobbishness revealed in her attitude to Esmond. It is significant that he is the only person who feels "a great calm" in her presence. Impressed by his "charming manners and refinement" (p.184), she entertains him to tea in her "drawing room so gracious, so charming amid her beautiful possessions ... Esmond sat there, slim and elegant, stirring his tea with a tiny silver spoon. All his worries left him and he was at peace" (p.188). Strangely enough this is also the one occasion when Madhuri herself is shown to be relaxed. She and Indira (her daughter-in-law) "laughed gaily, with a laughter as harmonious and as well-bred as the clink of the silver teaspoons against the china cups" *ibid*). The fact that only an Englishman is made to feel at ease in Madhuri's home suggests she considers herself at one with foreigners but not with her own people. She values the outsider and his culture much more than her own. That is why Jhabvala compares Madhuri's 'well-bred' laughter to the artificial clink of cutlery against china, in order to suggest the false standards on which Madhuri's idea of good breeding is based and which is in keeping with the rest of her superficial lifestyle.

As it is apparent that the cushions in Madhuri's house do not serve any useful functional purpose, we have to examine their symbolic role. We find that these items of furniture are used to satirise the sleek, well-fed men of the family. Descriptions of the men in Madhuri's life strongly resemble that of her cushions. Har Dayal is "plump and round" with a skin that is as "soft as a woman's" (p.143), while his son

Amrit, who is "plump and clean and satisfied" (p.124) with a "chest and stomach [that] had started to become quite expansive" after marriage (p.44), is not much different.

These men embody an Indian social ideal that fat men are contented men, because they are individuals who earn a good living and are able to feed both themselves and their families very well. This physical image is one which reassures wives and mothers who, like Madhuri, want to feel "safe" and "comfortable". The cushions are therefore an external expression of Madhuri's inner needs (p.22). As the cushions are useful indicators of the nature of the two men, then Madhuri's satisfaction at the impression of utter amiability which the cushions, her husband and her son project, is a clue to the role expected of husbands in the family - a subject that will be discussed in greater detail in a subsequent chapter. On the whole therefore Madhuri's social attitudes and the pristine, untouched effect of the decor indicates a personality primarily concerned with projecting the right image, and in this respect she is not unlike her husband.

To show that he has been educated at Cambridge, Har Dayal frequently quotes English poetry, but his intention to present himself as a man with serious literary interests is undermined by his inclusion of poetry reading in a description of revelry at Cambridge. He remembers how his friend Ram Nath "drank ... smoked ... read so much English poetry, had so many English friends and wore such stylish English clothes" (p.24). Although the image of the intoxicated poet passionately reciting poetry is one that does have a certain romantic attraction, Har Dayal's own attempts at reciting poetry are not presented in the same light.

He quotes English poetry to his gardener and, watching the performance, Shakuntala could see that "the gardener was not listening: probably Daddyji was lecturing to him about the beauties of nature ... By and by he would forget that he was talking to the gardener and break into sonorous English quoting Keats or Wordsworth" (p.8). The irony hinges on the word lecturing. Within the context of India's cultural traditions, lectures are valued for they are the words of the revered, infallible guru. But here the guru is limited in his wisdom, for he is unaware of the ludicrous effect of quoting English poetry to his unschooled Indian gardener. What relevance could Keats or Wordsworth have in an Indian gardener's life? Moreover a gardener is someone who already appreciates the beauties of Nature and therefore does not need Har Dayal to instruct him in this. It is therefore the derogatory connotation of lecture as a piece of unsought advice that is clearly applicable in this case.

There is another occasion, when in the presence of a cosmopolitan gathering, Har Dayal is seen reciting Sanskrit poetry translated into English. Again this is not a gesture to be derided. However we already know that when only in the presence of his impressionable daughter, Har Dayal deliberately mocks "high flown Hindi ... by making it sound ridiculous" (p.11). Thus here is a man who privately displays little respect for local languages but has few qualms about using one of them to impress a foreign audience. Reciting Sanskrit poetry is therefore an activity that is part of a hypocritical attitude calculated to win praise from the western world, to whom he wishes to present himself as a man well-versed in his own culture as well as theirs. The manipulative aspect of his nature is further exposed when we are told that he allows the audience to believe he has translated the poems

himself. "Actually it was not he who had translated them (his Sanskrit had never been very good) but Ram Nath Uncle" (p.63). With the narrative information on his duplicity, the reader, unlike Shakuntala, cannot accept Har Dayal's claim that basing his life on "Art and Beauty and Poetry" is choosing the "life of the spirit" (p.156).

He debases literary pursuits of both cultures by using them as an accessory similar to the wearing of English suits. Poetry simply becomes part of Har Dayal's shallow perception of what constitutes being English. Compared to Naipaul's approach to the painful implications in Ganesh's adoption of the name Gareth - also a superficial accessory - there is little narrative compassion here.

Har Dayal's exploitative attitude towards Indian culture can also be detected in his choice of attire. Previously he and his colleagues had dressed like "English gentlemen", unlike Ram Nath who had always worn "loose white clothes of handspun cotton, with, in the winter, a blanket slung over his shoulders" (p.40). But now Har Dayal is only seen in Indian dress - "tight jodhpurs and a knee-length fitted coat buttoned up to the neck" (ibid). Like other opportunistic politicians, his clothes are a carefully chosen vote winner. He wishes to convince the electorate of his patriotism which, otherwise does not reveal itself. The sad irony is that the recluse Ram Nath who neither serves on important Committees nor is publicly "garlanded" like Har Dayal, is the man who, in the past, "had spent many years in prison..addressed huge meetings ... been beaten up by the police" (pp.40-41). It was through sacrifices made by people like him that India gained independence and created the very environment for men like Har Dayal to strut around. 'As Lakshmi confirms, "It was we and people like us who made them so. It is by climbing up on our suffering that they have now become like peacocks"' (p.191).

Har Dayal's pre-occupation with worldly success has obviously influenced his son's outlook. Following his Cambridge career, Amrit, the older of the two sons, is now employed by a "British firm of paint manufacturers ... He was part of their policy of gradually replacing British executives by Indian ones; and indeed he was very suitable ... as he had attended an English university and was also very English in all other respects, except his complexion" (p.43). The narrative perfectly reproduces the language of the policy document and the voice of the bourgeoisie - the latter being a device which Jhabvala employs to expose social pretensions.

The middle-class view that Amrit possesses the right 'cultural' credentials for an India moving from British domination to local takeover, is undermined by the concluding reference to his one drawback and by the vagueness in the phrase "all other respects". If an estimate of Amrit's success is compromised by the wrong colour of his skin, then the assessment of his other assets is questionable. Further, because the coveted English traits are never defined, the reader becomes even more dubious. Finally, Madhuri's view of what an education abroad will mean to her son and to her adds to this suspicion. She is convinced that having sent her son abroad he will "come back a gentleman with the sort of nice manners that boys only seemed to acquire abroad" (p.22). That the enhancement she envisages is merely superficial, is indicated by the phrase "nice manners" and is linked to the other superficial concern with Amrit's (and her own) complexion.

Nirad Chaudhuri believes that the "partiality" for a "fair complexion" among India's Anglicized upper class is strong because fairness "helps them to pass off as Sahibs and Memsahibs" (1). Note for example Madhuri's pleasure when told she possesses the kind of complexion that

in Europe "would be taken for Italian or Spanish". She often remembered that and dwelt on it with satisfaction' (p.41). As previously pointed out, deeply entrenched 'colour' prejudice among Indians contributes to their blind devotion to western cultural icons. The unfortunate outcome of such a situation is that the snobbish and not the intrinsic value of education is prized. This is illustrated in Naipaul's The Mystic Masseur, where Indar Singh pointedly fingers his "St Catherine's Society tie" and speaks with a sustained Oxford accent which, in Trinidad, now "makes him feel he is talking to peasants ... old boy" (p.192). What both Naipaul and Jhabvala therefore emphasise is that western education merely results in the flaunting of acquired culture and it is here that we shall examine in a little more detail the sharp ironic edge latent in the seemingly bland phrase 'nice manners'.

Amrit's wife Indira happily contemplates "her big strong husband, calm and sensible like an Englishman; sometimes he also smoked a pipe" (p.22). Reference to the pipe - a token of cultural identity - used and seen by Indians as a fashion accessory, overturns the positive impression created by the preceding description. Suspicion that these reflections are only the fond perceptions of a doting wife is strengthened by another description of Indira's 'big strong husband'. With his "soft full face ... well cut clothes ... he ... looked prosperous and comfortably satisfied". We are then, significantly, told that this is primarily because he believes "'It is not so much a question of being brilliant, as of knowing how to seize one's opportunities. Now, look at me." He left a short pause, which was so intolerably smug' (p.71). What Indira describes as a 'calm and sensible' exterior could very well be the unruffled face of

complacency. The attention Amrit devotes to his personal appearance convinces us that smoking a pipe is but one of those "nice manners" he has acquired abroad.

All that Cambridge has given Amrit is what Indians have come to consider the hallmarks of good breeding. This is also implied in his automatic murmur "excuse fingers" as "he picked up the remains of a chop and began to gnaw" (p.44). Again the refinement supposedly conveyed by "excuse fingers" is made comic by the sight of him gnawing the chop and by the fact that eating with one's fingers is natural with Indians. As Gulab (Esmond's wife) says, eating with her fingers "was the way she enjoyed her food most" (p.17). Even Har Dayal the anglophile, confesses that once he too "had always worn kurta-pyjama or a dhoti and ... hated sitting on a chair instead of on the floor or eating with anything but my fingers" (p.23). "Excuse fingers" therefore seems a rather comic affectation in an Indian who, simply because he is totally conditioned by his English sense of social propriety, apologises for what is not a social error among Indians. That Madhuri's household has adopted western table manners is therefore less a narrative means of indicating their cosmopolitan upbringing than a way of reinforcing their constant attention to appearances - Madhuri on her home and on her well-preserved body, and Amrit and Har Dayal on their western self-image.

1. Circe: p.152

IMPERFECT IMITATIONS

Though Har Dayal's exploitation of cultures casts him in an unfavourable light, his behaviour is not a source of undue concern to the other characters in the book. In The Householder, however, Jhabvala does show how that which does not belong in Indian society possesses the power to intimidate and stifle local spontaneity, which is responsible for the confused cultural identity seen in the Dayals and in Naipaul's The Mystic Masseur. The tacit understanding between narrator and reader enables the latter to perceive subtle narrative mockery of a show of western sophistication. Here we will examine a tea party described in Jhabvala's The Householder and two social occasions in Naipaul's The Mystic Masseur. To fully appreciate the disturbing effects generated by new social practices, one should initially refer to what is considered the norm in Indian society. This is accurately described by Jhabvala herself.

In her introduction to How I became a Holy Mother, (1966) Jhabvala points out that the Indian "conception of enjoying each other's company" (p.13) differs from the western idea. For Indians "it is enough just to be together; there are long stretches of silence .. From time to time there is a little spurt of conversation, usually on some commonplace everyday subject .. There is no attempt at exercising the mind or testing one's wits against those of others: the pleasure lies in having other familiar people around and enjoying the air together and looking forward to the next meal. There is actually something very restful about this mode of social intercourse ... It is ... adapted to the Indian climate which invites one to be absolutely relaxed in mind and body ... just to feel, to be" (ibid).

In the light of the above, we therefore discover that a tea party hosted by Mr and Mrs Khanna in The Householder naturally turns out to be a highly strained affair, because it is conducted according to western social guidelines. The sense of unfamiliarity is very apparent. One of the guests, Mr Chaddha, "sat with his arms and his little bird legs crossed in an attitude of ease suitable to a tea party" (p.72), and "Mrs Khanna ceremoniously handed each guest a quarter-plate of flowered English crockery" (p.73). But when the women are offered dishes of food, they simply pass them on, and it is only on Mr Khanna's insistence that they "slipped something on to their plates ... but hastily and furtively" (ibid). Finally everyone eats "the correct amount sanctioned by good breeding" (p.73).

Conversation is artificial. First, Mr Khanna declares: "It is not for nothing that they (women) are known as the gentle sex ... It is good sometimes to break off in the midst of toil ... and enjoy an hour's leisure and ease in their charming company". As a corollary, Mr Chaddha adds: "As our heroes of old ... withdrew from their battles to have their wounds dressed and their brows soothed by the hands of their consorts" (p.72).

Since Mr Chaddha has to adopt the appropriate 'attitude of ease', it proves he is anything but relaxed. Moreover although he and Mr Khanna do hold forth, what emerges can neither be considered a "testing of one's wits" nor a dialogue. Since what they are saying has little relevance either to the present situation or to present-day India, it is therefore clear that they are merely engaged in airing their knowledge of English. Narrative comment on the lack of realism in this cliched self-indulgent talk is brief and to the point: "The ladies remained unmoved" (p.72).

Mrs Khanna's 'ceremonious air' is also comically ironic if one examines it in relation to the "parallelism between the British and the Indians in their love of rituals and of show" (1). The British love of ritual and show was given full rein in India, although the reasons behind it were not always apparent. The "hectic gaieties" of British social life, the "splendour of their fancy dress balls, the excesses of their burra khanas, i.e. grand dinners", were "partly designed to emulate Eastern magnificence and impress the locals, and partly to recreate European social life" (2). Meanwhile the Indians, who were not only familiar with the pomp of native courts, but whose social and religious life was and is organised in accordance with certain prescribed rules, were naturally pre-disposed to the idea of rituals and of show. Hence the spectacle of British dining occasions performed according to certain set rules came to be perceived as the expression of some strange mystique, especially when strictly observed in unusual circumstances. Consider, for instance, the following example taken from Allen's Plain Tales.

Isolated on a tea garden in upper Assam, Kenneth Warren "always dressed for dinner" so that he would be "looked upon in a respectful and proper manner" by his servants "who were quite likely to get slack just looking after a man by himself in the middle of the jungle". To them he would say "Now this is a dinner party and every night is a dinner party and you will serve my dinner as though there are other people at the dinner table" (p.79). In retrospect, such behaviour can be easily dismissed as eccentric or pompous, but the utter seriousness in British approach and practice made such incidents seem like a "solemn customary act" - a ritual. Local sensibility, already trained to respect ritualistic behaviour, proved only too susceptible to the suggestion of ceremonialism.

The above situation under the Raj is comparable to that described by Nirad Chaudhuri in his book Hinduism. Though Chaudhuri refers specifically to the encounter between ancient Greeks and Indian ascetics, his observation possesses a greater generality of application. "In admitting the superiority of other men over themselves, ordinary human beings are swayed, not by the content of the mind but by a behaviour which creates an impression of greatness by virtue of its abnormality" (p.5). For instance, Indian ascetics "poured out rigmarole which gave an impression of profundity, and at the same time affected a taciturnity which had the same effect. Above all, they could sink into unconsciousness and yet seem to have attained to the highest state of consciousness" (ibid). As it was in ancient India, so it was under the Raj - sustained strange behaviour converted mystification into awe.

What Kenneth Warren's example and Chaudhuri's analysis highlight, is how astonishingly successful absurdity in human behaviour can be. Backed by political power, the Raj lifestyle achieved a useful purpose, by contributing to the feeling that the British were strange, unknowable and therefore formidable. What Jhabvala's novel suggests about present day westernised India however, is that in the lives of individuals, like Mrs Khanna, it is only the absurdity and not the success which persists. Thus Mrs Khanna's air of superiority is effectively dispelled.

The one natural touch in the party is Indu's appetite. Contrary to the codes of polite convention, Indu ate with sensuous enjoyment - "biting, chewing, licking her fingers or flicking crumbs from her lips with her tongue. She seemed in a trance of enjoyment" (p.74). Watching her take "two more large sweetmeats" her husband Prem's eyes "roved frantically round the circle". But he did not blame her - "He had

heard that pregnant women had strange and uncontrollable desires" (p.74). The naturalness of her appetite is both a contrast and a relief from the general painful effort to strike just the right note. Let us now refer to The Mystic Masseur, where Ganesh's attitude is a welcome contrast to that adopted by the Mrs Khannas of this world. Faced with the prospect of a formal banquet at the British governor's residence, Ganesh exclaims: "Fish knife, soup spoon, fruit spoon, tea spoon - who sit down and make up all that?" (p.206). In his words and those of his friend Swami who agrees the arrangements resemble a "drill" (ibid), one can sense the Indian's exasperation at the regimentation irrelevant in an Indian context, where the only way to enjoy food is to eat it with one's fingers. Hence Ganesh's declaration: "'Going to eat with my fingers ... I don't care what the Governor or anybody else say'" (p.206).

However, for reasons that will be examined later, it is not in The Mystic Masseur but in Jhabvala's Esmond, that we will see why the Indian considers eating with one's fingers a pleasureable experience. Having stated that Gulab "sat on the floor and ate with her fingers ... for that was the way she enjoyed her food most" (p.17), Jhabvala then proceeds to suggest why. The tactile experience of handling and eating food is described in terms suggesting an intensely rich sensuous experience. "Gulab picked out a luscious piece of meat between thumb and forefinger" (p.18). But even when she is not actually shown picking up the food, the adjectives chosen immediately make it possible for the reader to feel the varying textures as Gulab, "ate ladoos which were so fresh that they were warm and wet and juicy like exotic fruit" (p.131); or when her "strong white teeth met with relish over a chili ... It was very green, juicy and pungent, and her palate and tongue burnt agreeably" (p.18). When food and its

consumption is so clearly a means of stimulating and delighting the senses, it is no wonder then that the Indian should not wish to approach his food in any other way.

Although one cannot challenge the exquisite accuracy in the description, one must recognise that there is a certain romantic bias which probably influenced this particular narrative representation. In an article printed in The Hindustan Times on July 27 1980, Jhabvala describes India's early impact on her "innocent - meaning blank and unprepared - mind and senses". Then she "entered a world of sensuous delights that perhaps children enter". In this same article, Jhabvala wonders if the sights and sounds of India proved intoxicating because of her own bleak childhood experience in "Nazi Germany" and "wartime blitzed London". If one links the author's reflections and memories of deprivation and rootlessness to the fact that India through marriage became the country in which she first put down roots and enjoyed some form of a settled existence, one can understand why in her early novels, she should look upon and present India in such enraptured terms. This interpretation gathers plausibility if one juxtaposes the Jhabvala extract and Narayan's undeniably prosaic account of a meal in The English Teacher.

'A little plate came up with some delicacy or titbit heaped on it - my tiffin. Susila placed this in front of me and waited for my reaction ... "It's good", I groaned ... She went in and brought out a little more ... I ate with relish just because she was so desperately eager to get me to appreciate her handiwork!' (pp.37-38) Here, no attempt is made to seduce us into lingering over different textures or tastes - in fact the food is subordinate to a narrative interest in the relationship between husband and wife, a fact which incidentally throws light upon Gulab's predicament. Her intense experience with

food, besides conveying the author's initial ecstatic experience of India, is a means whereby Gulab compensates for the sterility of her marital relations with Esmond - hence the sexual overtones in the description above. This latter fact is poignantly heightened when one recalls that Gulab's moments of delicious gastronomic enjoyment are rare, and invariably involve some degree of subterfuge.

Finally, if we now compare Jhabvala's and Narayan's accounts to Naipaul's description of eating we have yet another point of view. Naipaul is neither a romantic like Jhabvala, nor is he content to be matter-of fact like Narayan. Although detail is as much a feature of Naipaul's representation as it is of Jhabvala's, precision in his case is used to communicate disgust, not delight. Take for instance, the following description of the way some South Indians eat. "They were lapping up their liquidized foods. Food was a pleasure to their hands. Chewing, sighing with pleasure, they squelched curds and rice between their fingers. They squelched and squelched; then, in one swift circular action, as though they wished to take their food by surprise, they gathered some of the mixture into a ball, brought their dripping palms close to their mouths and - flick! - rice and curds were shot inside" (AD, p.223). There is both revulsion and bemusement in his recognition of their pleasure but no attempt at identifying with it.

What the tone of these differing descriptions reveals is the extent to which each author belongs, or does not belong, to the community he or she writes about. The prosaic quality of Narayan's description testifies to the fact that he belongs to India and therefore takes for granted daily activities like eating, which he describes with the minimum of fuss, eschewing both fantasy and revulsion. Consequently his depiction differs from that of Jhabvala, the nomadic-outsider who

now believes she has found a home in India, and sees the country through rose-tinted spectacles.

Narayan's sense of rootedness in South Indian society is also the reason why he does not portray Indians eating in the way that Naipaul does. As a result of displacement, the Trinidadian-Indian feels connected to but not rooted in Hindu society and Naipaul's description therefore supports the fact that he both belongs and does not. That he belongs is suggested by his recognition of the fact that for South Indians food was "a pleasure to their hands", during which experience they are completely oblivious to any other approach or reaction to their interaction with food. And it is because Naipaul no longer belongs that he is also able to see how this particular way of eating can be off putting to the outsider. He can accurately describe what he is criticising because he belongs, and he criticises because he does not belong. He sees not only with the eye of the Indian enjoying his food but with the eye of the outsider who judges according to different standards of what is tasteful.

Given the varying authorial slants, one can now understand the complex cultural attitudes which provoke Ganesh's defensive declaration when he is invited to dinner by the British governor of the island. In the light of Narayan's and Jhabvala's accounts, we can see why Ganesh should want to eat with his fingers. But the differing perspectives shown in Naipaul's work produce a more complex effect. On the one hand, Ganesh's deflation of the western eating "drill" in The Mystic Masseur wins the reader's sympathy when he decides to challenge the norms of an alien culture. Yet Naipaul's accurate and unflattering accounts of Indians squelching their way through liquidised food in An Area of Darkness, giving us the outsider's viewpoint, is an instance containing the judgement which Ganesh fears from the Governor.

It is therefore not surprising that any applause for a local stand sounded by Ganesh's vaunted challenge to the Governor soon dies out for Ganesh capitulates to the pressure of conforming to western social rules. The effect is painful. Once again we have a repetition of the predicament he suffers when we first see him in his English outfit, believing himself suitably equipped to meet the world outside the village. Throughout the dinner Ganesh "felt as if he were a boy again, going to Queen's Royal College for the first time" (p.209).

At the Governor's party, Ganesh finds himself at an inconvenient distance from anyone who might assist him with the eating 'drill'. Moreover Hindu taboos on food make him mistrust the dishes offered - "The meal was torture ... He felt alien and uncomfortable. He grew sulkier and sulkier and refused all courses" (ibid). Once again, his attempts to belong to the western world leave him feeling humiliated and vulnerably exposed. He leaves for home in a temper and demands food (ibid). To Leela's sarcastic observation: "But, man, I thought you was dining with the Governor", he replies, "Done dine. Want to eat now. Going to show them," he mumbled, as his fingers ploughed through the rice and dal and curry, "going to show them" (ibid). The dinner at Government House and its aftermath is therefore a means of conveying the complexity of reactions ranging from bravado, anger and helplessness which characterise the bondage of those who want to belong to more than one culture.

However, the contrasting connotations in the words 'dine' and 'eat', assert the Trinidadian-Indians' constant awareness of the two cultural worlds which have shaped their responses but which remain apart. It is an awareness that has honed their intuitive grasp and use of the subtle nuances contained in the English language, which they have appropriated and made their own. They see the world of the coloniser

as one characterised by style and so it is there that they dine. That world is a contrast to the world into which they are born and which they see as their natural environment. Consequently it is in the latter world that the consumption of food can only be defined in the most basic and simple way possible - they eat.

But what The Mystic Masseur reveals is that curious streak of cruelty in those who have been victims, towards others in whom they can see a reflection of their own vulnerability. Having suffered ^{embarrassment} himself, one would expect Ganesh not to subject anyone else to a similar predicament. But together with his wife, he seeks to expose gaucherie in his less 'sophisticated' guests who are as unfamiliar with the new culture as he once was. The pompousness seen in the Khannas is also evident when Ganesh and his wife Leela entertain a local deputation of supporters. The difference between this social gathering and that hosted by the Khannas, is that Coca Cola has been substituted for tea. But the relatively new commercial culture is equally powerful in insidiously encouraging false standards of behaviour, as did the emulation of British Culture in Jhabvala's novel. Moreover, the consequence is still the same.

Unsure of themselves, the guests "carefully" lower themselves onto the "morris chairs" (p.167). They are not only in awe of their surroundings but also of their host, whose loud shout for "Leela to bring out some Coca-Cola", is intended to reveal his familiarity with a drink, which the narrator then shows is unfamiliar to them. Ganesh's blase attitude is matched by Leela's pretence at weariness as she "sighed" and put down the "four frosted bottles" taken out of the refrigerator. That the guests are suitably impressed is conveyed by the suggestion of anxiety in the way they "held their glasses in both hands" (p.168).

Instinctively sensing the need for urbane nicety Swami, one of the guests, "...took a sip of Coca-Cola, a refined lilliputian sip" (p.168). His refinement however, soon breaks down when in a moment of intense feeling he puts down "the glass with decision, but with unintentioned violence" on Leela's glass-bottomed tray. This immediately brings her onto the scene to stand reproachfully at one of the drawing room doors. The abject Swami "took up his glass again and smiled" (ibid). His grip on decorum however soon loosens, when yet again excitement makes him take "a big gulp of Coca-Cola". Ganesh, meanwhile, has left his drink untouched - subtly indicating that for him the drink has lost its novelty and that tasteful living is characterised by restraint.

Details like the 'morris chairs', the coca-cola, the refrigerator, the Ramsumairs' attempt at genteel restraint, draw attention to the emblematic and ostentatious quality of a westernised lifestyle, in the same way as do Mrs Khanna's 'flowered English crockery', her 'ceremonious' air, and the stilted conversation in Jhabvala's The Householder. And as in Jhabvala's novel, the external show which succeeds in intimidating the guests is undermined by the narrative implications.

Leela may be convinced that her glasses are of "great beauty arabesqued in gold red, and green and ringed with gold bands" (p.168), but the narrator informs us that the glasses are merely "expensive looking" (ibid). They are an example of ostentation like the refrigerator, positioned in such a way, that it "could be seen from the road" (p.156). Moreover, Ganesh's restrained method of drinking is not an expression of genteel behaviour but an attempt to distract himself from the embarrassment he feels at being inadvertently reminded

of his past academic mediocrity. On hearing that the young unsophisticated boy before him was "a genius ... First shot, he get a first grade in the Cambridge School Certificate", Ganesh then 'thought of his own second grade at the age of nineteen. He said, "Ummh"', and it is only at this point that he takes "his first sip of Coca-Cola" (p.169).

Further, as far as Coca-Cola itself is concerned, any pretensions attached to the drink are convincingly crushed by The Great Belcher. Overcome by the afflictions to which she owes her title, she asks for water. 'She got Coca-Cola. It made her burp between belches and she remained uncommunicative for some time. "I done with Coca-Cola" she said at last. "I ain't modern enough for it. Next time is only water for me"' (p.171). This down-to-earth reminder of Coca-Cola's unpleasant effects puts paid to any inflated ideas of sophistication attached to the drink. However, one is then led to suspect that the Great Belcher may have deliberately delivered a subtle attack in a rather disingenuous manner. She launches into a tirade against one of Ganesh's political opponents and yet "throughout the long speech the Great Belcher hadn't belched once" (p.172). Had The Great Belcher been exaggerating her discomfort?

The above incident is also an illustration of how, like Jhabvala, Naipaul also uses a certain kind of English as an instrument of social comment. While it is dated English which contributes to the absurdity in the Khannas' tea party, the Great Belcher's deflation of the situation is underscored by her use of dialectal English which, in itself, constitutes a casual refusal to live up to the niceties and expectations associated with British culture. Both authors therefore use different forms of the English language to express a rejection of the absurd pretensions which accompany the perpetuation of a colonial

lifestyle. Ironically enough, like the Great Belcher, Ganesh is also someone with a talent for spotting affectation and deflating it, thus revealing himself as a man who is able to recognise falsity.

It is Ganesh who reproves, in dialect, the Oxford-accented Indar Singh: "Man, you talking with a Oxford accent now, man. What happening, man?" (p.191). What Ganesh's question implies is that there is something pretentious about a local man who speaks with a foreign accent, especially when he is unable to sustain this air of western sophistication. The reason why Ganesh easily identifies Indar Singh from among a group of delegates, is because Indar Singh publicly indulges in an Indian habit considered distasteful in the west. Ganesh is not wrong when he "thought he recognised the energy with which this man was gargling and spitting into the yard" (ibid).

Indar Singh may congratulate himself on his proficient use of the English language, but within an English social context he has exposed himself to ridicule precisely because of the kind of English he parades. Its connotations of class exclusiveness, which often translates into an insularity of attitude, make it an easy target for satire and fit in perfectly with the aspirations of a man cut off from the reality of his own cultural identity.

Thus, through Ganesh, the narrator has justifiably exposed that patronising attitude which westernised Indians have inherited from their former colonial rulers. Yet the irony remains that Ganesh himself is as guilty of the supercilious conduct which he lightly mocks in Indar Singh. However, one can also interpret Ganesh Ramsuair's reaction to Indar Singh's Oxford-accented English as an example of the uncertainty often disguised as banter, seen among those whose cultural assumptions are shaken by the individual who no longer appears to be guided by similar priorities. Because of his foreign

mannerisms, Indar Singh has set himself apart from those who once felt they could identify with him. The use of dialect in Naipaul's *Trinidad* is after all seen as an expression of cultural loyalty to a group which regards such allegiance as part of the maturing process.

As Beharry affirms: "Indar Singh is a good boy, but he still a boy. He does talk too big ... that all right for we here. I could understand and Ganesh pundit could understand, but is different for the ordinary people" (p.201). But in wanting to appear different, Indar Singh has cast himself in the role of the outsider who rejects those social codes, the continuation of which reassures the group of its validity. In discarding that which gives the society its sense of cohesiveness, Indar Singh threatens its sense of integrity and challenges the values it lives by.

The above interchange between dialectal English spoken by the group and standard/affected English favoured by Indar Singh is also a local illustration of the complex relationship between the 'centre' (Britain) and the 'margins' (all colonised nations). In rejecting dialect and adopting a 'foreign' accent, Indar Singh has moved away from the group which now sees him as someone who does not belong. Yet he cannot totally obscure his cultural origins to merge completely with another cultural group.

Similarly, the group which looks askance at Indar Singh and exposes him through the use of dialect, is itself unconsciously trying to move away from a dominant linguistic centre whose influence it cannot totally shake off. By their use of dialect spoken with an accent peculiar to the region, Trinidadian-Indians have weakened the hegemony of Standard English, but because the latter remains as a point of reference, if nothing else, colonised nations cannot be totally

independent of it either. The movement between the group and the individual, between the centre and the margins is therefore primarily a cyclical one.

The contradictory issues discussed above indicate the complexity of the colonial experience which is so often a sad one and, in Ganesh's case, is exacerbated by a history of personal insecurities. It is only because the narrator allows the reader access into Ganesh's thoughts, that we are able to establish the link between his residual sense of failure and the timing involved in his drinking of Coca-Cola mentioned above. We can then interpret his superficial air of smooth accomplishment as an act intended to disguise an inner insecurity. This interpretation gathers plausibility when we are once again shown Ganesh taking "a long draught of Coca-Cola" (p.169) after a second inadvertent exposure of yet another of his secret unfulfilled aspirations - the publication of his own newspaper.

We are told that "Sometimes he had made up dummy issues of newspapers ... He had ruled columns, indicated which were for advertisements, which for edification. But this pleasure, like that of making notebooks, was a private one" (p.170). The pejorative connotations in the word 'dummy' at first encourages an unfavorable interpretation. We see an adult engaging in the activities of a child - making up dummy issues and ruling columns. But there is an ambivalence in the narrative reference to Ganesh's private pleasures.

On the one hand, his desire to keep them private implies that he is ashamed of them. On the other hand, the description stirs our compassion for a man in whom we can still see an innocent, childlike aspect, reminding us of the acute emotional distress he had to suffer at having to live up to the expectations of his family. The suggestions and nuances, delicately moving through an overtly humorous

description, serve therefore to deepen our awareness of the tragedy in the evolution of Ganesh Ramsumair into the English persona of G Ramsay Muir. We are saddened at the passing away of a character whose weaknesses humanise but do not diminish him, a fact which so far has served to make him more real than his projection of a synthetic image fabricated from the pickings of a borrowed culture.

It is in incidents such as the above that Naipaul's work reiterates a narrative duality of vision characteristic of the observer who has made the transition from one cultural experience to another, and is therefore able to understand the aspirations of one community to become like the other. No longer identifying and consequently uninvolved in the struggles of his native community to achieve certain goals, he therefore, in that sense, no longer belongs to the society into which he was born. On the other hand, he is now sufficiently detached to be able to pass judgement on it, although in doing so, Naipaul is accused of pandering to a western audience. Note, for example, the implicit disapproval directed at Leela's penchant for over-embellished glass ware, too gaudy perhaps for western tastes, but attractive to the Indian eye accustomed to the strong colours of the tropics. However, while this may be a revelation of a particular western bias, one cannot conclude that Naipaul "looks down a long Oxford nose at the land of his birth" (3).

Naipaul may feel remote from the Indian community in Trinidad, but his distance from it is not absolute, for in his portrayal of Ganesh and his guests, he is still able to suggest the painful inadequacy experienced by those stranded between two cultural experiences. Moreover the novel does not end with an affirmation of Pundit Ganesh's transformation into G Ramsay Muir. Instead, the reader is asked to share the narrator's dumbfounded surprise when the man whom he greets

with "a shout of joy" as "Pundit Ganesh ... Pundit Ganesh Ramsumair", rejects the warmth of this recognition by "coldly" replying, "G Ramsay Muir" (p.220).

Narrative despair at the totality of Ganesh's self-delusion need not be expressed to be understood, for here is a man who, despite his "nigrescent" face which marks him out as an oriental, believes implicitly that he is a British gentleman. It is because the silence resonates with reminders of the cultural and historical reasons leading up to this caricature of a person, that one realises it is not so much the Trinidadian Indian who is being judged, but the historical process which has produced such an artefact. The process involving the meeting of the old (Indian) ways and new (western) ways, has resulted in a product that is not characterised by innocent spontaneity but is wholly concerned with contriving an image.

While cultural exploitation as a means of enhancing one's image is evident among Indians in Naipaul's The Mystic Masseur, Jhabvala recognises that this form of 'exploitation' does not afflict the westernised Indian alone. For instance, Esmond Stillwood's social credibility in western circles is based on his ability to impress co-westerners with his knowledge of Hindustani and Sanskrit literature. We have already seen how he encourages romantic illusions about himself by allowing his western acquaintances to believe that Gulab's failure to accompany him on social occasions, is in keeping with the customs of the "best old Indian families". But just as Har Dayal's pretentious display of western literature is inadvertently deflated by having the gardener as audience, it is again through the ordinary Indian that the insubstantiality of Esmond's credibility is exposed. While Esmond's friends believe he "spoke fluent Hindustani" (p.60), his servant "wondered what the Sahib was saying; he could not identify

the language he was talking" (p.33). As the narrator informs us his incomprehension is due to the fact that Esmond actually spoke in "his very bad but very careful Hindustani" (p.33).

"Having finished eating Esmond called "Bearer!" very ... imperiously'. The adverb immediately conjures up a vision of feudal life under the Raj, but it remains only a vision. A servile response does not follow and the reaction could not be more deflating. The boy's failure to respond prompts Esmond to once again call "Bearer!" so thunderously, at the same time crashing his fist down on the table' (p.33). It is only then that "the servant jumped with shock and came rushing out of the kitchen" (ibid). But he does so simply "to see what had happened", still blissfully unaware that he is the reason for Esmond's rage. Esmond's excruciating frustration needs no narrative confirmation. That the humour is only enjoyed by the reader indicates the narrator's intention to underline Esmond's lack of self-awareness - a failing which is also apparent in Har Dayal.

The link between the two men is finally established through a linguistic device - the same word is used to describe their manner of speaking. In an attempt to assert his authority, Esmond who "enjoyed listening to himself speaking in Hindustani, gave [the servant] a long and sonorous lecture on his duties" (ibid). This is reminiscent of Har Dayal who breaks into "sonorous English, quoting Keats and Wordsworth" to his gardener (p.8). While both men are impressed by themselves their listeners are unmoved. What is significant about these two incidents is that each man uses the language of the other to impress the listener. Cultural exploitation among the elite is mutual, while it is the 'ordinary' Indian who affirms that the intrinsic function of language is to communicate and not to impress.

1. K K Dyson, A Various Universe, p.58
2. ibid, p.44
3. Excerpt from The Daily Telegraph quoted by Naipaul in The Overcrowded Barracoon, 'London', p.11

HOPE AND DISILLUSIONMENT

The 'craze for foreign', apparent in both the foreigner and the Indian, proves that individuals from both communities see the culture of the other as a strong attraction. What Scott and Jhabvala then examine in their novels is the variety of reasons for western involvement with India, and this is linked to a fundamental sense of not belonging. We begin with an analysis of characters in Scott's novels, who openly sympathise with India.

During the early part of her stay in Mayapore Daphne at first experiences the trauma felt by all exiles, whose dissatisfaction with the present is brought about by sentimental nostalgia for the place that has been left behind. Daphne realises that her restlessness in Mayapore is due to the fact that "home" had become "the bungalow in Pindi" (JC,p.115), where she had been staying with her aunt, prior to her visit to Mayapore. Her need for a home has been made more acute by the realisation that with "Mummy gone, and Daddy, and David" (her brother), she felt she no longer had "a home in England" (ibid). The sense of homelessness is even more acute in Sister Ludmila who recalls that, even as a child, she was never sure of a permanent home, which sometimes was "a fine apartment and then a poor one" (p.130). She remembers when in Brussels her mother would refer to the possibility of returning to homes in either St Petersburg, Berlin or Paris, prompting Sister Ludmila to wonder, "Where ... did we really live. Where did we belong? There was about our lives a temporary feeling. " (p.130).

The uncertainties felt by both these women is reflected in Miss Crane's life. With negligible financial means and only the "certainty" of "her own spinsterhood" (p.19) to 'sustain' her, the prospect of a return to England seems pointless. This is because, like Daphne

Manners, Miss Crane has no family to go back to in England. Furthermore, even when she did have a family, she did not experience any warmth of love. After her mother's early death she "spent her youth and young womanhood looking after her father. But instead of valuing her care he "became fond of the bottle and his own company" (p.13).

Considering the loneliness of her early years in England, it is not surprising that, despite the social discrimination she suffers within the British community in India, Miss Crane is grateful for the "sense of community" which sprang from the "seldom-voiced but always insistent, even when mute, clan-gathering call to solidarity" (p.15). At least in India she could feel she belonged to a group. "It was good to feel safe", knowing that this community would "rally round if she found herself in any kind of danger" (ibid). If we then turn to her initial impressions of the Indians, we discover a similar attraction for that which is missing in her own life. Listening to the Indian children singing in the mission school, she "had a passionate regard for them. Hungry poor and deprived ... they yet conveyed to her an overwhelming impression of somewhere ... being loved" (p.24). Given the uncertainty and privations in their own lives, it is not so much of a coincidence that both Miss Crane and Sister Ludmila should choose to work among the poor and dying in India. It is after all not uncommon for those who have never been the recipients of emotional warmth to choose 'caring' professions through which they 'work out' their own painful deprivation.

Like Scott, Jhabvala also implies that dissatisfaction with family life in England can be a reason why some of her characters sever connections with their homeland in order to live in India. For example, in A Backward Place, Clarissa states that a search for

"Nature and the simple life" (p.20) brought her to India, to which her immediate and significant response is: "That's where I belong" (p.93). But what appears to be a spiritual affinity with the country is soon replaced by the brutal truth. Her stay in the country is more to do with not having a loving home in England than a feeling of belonging in India. She complains to Etta that her "beastly rich family" in England "don't care a damn ... all they can say is come back ... I suppose they want a free baby sitter and nursemaid and general drudge ... No thank you" (pp.154-155).

Where Judy in A Backward Place is concerned, she too like Scott's Miss Crane had a bleak childhood. Human contact was confined to her parents whose belief in self-reliance is gruffly summed up by her father: "'Never be under an obligation to any of them bastards" (them bastards being the world in general)' (p.13). Though the decision to be independent is conscious, it is their unconscious sense of social isolation that soon becomes apparent. Judy's mother begins to fill her life with unnecessary clutter like "fire-tongs, novelty ashtrays..china cats and dogs, plastic doileys" (p.10) - all this before the ultimate tragic scenario emerges. "One locked oneself up at home, all warm and cosy, and looked at the television and grew lonelier and lonelier till it was unbearable and one found a hook in the lavatory" - the hook in the lavatory being a reference to Judy's mother's suicide (p.179). As a result "Judy never cared to think much of home ... (whenever memories of it came up, she did her best to think of something else)" (ibid). The following account of her life in India affords a striking and welcome contrast.

The door to Judy's home is "often open so that anyone passing could look into Judy's courtyard" (p.8). Judy cannot complain of loneliness, for she is surrounded by members of her own and her brother-in-law's

family. Though she still remembers the childhood lessons on self-reliance, she retains her "open and trusting nature" (p.13), and this explains why she is attracted to her husband Bal. She loves his "enthusiasms" and "when he said wonderful, he expressed everything one could possibly hope and dream of" (p.53). In his unquestioning optimism about the future, she saw a release from the dreary, predictable cycle of her life in England where "she only went from the office ... to her home and back again, and twice a week to the pictures, and on Saturday afternoons she washed her hair" (p.54).

What the above suggests is that emotional rootlessness in their own homeland often moves individuals to seek a home elsewhere. This is why all the characters, consciously or not, see India as a refuge from an unhappy past. To the characters in Scott's and Jhabvala's novels, India becomes an environment in which either a vocation or marriage is seen as a means of redressing emotional imbalances.

India has not, however, only been a home for the displaced outsider. It attracts pseudo-intellectuals like Esmond and the Hochstadts in Jhabvala's Esmond in India and A Backward Place, who see India as a spiritual haven, preferable to their own materialistic society. Although they resemble the characters discussed above in their belief that India possesses that which is missing in their own country, they do not appear to be as obviously vulnerable. All that they ask of India is an affirmation of a positive attitude within themselves and towards the country. The positive aspect however turns out to be superficial and dangerous.

First of all this attitude betrays a degree of arrogance. As Said points out, western knowledge of the Orient has often given the intellectual a sense of power for "to have ... knowledge ... is to dominate ... to have authority". And it is because of this sense of

authority that "autonomy" is denied to "the Oriental country" which means that it "exists ... as [westerners] know it". (1). What Jhabvala's novels reveal is the existence of the real India that lies outside the westerner's mind - an India unwilling to cooperate with the westerner's idea of the country and of himself.

Here one must point out that the wish to experience the 'spirit' of India is a theme that has not always received unsympathetic treatment, even though it is still viewed as a misguided and emotionally hazardous experience. In Forster's A Passage to India, the symbolically named Adela Quested hopes that Aziz "would unlock his country for her" (p.79), and she would then be able to see "the true India" lying beneath "the pageant of birds in the early morning, brown bodies, white turbans, idols whose flesh was scarlet or blue" (p.60).

But the narrator predicts the futility of Adela's hopes: "The force that lies behind colour and movement would escape her ... She would see India always as a frieze, never as a spirit" (p.61). This is because India defies logic and categorisation and her conclusions about life are organised and reasoned - she is a "logical girl" (p.47). What determines our sympathetic attitude to Adela however, is that unlike Esmond and the Hochstadts, her desire to see the "real" India at least springs from a genuine belief in her own ignorance of the country. She is not guilty of the intellectual arrogance which afflicts the characters in Jhabvala's novels.

Esmond's knowledge of Indian 'Culture' is impressive. Names like "Kavindravacanasamuccaya" and "Suktikarnamrta" trip easily off his tongue (pp.182-183). He is like the academic Hochstadts who "were cultured people and had of course prepared themselves thoroughly before coming to India" (p.27). Apart from anything else, the

Hochstadts knew about "the echo of the Marabar caves", and so are able to explain to their guests that life in India "plays itself out to a different rhythm ... The East repeats the same note ... reaching not forward but down, down into depth" (p.26). They are charmingly apologetic about their limited "..understanding of India in all her depths" (p.27), and are therefore very appreciative of the country's "deeply religious people" (p.136); [underlining mine]. However, the muted sarcastic note struck by the phrase "of course", and the repeated references to depths, alert the reader to be aware of the irony in the presentation of their pronouncements.

Just as Esmond's glowing literary discourses, nurturing romantic western notions about India and his domestic situation, disguise the emptiness of his marriage to Gulab, the Hochstadts' use of language associated with mystical discussions betrays the insubstantiality of their actual experience of India. Their well-informed conversations belie their lack of close interaction with Indians. Thus where both Esmond and the Hochstadts are concerned, what they say is at odds with what actually is.

While the Hochstadts may describe India in terms of a deep meaningful experience, and while they may be "aware of the enormous benefits ... to be derived from a free-and-easy give-and-take relationship outside the classroom" (p.131), their actual interaction with the country is superficial. The novel repeatedly shows how the German couple rigorously guard themselves against any contact with the "real" India, which Mrs Hochstadt, from her house in the metropolis, all too complacently concurs can only be found among "the wretched people in their wretched villages" (p.27).

Their isolation from the local people is apparent in their apartment and in the kind of food they eat. Their "suite of rooms" had "a very comfortable European atmosphere ... the Hochstadts had managed to put their own touch on everything ... over [which] hung the smell of Dr Hochstadt's cigars and of the coffee which Mrs Hochstadt brewed ... (she had nothing but contempt for the coffee sent up by the caterer from the kitchens below)" (p.26-27). Similarly, when on a picnic, their fare is strictly European - "roasted chickens and smoked ham and hard-boiled eggs and fresh salad, all wrapped hygienically in greaseproof paper" (p.130). Their fear of coming into contact with India is symbolically conveyed by the way they "hygienically" wrap up their food. In this respect they are reminiscent of Esmond who flaunts his immersion in Indian culture, yet is intolerant of the smells of India, especially its food. He is associated with the disinfectant DDT. As Gulab reminds herself, "he was always insisting that things should be sprayed thoroughly and frequently" - a wish which she accordingly carries out in order "to get rid of the smell of the [Indian] food which Bachani had cooked for them" (EI, p.32).

Esmond and the Hochstadts are true descendants of the "Orientalists" described in Said's Orientalism, whose "rapport" with the Orient was strictly "textual" (p.52). Unintentional exposure of Dr Hochstadt's bookish knowledge comes from Bal, an Indian for whom "the names of certain kings ... had always been commemorated for him not so much through what they did or said ... as through streets and monuments called after them which he had known well and lived with since his childhood" (p.136). Although one can scoff at Bal's lack of interest in his country's cultural past, the narrative suggests that his down-to-earth attitude, grounded on realistic experience, is at least more

convincing than the outsider's learned but abstract reference to the "myths and beliefs" of "this ancient land" (ibid).

Dr Hochstadt's "detailed explanation" therefore does not in any way alter Bal's "own conception of the place, which was on the one hand, of something old and redolent of glories now crumbled ... into dust; and, on the other, of pleasant green surroundings where happy Sunday hours had been spent with his friends while hawkers catered to his needs with gram, betel, and cigarettes" (pp.136-137). Through the eyes of those who belong and those who do not belong, Jhabvala invites an evaluation of the various ways of 'knowing' India. We are asked to contrast the confident outsider's intellectual knowledge of the country with the insider's emotional interaction with his surroundings.

It is because his surroundings stir Bal's feelings that his appreciation is infinitely more preferable to the Hochstadts' empty fulsome praise. Unlike the foreign couple, Bal's specific references to ^{pleasurable} experiences make his account vivid and plausible. Further, a touch of poignancy is added to his thoughts by the underlying suggestion that, although he continues to enjoy the pleasures of the moment, he is aware of the necessity to accept that other glories have passed away. His is therefore a sensitive but unsentimental approach to India's Past, which is far more sincere than the Hochstadts' fulsome but distant appraisal of India's heritage.

It is in keeping with the Hochstadts' superficial experience of India that the novel's closing ironic reference to their proposed departure from India reads thus: "How greatly they felt themselves enriched by their contact with this fabled land!" (p.189). Their experience of India is summed up in the words "contact" and "fabled". Their stay in India had involved neither "touching, meeting or communication". To

them India had been and will always be "an awfully pleasant interlude" (p.29), which they experience through tales and legends.

That the Hochstadts can fondly look upon the end of their stay in India as a time when "all good things must come to an end" (p.189), is largely due to the fact that their attempts to remain ^{inured} to Indian life did succeed. Ironically enough, it is partly due to the fact that their 'expertise' is sought by bored westernised Indians like Mrs Kaul, that the Hochstadts' preconceptions of India and of their own presence in the country remain intact. Mrs Kaul is the architect of schemes like a "Discussion Group", an "International Music Circle" and the "Cultural Dais" - projects "based not so much on any profound inner need as on something heard or read about and found desirable" (p.168). It is not surprising that Mrs Kaul, who is enthusiastic about something merely "heard or read about", should be drawn to people like the Hochstadts. As with Har Dayal and Esmond, we once again see westerners and Indians as mirror images of one another, employing similar means of investing their empty lives with what is seen as possessing illusory significance.

Unlike the Hochstadts, however, Esmond retains no illusions about his own experience in India, and can only see his departure from the country as an "escape" from an existence in which he feels "trapped" (EI, pp.167 & 165). The difference in their ultimate reaction is due to the fact that, by marrying Gulab, Esmond's experience of India could not remain superficial. His physical union with Gulab is symbolic of the closer contact he is forced to have with India. Compelled to encounter the difference between expectation and reality, he faces the reality of disillusionment with India. Ultimately this leads to a confrontation with a part of himself of which he was ignorant.

But we must not forget that Esmond's initial approach to India had also been romantic. Then, the essence of the country was embodied in his wife Gulab, whose "beautiful deep sad eyes ... he had thought full of all the wisdom and sorrow of the East" (p.166). Beautiful though the description may sound, one has to recognise that its abstract content can only be the account of one who views the country from a safe, uninvolved distance. Once the incompatible nature of his marriage dawns on him, he looks at those same eyes and perceives them as a "mere blank", registering nothing (ibid). What is ironic about Esmond's disappointment with Gulab is that, while he wanted her to be this image of India which existed in his mind, his real expectations of her are those associated with an English wife. Too late he realises that he had wanted his wife to be his "equal", with whom he could discuss their incompatibility, thus "rationalizing their unhappiness" in the way that many of his friends did (ibid). It is not surprising that he now wants to be with his English mistress Betty, with her "quick lively mind and her quick lively body, which was spare and cool and dry and smelt of hay like an English field in the summer" (p.167). Although it is a change in preference from the exotic to the English that is most apparent, this does not indicate a fundamental change in Esmond himself. Consider Esmond's changed thoughts about children. Once he had wanted "an Indian son, a real piece of India" (p.34). But now, looking at his son Ravi who is "as dark as his mother", he "thought wistfully of fair sturdy little boys with blue eyes and pink cheeks" (ibid). What is significant about Esmond's descriptive thoughts about either Gulab or Betty, his son Ravi or the fair English sons he now wishes to have, is that it is not their inner selves that primarily concern him, but their idealised outward form. His attitude to life is therefore consistently that of a man who chases

idealisations and runs away from reality - inadvertently revealed by Gulab and India. He had thought life in India would consist of "parties, amateur theatricals, concerts, tennis, outings to places of historical interest" (p.202). Instead, he is forced to travel on buses "which ran to erratic timetables", or "sit and give lessons to stupid women and be grateful for the money they paid one" (ibid). He realises that in such circumstances there is no place for his role as the "carefree and charming" Englishman (ibid).

It is significant that once he comes to terms with the failure of his marriage, his perceptions of India are suddenly clarified. Confronting the reality of his predicament opens his eyes to the harsh reality of life in India. He sees "the ramshackle huts which served as shops, the wilting array of fruits and vegetables, the old men who sat on broken stringbeds ... the hordes of naked brown children" and he has to admit that "there was no romance about life in India" (p.202). This then is the wisdom and sorrow of the East. A similar graphic quality informs his thoughts when he faces the horror within himself. He is overcome with disgust when he finds that once again he wants "to seize [Gulab] ... and tear at her flesh and even to bite into her ... till he got some response" (p:166). Unable to bear the forceful truth of his own feelings, he predictably runs away to Betty where "perhaps they would make plans for his escape" (p.167). And, predictably, he again imagines only an idyllic existence: "Already he saw himself playing tennis with her ... both of them radiant in white tennis-clothes"(p.203). The world of fantasy beckons Esmond yet again, offering him respite from reality. Only the narrator questions his enthusiasm. "Life was beginning again for him: he was young, and he had wits, and charm ... one could always (couldn't one?) make an agreeable living in England" (p.203).

While Esmond confidently plans his escape from India, Etta in A Backward Place does not, despite the fact that she finds India unbearable for the same reasons as he does. This is because she sees through the precarious nature of her expressed allegiance to Europe - "where I belong" (p.173). Etta becomes aware that her feeling of belonging to Europe, is now mocked by the fact that her sense of identity has insidiously become entangled with her Indian experience. During the earlier part of her stay in India, however, she actually relishes the part India plays in establishing her identity. Indian appreciation of her uniqueness as a blonde, sophisticated European proves flattering, helping her to realise her aim to "conquer and charm this virgin territory" (ibid). What Jhabvala points out here is that while western exploitation of India is no longer economic, the westerner still considers India as a country to be exploited. And once again it is the Indian who ensures such a relationship. Amorous successes among Indian men "fascinated" (ibid) by Etta's novel appearance and lifestyle, heighten her sense of personal individuality, and she takes pains to accentuate that difference. Even her flat is designed to project her distinctive identity.

"There was a white rug on the stone floor ... a low divan done up in pearl grey and covered with an array of amusing cushions. The raw silk lampshades matched the curtains, and sophisticated black and white prints hung on the walls. There were two flowers each in two tiny delicate vases. Several gay record-sleeves were scattered on top of the radiogram; a French fashion magazine lay open on the divan. One might have been in Europe" (p.6). Although the raw silk lampshades and the divan convey an Oriental flavour, Etta's apartment like Esmond's projects her European tastes in decor. Furthermore, to Etta the flat represents a disciplined endeavour to maintain European standards,

which she considers superior to Indian. As she informs Judy, "It's no use sinking down to anyone's level ... we must always try to raise them up to ours" (p.7).

The implicit struggle to maintain appearances is however already hinted at in the description. The impression of precision and symmetry, reminiscent of Madhuri's flat in Esmond, produces a coldly aesthetic effect. This is a carefully constructed work of art, not a home. The air of frivolity suggested by the "amusing" cushions strikes a forced note, especially when one considers that the other touches of relaxed gaiety indicated by the "gay record sleeves scattered" on the radiogram, and the "open" fashion magazine, are suspiciously implausible in a flat so tidy. The novel finally unveils the tragic implications in Etta's apparent controlled mastery of her environment. She discovers that the flat intended to declare her proud European identity is only a refuge from disease, suffering and death - the harsh reminders of life which India does not allow you to forget.

The futility of her efforts is underlined when, towards the end of the novel, Judy finds her alone in a flat no longer immaculate. "There was a layer of dust and ashtrays were full to overflowing. The windows were all shut and the curtains drawn over them" (p.172). It is, however, a credit to Etta that she is able to see through her own strenuous attempt to be strictly European. She realises that her "chic and modern" flat is in actual fact "a cage ... necessary to her out of which she would not break even if she could: for outside lay the dusty landscape, the hot sun, the vultures, the hovels ... people in rags that lived there till some dirty disease carried them off" (p.171). The significance of the drawn curtains also becomes clear. We now understand why on previous occasions the curtains had been drawn. It

was not only to create a romantic effect "of apricot coloured dusk, very cool and soft" (p.152), but to protect Etta psychologically from the terror of disease and death, which surely must haunt her even more, now that she is becoming increasingly aware of her own advancing years.

But even more humbling is her realisation that however "desireable" (p.171) Europe may seem from afar, she is a misfit there as well. "She no longer knew the way they dressed there, or the way they talked, or the fashionable foods they ate and drinks they drank" (p.171). At least in India "she had a personality: she was Etta, whom people knew and admired for being blonde and vivacious and smart. In Europe there were many blondes and there they would notice that she was not as young ... vivacious ... and smart" (ibid).

We can see Etta's fears confirmed in Naipaul's personal experience of being in India. On arrival in the country he discovers "a new awareness of myself as a whole human being ... touched with fear, to remain what I was" (AD, p.13). This fear is sparked off by the realisation that his ancestral home deprives him of the "distinctive" status he enjoys in Trinidad, England and Egypt. In India he is "faceless. I might sink without a trace into that Indian crowd" (p.43). Fiction and fact therefore reveal the tangled problem facing the exile. While displacement gives the exile a special identity of which he is jealous, it also creates an equally strong need for a home to house this identity. Yet to be seen to belong to a definite group compromises that individuality, for belonging involves merging with a group and becoming "faceless" - a theme that will be examined in relation to Naipaul's A House for Mr Biswas.

Etta's predicament is an illustration of how the Orient has been a means of defining Europe. Even if India is ignored or shut out, it is still there as a silent but powerful foil. Etta, who symbolises Europe, is a distinct entity because in relation to India she/Europe exists as "its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (2). Etta's need to belong or to be seen to belong to Europe is therefore tragically complicated by her association with India. Ironically enough, the country which she rejects as a homeland is the one which defines for her the boundaries of her personal identity, while the continent to which she declares her loyalty is one which would rob her of her sense of self. Etta is therefore left needing both continents and yet at home in neither.

1. Said, p.32

2. Said, pp:1-2

STRANDED

As in Jhabvala's A Backward Place, neither flight nor the guarantees of a reasonably comfortable life are options available to Tusker and Lucy Smalley in Scott's Staying On. The novel movingly explores disappointment, loneliness and fear in the lives of this English couple, whose circumstances 'compel them to stay on in India after the end of British rule.

Their homeless plight is signalled in the first chapter. We are told they are tenants of "The Lodge", an annexe attached to "Smith's Hotel", now run by an Indian proprietor. Further, a new "five-storey glass and concrete hotel, the Shiraz" (p.5), which is also under Indian control, overshadows their apartments. The North Indian name for a hotel which dominates and obscures the more diminutive British establishment narratively confirms the changes on the Indian political scene. The sun has now set on the British Empire and the British left behind are people condemned to live in the shadow, as mere lodgers in premises owned by Indians. Hence Lucy's wry comment to Ibrahim their servant: "We are people in shadow" (p.40).

It is in Staying On that the gap between the narrator and the character narrows. Here, we see the virtual disappearance of that exclusive alliance between narrator and reader which could assume a privileged knowledge of the character. When once it was the narrator who ironically pointed out to the reader truths which the characters either hid from, chose to avoid or were unaware of, Staying On depicts individuals who face up to the ultimate despairing fact about their situation. Tusker's disclosure of the true 'state' of their financial position, leads him to define their remaining behind in India more as a matter of "hanging on" than "staying on" (p.231). Tusker therefore makes the fine but telling distinction between what the observer may

perceive and what the Smalleys actually experience - he now shares the role of the omniscient narrator. As the Smalleys themselves point out, the expression "hanging on" does not leave us with a comforting sense of a happy choice as suggested by the phrase "staying on". With British loss of political control over India, Lucy Smalley realises that their position in the new India is now "marginal and temporary" (p.97).

Narrative detail emphasising the radical change in their lifestyle is unobtrusive yet touching. The description of the Smalleys' rundown home and their frugal existence is a sad contrast to what had been life under the Raj. The Lodge itself has lost all residual claims to respectability. Once there had been "several huts and a cookhouse". Now only "the hut in which Ibrahim ... slept remained in good repair. The others had fallen into ruin and of the cookhouse there was nothing left except a few blackened bricks". Any plans of "stocking" the fridge really only meant replenishing the supplies of "butter and milk", and nothing more (p.20). With money in such short supply "a bottle of Carew's gin a week and a monthly bottle of Golconda brandy, a dozen bottles of beer had been about all they could afford" (p.89). Meanwhile the Indian couple - the Bhoolahboys - who now manage Smiths Hotel and own the Lodge, seem spoilt for choice. "A lovely Tandoori, and chicken curry, and perhaps some mutton-do-piazza and some lovely saffron rice", and Mr Bhoolahboy could go "heavy on the gin and light on the tonic" (p.137). But it is a certain mundane detail to which Ibrahim draws our attention which reveals the narrator's sensitive awareness of Lucy's attempts to try and restore some measure of dignity to their lives. It was "Colonel Memsahib" who made sure that

the loos or "thunder boxes" as they were called, "were immaculately kept and gave the sweeper baksheesh for polishing the new mahogany-stained seats" (p.46). Ibrahim is incensed that it was not seen fit to install flush-toilets in the Lodge when this was done at the hotel, where he enviously imagines the massive form of Mrs Bhoolabhoy sitting "to her heart's content on a pukka loo" (ibid).

The indeterminate and uncertain nature of their existence on a personal level is defined by Tusker, who is all too aware of the worrying insubstantiality that restricts their lives. He realises that people of their "age and upbringing and limited talents, people who have never been really poor but never had any real money, never inherited real money, never made real money" (ibid) have little choice. Tusker's words underline his realisation that, as a couple, the Smalleys occupy that unenviable territory that is neither here nor there - they cannot belong nor can they not belong. But what is ultimately most tragic, is the Smalleys' combined recognition that they are people who have never really belonged in India and will never belong anywhere else.

Unfortunately for Tusker, Indian independence occurred when he was forty-six: "too bloody early ... for a man to retire but too old to start afresh somewhere you don't know" (p.231). The relentless march of time conspires with historical and political processes to throw Tusker's career into limbo. Meanwhile Lucy, who had never been accepted by the British memsahibs because of her humble origins and Tusker's unspectacular position in army circles, discovers that post-Raj society has done little to enhance her social credibility. She does not feel she belongs in the new hierarchy any more than she felt she belonged under the old. Lucy who "knew nothing of Dusseldorf, Basle, Roma, Cairo, Moscow, Paris ... [and] could not even discuss

Fortnums" (pp.206-07), could not possibly join in with the "new race of sahibs and memsahibs of international status and connection who had taken the place of generals and Mrs Generals, and she and Tusker had become for them almost as far down in the social scale as the Eurasians were in the days of the Raj" (p.215). In the context of Lucy's reflections, it is no strange coincidence that she should strike up a friendship with the young Eurasian hairdresser Susy, nor is it surprising that their relationship is nurtured by vicarious recollections of the past, unconnected with the humiliating realities of the present. In the privacy of The Lodge, away from high society, Lucy, discovers that Susy, like her, is a "film fan" who "liked hearing about London in 1950; and telling Lucy what if anything she had heard from Lucille (her sister) in the States" (p.207).

The world of films, with its connotations of fantasy, escapism and role-playing, serves an important function in developing certain themes and characters in the novel, while simultaneously commenting on the nature of the Raj itself. The frequent references to films with romantic plots emphasise the contrast between the idyllic, self-contained world of cinema and the Smalleys insolvent and uncertain existence. The contrast can be viewed as a narrative deflation of what was once believed to be a beautiful fairy tale - the British Raj. The discrepancy between the 'glory' attached to external political events and the despair characterising the Smalley's personal lives is effectively captured in the following description of Tusker, when he is "taken ill ... sitting on one of the viceregal thrones ... slumped, unconscious, half-on half-off, his pyjama trousers round his ankles, white legs spread" (p.44). While the comparison of toilet facilities, to 'viceregal thrones' is a disrespectful reference to the demise of British power, the note of levity is in no way a mockery

directed at Tusker, but deepens instead the pathos of his predicament, symbolised in his physical posture. A system in which he had invested all he had - i.e. himself - has left him physically broken en route to a fatal end, which leaves Lucy "frightened", and as she had feared, "alone ... amid the alien corn" (p.255).

As with Tusker, the mixture of tragic and comic elements also deepens the sadness of Lucy's life. Hence we sympathise with her attempts to escape from an uninspiring existence by imagining herself in one of her favorite screen roles. But through Ibrahim's eyes we also see the ridiculous picture she presents: "Himself an old devotee of Hollywood films, as she was, he knew Memsahib was about to go into her Bette Davis bit ... He had seen her at it when she thought herself alone ... wagging her old bottom, muttering in that unmistakable voice" (p.35). Pathos and absurdity delicately balance one another, avoiding sentimentalism and pointing to a narrator who wishes to lay bare the painful tenderness with which the novel ends.

While role-playing serves an important function in the narrative unfolding of Lucy's life, we can also see how her escape into the world of cinema is only another aspect of the social pressures under the Raj, when playing the desired or assigned role was either expected or inevitable, and was closely linked to the question of belonging and not belonging. It is because both Tusker and Lucy knew they did not belong and yet wanted to appear to belong to the British social circle in which they found themselves, that they both chose a part to play.

Tusker knew that he had blotted his social copy book by marrying Lucy whose father was "only a vicar" and not a "bishop". In addition she makes matters worse by admitting she had been at "Pitmans and her speeds were such and such" (p.85). As Lucy herself confirms, her skill

at shorthand immediately marked her out as "a girl who once had to work for a living" (p:104). As a "Mahwar Regiment chap", Tusker knew he "didn't begin to rank with them at all" (p.85). As a result he "deliberately kept ... a low profile" which helped him to "merge unobtrusively with the background" (pp.87-88). Lucy meanwhile referred to herself as "Little Me" complementing the self-effacing part Tusker had chosen for himself. This does not imply that Lucy is happy about her supporting role. Her long-suppressed outburst against Tusker is also an expression of bitterness against a system, whose rigid social provisos compel those within it to adopt attitudes of self-denial in the hope that somewhere they may find a niche where they can belong. Her words underline the soul-destroying element of years of pretence. "It was you, Tusker, who made me a dogsbody because a role of dogsbody for yourself was the one you had chosen to play" (pp.104-105), [underlining mine]. Lucy is however also aware of the social implications of behaviour such as theirs. Ultimately she knows that she endured the condescending attitude of the other army wives because "a hierarchy was a hierarchy and a society without a clear stratification of duties and responsibilities and privileges was no society at all" (p.96).

Considering the oft quoted comparison between the British Raj and the Indian caste system, it is interesting at this point to refer to Mark Tully's observations on caste recorded in No Full Stops in India. Although he does not deny the injustices of the caste system, he sees that it does provide "security and a community for millions of Indians. It gives them an identity that neither Western science nor Western thought has yet provided, because caste is not just a matter of being a Brahmin or a Harijan: it is also a kinship system" (p.7). To support his argument, Tully quotes Madhu Kishkar, one of India's

leading feminists, who writes: "Even though the survival of strong kinship and community loyalties has some negative fallouts the existence of strong community ties provides for relatively greater stability and dignity to the individuals than they would have as atomised individuals. This in part explains why the Indian poor retain a strong sense of self respect" (Seminar magazine, September 1989).

What Scott expresses through Lucy Smalley, and what Tully believes is true of India, imply that during precarious political and social periods, distinct hierarchical divisions do serve an important communal function giving people a much-needed sense of belonging. In this context we are reminded of Miss Crane who may have "disapproved of this question of who was who and why", but soon realises the compensation accompanying that "sense of community ... the clan-gathering call to solidarity that was part of the social pattern she had noted early on and disapproved of" (JC,p.15).

It was because of the importance of a strong 'family' identity among the British and the Indians, that the ma-bap (mother-father) sentiments, sustained by the Raj, had such a profound influence on the ordinary Indian. It was this sense of a 'family' loyalty in Scott's A Division of the Spoils that fired both Teddie Bingham and Mohammed Baksh, a deserter, when the former questioned the latter after his capture. Teddie accuses the Indian of having "done very wrong", but reassuringly concludes: "but I am still your father and mother". Baksh needs no further comfort. "Both understood that Teddie intended to do his best for him ... Baksh knelt down and put his head on Teddie's boots" (p.398). Ronald Merrick who describes this scene to Sarah Layton, recognises that Baksh immediately felt "he belonged again ... He might be court-martialled and shot ... but even in front of a

firing-squad he would belong to the system that was executing him", a fact which then makes Merrick reflectively conclude: "It's extraordinary the lengths people will go to to convince themselves that they belong" (ibid). That this need to belong overrides so many considerations and reservations, has also been proved by the Smalleys, even though the lengths they go to are less apparently dramatic and insidiously more stultifying.

Scott makes final ironic use of the 'ma-bap' image in Staying On as a means of debunking the lofty idea that Britishers like Teddie Bingham had of the Raj. This does however tenderly humanise the story of the Smalleys. A significant reversal of roles occurs here. Where once it was the rulers who paternalistically supervised the welfare of the Indians, Staying On is a novel about how members of the ruling race are eventually devotedly looked after by those they once ruled. It is Ibrahim who looks after the Smalleys in their old age. Besides having "a go at cooking the porridge which kept his old master's and old mistress's bones warm ... he could and did turn his hand to anything in the line of nursing and commissariat ... Years younger than both he felt for them what an indulgent, often exasperated but affectionate parent might feel for demanding and unreasonable children whom it was more sensible to appease than cross" (p.20).

Although it is natural that Ibrahim should be devoted to the Smalleys, there is again about this connection, as with other major human relationships in Scott's novels, a sense that individuals who feel they are outsiders often draw close together. Because he is a Muslim, Ibrahim like the Britishers could not identify with the majority Hindu population. His awareness of being different and not belonging expresses itself in prejudice. He "trusted no Indian doctor to treat a white man. At a pinch a Muslim doctor would do, but a Hindu doctor

never" (p.31). Ibrahim's sense of being beyond the social pale because he is a servant is further compounded by his membership of a religious minority in India. This is why an important factor concerning the British attitude towards servants cannot be overlooked in connection with this discussion. Although the British in India were aware of social distinctions among their own kind, and felt threatened by educated Indians, against whom they were guilty of racist conduct, British employers were kind to their servants. As Ibrahim testifies, servants "were treated as members of the family", which was infinitely preferable to being treated by men like the Indian Dr Mitra "as if he were merely a machine" (p.30). It was because those without status were made to feel human, that they repaid their masters with years of devotion.

This however did give rise to yet another hierarchical subdivision among Indians - "Personal servants, although no longer de riguer, were nevertheless a status symbol" (p.43). In instituting such a practice, the British inadvertently tapped into a crucial aspect of the Indian sensibility - the Indian's concept and need of personal 'honour' that is dependent on family or caste connections which, being absent in a servant's life, were based on the master's social position. Such acquired credentials were then reinforced by the Britisher's flair for the ceremonial, coupled with his uncanny use of paraphernalia, when a servant performing his duties could still be made to feel he was part of a grand occasion. This is why Ibrahim yearns for those days when on mess nights he could wear his "most treasured possession, immaculately preserved ... the ... set of long white tunic and trousers", and "you stood behind your Sahib ... at the long gleaming table" (pp.42-43). It is Jhabvala who records the servant's loss of status with the apparent decline of his employer's good fortune. In

"An Experience of India" (How I Became a Holy Mother), the English memsahib notes that her servant Ramu "suffered in status", because she and her husband did not have "a round of buffet suppers and Sunday brunches" as did the "Ford Foundation people next door" (p.119). She is a disappointment to servants who "want their employers to be conventional and put up a good front so that other people's servants can respect them" (p.119).

There is therefore an underlying poignancy in Ibrahim's execution of his duties. The description sheds a new light upon the statement that "Ibrahim belonged to Tusker and Lucy" (p.21). "Replacing worn-down mothballs with new ones among the little pile of cashmere twin sets .. inspecting delicate items of underwear ... for snags ... that could do with attention from ... his ... expertise at invisible mending", and finally bringing the shine back to Lucy's "diamond ring and regimental brooch" by immersing them in gin, are small but significant acts that symbolise the servant's desire to brighten up his mistress's image, on which depends his own identity and social credibility. Scott's description of Miss Crane's servant Joseph, in whom we see shades of both Ramu and Ibrahim, further corroborates the servant's psychological dependence upon his employers. Whenever Joseph packed away Miss Crane's clothes, he did so "proudly because his mistress was a Mem in spite of the bicycle, the topee and the gum-boots and her work which took her into the stinking alleys of the heathen, native town" (JC,p.41).

What Staying On constantly reiterates is that different aspects of the need to belong influence the nature of social groupings and associations in the novel. The poignancy of this need is then made more acute by our sense of how vulnerable human beings are to forces beyond their control. Shadows, more ominous than that cast by the

Shiraz, threaten the Smalleys' lives. They can no more challenge the end of imperialistic rule than they can stop the onset of old age and their eviction from The Lodge. It is this aspect of Scott's novels, suggesting the powerful presence of fate, which makes his work seem so appropriate within the Indian milieu. The human being's helplessness in the face of dominating odds is seen in the life of Hari Kumar, an examination of whose experiences completes this discussion on the displaced individual.

Any discussion of the displaced individual cannot be complete without an examination of Hari Kumar's plight in Scott's Quartet. It is through the experience of Hari Kumar that the question of belonging and not belonging can be seen at its most acute. With his ambivalent 'Anglo-Indian' background, Hari is a medium through which Scott examines the fundamental basis governing a person's sense of his own identity, which often determines a person's cultural allegiance. Is personal identity determined by one's cultural ancestry or does the impact of a different cultural upbringing upon our responses assume greater importance?

Having spent the first eighteen years of his life in England, Hari "spoke like an English boy. Acted like one. Thought like one" (JC, p.120). Home, to Hari, was a gabled house in Sidcot, set against "park and pasture-land", with "leaded diamond-pane windows, and the benevolent wistaria" (p.238). On his return to to British-dominated India after his father's death, Hari discovers that, as an Indian, he "had no sense of coming home" (DS, p.250). The realisation is reinforced when he contemplates the house he shares with his aunt Shalini in the Chillianwallah Bagh.

It could not be a more violent antithesis to his English home described above. "Fat amber-coloured cockroaches..lumbered heavy-

backed .. from the bedroom .. to an adjoining bathroom where there was no bath - instead, a tap, a bucket, a copper scoop, a cemented floor to stand on and a slimy runnel for taking the dirty water out" (JC,p.239). "Waking in the middle of the night .. he beat at the mosquitoes, fisted his ears against the sawing of the frogs and the chopping squawk of the lizards" (p.238). "To Hari, England was sweet cold and crisp clean pungent scent; air that moved, crowding hollows and sweeping hilltops" (p.238); [underlining mine]. In contrast, the air in the Chillianwallah Bagh is "stagnant, heavy, a conducting medium for stench" (ibid).

The contrasting but by no means false images of Britain and India, are not intended as a narrative commendation of Britain at India's expense, for elsewhere in the novel, Scott does refer to the imperfections of English life. When in England, Duleep Kumar had often been "dismayed by the dirt, squalor, and poverty, the sight of barefoot children, ragged beggars, drunken women and evidence of cruelty to animals and humans: sins which in India only Indians were supposed to be capable of committing or .. allowing" (p.225). Furthermore, the narrative cautions us to recognise that life at Sidcot is not a general English experience, for this was England "To Hari", and so, by implication, to no one else.

However, what the contrast between the two ways of life does suggest, is the immediate psychological leap which Hari has to make when he is confronted by experiences for which his English upbringing had left him unprepared. Having led a sheltered and gentle life in England, his "repugnance" for this "alien country" is understandable, especially as, unlike Etta and Esmond in Jhabvala's novels, he could not create a European haven in India to protect himself from the constant onslaughts on his sensibilities. Instead, he has to learn to become

"consciously Indian. Conscious of being something I had no idea how to be." (DS,p.255). The unsettling effects of Hari's 'ignorance' of Indian ways is revealed at the most basic of levels.

For instance, his basic conception of and attitude to dirt differs from the views held by his Indian relatives. While it is the visible squalor of "houses, town, river, landscape" which ^{repels} him, it is ritual pollution that alarms them. Consequently, he is tempted to write to his English friend Colin that "From their point of view I'm unclean. They want me to drink cow piss to purify myself of the stain of living abroad, crossing the forbidden water" (JC,p.241). The narrative stresses Hari's consciousness of being an outsider in India. By referring to his Indian relatives as "they", he indicates his perception of them as a group from which he feels separate. And the reason why he feels separate is because his English upbringing cannot comprehend the fact that cow piss, which he considers physically unclean, could possibly be seen as a means of spiritual purification. On another occasion, his idea of western morality is once again challenged by Hindu socio/religious priorities. He refuses to take any more milk in his tea, once he discovers that "a dead, stuffed calf which the cow nuzzles .. keeps her in milk. The calf was starved to death because the cow's milk was taken by the milkman to sell to good Hindus" (ibid). In addition, although he ultimately grows fond of his aunt, he cannot share her cynical acceptance of bribery and corruption, as this goes against his western ideas of morality.

As his English experience and sense of values are the only certainties in his life, Hari "hung on to his Englishness as if it were some kind of protective armour" (p.245), against a country "draining .. him of his Englishness" (p.239). In Hari we can see that same panic experienced by Esmond, who perceives India as a passive but powerful

force destabilising the validity of the English way of life, of thought and of self. India, personified by Gulab, undermines Esmond's image of himself as projected in his flat. He has to admit that his flat "which he had tried to make so elegant and charming" .. had been filled "completely by her animal presence .. She was everywhere .. in the heat saturating the air, .. in the faint but penetrating smell of over-ripe fruit; everywhere, she was everywhere" (EI,pp.166-167). While Esmond plans escape, Hari's only choice is to preserve his English image, as that is all he is left with. "He sometimes talked aloud to himself, trying to detect changes of tone, accent and resonance in order to correct them" (JC,p.253).

However, his intense desire to preserve his English identity earns him the hostility of many in the Indian community, deepening his isolation from them. On hearing Hari speak, Laxminarayan, the Indian editor of the Gazette, takes an intense dislike to him: "The manner, the voice, the way the fellow sat, with his head up, his legs crossed, one black hand resting on the other side of the desk - an embryo black sahib, talking with a sahib's assurance, the kind of assurance that conveyed itself as superiority subtly restrained in the interests of the immediate protocol" (p.264). While the Indian can accept that "air of effortless superiority" in the British ruling classes, he resents it in an Indian. Yet Laxminarayan's hostility towards Hari is ambivalent. He is like other Indian "boys who, if they could help it, never spoke their mother tongue, and so looked down on .. the old clerks who conducted their business .. in the vernacular" (p.253). Thus, while they openly "resented" Hari, they were secretly "flattered" by the sense of "elevation" his presence gave them.

Tragically enough, Hari's sense of his Englishness does not win him entry into the world of white men, for they too are afflicted by that

same sense of class-insecurity seen among the Indians. The self-assurance which Hari acquired in Chillingborough also arouses the envy of those in the white community, who covet the advantages that once were his. The British in India refuse to accept the combination of "an English boy in a brown skin" (DS,p.279). Hari's Chillingburian background antagonises a Mr Stubbs who, at the end of an interview with Hari, informs the latter that he prefers not to have "bolshie black laddies" on his side of the business (JC, p.258). We have also seen how Hari's air of natural superiority proves his undoing, where Ronald Merrick is concerned. When he is arrested by the Englishman, Hari spoke in "accents so much more English even than Merrick's. And in Merrick's book, this counted against him. For in Merrick's voice there was a different tone, a tone regulated by care and ambition rather than by upbringing" (p.145).

Thus while Hari's bearing marks him out as a member of the English upper class, the colour of his skin debars him from any association with them. And while his blackness identifies him as an Indian, his English upbringing is a barrier to the Indians' acceptance of him and to his identification with them. Yet he is doomed to live among the latter. He is the outsider, struggling to come to terms with a world with which he cannot identify, but one which he has to accept as the only reality left open to him; for the option of escape, available to Esmond and Etta, is not open to Hari. It is because of this that he came to hate the "black town..as much as any white man fresh from England would..[but] hated it more because for him the black town was where he had to live, not the place he occasionally had to pass through" (p.162). Hari himself recognises that his life is one which is not characterised by "an alternative choice and a preference for one of them" (DS,p.249). He therefore has to struggle with the fact

that belonging or not belonging is not always a question of where one feels one belongs, but also has to do with where the outside world perceives you belong.

It cannot be said of Hari that his is a transition from illusion to disappointing reality, as seen in Esmond and Etta. With Hari it is more an exchange of one kind of reality for another, with both these realities soon acquiring a quality of unreality: "He entered the mornings from tossing dreams of home and slipped at once into the waking nightmare" of life in Chillianwallah Bagh (p.238); [underlining mine]. Unlike Esmond, Hari did not come to India armed with any preconceptions which he sought to affirm. India had merely existed in the stories his father told him. They were stories which he thought had "no bearing on his own life" (p.231). Content in England, he did not need India as a means of enhancing his own image, as did Esmond and Etta. The tragic irony of Hari's life is, that his experience of India, becomes the concept threatening his sense of his own personal identity. Hari's life therefore serves to illustrate a powerful concept in Scott's novels: "The comparative unimportance of the individual in the wider general scheme of things" (TS p.158).

The fact that human beings are subject to the manipulative power of external social and political forces, could explain Scott's attraction to India, where a fatalistic outlook governs people's attitudes. Life under the Raj, where the individual who challenged the norm could not escape the wrath of society, provided Scott with an appropriate medium to express this philosophy. Insofar as he shows the working of fate in the lives of Hari Kumar and Daphne Manners, Scott is convincing. It is when he tries to impose an optimistic solution upon a desperate situation that Scott's treatment of displacement suddenly becomes suspect.

Hari gradually comes to accept that, to the white community, he had become "invisible" (JC,p.254). He also recognises the absurdity of his "ridiculous English manner", for "someone born an Indian, and still an Indian, [is] incapable of being anything in India except an Indian" (DS,p.265). But, as Indians cannot trust him and he cannot accept them, he concludes that to "the outside world he had become nothing" (JC,p.260). Here the attitude of acceptance is still in keeping with the Indian ethos within which the action unfolds. But the narrative then effects a swing of mood, which culminates in Hari's rejection of the idea that he could be "nothing". In his prison cell, he reasons that any oppressive situation can only exist with the cooperation of the victim, and that no one had the right or the means to destroy him. Whereupon, "sick of lying passively .. in the dark", he picks up the mug of water which Merrick had left behind, and with the towel round his middle he begins pacing the length of his cell (DS,p.312). This action, following the realisation of his own mental strength, recalls a memory from the past which appears to link with his present.

In convincing himself that he is not answerable to anyone, he suddenly sees a connection between himself and his grandfather, who renounced worldly responsibilities and set off with only a loin cloth and his begging bowl to "acquire merit" - thus fulfilling the last of the four asramas or stages in a Hindu's life (ibid). The link which Scott forges between Hari's present situation and the stirrings of racial memory, is however too contrived to be convincing. One gets the feeling that the author is trying to convert what would otherwise be a plausible though insignificant action into a symbolic expression, blending the two cultural influences in Hari's life - the Hindu's sense of duty and the westerner's assertion of his individuality.

The above suggestion that a blend of east and west has been effected

somewhat contradicts Hari's refusal to be pigeon-holed. "I wasn't to be categorised by type, colour, race, capacity, intellect, condition, beliefs, instincts, manner or behaviour .. I was Hari Kumar" (ibid). Moreover, nothing that follows in the Quartet manifests the effects of Hari's individualistic philosophy. His release from prison is not a triumph of his principles, but a question of "uneasy [official] consciences" (p.301). He soon drops out of the reader's view and is only resurrected briefly towards the end of the Quartet, when we are told that he earns a modest living by "coaching students privately" (DSp,p.498). This is a development that does not suggest that the pessimistic mould in which Hari's life-story was shaped, has been broken. Moreover it cannot in any way be taken as the triumphant dramatisation of a life that has exultantly overcome the barriers set up by differing cultural demands. The hope held out by the narrative therefore appears to be the grafting of a western optimistic vision upon the pessimism generated by an Indian situation. A more plausible consequence to the dilemma of belonging and not belonging, however, does emerge at the end of the Quartet. This is suggested in an article Hari writes for the Ranpur Gazette, in which he describes his feelings on visiting the new extension to the Government College building. Visiting the new wing he hopes "to pass as someone with business to do there", and he is assured of "anonymity. The carpenters and the workmen assumed I was a member of the college staff and..the staff .. assumed I was connected with the builders" (DSp, p.535). The individual who does not wish to be restricted by social definitions and therefore feels he cannot belong anywhere, is nonetheless perceived by one group as belonging to the other. It is because he is always seen as belonging somewhere else that he ends up being accepted nowhere.

So far we have seen the unsettling effects brought about by cultural adjustment in the lives of displaced individuals - both western and Indian. The remaining chapters will focus on authorial representations of poverty and the Indian community, both in the West Indies and India, and will show how the writers' sense of belonging and not belonging affects their representation of these issues. Considerable attention is given to the role of women in shaping family relationships, showing how social expectations generate tensions between opposing gender groups and within the individual. While the link between the centres of interest in the two chapters is not immediately discernible, the depiction of the one is a key to understanding the second. This is because what the authors include or exclude in their depiction of poverty, indicates ways of perceiving which also influence their portrayal of the community. By inviting questioning on several levels, the outsider's viewpoint leads to a constant reappraisal, not only of what is accepted as the status quo, but also of the premises upon which interpretation is based.

PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY

In their depiction of the Indian village scene, both Naipaul and Narayan reveal a down-to-earth attitude which does not seek to encourage romantic notions about India. A closer examination of their work, however, reveals that the implied narrative attitudes in the works of the two authors are not always the same, despite the fact that the actual description may draw attention to similar features. For instance, this is how Naipaul describes the village called Fuente Grove in The Mystic Masseur. "It was a sad little village, just a dozen or so thatched huts strung out on the edge of the narrow lumpy road" (p.12). Superficially this is not very different from Narayan's description of the village Kritam, in A Horse and Two Goats, a short story about a poor old man named Muni. Kritam "sprawled far from the highway at the end of a rough track furrowed up by the iron-hooped wheels of bullock carts ... The village consisted of less than thirty houses, only one of them built with brick and cement ... The other houses, distributed in four streets, were generally of bamboo thatch, straw, mud, and other unspecified material" (p.9).

The impression of isolation and poverty characterises both descriptions, conditioning the reader not to expect any wealthy inhabitants. Further, both narrators are aware of the ironic discrepancy between the names given to the two villages and the reality of their state. In The Mystic Masseur the narrator says "Fuente Grove - Fountain Grove - seemed a curious name. There was no hint of a fountain anywhere, no hint even of water". Similarly, in A Horse and Two Goats the narrator says Kritam was only 'a microscopic dot ... but its size did not prevent it giving itself the grandiose name Kritam, which meant in Tamil "coronet" or "crown" on the brow of this subcontinent' (p.9).

The choice of Kritam as a name for this inconspicuous village is in keeping with a general Indian tendency to confer grandiloquent names and titles, not only on villages and towns but also upon their shops, hotels, restaurants or means of transport. The names indicate the attachment and the hopes which the inhabitants or the owners have for their environment or their possessions. The name "Fuente" itself, though Spanish in origin, also implies that same quality of wishful thinking which underlies this kind of name giving. Indians may be well aware of the contrast implied by the name but this is of little concern to them.

The above practice has often invited adverse criticism of Indians, who are seen as people out of touch with, or unable to confront, the reality of their world. But a more compassionate view would see that this is the ordinary person's method of transcending the shortcomings of his environment. Amidst the harsh realities of life in India, the transforming power of the imagination is a greater sustaining force than is realised in the west, where life is often designed to meet most material needs.

However it is the narrative attitudes implicit in the above descriptions which are of significant interest to the question of belonging and not belonging. The use of the adjective "sad" in the narrative introduction to Fuente Grove immediately asks the reader to adopt a value judgement in relation to the village. This doleful preliminary is further enhanced by the haphazard and precarious impression of huts "strung out" on the side of the road. Narayan, on the other hand, does not use any such emotive word, but concentrates instead on precisely detailing the rural setting. In being visually and tactilely accurate, his description possesses a three-dimensional

quality, which does not allow any narrative subjectivity to influence the reader's independent opinion of the scene.

While the phrase "strung out", used in Naipaul's description of Fuente Grove, evokes a sad response because of the suggestion of impermanence, insecurity, and a lack of orderliness, the connotations of haphazardness contained in the word "sprawled" do not produce a similar despairing effect. Instead the word seems to add to the "character" of the village, as it is more suggestive of undisciplined chaos and not desolate isolation. The roughness of the tracks, the furrows, the iron-hooped wheels of the bullock cart reinforce the rural atmosphere, causing the mind's eye to stray from the track and dwell upon the peasant-farmer's perception of his land and his interaction with it. The narrative focus is not only upon the apparent lack of material well-being, but contains a recognition of that deeper, more abiding bond between the human being and the land to which he belongs.

Further, Narayan's reference to the size of the village is factual: "the village consisted of less than thirty houses". But Naipaul's description draws the reader's attention to the village's drawbacks. "The dozen or so thatched huts" were "strung out on the edge of a lumpy road". Immediately it is the nondescript character of Fuente Grove that is announced, and this seems to fit in with its impression of insubstantiality evident in the houses that are strung out instead of being solid edifices built to last.

If we now move to the description of the people who inhabit these poor villages, we will see that a similarity in attitude between Naipaul and Narayan is only superficial. For instance, when one considers Narayan's description of the shop owned by Raju's father in The Guide, and Naipaul's accounts of shops owned by Haq and Ramlogan in The

Suffrage of Elvira and The Mystic Masseur, one initially recognises that both narrators are dealing with petty traders rather than big-time business magnates. Then one becomes aware of the different ways with which the two narrators look at the shopkeepers' respective circumstances.

This is Raju's recollection of his father's shop. "My father had a small shop built of dealwood planks and gunny sack; and all day he sat there selling peppermint, fruit, betel leaf, parched gram (which he measured out in tiny bamboo cylinders), and whatever else the wayfarers on the Trunk Road demanded ... A very busy man indeed" (pp.10-11). The following is a description of Haq's shop: "He ran a grubby little stall, just twice the size of a sentry box, stocked only with cheap sweets and soft drinks" (SE,p.13). Haq's shop resembles Ramlogan in one basic respect - its filth - for Ramlogan's dirty appearance "looked of a piece with his shop. Ganesh got the impression that every morning someone went over everything in it - scales, Ramlogan, and all - with a greased rag" (MysM, p.33).

Both authors focus on the same subject - those small corner shops which form an integral part of Indian community life. But there is a difference in the points-of-view from which the descriptions originate. It is through the eyes of the child Raju, that one is asked to look at the shop in The Guide. Listing each item comprising the miscellany contained in the shop is therefore a means of projecting the child's sense of wonder as he notices the variety which guarantees his father's income - a wonder that is further compounded by the fact that what is sold is forbidden to the child. Consequently the size of the shop and the sub-standard quality of the business pale into insignificance beside this narrative awareness of what is significant to a little boy.

As is characteristic of Narayan's descriptions, the factual representation of Indian life is conveyed in a way that simultaneously enables the reader to measure the significance of this way of life to the character. This grafting of the non-judgemental but sensitive narrative treatment onto the child/insider's viewpoint, then imperceptibly moves the reader to consider certain elements, not immediately apparent, but eminently crucial to Raju's description of his father's occupation. The initial details about the shop and the nature of Raju's father's business, move the reader to reflect upon the nature of this particular father/son relationship. Any assessment that this particular experience in shopkeeping may be an unglamorous livelihood is made irrelevant by the insight one receives into the son's esteem for his father. As far as this child is concerned the world is defined by, and contained in Malgudi. So in his eyes, his father, who is able to satisfy the varying needs of numerous wayfarers, is an important man indeed.

Similarly Raju's recollections of sharing a simple meal with his mother amidst very basic surroundings is a means of showing intangible blessings. They sat and ate together in the light "by the sooty tin lamp, stuck on a nail in the wall". The descriptive detail suggests that they are not well-off: the lamp is "sooty", and though there is a suggestion of carelessness in the way the lamp is stuck on a nail in the wall, there is also an added implication that they are making use of every basic available functional utility.

What follows is even more heartwarming for when the boy unrolled his mat and lay down to sleep, his mother sat at his side, whereupon he thought, "Her presence gave me a feeling of inexplicable cosiness" (p.20). It is thus the emotional richness of their relationship that is emphasised, and the lack of material comforts is sensed to be of

secondary importance. Somehow the extracts from Naipaul's novels do not have a Narayan-like ability to highlight the potentially positive aspect.

While the western reader is aware that the world described by Narayan is one removed from western experience, the same reader also recognises that this is a world about whose limitations Narayan neither despairs nor is apologetic. As a widely travelled writer himself, Narayan is only too aware of the disparity in living conditions between the east and the west, yet he never shys away from describing this poverty, and in The Talkative Man he even makes fun of possible western expectations of a small Indian town. In answer to Rann's enquiries about bars and restaurants in Malgudi, the eponymous hero of the novel replies: "No bar or good enough restaurant ... nor do we have an airport or night club ... no bars, sir, we have only toddy shops which serve liquor in mud pots" (p.8).

On turning to Naipaul's accounts, one discovers that it is solely the narrator's point-of-view which dominates. The shops (unlike the one described in The Guide) are not seen through the eyes of the owners. It is the narrator who succeeds in imposing his value judgement on what he describes. While Narayan's description manifests a tender curiosity in identifying the significant aspects of Raju's father's lowly occupation, the extracts from Naipaul's novels categorically emphasise the insignificance of minor commercial activities. Attention is methodically drawn to the paltriness of the business venture and to the grimy surroundings. Haq sells "cheap sweets" in his "grubby stall" and Ramlogan is as dirty as his shop. In contrast to Narayan's novel there is nothing to suggest what the attitude of the shopowners is to their trade. The descriptions confirm the implication contained in the

statement that "Ramlogan looked of a piece with his shop". The characters in their structures together reflect what the narrator underlines is the pervading lack and disregard for standards, which is both the root and the consequence of general hopeless poverty.

In his fictional works based on Trinidadian-Indian society and his autobiographical accounts of India, Naipaul does not hesitate to draw attention to squalor. In fact his aversion to dirt in India verges on paranoia, as can be seen in his systematic references to defecation and filth in An Area of Darkness. The reason behind Naipaul's fixation lies in the mixed cultural influences that have shaped his point-of-view. Primarily it is his deep-rooted Hindu upbringing which makes Naipaul painfully conscious of the existence of filth. He is very much the Hindu whose "concept of life [is] dominated by the notion of impurity. All material things, including the human body, could become horribly impure" (1). As the westernised observer, however, Naipaul cannot accept the fact that this sense of being dominated by a 'notion of impurity' does not lead the Hindu to remove dirt. He is therefore un-Hindu in not accepting that impurity is not so much a question of physical dirt but spiritual taint, which cannot be easily cleansed and sometimes never is.

As a result Naipaul notes that a brahmin family relishes the meal "served according to the established form ... the dirty old servant was of the right caste ... nothing served by the fingers of his right hand could be unclean" (AD, pp.139-140). It is the brahmin in Naipaul who understands why food served in an unhygienic manner is still enjoyed by the Hindu family, and it is the westerner in Naipaul who simultaneously feels repelled by the idea of food being consumed with little regard for the rules of cleanliness. It is in this latter awareness that Naipaul radically differs from the native Hindu whose

cultural values remain intact and have not been affected in any way by considerations that seem of greater importance to the westerner or the westernised observer.

Estrangement from 'native' Hindu culture and contact with western rationalism makes Naipaul "see" physical dirt in a way that he rightly points out, the native Indian does not. And when in An Area of Darkness, Naipaul analyses Gandhi's alien viewpoint, he is in effect also describing himself. Of Gandhi, Naipaul says that he "looked at India as no Indian was able to ... he does not ignore the obvious ... He sees the beggars and the shameless pundits and the filth of Banaras, he sees the atrocious sanitary habits of doctors, lawyers and journalists" (p.73).

Like Gandhi, Naipaul is unable to 'ignore the obvious'. However, to consider Naipaul's exposure of a basic limitation in the Indian 'vision' only as part of his, and the reader's effort to understand his position vis-a-vis India and the Hindu milieu, would be tantamount to denying the a truth about India and Indians. The offensive presence of dirt in India means that Naipaul's accusation cannot be dismissed. Unfortunately for India, Naipaul is justified in his attack even if one is able to say that he does over-react. What Naipaul criticises does throw valuable light upon the nature of the native Indian's bond with his country.

This 'blindness' which afflicts the Indian occurs in a particular form which Naipaul sees exemplified in the writings of another well-known Indian, Jawaharlal Nehru - Gandhi's close confidant and India's first Prime Minister. Unlike Gandhi, who spent twenty years in South Africa, Nehru, despite his much publicised western lifestyle, had never been part of "an Indian community removed from the setting of India". As a result, Nehru did not experience what Naipaul implies are the benefits

of displacement, when "contrast made for clarity, criticism and discrimination for self-analysis" (ibid). Nehru is "more Indian; he has a romantic feeling for the country and its past; he takes it all to his heart" (ibid), and it is this quality that one finds in Narayan's portrayal of Malgudi.

There is in Narayan's work not so much an avoidance regarding the mention of dirt and disease but a 'romanticising' of these ills, which consequently neutralises the implication of their presence. In Lawley Road Narayan informs us that

for many years people were not aware of the existence of a Municipality in Malgudi. The town was none the worse for it. Diseases, if they started, ran their course and disappeared, for even diseases must end some day. Dust and rubbish were blown away by the wind ... drains ebbed and flowed and generally looked after themselves (p.7).

The conversational pace takes in its relaxed stride allusions to the momentous phenomenon of the ebb and flow of time encompassing the eventual cessation of all things. Malgudi is subtly elevated from a position of lowliness to one of significance within an eternal, cosmic pattern. Attention is deflected from municipal exigencies which now appear petty and irrelevant. Narayan has therefore succeeded not in avoiding the truth but in making it more tolerable.

Another of Narayan's deceptively simple descriptions of ordinary everyday life in India produces the same effect. Consider the following passage from Mr Sampath, which I shall quote at some length.

Srinivas shut his eyes and let himself drown in the luxury of inactivity. Mixed sounds reached him - his wife in the kitchen, his son's voice far off, arguing with a friend, the clamor of assertions and appeals at the water-tap, a peddler woman crying "Brinjals and greens" in the street - all these sounds mingled and wove into each other. Following each one to its root and source, one could trace it to a human aspiration and outlook. The vegetable seller is crying because in her background is her home and children whose welfare is molded by the amount of brinjals she is able to scatter into society ... What great human forces meet and come to grips with each other between every sunrise and sunset! Srinivas was filled with great wonder at the multitudinousness and vastness of the whole picture of life that this presented (p.60).

Srinivas's mood of detached and quiet contemplation, though touched upon very briefly, is a subtle narrative device creating a stable backdrop against which local sights and sounds achieve clarity. The cataloguing of realistic details like his wife in the kitchen, the clamor at the water-tap and the arguing voices, beats out the rhythm of everyday life which, by its evocation of variety, invests the mundane with heightened interest. Concern with reality deepens to a more serious note when we recognise sympathetic awareness for those who are poor like the vegetable seller, whose livelihood depends upon the capricious demands of her customers. Yet nothing is intended to shock, for both visual and aural detail is seen to be part of the tapestry of life in which "sounds mingled and wove into each other". Even greater elevation is achieved when the ordinary is then described in epic terms, for the narrator perceives ordinary activities as an encounter between "great human forces".

Ultimately therefore the effect of the description is not to linger solely upon the Indian predicament. Instead one senses a concern for the general human condition. The narrator sees that each sound expresses "a human aspiration and outlook" (ibid). In her nonentity the vegetable seller is a fitting symbolic figure to voice and echo the aspirations of the many. Moreover, the metaphysical and mythical overtones suggested by multitudes and vastness gently lead one to ponder upon the variety of life itself, imperceptibly transforming pensiveness into wonder.

This is the Indian's romantic approach to his country which Naipaul recognises in Nehru, and this is what the westerner in Naipaul cannot comprehend. What Narayan's novels offer as an answer to India's predicament, is seen by Naipaul as a reason for that predicament. The Indian method of coping with an evil by placing it within a larger

cosmic scheme, thereby reducing its immediate threatening potential, runs contrary to recommended western response, which believes in some form of action to remove that which is offensive. Naipaul's exasperation at Indian acceptance implies that he favours the western response, which is alive to the contradictions resulting from what he sees is a form of Indian blindness.

Narayan however cannot be accused of remaining on a comforting mystical plane. He is aware that life is lived on less sublime levels. Srinivas's thoughts are rudely interrupted by the sound of a woman's voice promising to "kill that dirty dog if he comes near that tap again" (p.61). What could be a more vivid reminder of brutal reality than this dire, penetrating threat? As Narayan himself points out to students in an American university, who may have thought that "all Indians are spiritually preoccupied. We aren't ... normally we also have to be performing ordinary tasks, such as working, earning, living and breeding" (Reluctant Guru: pp.13-14).

This balanced perception of human existence as a combination of certain necessary experiences gives Narayan's work that quality of detached involvement uncharacteristic of Naipaul's work, which is shot through with a painful awareness of barrenness and poverty. Although Naipaul's depiction of the Hindu community cannot be easily dismissed, it is necessary to point out that his particular vision is one he inherited from his father, Seerpersad Naipaul. Shades of Fuente Grove are recalled when one is introduced to the village of Chandranagore in the short story entitled 'My Uncle Dalloo' by Seerpersad Naipaul (in The Adventures of Gurudeva):

[The village] contained, among other animate and inanimate phenomena, about a dozen huts, mostly primitive grass-thatched habitations, planted anywhere and anyhow in the lowlands ... these huts made you think of some gargantuan, prehistoric monsters that had rambed in the slime and slush of the lagoon and then ... had died,

greyed, fossilized, and remained rooted for ever ... For six months of the year the place abounded in flood and mud ... floods inundated the earthen floors. The villagers did not mind all this. Mud and they were kin (p.137).

The horror of this description lies in the fact that, unlike the narrator, the villagers are unable to see how much they have been dehumanised by their environment. The spectacle of poverty makes a mockery of the name of the village, which translates romantically into "The City of the Moon". The discrepancy is ironically significant if one recalls the splendour of the tropical moon, shining in radiant contrast to the dereliction of Chandranagore.

In the other short stories included in Gurudeva, Seerpersad Naipaul continues to reiterate the drabness he sees around him. For instance, the description of a hut's interior in 'In the Village' concludes with the suggestion that "Everything in the hut seemed to be competing for a prize in drabness" (p.173). Then in the main tale about Gurudeva, Bhakhiran the old stick-mounter is presented as a poor specimen of humanity. "His thin merino-clad belly was pressed on his legs as on pillows ... His feet were drawn in under his lean shanks, and he wore a length of mildewed, dirt-sodden cotton for a dhoti .. Its scantiness, thinness, and dirt made it an offence ... His whole attitude was one long cry" (p.39).

It is this same atmosphere of impoverished neglect and physical hopelessness that can also be discerned in the works of the younger Naipaul and is especially conspicuous in A House for Mr Biswas. Whether it is at The Chase or Green Vale, Mr Biswas's attempt at family life without Tulsi interference is mocked by the makeshift dwellings he is offered for accommodation. The state of the two rooms occupied by Mr Biswas at The Chase is never improved upon. There were "unplastered walls and a roof of old thatch ... The kitchen had

crooked tree branches for uprights, assorted bits of corrugated iron for roof ... and almost anything for walls" (p.142). Mr Biswas's appearance is reminiscent of Bhakhiran in Seerpersad Naipaul's Gurudeva. Aware of his own unattractive appearance, Mr Biswas takes a self-deprecatory delight in drawing attention to his own ugliness. "He slapped his yellow, flabby calf and pushed his finger into it. The calf yielded like sponge ... With a push of his fingers he kept the calves swinging" (p.120).

There is however a marked change in the way Mr Biswas is portrayed. He is not merely seen as being physically frail and unattractive. Unlike Bakhiran, he is portrayed as someone who is pained by his own vulnerability and the limitations of his existence. He wishes he could reject the patronage of his in-laws, the Tulsis, and leave. "He didn't feel a small man, but the clothes which hung so despairingly from the nail on the mud wall were definitely the clothes of a small man, comic make-believe clothes" (p:157). Despite his inner despair however, Mr Biswas differs from the villagers of Chandranagore in his ability to interact with his surroundings in that they do not numb his responses. Although he cannot immediately change his environment, he is alive to its 'character'. He may be anxious about the flimsy walls made of "mud, tapia grass and bamboo strips" (p:142), but he is amazed at their "astonishing resilience". For the next six years they "never deteriorated beyond the limberness in which he had found them" (ibid). In more ways than one, Mr Biswas is a character who is 'alive'. It is in his readiness to stand away from his personal situation and to assess it that Mr Biswas embodies the traits of Naipaul as a writer. He is the outsider looking in.

If we now turn to Jhabvala's depiction of poverty, we will discover that, like Naipaul, she makes no attempt to neutralise the effects of this social evil. That poverty is a negative force in India is indicated by the detailed attention paid to the poor and their living conditions in Get Ready for Battle. Again like Naipaul, Jhabvala presents abject facts in a way that may be repellent but is nonetheless moving, and in this respect both authors testify to the honesty of their vision.

The poor in Get Ready for Battle are concentrated in, and collectively represented by the name of their slum colony - Bundi Busti. In itself the choice of name is poignant, for like "Chandranagore" in Seerpersad Naipaul's Gurudeva, part of its meaning belies the squalid conditions. The Rajasthani fort-town of Bundi, which gives this fictional slum its name, was once a centre associated with the Bundi school of painting. It is with a sense of pathos that one realises how bygone glories are now only parodied by local craftswomen who nimbly fashion and then sell paper-dolls in their bid for survival. The other positive connotations associated with the word Bundi further manifest the ironic choice of name. Bundi is the feminine form of Bunda and refers to an ornamental pendant worn in the ear; and the plural form - "bundiya" - refers to sweetmeats shaped in the form of drops. In the following narrative description of the slum, one discovers little that is ornamental, nor is there any suggestion of the sweetness, repletion and softness symbolised by the sweetmeats "bundiya".

The colony was built out of the salvage that came floating down from a more prosperous world - rags and old bicycle tyres, battered tins and broken bricks. Walls were made of dried mud or of tattered matting, roofs were a patchwork of old tiles, rags and rusty sheets of tin ... The earth was streaked with runnels of dirty water, vegetable waste and peels were trodden into the mud and scratched up again by mangy dogs and pigs and a few sick chickens" (p.83).

The world of plenty lies beyond the boundaries of Bundi Busti. Here each form of life is left to live upon the refuse discarded by the other, and though life is a matter of survival, it is evidently not a survival of the fittest. The sadness conveyed by the inappropriate connotations of beauty and fullness contained in the name of the village (the Busti), is reinforced by the one unromantic meaning which the word contains - dot or point. The reader is finally able to see that this slum is in fact only a dot or a point on the Indian landscape, scarred by the existence of many other such places. This is an indictment of more fortunate Indians, in whose field of vision the poor are only insignificant dots that can be easily ignored. Thus the extract from Jhabvala's Get Ready for Battle, and the interpretations it stimulates, do not produce the same effect as do Narayan's novels, where the narrator reduces the horror of such scenes, without being guilty of evading the truth.

It is in the manifest determination to confront and describe the disagreeable that Jhabvala's novels are thus strongly reminiscent of Naipaul's factual accounts of India. In An Area of Darkness, Naipaul recalls the Indian villages he had seen: "the narrow, broken lanes with green slime in the gutters, the choked back-to-back mud houses, the jumble of filth and food and animals and people, the baby in the dust, swollen-bellied, black with flies" (p.45). Like Jhabvala, he draws attention to filth in cramped conditions, where the distinction between animal and human pariahs becomes indistinguishable.

If one looks no further than these descriptions of India, it would be easy to conclude that here are typical impressions of foreign shock at those aspects of Indian life which contrast starkly with life in the west. But the narrative shows that both Jhabvala and Naipaul are sensitive to the notes of hope, however muted, which relieve the bleak

scenes of despair. Jhabvala is aware of the injustice in denying the poor their humanity and gives the exploited a voice - and a strong one at that. Ramchander's neighbour declares 'lustily': "Perhaps we are not human beings? Perhaps we have no right to live that they should come to us and say clear out?" (p.85), [underlining mine].

The women at Bundi Busti, are not the dumb millions of popular imagination. They are a spirited and vocal group of individuals who enjoy a joke together, and above all are still able to derive pleasure from their craft of making paper dolls: "they laughed and gave a merry spin to a newly finished paper parasol" (p.86). The quick carefree whirl executed on the doll strikes a note of poignancy, for it is an ironic touch reminding the reader that joyous abandon is but one of the many guarantees absent from human lives which are as fragile as the dolls they make. The same unselfconscious inclination to rise above personal predicament is seen in the "hordes of underfed children playing games with gusto" (p.83), and heard in "the merry jingle of bells from the harness of underfed but bravely plumed horses" (p.71). Similarly Naipaul too is able to see "the smiles on the faces of the begging children, that domestic group waking in the cool Bombay morning, father, mother, and baby in a trinity of love" (AD, p.45).

That the above examples constitute a narrative recognition of the remarkable ^{buoyancy} of the Indian spirit is confirmed by the fact that these positive impressions occur within extended descriptions of utter hopelessness. One cannot help but conclude that both narrators intend the reader to register these touching details which humanise the poor and lift them out of the squalor of their daily existence. Although the descriptions of poverty convey the writers' disgust at what they see, there is a narrative awareness that the poor are not to be pitied, for they are able to create something out of virtually

nothing. And if one then compares the underfed children in Jhabvala's novel to Pritti, the child of rich parents in the same novel, it is obvious that the narrator wants the reader to make a value judgement as to which kind of child is more fortunate. Pritti's material needs are attended to, but despite a mother and a grandfather who profess to love her, she is not portrayed as a happy carefree child - still less as one who plays with "gusto". Instead she is invariably caught in the cross-fire of her parents' matrimonial conflicts.

Thus the above examples show that because both Jhabvala and Naipaul do not solely describe the externals of poverty, they cannot be accused of presenting the poor as stereotypes. In fact the examples indicate the presence of a narrator who examines the underlying significance of the superficial, thus espousing realism with sensitivity. But it is also necessary to point out that the implicit contrast between rich and poor in Jhabvala's novel is not designed to portray the poor in a sanguine light, thus dangerously veering towards a sentimentalist approach. Combined with compassion is the courage to strike a jarring note, and sympathy is then tinged with revulsion. This is because the abject or hardened physical exterior is very often the visible expression of inner spiritual desolation.

The description of Ramchander's mother denotes a narrative refusal to sanitise any physical depiction of the poor. Ramchander's mother is reminiscent of a witch who does not appear to need our protective instincts. She is 'tiny, frail as a dry twig and bent almost double .. squashing lice over [a] child's head with her fingernail; she seemed to enjoy this work, cackling, "There you devil"' (p.83). Referring to hunger the old woman nudges the well-meaning social worker Sarla Devi and says, "'The poor need food in their bellies. Eat, eat", ... poking a forefinger into her toothless mouth stretched like a bird' (p.86).

Further, although the inhabitants of Bundi Busti are ultimately the helpless victims of wealthy property speculators, they are not simply portrayed as innocent pawns. The poor have discovered that there is power in poverty and so they too are as opportunist as the rich whom they despise. When Sarla Devi's son Vishnu visits her, he meets Ramchander, the self-appointed spokesman of the slum colony. On a visual level, Ramchander and Vishnu represent two opposing ways of life. When he is introduced to the man, Vishnu "felt all too conscious of his own good clothes and healthy well-fed appearance" (p.104). But it is not to the disparity in lifestyle that the narrator wishes to draw our attention. The description disconcerts by focusing on the unexpected exploitation of the situation by Ramchander, whom one assumes represents the exploited. Ramchander is someone who has successfully learnt to play the part of the poor man to perfection, thereby manipulating the sympathy of vulnerable people like Sarla Devi. (Such exploitation of public sympathy is carried out to even greater extremes in India's cities, where children are deliberately maimed and then sent out to beg).

Ramchander "kept his eyes fixed stubbornly on Vishnu's shoes. He stood in an attitude of aggressive lowliness - his eyes downcast, his hands meekly folded, a poor man, a hungry man, a man who had nothing and was nothing" (ibid). Considering that we already know how utterly poor and hungry the Bundi Busti villagers are, conveying the same information would seem repetitious, except that it is now seen as an ironic exposure of the man's "aggressive lowliness". Ramchander's gesture is one which gives a cynical twist to an attitude which Naipaul believes is forced upon the Indian by the institution of Caste. This, he says, is the desire to appear and act as if one is worthless, as is evident in the attitude and behaviour of sweepers, who seem to believe that

their function is "to be sweepers ... They must stoop when they sweep; ... they will squat and move like crabs between the feet of the customers, careful to touch no one, never looking up, never rising" (AD,p.75).

There is in this example from An Area of Darkness a sense of outrage that human beings should naturally go through these "motions of degradation" simply because they, as Jhabvala puts it, feel they "are nothing". While outrage is accompanied by sympathy in Naipaul's account, the portrayal of Ramchander does not have the same effect. A man who sleeps by day but goes "roaming about and talking and drinking of spirits" (p.83) at night, and still believes that with his downcast eyes and folded hands he too can give the impression he is "nothing", is not intended to win our sympathy. This is because we are shown it is only for Sarla Devi's benefit that he acts out the spiritually crippling conviction of the untouchable, described by Naipaul. Our negative opinion of Ramchander is confirmed when he accepts bribes offered on behalf of the property magnates. It is through his corruptibility that the way is cleared for the property developers. Neither the characterisation of Ramchander nor the description of his mother provide pleasant reading, but this non-sentimental approach to the poor is infinitely preferable to seeing them as helpless stereotypes who are patronisingly dehumanised.

But even while Jhabvala does confront the ugly face of poverty, she does not forget that the rules which operate within the predatory world of want and corruption are radically different from those accepted in the 'normal' world. It is such a realisation that makes Sarla Devi understand why Ramchander accepted the bribe. "How could she blame him? Whatever sum it was they offered him, it had been a

fortune for him; and he was in no position to resist a fortune." (p.149). These are also the sentiments of Joginder, who fobs off second rate furniture to gullible clients. In response to moral criticism of his business dealings, he states: "You speak of ideals. I know only that I have a family and that we have to live" (p.56). It is because such penetrating and thoughtful social analysis permeates the novel that the action remains anchored on the plane of reality.

It is in keeping with their realistic approach to poverty that Naipaul and Jhabvala also examine how the more fortunate Indian handles this problem. Both authors agree that the Indian's readiness to slip easily into a sad mood about the human predicament, without any constructive action, accounts for the persistence of this social evil. Naipaul sees this tendency as an excuse for the onlooker merely to feel sorry without doing anything for those in need. In An Area of Darkness, Naipaul recounts what is believed to be a well-known story about "the Sikh who, returning to India after many years, sat down among his suitcases on the Bombay docks and wept. He had forgotten what Indian poverty was like". Naipaul's verdict on this story is that: "It is Indian above all in its attitude to poverty as something which, thought about from time to time ... releases the sweetest of emotions" (p.44).

As with all Naipaul's indictments of India and Indians, this one cannot be dismissed. For instance, while the subject matter and songs of many Indian films are inspired by the poor, little has been done to improve the quality of their lives. As Tully observes with brutal honesty, it is not the elite in India who cope with poverty, "[They] don't have to. The poor do" (2). Where the poor of India are concerned, Naipaul's allegation therefore remains a valid one. It is

the emotion which poverty liberates in the observer that takes centre stage, while the 'reality' of their suffering is completely forgotten. As an outsider in India Jhabvala is also dubious about the genuine nature of Indian concern, although she is prepared to give her characters the benefit of the doubt. Consider the following evocative description from A Backward Place. In the midst of a lively discussion about anticipated pleasures, Bal and his companions suddenly "grew melancholy and all sank back on to the grass, to contemplate the high blue sky and the yellow fields and the blackened monuments. In face of this Absolute, they recognized the transitoriness of all human pleasures and endeavours" (p.132).

At first the narrative fosters a favorable impression of these men who seem able to assess the significance of human existence within an eternal scheme. One is prepared to believe that because of the timelessness of natural wonders like the "high blue skies" and the "yellow fields", they recognise the triviality of all human achievements and ambitions including their own. Hence one of them sadly and appropriately quotes : 'O where are they now whose palaces glittered with thousand coloured chandeliers? Silent in their graves: not a whisper' (ibid). But the narrator soon intervenes to warn us that "There was pleasure in this melancholy" (ibid). Here we are reminded of Shakuntala in Esmond in India, who also lays claim to this paradoxical combination of feelings. Like her friends she was often overwhelmed by "a great lovely sadness which was also happiness" (EI,p.7). Where all these characters are concerned however, this "lovely sadness" does not lead anywhere. It is merely experienced and disappears with the same swiftness with which it appears. Further, what A Backward Place suggests is that Hindu philosophical acceptance is responsible for the lack of positive action in any direction.

Like Srinivas in the extract from Narayan's Mr Sampath quoted earlier, Bal and his friends are soothed by their belief in a Divine Plan which governs and unites all men. "How easy everything was in this world ... God provided even for the tiniest insect that crawled over the tiniest blade of grass" (ibid), [underlining mine]. And it is because they see how within this Divine Plan everything ceases yet constantly renews itself, that they believe any present doubts they harbour about their own futures will eventually disperse.

Like Naipaul, Jhabvala is cynical about this Indian approach to life's problems. Philosophical musings are ironically used to sharpen the reader's awareness of the succeeding anti-climax "They realized they held the whole of this little world in the hollow of their hand and it was nothing. What were film studios? Midnight parties on beaches? Money, fame, Scotch whisky? ... They knew the answer, and it filled them with a sense of peace and utter resignation" (ibid). Any burgeoning sense of wonder is expertly deflated by the narrative juxtaposition of Hindu consolation and frivolous concerns. Thus the extract from Jhabvala's novel does not take the individual out of himself into a sense of the primal unity of all creation, which is what happens in Narayan's novel.

This technique of deflation in A Backward Place continues. Beset by pangs of hunger, the young men realise that "they had between them run out of everything except their bus money. The world, they realized, was still very much with them" (p.133). Here one begins to hope that with the onset of stark economic reality, common sense will at last prevail - a hope that the narrative at first appears to encourage. We are told that "With a sigh they turned their conversation back to those matters which, in their higher moments, they recognized as shadow and illusion but which were still ... solid substance" (ibid).

But the "solid substance" the reader expects once again turns out to be the intangible world of dreams. Tongue-in-cheek, the narrator continues: "So thorough was their return to reality that they spoke now no longer of production units in Bombay but of things nearer home ... such as a possible radio broadcast or a programme or recitals in honour of the death anniversary of some Urdu poet" (ibid), [underlining mine]. It is obvious that vagueness and impracticality continue to characterise their lives' plans.

If we then examine Shakuntala's reference to poverty, we discover that although it is undoubtedly more explicit, her awareness of social injustice is no less theoretical. She may recognise the lofty idealism in turning one's back on "the city with all its comforts" in order "to devote oneself to the cause of rural development" (p:97), but her denunciation is only the result of youthful exuberance that is convincingly conveyed in suitably exaggerated terms. "Is it not one hundred thousand million times better to go out into the villages and give your life in the service of the sick and poor ... than to sit in a fashionable practice in New Delhi and take fat fees from fat clients and yourself grow fat like a money lender?" (p.74).

Yet nowhere in the novel is she seen practising what she so passionately preaches. The fact that she takes her material comforts for granted is ironic proof that she is not unduly concerned about the nature of either her own existence or anybody else's. Moreover, social commitment such as hers is questionable, when she is easily made to feel uncomfortable merely by the curious stares of those very people whose welfare she is so vocal about. She "hated being scrutinized at such close quarters by the sort of people whom she usually saw only through the windows of a motor-car" (p.137). The tangible barrier is the external expression of Shakuntala's attempt to protect herself

psychologically from the unhappy realities of Indian life. Like her father, she is an example of the type of Indian whose "energies are consumed in verbalising desireables, in theorising" without acting in any way to reduce the economic problems which grip India. (3)

In contrast to the above, common sense is voiced by Jaykar and Sudhir in A Backward Place. Together they discuss more realistic and pertinent subjects such as "corruption in high places, the inadequacy of defence preparations, the failure of community development schemes and the impossibility of raising the basic wage level" (p.55). This is what the rational/western observer would understand and approve. However at this stage in the novel one cannot be too fulsome in one's praise of either Jaykar or Sudhir.

Like Bal and his friends, Jaykar and Sudhir also merely talk and do not act, discussing India's problems with "humorous nonchalance". While it is pointed out that their air of intellectual cynicism is an act to hide their frustration at seeing their "enthusiasms ... so often disappointed", it is still ironic that Jaykar should denounce Bal and his entourage as "loafers ... worthless nothings ... chattering like old fishwives while the country is falling in ruins about their ears" (p.101). Finally, although we are informed that Sudhir decides to leave the Cultural Dais in the city to work in a Literacy Institute in a "remote region of Madhya Pradesh" (p.122), we never actually see him at work in his new environment.

What we see in Jaykar and Sudhir is what Scott recognises as an overwhelming reason for the dismal record of poverty in India - a sense of helplessness. As the unnamed narrator in The Jewel regrettably confesses "To look straight into [the beggar woman's] eyes would be fatal. In India the head too often has to be turned away" (p.205). Significantly it is the Indian - Srinivasan - who warns the

narrator "not to give them (the beggars) anything". Though this may appear insensitive, it is nevertheless a hard-headed rather than a hard-hearted piece of advice, for to give to one entails giving to all. In such a situation any good intentions are ultimately strained and defeated. This is why Daphne does not totally condemn richer Indians like Lili Chatterjee. She recognises that although they have a "sort of deep-rooted guilt ... because there's so little they can individually do to lessen the horror and the poverty", their work is "like trying to dam up a river with a handful of twigs" (ibid,p.407). Examples from Get Ready for Battle illustrate the magnitude of India's problems, demonstrating how hopeless causes often inspire hopeless solutions. Society ladies who, unlike Sarla Devi, have not given up the material comforts which life can offer, first of all patronisingly suggest that "Mothers must be taught to keep their homes, however humble, scrupulously clean", before moving on to what they consider another practical idea: "Also all fruits and vegetables must be washed in potassium manganate to prevent outbreak of cholera" (p.99). But as Sarla Devi counters, "It is difficult to be clean and healthy if you live in a hovel and don't have enough to eat" (p.119). Further, to envisage that the daily washing of vegetables in the manner recommended by these women will stem the spread of epidemics - that is providing the slum dwellers can get hold of potassium manganate - is to be totally out of touch with the causes, the problems, and the horror of poverty.

Even Sarla Devi's attempts to help the inhabitants of Bundi Busti can only confirm the truth in Daphne's statement. Sarla Devi's lifestyle and her appearance indicate an integration with those whom she wishes to help. On the road to Bundi Busti "she was just one more old woman, in the plain cotton sari worn by the poor ... Her very exhaustion was

a triumph for her; it brought her close, she felt, to all the poor with whom she so much longed to identify herself" (p.82). Yet all this is apparently futile - she can no more be like the poor than they can sympathise with her good intentions. She is left longing to identify herself with them while they continue to dismiss the promises made by social workers - "yes, on promises our bellies have grown good and fat". Whereupon Sarla Devi, who felt "too personally guilty to ... disclaim anything ... looked down at the ground and suffered" (p.84). Given the scale of despair in India, the Indian indulgence in sad contemplation can therefore be arguably seen as a defensive barrier against such horrors. It is a predicament from which the Indian, unlike the Jhabvalas, the Naipauls, other foreigners and the wealthy of this world, cannot escape. As Nissim Ezekiel points out, choice and escape is not generally open to the Indian. "To forget this is to be wholly subjective ... to think of one's own expectations, one's extreme discomfort" (4).

What one must also bear in mind is the fact that India's deeply embedded traditions often run counter to the socialist ideologies borrowed from the west. Such western ideologies naturally carry with them western ideas of social justice. The new political guidelines have to contend with the more ancient religious and cultural rules. It is therefore extremely difficult for a Brahmin to overcome prejudices within himself and the society in order to work among untouchables, if he wishes to live up to the democratic ideals of a Gandhi or a Nehru. Paradoxically enough, even those who would benefit from the abolition of caste rules do not respect the agents of change. Sarla Devi's move to treat Tara, her brother's mistress, as a human being worthy of respect does not meet with any approval, least of all from Tara. While

Sarla Devi would have liked "to say something courteous and friendly ... Tara looked after her and spat red betel juice in an eloquent manner" (p.82). The relaxation of traditional rules is chaotic, for it disturbs old certainties, creating the need for new rules to govern new enclaves. The old and the new therefore enjoy an uneasy partnership, especially in the cities where the winds of change blow strongest.

Running through Jhabvala's early novels is therefore a concern for India, although Shakuntala's theorising, Bal's philosophising, Jaykar's and Sudhir's intellectual cynicism and Sarla Devi's efforts ultimately do not lead to the visible solution of any problems. However, despite the undeniable impatience at the Indian's inadequate response to social and economic problems, there is nonetheless some evidence to show that perhaps the Indian is not wholly to blame for his acceptance and passivity. And it is here that the narrator abandons western standards of rationality and seeks intuitive grounds for the Indian point-of-view.

Alongside the irony and scepticism runs a strong awareness of a strange natural power pervading the land which is capable of subtly transforming the observer's perceptions. Normal standards of judgement are suspended for "one could never be sure what sudden thrill might not spring out of even the most unpromising soil" (BP,p.183). On his way to Madhya Pradesh, Sudhir recalls "an abandoned slum colony, where the pitiful shreds of pitiful lives lay scattered over the cracked and filthy earth and an old woman dug hopelessly in a heap of ashes, and suddenly it was sunset and the sky blazing with the most splendid, the most royal of colours and everything - the old woman, and the ashes, the rags, the broken bricks, the split old bicycle tyres - everything burst into glory" (ibid). From images of

deadening hopelessness and utter destitution, the narrative suddenly comes alive with evocations of royal splendour inspired by the glorious sunset. The swift transition from one level of experience to another parallels the rapid but imperceptible change wrought in the observer by the powerful impact of the sky at sunset. It is in acknowledging the presence of such transformations that Jhabvala's novels can be said to project the insider's viewpoint found in Narayan's works.

As in Narayan's work, human beings and their activity seem insignificant, while normal ideas of linear time suddenly seem irrelevant. Voices calling in the night "pricked as feebly into the surrounding silence as ... lamps did into the darkness". A railway station, the sign of technological progress, is but a piece of "cardboard" propped up in "an ocean of flat empty land that stretched, as far and wide as one could conceive, all around it" (ibid). The fact that these are the thoughts of the down-to-earth Sudhir compels the reader to accept the irrational effect which India has upon an individual. One then discovers further reinforcing proof in Judy's reaction to the country. As an English character, Judy is seen to possess more common sense than her dreamy husband Bal. But even Judy is not immune to the Indian atmosphere, where "all was boundless and open in the warm air, the river and the sky and the sand ... Judy forgot why she had run away from home" (p.89) after a quarrel with Bal.

As in Narayan's novels, there is a sense of timelessness, where the old and new, the past and the future co-exist in the present. Sitting by the river, Judy watches an evening scene unfold before her eyes.

"The chanting and the sound of cymbals coming from the temple", (the repository of ancient traditions), mingles with the sound of traffic "of buses and lorries and tongas and cycles", the emblems of modernity. Among the women going in and coming out of the temple were old widows, reminders of the proximity of death, and a few young married ones who were "pregnant", suggesting regeneration, life and the future.

It is only appropriate then that the holy man who figures in this scene should be totally absorbed in an act that is simple but symbolic. "He lay reclined and at his ease and amused himself with scooping up handfuls of sand and letting it slowly trickle out again through his fist". His action is a reminder that he, like everyone else, is part of that eternal, steady flow of the sands of time. Yet because he has about him "an air of freedom and leisure", the onlooker is not disturbed by the obvious reminders that the passing of time is either a hindrance or a cause for regret. Instead the narrative suggests that the scene is a soothing balm for Judy's troubled spirit, as she contemplates the intense but flowing activity before her. The narrative guides the mind's eye to follow movements of smooth perfection - going in and coming out, scooping up [sand] and trickling down. Concurrently an atmosphere of uncomplicated leisure is evoked through a childlike recording of whatever happens to attract attention - " buses and lorries and tongas and cycles".

Like Judy, the reader is left with a sense of being enclosed in an atmosphere of wholeness, born of a pervading sense of carefully patterned integration which gently tones down any discordant influences. This in turn is related to another 'natural' quality which less blatantly governs the Indian's view of life. The evening light which softens harsh outlines and subdues glaring colours, subtly

operates to tranquillize the observer's perceptions and his powers of discernment. This blurring of judgement is reflected in the following description of indistinctly perceived forms and hues. "Everything is wrapped in a veil of pearl-grey evening light faintly tinged with pink, through which gleamed only the golden clouds and the black bridge with red buses on it". (pp.88-89).

The examination of subtle influences wrought upon individual sensibility by the Indian environment illustrates the outsider-narrator's desire to look for an Indian reason to explain the lack of positive action in India with regard to urgent problems. The beautiful descriptive passages are narrative instances of the relaxing property of natural surroundings, which causes both the Indian and the foreigner to succumb to the soothing effect of that which is "boundless" and "warm". Yet the outsider-narrator is careful to maintain a position of objectivity. Thus while acknowledging that there could be a less obvious reason for the Indian being this way, the narrative then proceeds to analyse the effect which India's natural magic weaves upon the senses.

We are shown how nature bolsters Bal's tendency to indulge in elaborate, impractical plans. He is at his most fanciful when "his eyes roved happily round the countryside that lay green and gold and yellow in the sun and seemed as unlimited as his hopes" (p.136). Similarly, Judy's well-justified wrath at Bal's self-centred attitude as he embarks on another harebrained scheme soon evaporates, and her misgivings are replaced by an optimism matching his. This is simply because she suddenly begins to notice the fresh external world. The early morning sky is a "pale whitish blue", the grass of the maidan before the Fort "looked very green" and the Fort itself a "shining red". The transformation in her can only be described as miraculous -

"The morning air was still clear and fresh ... Judy suddenly elated, gave Bal's hand a squeeze" (p.125). It is obvious that since there has been no time in which the situation could have undergone change, Judy's lighthearted response can only be attributed to the anaesthetising effect of the environment.

So persuasive is the mood created by one's perceptions that even the poverty of the "South Indian beggar woman ... together with her child ... as filthy and ragged as she was" blends in with the rest of humanity. She is part of the panorama of life outside the temple - a "well-known figure" like the widows, the pregnant women, the holy men in orange robes (p.88).

"The South Indian beggar-woman had come down from the temple and now she was sitting on the sand and looked at the water, with her dirty matted little child crawling near her playing with stones, and the singing coming from the temple and the birds flying in the sky overhead" (p.89). She fits in perfectly within a photographic reproduction of one of India's many ambivalent images, where the presence of misery is acknowledged but does not produce any disturbing effect. The outsider may well be shocked to realise that here the beggars merely add human interest to the composite picture, as nothing links them to the singing and the birds, except that together they are all part of the same onlooker's sense perceptions. Although the suggestion may sound insensitive, the passage persuades the reader not to question the fact that it is only the "picturesque" appeal of the beggar's predicament which 'matters'. Jhabvala however grafts the outsider's judgement onto the insider's vision, thereby suggesting the invariable tensions which India can produce in the observer. The 'critical' outsider will not fail to notice the ironic undertone in the above description of the scene outside the temple - neither the

joy in the singing nor the freedom enjoyed by the birds flying overhead mark the lives of the beggar woman and her child. But to be frustrated at the implicit acceptance of the beggar-woman's lot as being part of Life is to be imbued with the westerner's "passion for tidiness" which, as Lady Chatterjee points out, is a process of "negation". The Indian's vision does not exclude the disturbing, even though the disturbing in itself does not seem to arouse responsive concern. This is why Lady Chatterjee affirms that, though she may not like violence, she "believes in its inevitability. It is so positive" (JC, pp.77&78). This is a view of life symbolised by Shiva who is the Hindu god of "creation, preservation and destruction. A complete cycle. A wholeness". It is a view which Sister Ludmila says "one must respond to ... in the heart, not the intellect" (p.152). To understand the all-embracing Hindu philosophical viewpoint is to comprehend but perhaps still remain frustrated at the 'passivity' in Indian attitudes towards poverty.

What is relevant about the above discussion on the narrative attitudes to poverty within the Indian community, is that it draws our attention to the attitudinal stance which the various authors adopt or are willing to adopt in relation to certain Indian social concerns. We shall see that, in their depiction of Indian family relationships and the role of women, the authors manifest the same approaches to the subject as they do to poverty. While Narayan stresses the positive aspects of the Indian joint-family system, Naipaul challenges its idealistic bases. Jhabvala, meanwhile, attempts to bridge the gap between the westerner's and the easterner's points-of-view, although this is a line of approach mainly confined to her earlier novels. What

does become clear is that it is a sense of belonging or not belonging in either the author or the characters which generates the tensions in the functioning and representation of Indian society.

1. Chaudhuri, Hinduism, p.205
2. Tully, Introduction, p.1
3. A D Moddie, The Brahminical Culture and Modernity, p.66
4. Nissim Exekiel, 'Naipaul's India and Mine', in Adil Jussawalla (ed.), New Writing in India, p.73

THE JOINT FAMILY

If one compares the representations of Indian society found in Naipaul and Jhabvala's novels to those found in Narayan's works, one cannot deny that in the work of the first two novelists, greater emphasis is placed upon the individual's struggle within what the narrator perceives are the constraints of the Indian social order. Narayan's work, on the other hand, communicates an overriding sense of undisturbed equilibrium. This, according to Naipaul, is due to the lack of reference to anything which is "overwhelming" in the Indian experience (AD,p.216).

To understand the differing points of view in the novelists' works and the basis for Naipaul's accusation, one must remember that Naipaul and Jhabvala view India from "a double perspective: they ... are at one and the same time insiders and outsiders in [the] society" (1). Consequently they are naturally drawn to the agonies of displacement, in a way that Narayan is not for he belongs and accepts what he belongs to. This is reflected in his definition of one of the most enduring of Indian systems - the Hindu joint family. The implications of his point-of-view provide a useful starting point for a multi-angled consideration of the Indian social milieu.

In My Dateless Diary (1969), Narayan stresses the caring aspect of the extended family which he believes "affords protection to the oldest and the youngest in a family". He also sees sound psychological reasons for having the system. Several people living together and sharing a certain way of life under one roof engender security among children, who then grow up "without neurosis, angularities, or oversensitiveness". Meanwhile the older generation is always at hand to proffer "advice and guidance" (pp.72-73).

As an institution, the family in India does serve an important economic and social function. In the way it provides for those who are in need, the family is the local equivalent of the welfare system familiar in the west, for the benefits of financial gain within a family are very often shared by all its members. Within such a framework, children are seen and learn to see themselves as a source of potential wealth, for they are regarded as the future earners and supporters of the family. This is particularly important in the context of India's agrarian economy.

The sense of emotional involvement resulting from daily contact engenders a sense of caring responsibility which moves the more fortunate members of the family to give financial help to those less fortunate. We see evidence of this in Jhabvala's A Backward Place, where Bal's brother looks after the entire family when Bal is out of work. It is also because family support can be taken for granted that Srinivas, in Narayan's Mr Sampath, can acknowledge without any embarrassment that "all along in the joint family home" his wife and son "had been looked after by others" (p.42).

The knowledge that one is capable of looking after other members of the extended family is as sustaining as the assurance that one will be looked after. Both these factors contribute to a person's sense of self-worth, forming an inextricable part of his own and society's concept of personal "honour". In contrast to the west, where identity is synonymous with self-determination, the role one plays within the family is one's identity in India. Consequently a low premium is placed on independence or apartness from the family or society. This is mainly because in the interests of collective cohesiveness which is regarded as a social value, the loner challenges the paramount importance of the group represented by the family and by society.

Curiously enough however, Narayan's earlier novels do not portray the workings of the joint family in any great detail. It is after all only in the novels centring on the boy Swami, that one can see in operation the mutual dependence between the older and younger members of the family communicating that sustaining harmony which Narayan claims results from being part of an extended family. The reason for this is perhaps what, as Naipaul notes, underlies Narayan's faith in India. In a conversation he has with Narayan, Naipaul is struck by the latter's unshakable belief that "whatever happened, India would go on". In these words, Naipaul recognises "a conviction so deep it required no stressing" (AD,p.216). It is a certainty that is to be found only among those who feel they belong. This is because of the mutual relationship between an individual's undisturbed rootedness and his perception of his environment as an enduring entity.

In the light of Naipaul's conclusion about Narayan's faith in India, it would be safe to treat his quiet confidence in the joint family in the same light. It is therefore not implausible to suggest that the absence of any detailed account of the joint family in Narayan's earlier novels is due to a similar unquestioning belief in its virtues. His novels, with the exception of A Dark Room, mainly concern themselves with the destiny of individual men. It is therefore to the novels of Jhabvala and Naipaul that we must turn to find a narrative portrayal of the joint family.

In her novel A Backward Place, Jhabvala appears to support Narayan's positive opinion about the joint family. The two households, headed by Bal and his brother, soon merge into one. "There was really no point in cooking upstairs as well as downstairs, especially as the children of both households took it for granted that both parts of the house

were theirs, to eat, play and sleep at will in either" (p.9). And when, at the end of the novel, Bal decides to leave Delhi hoping to procure work in the Bombay film industry, Judy is grateful that Bhuaji, the old widowed aunt, has decided to accompany them. Judy sees Bhuaji fulfilling the role which Narayan says belongs to the older generation: that of providing guidance and advice. Having heard that young girls in India have to be "guarded", Judy "needed Bhuaji, who knew about these matters" (p.180).

Earlier in the novel Jhabvala also describes the house and its interior - a technique by now familiar as a means of exteriorising the attitudes and values of the inmates towards each other and the outside world. Compared to Etta's "elegant" flat, which is furnished "in such good taste", (referred to earlier) (p.6), Judy's home is "very different" (p.8). The furniture is very basic, possessing little outward attractiveness. The courtyard had "a few old string cots, and some washing strung up, and a battered water-container". Then there was a bedroom, a "kind of sitting room", a storeroom which had been converted into a "room for their old aunt Bhuaji", "a sort of cooking shed, covered with an asbestos roof, and a very small bathroom with only one tap in it, and an even smaller WC" (p.8). It is the quality of basic usefulness that gives the various items of furniture their value. The deliberate imprecision in the description underlines that curious tendency among most Indians (barring the wealthy or westernised upper and middle-classes), to attach little importance to the visual appeal which the interiors of their homes might possess.

What is significant about the above narrative description of Judy's home in relation to the question of the joint family, is that it serves to emphasise the importance attached to people being in the house rather than to the appearance of the house itself. This is in

direct contrast either to Judy's childhood home in England where her parents shut out the outside world; or to Etta's apartment in Delhi where visitors are seldom entertained. Judy's Indian home, however, is filled with people - from the youngest to the oldest - and there is little insistence on privacy. The door is "often open so that anyone passing could look into Judy's courtyard" (p.8).

Likewise Uma in Esmond presides over a compound filled with people - "a great many children, besides wives, old parents and widowed sisters-in-law" (p.76). Although they are not members of her family, Uma evidently regards them as such, for her attitude reveals the care and concern which Narayan states is part of the joint-family ethos. She lets out rooms to numerous poor families at nominal rents and simultaneously accepts that, because of their poverty, they would invariably sublet any available space. She is the mother figure, who perpetuates the ideals of the Indian communal way of life through active participation. She "often visited ... settled feuds, ... attended a marriage ceremony or helped to mourn at a funeral, or just sat and talked with the other women in the courtyard" (ibid).

In Esmond, as in A Backward Place, the homes of the westerner and the Indian families provide a contrast between two ways of life. Just as Etta's tastefully furnished flat is a contrast to Judy's home, Esmond's flat is a contrast to the house owned by his mother-in-law, Uma. His flat, is like Esmond, "its own neat modern cosmopolitan self" (p.32). The difference between Uma and Esmond is also indicated through the description of her surroundings. While Esmond is praised for his "nice furniture" and his talent at being able "to make so much of that small flat" (p.15), Uma's house is just the opposite.

Along with its grounds, her house suggests an era of past glory. "The marble was turning brownish and the coloured panes of frosted glass were largely replaced by pieces of cardboard" (p.130). There is none of the smart sophistication associated with Esmond's flat. What the narrative then suggests is that Uma has let her house degenerate into this state of neglect, because she cares more about people than about material possessions. To corroborate this, we are told that it is only when Uma envisages her grandson Ravi playing in the gardens that she begins to make plans about restoring the "tennis court. And the pond, which now had only a little green slime at the bottom, should be gay with little fishes", and again it is with Ravi in mind that she plans not to "cut down any of the shrubs and growths that had started up ... because it was more fun for a boy to play in a wild than in a cultivated garden" (p.76). In contrast to her relaxed attitude, the regime at Esmond's flat is very strict. Ravi may have a "brightly painted cot" (p.34) to sleep in, but this colourful detail seems an empty gesture when one realises that Esmond had not only "insisted .. Ravi should sleep in his room", but that "he had now trained Ravi not to wake up in the night; or if he did wake, to keep quite still and not disturb his father" (ibid).

The homely chaos of Uma's house is meant to symbolise India, while the flats belonging to Esmond and Etta stand for the neatness and orderliness of the west. In the light of Gulab's departure from the restricting confines of Esmond's flat to seek sanctuary in her mother's house, and Esmond's decision to leave India, the narrative at first seems to suggest that Indian values have defeated the west. A Backward Place then further reinforces this implication when we learn that, against her better judgement, Judy decides to trust in Bal's optimism and leave for Bombay, while her friend Etta - the ostensibly

organised European in the novel - tries to commit suicide. It appears that, as in Esmond's case, beautiful surroundings fail to provide Etta with the support she needs, while the chaotic joint-family appears to support Judy.

However, if one realistically considers Judy's life, it does not give much cause for hope - uncertainty still surrounds her future with the ever-optimistic but ever-vague Bal. Moreover it is ironic that towards the end of the novel Judy, like her mother, also begins to contemplate the idea of clutter filling her home - "She would buy vases ... and a lot of little ornaments" (p.168). If one interprets this detail as Judy's unconscious wish to fill a void in her life, and if one also recalls our earlier discussion of how Judy's sense of not belonging in England could very well have been the reason for her perceiving India as a welcome refuge, then one can conclude that the Indian family system is not necessarily the answer to Judy's search in life.

If we now turn to the Indian home in Esmond, we discover that there too the joint-family system is not an unqualified success - in fact no members of Uma's family live with her. Although the narrative refers to Uma's physical strength ("her great height, her strong shoulders" - p.94), and to her genuine faith in preserving traditional customs and values, she is powerless to make her own home the centre of family togetherness. Moreover it is her only daughter, Gulab, who flouts tradition and marries the Englishman, Esmond. Perhaps the reason for this impulsive action, that subsequently cannot be reconciled with the slow, languorous Gulab who now inhabits the novel, lies in the girl's recollections of her mother and her childhood home.

Gulab remembers how her mother's "presence pervaded whatever place she was in and there was no substitute for it" (p.16). The smell of frying parathas in the flat she shares with Esmond stir childhood memories.

"If she shut her eyes she could almost imagine that she was at home", although she realises that shut eyes alone could not conjure up her mother", just as "shut eyes alone or shut ears could not make her disappear" (ibid), [underlining mine]. Could this mean that the "weight" of her mother's presence had been a contributory factor in Gulab's flight?

So although the contrast between Indian and western lifestyles, in Esmond and A Backward Place, may highlight certain positive aspects of extended family life, it ultimately does not lead to any categorical preference for it on the part of the narrator. In fact A Backward Place does make an indirect reference to the negative aspect of the Indian communal lifestyle. While Bal and Judy are happy together, they acknowledge that their situation is exceptional - it is not like the "usual Hindu joint family ... a seed bed of ill will and strife" (pp.8-9). It is through a joint examination of The Householder and Esmond that we can see how this conflict is in fact possible. The former novel deals with characters making the transition from the close knit pattern of Indian family life to the nuclear family arrangements common in the west.

What is valuable about Jhabvala's assessment of social change however is that, although as an outsider, she tacitly upholds the younger generation's need for privacy in personal relationships, she is also aware of the anxiety incidental to any challenge directed against the status quo which also forms part of the Jewish experience. Jhabvala does not therefore summarily impose or support a western viewpoint, but looks at the issue from the insider's point-of-view. This applies equally to the younger generation and to those whose lives are made insecure because they represent an old way of life whose validity is being shaken.

There is therefore that same even-handed approach to conflicts of loyalty between generations, as there is in her approach to poverty. Once again it is from the pen of this outsider that we comprehend and sympathise with the complexity of a very Indian problem. Her objective account of joint family life is therefore necessary to balance Naipaul's more aggressive denunciation of the system, which is based upon painful memories. It is also at this point that we will begin to explore the role and influence of women in a society that is officially recognised as a male-dominated preserve.

Although the official or ritual significance of most women in India is negligible, the novels of both Naipaul and Jhabvala suggest that women possess stronger personalities than men. The knowledge that "their ultimate role is to preserve unity and continuity in the chain of life" (2) subtly instills in women a sense of power which does not need the validation of ancient sanctions. This power is then expressed through their relationships with their children and their husbands. Both novelists, however, also examine the emotional fall-out when women experience the intolerable pressure of having to conform to this expectation of preserving "unity and continuity".

1. Salman Rushdie: 'The Indian Writer in England', in Maggie Butcher (ed.), The Eye of the Beholder, p.82
2. Richard Lannoy The Speaking Tree, p:130

THE MOTHER - ARCHITECT, DESTROYER OR VICTIM OF FAMILY TRADITIONS

All our worst fears regarding dominating mothers-in-law are depicted in The Householder. The mother's actions in the novel point to a stubborn belief on her part that her son, Prem, is still an integral part of her life. Furthermore, she expects his wife Indu to accept this fact. The triangular relationship between the mother-in-law, the son and the wife in this novel is a narrative means of arguing against the viability of the extended family, which undermines marital intimacy. However, one is also made to understand the 'cultural' reason behind the older woman's attitude.

What is customary within a Hindu milieu is that the relationship between mother and son usually continues after the son's marriage. This is because the eldest son continues to live in his ancestral home, and it is the daughter who leaves her childhood home in order to live with her husband's family. Prem's move away from his parental home therefore deprives his mother of a customary certainty, and Jhabvala uses the situation to invite a sympathetic appraisal of the Indian widow's predicament. Due to the destabilisation of old customs, her growing sense of isolation becomes more acute. It is this which sharpens both the poignancy and aggressiveness in the campaign which Prem's mother launches to re-establish control over her son's life when she visits him in his marital home.

Among the many things, which Prem's mother brings with her when she arrives is a carefully-handled jar containing his "favourite pickle" (p.60). Initially, one regards with tolerant amusement the familiarity of such situations in which one recognises that, in the eyes of every mother, a son will always be their little boy. This is reminiscent of a similar mundane detail in Esmond, where it is not Indira, the wife,

as one might expect, but Amrit's mother, Madhuri, who is instrumental in decisions about what he is to eat: "She ordered egg curry, for this was a dish of which her son Amrit was fond" (EI,p.11). While these examples reflect that very Indian situation where there is a close bond between mother and son, especially the eldest son, the narrative does caution us not to accept either of these incidents at face value. The careful listing of each item of food in The Householder - "biscuits, pickles, chutneys, guava cheese, sherbet" (p.61) - gives the impression of generosity and abundance. But the narrator also points out that, as Prem's mother "unpacked" and "displayed" the various packages of food she has brought with her, she "sighed". "Her sigh at once made clear the infinite labour she had undergone in the preparation of them" (p.61). This comment immediately makes explicit the subtle narrative judgement hinted at in the heavy sighs and the display of food.

It is clear that Prem's mother wants him to recognise the effort she has expended on his behalf. There is thus more a suggestion of pharasaical generosity in her labours than a selfless desire to please her son. The emotional pressure on Prem is intense. One cannot but sympathise with him for, in his position as the "only son" (p.84), the burden of fulfilling his mother's unspoken needs is a heavy one. On being given the jar of pickles, he "smiled sheepishly" (p.60). His embarrassment is an indication not only of the pressure his mother exerts on him, but of his own need to break out of the little-boy mould in which she wants him to remain.

Meanwhile in Esmond it is the casualness with which reference is made to the dinner arrangements that creates unease. Madhuri's decision on this matter underlines her pre-eminent position in her household, which is strengthened by tacit acceptance on the part of Amrit and

Indira. It is interesting to observe that a dominant maternal figure in a three-cornered relationship in The Householder leads to intensely felt rifts in the family network. But a similar situation is responsible for a cohesive family structure in Esmond, where the impression of a close-knit family is achieved through certain blanket decisions made by the mother. It must be pointed out however, that westernisation which enhances the social credibility of the Dayals, eventually becomes a factor that betrays the family's 'values'. Shakuntala's affair with Esmond undermines the close control which Madhuri otherwise maintains over her family.

Madhuri "was not very educated and had not been out of the house much; but she knew how to arrange her life and the life of those around her" (p.168). By this I do not suggest that Madhuri has deliberately set out to ignore the wishes of both her son and his wife, or that Indira herself is aware of the extent to which her deference serves to enhance Madhuri's paramount position. It is the narrative which points out that, in the unfolding of their relationships, the various members of the Har Dayal family are enacting the society's underlying psychological expectations and conventions, regarding the mother's or the mother-in-law's position in the family.

In her deferential attitude to Madhuri, Indira typifies the outcome of "an Indian girl's training in how to be a good woman. She learns that the 'virtues' of womanhood which will take her through life are submission and docility as well as skill and grace in the various household tasks" (1). This is why Esmond senses the accord between Madhuri and her daughter-in-law, because they are both in the kind of environment for which they have been nurtured, and which they regard as ideal. They "laughed gaily, with a laughter as harmonious and as

well-bred as the clink of the silver teaspoons against the thin china cups" (p.188). The description, however, also hints at the delicacy required to maintain such a status quo, which is as fragile as the thin china cups. Indira's complete trust in Madhuri's unerring judgement, albeit about trivial matters, prevents any clash between the two. But we shall see that such a peaceful atmosphere does not exist in The Householder, for Indu refuses to abide by social expectations.

Both incidents, dealing with maternal decisions concerning the sons, are mild examples of what Sudhir Kakar defines as a "universal developmental dilemma ... aggravated in the Indian setting ... because of the profound, often unconscious reluctance of the Hindu mother to 'release' the male child" (2). It is in The Householder that this struggle is explored in detail. The disruption caused to Prem's married life by his mother's interfering ways corroborates Kakar's statement, and makes the reader reluctant to see the older woman in a favorable light. Her constant demands for Prem's attention is an intrusion on the couple's privacy and her attitude to Indu is blatantly rude and overbearing. Making no attempt to hide the dislike she has for her daughter-in-law, Prem's mother implicitly criticises Indu while purporting to sympathise with Prem: "My poor boy to have to work so hard and then to come home to an empty house, with the fire unlit, no tea, no light, nothing" (p.70).

She constantly refers to Indu's lack of good looks and domestic skills. Here too, as in Esmond, where Madhuri decides on the day's menu, or where Uma champions the superiority of Indian over western cuisine, the sphere of influence in which the mother establishes or seeks to re-establish emotional control over her offspring is the kitchen. It therefore comes as no surprise when, having driven Indu

away by her systematic and vicious criticism, Prem's mother should celebrate her victory by triumphantly installing herself in the kitchen. Prem returns in the evening to find his mother "cooking ... She looked and sounded remarkably cheerful", when it was only at lunchtime she had been "walking around ... with a tight-lipped look of martyrdom" (p.82).

The tension between Prem's mother and Indu can be understood in terms of the Hindu mother-in-law's sense of insecurity which Sudhir Kakar sees as the underlying reason for her aggression. The older woman sees the "new bride" as a "threat to the unity of the extended family", for 'sexual passion' could "inspire such a close relationship in the bridal couple that the new girl becomes primarily a wife rather than a daughter-in-law", thereby causing the husband to transfer "his loyalty and affection to her rather than remaining truly a son of the house" (3). The plausibility of Kakar's theory is illustrated when Prem's mother interrupts the young couple while they are discussing a staff tea-party in their bedroom. From the living-room she calls out: "Is something wrong? ... Shall I come?" (p.63). Again on another occasion, when Prem and Indu are discussing their rent problems in the bedroom, she complains plaintively, "What are you doing, son? ... Why do you leave me to sit here alone?" (p.78).

Meanwhile the lack of animosity between Madhuri and Indira in Esmond can also be explained in terms of psychological undercurrents but with a significant difference - Indira's attitude to Madhuri and her relationship with her husband poses no threat to her mother-in-law. Instead she conforms to Madhuri's idea of a model daughter-in-law. In the Har Dayal home, Indira does not seek to enforce her role as a wife, which could succeed in usurping the position held by the mother in her son's life. Indeed Madhuri expresses her unequivocal approval:

"She is an excellent wife to my son and an excellent daughter-in-law to me" (p.94), thus explaining why she finds Indira "increasingly useful" and "very pleasant company" (p.93). Yet it is because Indira's usefulness only reveals itself in her ability to make out "a shopping list" for Madhuri (ibid), that we are asked to question Madhuri's evaluation of her daughter-in-law, whose appearance of submissiveness and composure, in the event, negates her as a character.

The observance of conformity translates itself into that prim air of propriety which attaches to Indira, whose name could be, but is not, contracted to Indu - a form which conveys that relaxed homeliness associated with Indu in The Householder. She is a warm, spontaneous being who is far from reticent in expressing her feelings. There is however an element of 'class' pressure on Indira's behaviour. Jhabvala's novels make it clear that, as in other societies, women who come from a wealthy background are less spontaneous in vocalising their true feelings than those who do not. The latter include women like Indu, Bachani (Uma's servant in Esmond), and the slum dwellers in Get Ready for Battle. Behaving decorously is often an upper class expectation, and that this could be a form of social repression is suggested by another description of Indira: "She did not raise her eyes; her mouth was set in a prim line" (p.94).

However the narrative seems to suggest that Indira is merely restraining any inclination to enforce her presence. That Indira will eventually play the same role as does Madhuri is suggested by the description that Indira looked "so fresh and well tended and content" (p.94). This is immediately reminiscent of the perfumed and (self)-contented Madhuri, whose physical and emotional well being is tended and maintained by her husband and the rest of her family. The contrast between Indira and Indu is further emphasised by the narrative

suggestion which lends support to Kakar's theory about sexual passion becoming a weapon that could drive a wedge between the son and his family, but this time by default. Whereas in The Householder the mother-in-law has grounds to doubt her son's loyalty, there seems to be no need for such misgivings in Esmond. The freshness of Indira's appearance hints at a person who is 'untouched'. Could this therefore be an explanation for the harmonious relationship between Madhuri and Indira?

While the narrative offers scope to detect unseen psychological reasons for the power struggles in the novels, we must acknowledge the sympathetic portrayal of Prem's mother. Despite her interfering ways the old woman's actions can be perceived as an inadvertent exposure of needs with which we can sympathise. For instance, in wanting to please her son and in expecting him to be pleased by her gifts of food, Prem's mother externalises her own need to feel she still has a useful role to play, not only in his life but in life generally. That Prem's mother is searching for a role is corroborated by other incidents in the novel. The accurate but sensitive portrayal of the old lady is evident in the reader's ambiguous responses to the various statements she makes.

For example, one could just as easily be saddened as irritated when she urges Prem and Indu to "go and enjoy yourselves. I will be here to guard everything" (p.71). As there is not much to guard, it is clear that in appointing herself as the official guardian of the household, Prem's mother is convincing herself more than anyone else that she has a useful part to play in the young couple's lives. This evokes sympathy, just as does a later development in the novel engineered by Prem and his sister.

Without his mother's knowledge, Prem has asked his sister to invite their mother to her home. The old lady's response to this confirms yet again her need to be needed. "What can I do, son? She needs me .. A mother's duties never end" (p.116). Her need to be needed is underlined by the number of times Prem's mother subsequently repeats the word "need". "But what to do? Your sister needs me ... Now his sister from Bangalore has written to say she needs me ... All our lives our children need us .. If your sister had not needed me, I would have stayed with you" (pp.117 & 118). The exaggerated weariness can now be interpreted as a front to conceal her recovery of self-respect - now she no longer feels redundant.

The clear narrative purpose of trying to understand the loneliness of the widowed mother prevents her from degenerating into a mere stereotype. Moreover the sensitive resolution of the conflict by the young members of the family implies that they, like the narrator, are capable of understanding their mother's predicament in a way that she cannot. With compassionate understanding for the intricacies of traditional pressures, Jhabvala indicates the polarisation within traditional Hindu society, into those who belong to the old ways and those who feel constrained by tradition and wish to break away.

The ironic but sensitive observations of Hindu family life in the earlier novels however give way to a darker interpretation of joint family life. The change in narrative attitude can be seen in the short stories entitled 'Miss Sahib' 'The Young Couple', and 'A Young Man of Good Family' - all of which appear in A Stronger Climate. Here the joint family appears more as an amorphous body of opinion, which strangely enough exercises greater power in its near-abstract form.

In depicting the confrontation with tradition as one between young individuals and an abstract force, Jhabvala conveys the enormity and

the futility of the struggle. It is after all easier to tackle a human being than to deal with an intangible pressure. The joint family 'headed' by a mother figure is seen as a negative force which extinguishes any spark of individuality in the children. The humanising touch with regard to the matriarch, evident in The Householder, is no longer apparent.

In her short stories, Jhabvala appears to have the same unrelenting judgement which is characteristic of Naipaul's 'Indian' novels, especially Mr Biswas. Their conclusions are supported by Nirad Chaudhuri when he outrightly condemns the Hindu joint family as a hindrance to the development of meaningful personal relationships. Chaudhuri believes that "communal living is not family life ... This type of family puts serious obstacles in the way of developing intimate personal relations of love, affection and companionship between husband and wife" (4). The ills described in Chaudhuri's indictment of the Hindu social system can be seen in Naipaul's A House for Mr Biswas. In this novel, the hero explicitly criticises the system, while the narrative account of his life indicates sympathy for a man whose confidence in himself is constantly undermined by the interference of various members of his wife's family.

The dominating mother at the centre of family life, is also an important controlling image in Naipaul's A House for Mr Biswas. In The Householder and Esmond we saw how, within the joint family, the mother's power of influence over her children, especially her sons, determines the relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law. In this section we will examine the relationship between husband and wife and look at the factors which affect the status of the husband in relation to his wife and to his children.

That it is the mother who is seen as a source of strength is established early in Mr Biswas. When Bipti, Mr Biswas's mother, left her husband, she "walked all the way ... to the village where her mother Bissoondaye lived" (p.15), [underlining mine]. The social and psychological implications contained in this statement can be easily missed, simply because the narrative is acknowledging a basic truth that is so strongly felt that it is not always formally articulated.

That Bipti is said to be journeying to her mother's village, implies the certainty with which she expects her mother, and not her father, to provide her with the support she needs. Thus even though her father is still alive, Bipti does not acknowledge his existence. The father is depicted as a pitiable figure who 'futile with asthma ... propped himself up on his string bed and said, as he always did on unhappy occasions, "Fate. There is nothing we can do about it". He is ignored - "No one paid him any attention". (p.15) The narrative then goes on to justify Bipti's confidence in Bissoondaye. "While the old man talked on, Bissoondaye sent for the midwife, made a meal for Bipti's children and prepared beds for them" (ibid). The mother is thus shown to respond in a practical manner to the problem - she acts while her husband merely talks.

The father is portrayed as an ineffectual character, whose physical frailty and general helplessness provide strong reason for Bipti's reliance upon her mother's contrasting manifest dependability. However it is not only the old man's fragility which compels Bipti to turn towards her mother. The narrative also suggests that Bissoondaye's general off-handedness towards her husband influences the attitude which the rest of the family adopt towards him. If this attitude is then examined in the light of a comment made by Nirad

Chaudhuri in The Continent of Circe, one is able to recognise that there could be another possible reason for the narrative presentation of a weak parental male figure in contrast to a strong mother-figure. In his analysis of Indian society, Chaudhuri recalls: "Even as a boy I could detect in ageing women who had not been released from the mood by widowhood, not only indifference to their life partner, but almost passive hatred ... Throughout married life the drying up of the lust without its atrophy, and the growth of the repulsion marched step in step" (p.206). That no attention is paid to the old man's ramblings may well be his own fault, but given Chaudhuri's observation, it is possible that the family's disregard does stem from Bissoondaye's indifference towards him.

A later incident in the narrative serves to confirm Chaudhuri's theory. The transition from indifference to "hatred" can be sensed in the following description. When the pundit, "a small thin man with a sharp satirical face, and a dismissing manner" arrives to officiate at Mr Biswas's birth, Bissoondaye uses "the string bed, from which the old man had been turned out" as a seat for the priest (p:16). Her contempt for the old man is apparent in the callousness of her action. She has no qualms about turning her husband out of his string bed, the only item of furniture defining the limits of his territory within the hut, in order to accommodate the pundit whose "dismissing manner" appropriately enough reflects her own. She is eager to please the visitor but cares little about her asthmatic husband, whom she turns out with as little concern as if he were an object or an animal.

That the husband is a nonentity within the household is implied through his lack of a name. This narrative omission is important within the scheme of the novel as a whole, for it is linked to the narrative conception of the novel's anti-hero who, unlike his

grandfather, is always referred to by his formal name - Mr Biswas. This title in turn reflects one of the many ambiguities contained in the novel. The respect implied by the formal title at first seems to mock a character whose puny physical stature is the objective correlative of the many futile verbal onslaughts he makes on the Tulsi regime, symbolising relentless Fate. Yet paradoxically the title is a tribute to Mr Biswas's tenacious resistance to being crushed by the Tulsi family with the formidable Mrs Tulsi at its head. Unlike his grandfather, Mr Biswas is a somebody whose individuality is acknowledged. Nor does he sink into nonentity like the other Tulsi sons-in-law whose "names were forgotten; [once] they became Tulsis" (p.97). It is significant that the only other person who receives the same narrative 'respect' as does Mr Biswas, is Mrs Tulsi, which can be interpreted as subtle narrative recognition of the opposing forces within the novel.

Finally, the narrative significance of possessing a name is an aspect of the broader thematic import of the displaced Indian's search for an identity in the New World. And where Mr Biswas is concerned, the need for an identity begins with his attempts to maintain his credibility as a husband hemmed in by powerful female in-laws, who in themselves possess a combination of economic power and strong mental coercion missing in his life. The brief references describing the relationship between Bissoondaye and her husband can now be seen as significant introductory inroads into the novel's preoccupation with the subtle struggles between women and men, and the dissenting son-in-law/individual's need to define his position within the Hindu joint family framework. These in turn are dramatisations of the colonised person's need to define the parameters of his identity.

This is not to suggest that in his protracted struggle against the Tulsis, Mr Biswas is consciously spurred on by the deep fear of becoming a nobody like his grandfather. But subsequent developments in the plot do suggest that the narrator intends us to see both Mr Biswas's verbal attacks on the Tulsis and his search for a home independent of Hanuman House, where he cannot rely upon Shama's allegiance to him, as expressions of his refusal to accept being reduced to a nobody at the hands of women, as was possibly the case with his grandfather. Although they are minor characters in the novel, Bipti's parents are therefore the forerunners of many others like them, and the nature of their relationship is one which informs all other relationships within the novel, with the notable exception of that between Mr Biswas and his wife Shama. We will see how, depending upon circumstances, their attitude towards each other changes, in response to the strong pull exerted by traditional and personal expectations.

The power which one senses in the women is concentrated in Mrs Tulsi who proves that maternal influence does not diminish with the onset of old age and physical decline. She rules over the affairs of Hanuman House with what is reminiscent of an iron fist - "an armoured hand" (p.89). She is a latter-day version of the powerful widows in the old Mughal courts. Purdah did not prevent Hamida, Akbar's mother, from exercising a strong influence on court decisions. In The Great Mughals Bamber Gascoigne states that "This old lady ... was ... the very energetic and powerful hub of the royal family" (5). Similarly, in the reign of the next Mughul king Jahangir, his wife Nur Jehan was instrumental in naming the successor to the throne (ibid). Indian society has therefore had a core of strong women, the reality of whose position is at odds with the general view of India being a male-

dominated society. Confinement to her sick bed does not make Mrs Tulsi a passive member of the family. She remains in the dark room "devising economies and issuing directives about food" (p.419).

In establishing a connection between historical fact and present day fiction, it is important to recognise the different effects intended and achieved by Gascoigne and Naipaul. While it is clear they are in agreement about the power which women exercise, the narrative aim implicit in their respective disclosures, differs. Gascoigne's reference is evidently intended to correct preconceptions and to inspire respect for powerful mother-figures in the old Mughal courts. To a certain extent the first of these two intentions is also true of Naipaul's work, but not so the second. Gascoigne conjures up visions of ancient splendour reflected in his choice of title for his work. But Naipaul's account of Mr Biswas's perception of Mrs Tulsi is a travesty of this effect.

The language used to describe Mrs Tulsi's paramount position within the family at first suggests omnipotence - she "devises economies" and "issues directives". And where both the Mughal women and Mrs Tulsi are concerned, our sense of the formidable nature of their positions is reinforced by our prior knowledge that they exercise their maternal prerogatives from within certain spatial and social boundaries. The limits of Mrs Tulsi's "kingdom" do not extend beyond Hanuman House and the Mughal Begums most probably did not venture freely outside the Zenana or the women's quarters. However here the favorable comparison ends. Decisions made by Hamida and Nur Jehan affect the running of a vast empire, but Mrs Tulsi's directives are about food. And to counter any suggestions that motherly concern about food is heartwarming and

perfectly legitimate, Naipaul then proceeds to periodically 'dish up' the disgust with which Mr Biswas's describes the way food is served and eaten at Hanuman House.

Mr Biswas's introduction to Mrs Tulsi takes place in the communal hall, where he is then served a meal similar to the one Mrs Tulsi consumes with gusto - roti and curried beans. It is obvious that the narrator is determined to extract every possible ounce of disgust from her eating habits. Mrs Tulsi is shown "scooping up some beans with a shovel of roti" (p.88). Using roti (unleavened bread) as a shovel is actually an accurate representation of the way one eats roti and beans. Yet the subsequent description of the food and the way Mrs Tulsi eats it, suggests that accuracy is not the narrator's intention. It is Mr Biswas's revulsion at the sight of Mrs Tulsi eating her food that receives narrative attention. He watches and listens to Mrs Tulsi "chewing, with lingering squelchy sounds" (p.90).

Further, the presentation of food is never described in attractive terms. Mr Biswas is invited "to lunch ... off lentils, spinach and a mound of rice on a brass plate. Flies buzzed on fresh food-stains all along the pitchpine table" (p.93). "Rice, potatoes. All that damn starch ... You want to blow me up?", Mr Biswas later complains to Shama, after which he empties the contents of the plate "loaded with rice, curried potatoes, lentils and coconut chutney", out of the window. "The food slipped off easily, leaving a few grains of rice sticking to streaks of lentils and oily, bubble ridden trails of curry" (pp.132-133). The unappetising remains are obviously intended to support Mr Biswas's vocal condemnation of Tulsi culinary efforts.

In the light of the above description the word shovel therefore becomes a means of intensifying Mr Biswas's gross picture of Tulsi eating habits. The word is apprehended less as an accurate metaphor,

and more in its absolute literal functional sense within a western context. Consequently we discover little romance in a description comparing the eating of food to the shovelling of coal or soil. To implicitly evoke negative reactions based on western standards when describing food and its consumption is a travesty of the significance with which the eating of food is held within the Hindu context. As Nirad Chaudhuri points out "Eating together is one of the most important signs of friendship", for as the Panchatantra affirms, it is an occasion when one "gives and receives in return; tells and asks about intimate matters, eats and feeds", these being "the six signs of friendship" (6).

While such reciprocal relationships are portrayed in Jhabvala's The Householder, when Indu and Prem invite Raj and his family to share a meal with them, (7) one cannot see the social ideals described in the Panchatantra in Mr Biswas. At no stage during the meal at Hanuman House is there any sharing involved. The entire proceedings are not an expression of friendship but a Tulsi exercise in coercion, which is based on the premise that Mr Biswas, and consequently his wishes, should and can be easily disregarded. As far as Mrs Tulsi and Seth are concerned, Mr Biswas is virtually non-existent. In Mr Biswas's presence, she consults Seth about the possibility of giving Mr Biswas some food. This is done by insultingly referring to Mr Biswas in the third person. "Mrs Tulsi .. said to Seth, "Better feed him?" (p.88). Her patronising denial of Mr Biswas's identity is again evident when she then instructs her daughter C to "bring a cup of tea for this person", even though Mr Biswas had already indicated with a shake of his head that he did not want any (p.89), [underlining mine].

Food and drink is forced down Mr Biswas's throat in the same way as marriage to Shama is thrust upon him. Overwhelmed by the Tulsis, Mr Biswas "helplessly" admits: "I like the child", (Shama) an admission which is followed by an ironic rejoinder from Seth: "That is the main thing ... We don't want to force you to do anything. Are we forcing you?" (p.90). Completely at the mercy of strong-arm Tulsi tactics, Mr Biswas "remained silent". He realises that "it would be useless to explain" that he did not feel ready for marriage. The narrative comment then says it all: "The world was too small, the Tulsi family too large. He felt trapped" (p.91).

Portraying Mrs Tulsi as an autocratic ruler exercising her powers against a background that contains neither the romance nor the splendour of royal courts, is a narrative means of deflating the Tulsis' sense of self-importance. The reader's is made aware of the difference between a genuinely powerful political organisation and the Tulsi regime. Nevertheless Mr Biswas's reference to Mrs Tulsi as "the old queen" (p.104) has complex resonances - it is not mere mockery. Although Mr Biswas constantly exposes Tulsi policies and behaviour, the fact remains that these attacks spring from a deep-seated fear of this woman - a fear that is made more acute by the unquestioning obedience she can command, especially when weak.

Unlike Bipti's father, Mrs Tulsi's physical vulnerability increases the caring attentions she receives from all her daughters. She often fainted and "whenever this happened a complex ritual was at once set in motion. One daughter was despatched to get the Rose Room ready, and Mrs Tulsi was taken there by other daughters working under the direction of Padma, Seth's wife ... In the Rose Room one daughter fanned Mrs Tulsi; two massaged her ... legs; one soaked bay rum into

her loosened hair and massaged her forehead. The other daughter stood by, ready to carry out the instructions of Padma or Sushila" (p.126-127).

The above ritual is also presented as an organized bureaucratic arrangement. One daughter is "despatched" to perform a certain task, others work "under the direction" of Padma, who as the wife of Mrs Tulsi's trusted confidant, automatically held a position of importance. It is in keeping with her regal status that there are "two throne like mahogany chairs" in the drawing room at Hanuman House (p.98). Where her family is concerned, Mrs Tulsi's supremacy is awesome - her divine stature is matched by her temporal powers.

Such devotion contrasts strongly with the total disregard handed out to Bipti's father. The difference in the esteem with which these two parental figures are held is conveyed by the word "ritual". As the term is normally associated with religious practices, its use in relation to Mrs Tulsi implies that in the eyes of the women in her family, she is a god. She is not someone who is turned out of her bed. Mrs Tulsi anticipates Sharmila's grandmother in Jhabvala's short story "Miss Sahib" (A Stronger Climate). Here too, in all decisions affecting the joint family, the grandmother's word is law. It is "the old landlady who ruled the family with a rod of iron. She kept a tight hold of everything and doled out little sums of money to her forty-year old sons" (p.165). In her stringency, we can see a manifestation of Mrs Tulsi's desire to maintain control over the men in the family. This subtle form of male-emasculatation is an even more extreme version of curbing the sons' independence than was evident in The Householder. As with Mrs Tulsi, old age does not decrease this matriarch's desire to relinquish control over her family. She continues to "watch" Sharmila from "her bed inside the room: the terrible old woman was

bedridden now and quite unable to move, a huge helpless shipwreck wrapped in shawls and blankets" (p.168). The impression of revulsion and fear, instilled in the observer by this monumental image of helplessness, is as ironic as the awe with which Mr Biswas looks upon Mrs Tulsi when "fatigued and heavy" she came into the hall. "Without her teeth she looked decrepit, but there was about her decrepitude a quality of everlastingness" (Mr Biswas: p.128).

The quality of "everlastingness" which Mr Biswas perceives in Mrs Tulsi can be interpreted in terms of the far-reaching effects which decisions made by the heads of families have on younger generations. This can be seen in Jhabvala's 'Miss Sahib'. In her unchallenged position as head of the family, Sharmila's grandmother, arranges a marriage for her granddaughter with a man who turns out to be not only "stocky and ill at ease, but ... no longer very young" (p.167). The description of the son-in-law does not by any stretch of the imagination suggest that the grandmother may have considered the needs of her vivacious sixteen-year-old child-bride. Such a groom is undoubtedly a strange choice for a grandmother to have made for the granddaughter on whom she dotes - the "only person to whom she showed any indulgence" (p.165). The marriage turns out to be a failure.

In the choice of a husband for her favorite granddaughter, Sharmila's grandmother contravenes all logical expectations. Her action can be regarded as Jhabvala's most damning indictment of the joint family. The narrative vision which darkens this and other later works by Jhabvala, undoubtedly reflects the author's growing disenchantment with India - a disenchantment which leads to her growing estrangement from the country and the community she writes about. It is a state of mind which produces a narrator who is less willing to portray the positive aspects of Indian social life seen in her earlier novels.

What we saw in our previous encounters with arranged marriages in Esmond and The Householder was that, despite the tensions generated by close communal living, couples like Indira and Amrit, or Prem and Indu, were ultimately happy with one another. The light ironic touches with which the critical evaluation of marriages and relationships within the Indian social structure were made, reveal the vulnerability of the young couples concerned and therefore did not alienate the reader. In these novels, the grafting of an outsider's vision on the knowledge of local tradition provides objectivity without allowing sympathetic awareness to weaken into indulgence. Although western premiums on individuality and personal initiative are implicitly juxtaposed, there is an equally strong tacit acknowledgement that the Indian predicament has to be worked out within the Indian experience. Thus, for example we see how Prem and Indu in The Householder circumnavigate the frustrating influence of traditional expectations to arrive at reconciliations achieved within the constraints of inherited order.

In 'Miss Sahib' however, there is a radical change in narrative attitude towards the characters. Any initial sympathy for Sharmila is systematically eroded. The extent of her physical and psychological degeneration eventually succeeds in arousing our disgust, despite our constant awareness that she too is as much a victim of rigid social customs, as the characters in the other novels. This is because in 'Miss Sahib' Jhabvala is clearly determined to expose the cruelty of the joint family by showing the insidiousness with which the system perpetuates itself.

We have already seen how in Esmond the submissive daughter-in-law Indira is beginning to display signs of eventually becoming like her dominating, but apparently frail mother-in-law Madhuri. However, in

using external resemblances between characters as a judgemental technique, Jhabvala evokes the lighthearted atmosphere of a comedy of manners. The more alarming psychological reverberations of joint family customs which are exposed in 'Miss Sahib' are not apparent in the relationship between Madhuri and Indira. It is in "Miss Sahib" that the twisted face of communal living is revealed, for Sharmila's incompatible marriage does not, as expected, turn her against the practices which bring about her suffering.

In more ways than one, Sharmila takes over from where her enfeebled grandmother leaves off. It is "Sharmila and not one of the older women ... who carried the keys and distributed the stores and knew where the money was kept" (p.169). After her marriage and the birth of her children, the lively Sharmila "became fat and matronly, and her voice was louder and more raucous" (p.168). The sound of her children's voices quarrelling in the courtyard galvanises her into a rage, whereupon she "caught the biggest child and beat him with her fist" (p.170).

One can see little difference between the granddaughter's treatment of her children and that of the older woman who was once heard "abusing" her grown-up sons and their wives, "and often she beat them" (p.165). This is obviously an extreme example of the cruelty of the joint family in operation, but it is by no means untrue. In his analysis of the Indian joint family, Nirad Chaudhuri refers to the violence smouldering beneath the surface of passive Indian acceptance. "There are no people who are more law-abiding, non-violent, and even given to submitting to the worst oppression and who yet are so prone to run amuck at a sudden provocation. Then they will burn, loot, and kill until the fit is off .. Indeed verbal cruelty shown in family quarrels has to be heard to be believed" (8). This tendency to sudden violence

does not exist merely on the domestic level, but often erupts into acts of political and communal atrocity, as Indian historical and contemporary accounts testify.

Beating, as a disciplinary measure, is a widely accepted feature of Indian family life - accepted, that is, not only by the adults but also by the children. Naipaul confirms this in his accounts of Tulsi family life. For instance, Mr Biswas's daughter Savi remains silent when her father questions her about any beatings she may have suffered at Hanuman House. She is equally non-committal about verbal abuse: "They shout at everybody" (p.185) is her reply to his anxious queries, implying a resignation to what she sees is a family code of practice. The dangerous implications of this enforced acceptance can be assessed in the following description of a beating which takes place during a 'house blessing ceremony' organised by Shama at The Chase, to which Mr Biswas and his family have moved from Hanuman House. While the consecration conducted by Hari, the official Tulsi priest, is in progress, Sumati, one of the Tulsi sisters, mercilessly flogs her son for breaking bottles of soda water from Mr Biswas's shop. "In the tent Hari droned imperturbably on .. The brothers-in-law sat on their blankets, reverentially still" (p.154).

The narrative purpose of juxtaposing a religious ceremony and the beating is contained in the description of the latter: It "had ceased to be a simple punishment and had become a ritual" (ibid). The word "ritual" is the damning link exposing the absurdity of the Tulsis' sense of values which has already been exposed through the following information detracting from Hari's credibility as a priest. "..Reading from some huge ungainly Hindi book" (p.115) is hardly a flattering

account of religious piety, and when one learns that Hari combines this with frequent "visits to the latrine" (ibid), any serious faith in Hari as a spiritual mentor remains quiescent.

We have already encountered the word "ritual" in connection with the description of Mrs Tulsi's periodic fainting fits which conveniently occur whenever she needs to salvage her self-esteem. Her collapse elicits certain stock responses from the rest of the Tulsi women in their attempts to resuscitate the old woman. Their performance is sceptically watched by Mr Biswas, who notes Mrs Tulsi's "surprisingly firm legs" (p.127). That an old woman's fit of pique should lead to exaggerated robotic patterns of behaviour supervised and performed in the spirit of a religious observance, casts doubt on the family's concept of the gravity of an authentic ritual. So when the word "ritual" recurs to describe a beating, the same suspicions are aroused. To equate flogging with religious practice (ritual), suggests that this form of brutality has undergone several stages of evolution before acquiring the sanctity of unchanging permanence. This has alarming implications, especially when one notes that the energy permeating the description of the flogging establishes beyond all doubt which of these two rituals is the more powerful.

The lack-lustre quality of the legitimate ceremony cannot match the robust dynamism with which the "enraged" mother 'flew to a hibiscus bush and began breaking off a switch. It was a tough bush and she had to bend the switch back and forth several times. Torn leaves fell on the ground. The mother broke two switches on the boy, speaking as she beat. "This will teach you not to meddle with things that don't belong to you .. This will teach you not to provoke people". Note that the repetition of 'this' parodies the practice of ceremonial chanting.

Meanwhile the other mothers who "came out to witness", register their protest, but "without urgency": "You will damage the boy, Sumati. Stop it now" (ibid). But they make no move to stop the beating. Instead they continue "rocking crying babies in their arms" (ibid). It is made plainly obvious that they are not unduly concerned.

Their casual approach underlines the disturbing implication that flogging among the Tulsis is a routine distraction and the reasons why it continues can be found in the narrative. To beat and to be beaten is seen as a sign of toughness. As the threat in the following question suggests, the adult who inflicts the punishment is duly admired: "Do you want to be beaten the way Sumati beat her son?" (p.155). Similarly the child who suffers the beating is considered to possess an adult's capacity to endure pain. This can be gauged from Sumati's words to her hapless child. "You are not a child. That is why I am beating you as though you are a big man and can take a big man's blows" (p.154). It is precisely because beating enhances the individual's image that it continues to flourish within society. Invariably it is Mr Biswas who expresses the inverted value judgements perceived by the narrator. "'House blessing party!" said Mr Biswas ... The beating went on' (p.154).

Both Jhabvala's 'Miss Tuhy' and Naipaul's Mr Biswas therefore not only refer to the existence of violence within the joint family, but examine the possible reasons for the persistence of not only this evil but of other ills within the system. If the manifestation of latent violence in both Sharmila and her grandmother is not sufficient narrative evidence linking the two women, a final piece of information completes the connection. Sharmila is suspected of entertaining a clandestine lover just as her grandmother once did, although in both

cases there is no tangible evidence to support the suspicion. When Sharmila confides in Miss Tuhy about her grandmother, she is relying solely on hearsay: "They say she had a lover, a jeweller from Dariba. He came at nights when everyone was asleep and she opened the door for him" (p.170). It is not what Sharmila says but the way she communicates this information in "a low excited voice", which persuades the reader to believe that Sharmila is titillated by the thought of these illicit pleasures and could very easily indulge in similar nocturnal pursuits. This rumour is then reinforced by narrative descriptions, which make it easy to visualise Sharmila in a carnal but not a romantic relationship.

She cuts an unflattering figure in the bazaar. The irony which permeates the following scene derives from the name Sharmila which means bashfulness and modesty. She is "fat and slovenly; the end of her veil, draped carelessly over her breasts, trailed a little in the dust ... She was quarrelling with one of the shopkeepers, she was gesticulating and using coarse language; the other shopkeepers leaned out of their stalls...and from the way they grinned and commented to each other, it was obvious that Sharmila was a well-known figure and the scene she was enacting was one she had often played before" (p.176).

Her lewd gestures and the coarse language she uses which sounds more obscene because of her thickened figure, her slatternly ways and the knowing grins of the men around her, immediately make us draw comparisons between Sharmila and what we have been told about the grandmother. And it is at this point that one begins to comprehend the destructiveness, intentional or otherwise, of that "everlasting" quality which Mr Biswas fears in women like Mrs Tulsi. Although, in drawing such a conclusion, it must be pointed out that where

Jhabvala's story is concerned, one is only extrapolating from what is stated or implied in the narrative. The effect of the various insinuations within the story is to leave the reader wondering if some streak of viciousness had driven the old lady to callously arrange an unsuitable match for Sharmila, thus virtually ensuring that her granddaughter's life would be no more blessed than her own.

Although there is no conclusive evidence to support the above speculations, Jhabvala's technique of using the house as a comment on its inmates is a useful method of inductive analysis. It is in Jhabvala's description of Sharmila's family home that we can find the necessary 'proof' to support our conclusions about Jhabvala's gloomy analysis of Indian joint family life. The house is "old, dirty and inward looking. In the centre was a courtyard which could be overlooked like a stage from the galleries running all the way round the upper storeys" (p.165). "Dirty and inward looking" could just as easily be the description of the physical state and architectural style of a house, as of a person's appearance and attitude. The description, suggesting an interchangeability of status, encourages one to believe that the house functions as a metaphor for a person. And in the light of what one knows about the old grandmother, this house can be seen as a metaphor for the grandmother and the domestic politics she practises. The cyclic and non-linear pattern of family histories portrayed in "Miss Sahib" is tangibly expressed in the "inward looking" style of the architecture.

Leaving aside the overt references to dirt and the implied negative connotations discussed above, there are several value judgements embedded in the description, which illustrate an important point relevant to any study or representation of India. It is the inevitable ambiguity in these judgements which reveals the difficulty in arriving

at categorical conclusions about the country. For example the courtyard is a place of openness, reflecting the Indian's familiarity with and easy acceptance of open spaces. Like flat roofs and balconies, courtyards are sleeping areas during hot nights.

All the above factors help to explain why 'ordinary' Indians do so much of their daily living - their cooking, their washing-up, their sleeping, their bathing - outdoors. We see evidence of this in the courtyard which forms part of the quarters attached to Uma's house in Esmond. "The women carried on quietly with what they were doing, lighting fires ... grinding atta (wholemeal flour), washing clothes, feeding their babies" (pp.76-77). The adverb "quietly" communicates the steady, unobtrusive and timeless nature of their occupations, while the children who "went on playing all round" Uma, testify to the soothing effect of an environment such as this. Western rules of privacy are clearly inappropriate and therefore inapplicable.

To a traditional Indian like Uma, the bustle of life among the tenants in her courtyard spells happiness, "for at least they (the tenants) have company, they can sit here in the courtyard with one another, enjoying the air and each other's conversations, their children run about free in the open". In contrast, she feels that her daughter and grandson - Gulab and Ravi - are "trapped ... in Esmond's flat" (EI p.77). Naipaul too recognises the crucial importance of the family's continual physical presence in determining the Indian's sense of well-being. In India: A Million Mutinies ^{Now} Naipaul quotes the instance of a couple who did not move out of their old cramped quarters even though they could afford to do so, simply because the wife "liked staying with her family in their old flat, for the company, the warmth, the reassurance of human voices" (p.66). When one recalls how,

in A Backward Place, Judy's mother is reported to have committed suicide because of the near-solitary existence she leads in England, one can see the positive attractions held out by the Indian kind of lifestyle.

Yet the open courtyard is not always an image of traditional continuity nurturing emotional security. There is in the same novel (Esmond) another courtyard inhabited by just as many tenants and this is owned by Lakshmi. The effect of this arrangement however gives rise to a sense of distinct unease brought about by the feeling of being constantly watched from above - "overlooked". Lakshmi's courtyard, where the hum of continuous human activity is not a source of any assurance to her, conjures up visions of life in Sharmila's courtyard. The "overlooking" open verandahs made Lakshmi realise that she "certainly did not care to be overseen in this way" (p.26), [underlining mine].

Thus while the openness of the courtyard and the presence of a large family network have positive connotations in A Backward Place, these same factors account for the negative attributes in Lakshmi's domestic life, for they are the reasons which deprive Lakshmi of privacy and self-esteem. The comparison made in "Miss Sahib", between the courtyard and a stage - the ultimate symbol of display and exposure - therefore seems highly appropriate. The likeness is neatly reinforced by reference to the overlooking spectator galleries. Perhaps it is this lack of privacy that prompts Ram Nath, Lakshmi's husband, to see a resemblance between his house and the open street which is "narrow, crowded, full of life and food" (BP,p.50). This brief description, which holds within itself both positive and negative connotations depending upon the cultural perspective, then helps to emphasise the dual vision peculiar to Jhabvala's early novels.

The "narrow" and "crowded" streets initially convey a sense of spatial and emotional constraint. We hear similar echoes of the western or westernised observer's response to the Indian way of life in Mr Biswas, when Mr Biswas finds the extended family within the boundaries of Hanuman House intolerable. It is his own physical revulsion for the situation that is projected onto the description. "The old upstairs ... is choked with sleepers" and privacy is non-existent because "It was impossible to keep anything secret from the children" (p.103). Such close living is anathema to the western sensibility, accustomed to a certain amount of physical and psychological space.

Interestingly enough, when deprived of the particular setting conducive to their emotional equilibrium, both the Indian who upholds traditional ways and the Indian who feels he is an outsider to the society, describe their predicament in the same way. This paradox is noted by Jhabvala and ^{Naipaul} who, as has been said before, are both outsiders and insiders within the Indian community and therefore able to understand opposing points-of-view. In Jhabvala's Esmond, Uma believes that her daughter and grandson are "trapped" (p.77) within the enforced loneliness of Esmond's cosmopolitan flat, while "trapped" is also the very word Naipaul uses to describe Mr Biswas's sense of helplessness within the populous confines of Hanuman House. "The world was too small, the Tulsi family too large. He felt trapped" (p.91). These two novels illustrate an important aspect in cross-cultural understanding and acceptance. In both examples the ideal situations pictured by Uma and Mr Biswas are radically opposed, yet both emphasise the same psychological distress when not being allowed to choose the environment that suits him or her best.

Both Jhabvala and Naipaul, however highlight the ambiguities in the westernised observer's responses - there are positive connotations in Ram Nath's implied comparison between the street and his home, and we will also discuss the complexity in Mr Biswas's reaction to the above aspect of life in Hanuman House. Connotations of zest and plenty, contained in Ram Nath's phrase "full of life and food", balance the sense of being personally besieged. The ambivalence is inevitable in an Indian character who retains his 'natural' or traditional response to his country, but is able to see the same situation through the eyes of the outsider because of his educational career in England.

In Naipaul's novel there is little doubt that the narrative voice supports Mr Biswas's need for privacy. In Jhabvala's Esmond, however, the narrative stance is not so easily defined. For instance, where Uma is concerned, the narrator is sufficiently distanced from the character to make it possible for the reader to distinguish both the implicit authorial voice and the explicit voice of the character. But where Lakshmi is concerned, the narrator subtly exploits the reader's awareness of the significance attached to privacy in the west. Consequently, our interpretations of Lakshmi's thoughts regarding her courtyard could very well be a case of "the book reading you", for the narrative then suggests that it is not Lakshmi's sense of privacy that is at stake. Any suspicion that the narrator is trying to impose a western sense of values is dispelled, when it is revealed that Lakshmi's negative attitude to her surroundings springs from a reason entirely unconnected with any external criteria - there is, it seems, a more local and personal cause for Lakshmi's displeasure. The narrative makes it clear that her dissatisfaction is partially kindled by subconscious resentment that the structure of the house mocks her social aspirations.

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Lakshmi continually smarts from a deeply felt sense of injustice that "misfortune and an obstinate husband" (Ram Nath) force her to remain in undesirable accommodation, when she could have been living in "a large house of her own with many servants" (p.26). Hence the pun on the word "beneath". Lakshmi who lives "downstairs ... considered the other tenants ... considerably beneath her" (ibid). She who is "overlooked" looks down upon those who live above her. As in the other early novels by Jhabvala, the domestic environment, of which the courtyard is a part, continues to function as an ironic means of commenting upon the predicament of the individual. Here the courtyard is not yet a symbol of what Jhabvala perceives is an inward-looking attitude among Indians, as in the later short story "Miss Sahib".

However, that traditional Indian family customs are labelled inward looking by those who are outsiders to the community, is borne out by the fact that Naipaul's description of Hanuman House in Mr Biswas points towards the attitudes implicit in "Miss Sahib". Although the image of the house in Mr Biswas possesses a complexity not found in Jhabvala's novels, the two authors are comparable in the way they use the house as a critical comment on the people living in it. The ambiguities hinted at in "Miss Sahib" are also explored and exposed in Naipaul's novel, but more exhaustively and with a greater emotive edge. The reason for this is not only the freedom allowed by the particular genre, but the fact that Naipaul's novel is closely based on his personal family history. There is marked narrative compassion for the novel's hero, whose struggle to overcome relentless fate personified by the Tulsis was inspired by Naipaul's father's efforts to transcend both the unpromising nature of his bleak environment and the dominating power of his wife's family. It was his Brahmin caste

that had won Naipaul's father "admittance" to his mother's family "a totalitarian organisation. Decisions were taken by a closed circle at the top - my grandmother and her two eldest sons-in-law" (FC,p.76-77). Hanuman House is first introduced to the reader as a "fortress" which is "bulky, impregnable and blank". There is in the succeeding description a sense of that same "inward looking" attitude referred to in Jhabvala's story, for we are then told that the "side walls were windowless, and on the upper two floors the windows were mere slits in the facade" (p.80). The store itself was "disappointing ... There were no windows and light came only from the two narrow doors at the front and the single door at the back, which opened on to a covered courtyard" (p.82).

In Mr Biswas, even more so than in "Miss Sahib", the descriptive details like the "covered" courtyard, the "slits" for windows, the "narrow" doors, leave the reader in no doubt as to the oppressive and excluding nature of the household. This could initially imply that neither natural or symbolic enlightenment gain easy access into Hanuman House. Hence the many references to the darkness and the blackness within the building: e.g. "The doorway gaped black; soot stained the wall ... so that blackness seemed to fill the kitchen like a solid substance". Together with the "blank" outward face which Hanuman House presents to the outside world, the darkness conveys a sense of immutability on which little or no impression can be made.

In describing Hanuman House, Naipaul like Jhabvala, uses surface detail as a means of effecting ironic judgements on several levels. There is in this process a systematic deflation of preconceptions - whether they are of situations, characters or the complacency of one's judgement. The immediate registration of overt mockery is a gimmick which flatters the reader into believing he is in cahoots not only

with the narrator, but also with the protagonist, Mr Biswas. Theirs, it seems, is the position of enlightenment removed from the darkness within Hanuman House and its reactionary attitudes, which all three jointly condemn. This impression of unity is further reinforced by Mr Biswas's sustained struggle against the Tulsis, whose power to crush Mr Biswas leads one to conclude that the implicit narrative preference is for a western lifestyle with its emphasis on individual freedoms. Yet underlying Mr Biswas's apparently disparaging account of Hanuman House is an element of fear which transmutes itself into awe.

For instance, the use of the word "gaped" in connection with the entrance to the kitchen (p:87), if considered in conjunction with the word "blank", describing the exterior of the house (p:80), could easily be interpreted as a narrative means of indicating cerebral vacuity. Both these details would tie in neatly with what we already know of Mr Biswas's contempt for the inferior standards maintained by the Tulsis in relation to their domestic organisation and their commercial transactions. Yet a doorway which "gaped black" also awakens visions of cavernous jaws, or of a gateway leading to mysterious and fearful territory, which in turn is symbolised through the "blackness which filled the kitchen like a solid substance".

On the most obvious level these descriptive details can constitute a symbolic account of the unknown fate which awaits Mr Biswas in Hanuman House. "Blank" at this stage, could then assume the less derogatory connotation of inscrutability. On a deeper psychological level, however, the unknown is part of that subconscious world of fears with which we are all familiar. These fears become associated with beings whom we hate precisely because we fear them (9). The tangibility of such fears is suggested by the comparison above, of blackness to a 'solid substance'. It is the humiliation of knowing we fear which

leads us to mock the objects which inspire this fear. Mockery becomes a means of reassuring ourselves that, somehow, the presence of the risible in feared objects reduces their terrifying potential. We can see this process at work when Mr Biswas "discovered the solace of Dickens ... In the grotesques of Dickens everything he feared and suffered from was ridiculed and diminished, so that his own anger, his own contempt became unnecessary, and he was given strength to bear with the most difficult part of his day" (p:374). It is such shared human experience which enables the reader to fully comprehend the trepidation and bravado with which Mr Biswas approaches life with the Tulsis.

For Mr Biswas the psychological fears are objectified in the person of Mrs Tulsi, and it is in the description of her, quoted earlier, that we can best sense both mockery and fear: "Without her teeth she looked decrepit, but there was about her decrepitude a quality of everlastingness" (p:128). Here Mrs Tulsi is the grotesque figure whom one is intended to find ridiculous and not respect, yet the quality of "everlastingness" to which attention is drawn, simultaneously points at an inner power, which contradicts the sight of the decaying body.

What however adds to the ironies compounding Mr Biswas's attitude to the Tulsis is that, lurking beneath the sarcasm of surface mockery and lying alongside concealed awe, is the poignancy of his need to be part of that large family group, of which he is so vocal in his condemnation. Ironically enough, despite his independent stand, Mr Biswas does not want to remain merely on the periphery of Tulsi existence. Herein lies the paradox of his relationship with the traditional Hindu world he overtly rejects, and if one accepts that Mr Biswas represents those who are displaced, then by extension his predicament is also that of every other displaced person. Like Mr

Biswas, those who have ventured beyond the boundaries of their own community often seek the security represented by the stable world of fixed traditions, while fervently guarding their newly discovered independence outside the constraints of the old order. Again, it is to the description of Hanuman House and its effect on Mr Biswas that we must turn to, to apprehend the essence of this tormenting dilemma.

1. Kakar, p.62
2. Kakar, p.148
3. Kakar, p.74
4. Chaudhuri, To Live or Not to Live, p.118
5. Bamber Gascoigne, The Great Moghuls, p.125
6. Chaudhuri, To Live or not to Live, p.57
7. Raj sympathises with Prem's worries about the cost of living: "The landlord should not be allowed to charge so much rent", while Indu's whispered response, "Especially in the nights," presupposes a solicitous inquiry from Raj's wife who is also ready with welcome assurances "It will be a boy ... I can see from the way you are carrying" (p.138).
8. Chaudhuri, To Live or not to Live, p.103
9. The Hindu's response to this psychological dilemma is expressed in religious terms. He acknowledges the power of these unseen fears by projecting them in the form of gods whom he reverently worships in the same way as he does the benign aspects of the Divine. Thus we have Shiva, who is revered not only as the Creator but also as the Destroyer; and Kali the Mother-Goddess - a being capable of begetting life and yet placated only by human sacrifice, thereby paradoxically destroying the very lives which she engenders.

THE NEED TO BELONG

We have already seen that the two aspects of Hanuman House which seem to oppress Mr Biswas most are its darkness and the lack of privacy. Yet when Mr Biswas first experiences closing time in the Tulsi store, he is not repelled by the darkness. On the contrary, when the front doors are "bolted and barred", the Tulsi Store becomes a place that is "dark and warm and protected" (p.86). The sense that darkness is comforting is further enhanced by various sounds of human occupancy, which break the silence. "The tall gate banged repeatedly ... the courtyard was filled with the shuffle and chatter of the children back from school ... From the kitchen came sounds of activity. At once the house felt peopled and full (p.88), [underlining mine]. Nowhere in this description is there any indication that, later on in the novel, Mr Biswas was going to look upon the children in Hanuman House as pestilential entities who "swarmed" everywhere (p.150). Here the sound of children's voices and the confirmation of domestic activity are welcomed by Mr Biswas for, in combination, these sounds negate the emptiness which had so far characterised his life. "For with his mother's parents dead, his father dead, his brothers on the estate at Felicity, Dehuti (his sister) as a servant in Tara's house, and himself rapidly growing away from Bipti ... it seemed to him that he was really quite alone" (p.40).

Given this knowledge of Mr Biswas's bleak childhood and adolescent experiences, his positive interpretation of the darkness in Hanuman House poignantly deepens our sense of his personal need for the conditions ensuring inner repose. Now we can see how the use of the word "and" in the description of darkness does not merely draw attention to the different ways in which Mr Biswas perceives darkness, but underlines the complexity of his own emotional needs revealed

through the nature of his varying perceptions. The momentum produced by reading about the Tulsi store being 'dark and warm and protected' - is an accurate reflection of the breathless incredulity Mr Biswas experiences. This is understandable if one remembers that at this stage in his life, he believes the store contains all the nurturing qualities sadly missing from his own existence. In the light of his subsequent disappointment with the Tulsis, the expression of his early hopes can then be retrospectively seen as ironic mockery deepening our sense of his vulnerability.

The fact that both these positive descriptions occur early in Mr Biswas's experience of life in Hanuman House, suggests that the loneliness of his childhood and adolescent experiences caused Mr Biswas to look upon the Tulsis as people who would fill the void in his life. This is why the sight of the store, "bolted and barred", does not seriously perturb him, but instead instills in him a sense of safety from the outside world, which in his experience was fraught with far too many frustrations. That Hanuman House should initially have a consoling effect on him, indicates the presence of an inner insecurity which seeks reassurance in the external world.

The irony contained in Mr Biswas's unquestioning acceptance of "bolted and barred" is soon brought home when, shortly after the Tulsis finalise arrangements for his marriage to Shama, he admits to feeling "trapped" (p.91). The dual significance of the phrase 'bolted and barred' can now be clearly seen. On the one hand one can see the phrase's potential usefulness in exposing Mr Biswas's need for secured safety. On the other hand however, later developments in the novel reveal that the situation of being 'bolted and barred' is obviously intended to anticipate Mr Biswas's emotional confinement within the Tulsi power-base, and his feeling of powerlessness at being a victim

of ruthless Tulsi machinations. In the room allocated to him and Shama "He spent the rest of the day imprisoned where he was, listening to the noises of the house" (p.97), [underlining mine]. To mock Mr Biswas even further, those noises which once made the house seem "peopled and full", thereby holding out a promise of comforting familiarity, now do turn out to be his only companions but without being companionable. They tantalisingly remain outside the bounds of his experience, sharpening his sense of isolated impotence within the hurly-burly of life in Hanuman House.

One however does not have to wait so long for the plot of the novel to unfold in order to witness the disillusionment which Mr Biswas suffers. The discrepancy between the reader's interpretation of narrative detail and Mr Biswas's response to the situation is already evident in his initial perceptions of the Tulsi establishment. "The Tulsi store was disappointing. The facade that promised such an amplitude of space concealed a building ... which was not deep" (p:82), [underlining mine]. The narrative process of tracing the disillusionment awaiting Mr Biswas, has therefore already begun with the use of the above underlined words which contain illusory and deceptive connotations.

The process of ironic exposure, revealing Mr Biswas's desperate need for a home, operates on rather complex levels - Mr Biswas exchanges one set of false impressions for another, and is ultimately left with nothing. At the outset, he creates problems for himself in choosing to ignore the warning messages sent out by the facade - the false appearance - of the house. He then unwittingly contributes to his own eventual disillusionment by choosing to believe in what he cannot see is but another form of intangibility - the darkness within Hanuman House which gives him a sense of warmth and protection. But we are

then made to see that, ironically enough, it is the facade - the appearance - which contains a valuable truth in the form of a warning. In his desperate need for a haven, however, Mr Biswas believes that the truth - the abiding realities he sought - lie beyond the apparent. He is inevitably disappointed.

Narrative confirmation that the image of darkness should be approached with caution is reiterated when, later in the novel, we encounter warm, protective darkness in a situation that subsequently proves disappointing - the Tulsi move to the Shorthills estate. Narrative introduction to Shorthills is at first sensuously beguiling. The lush fecundity of the Eden-like landscape is so overpowering that, even where growth is stunted, the contrast enhances rather than detracts from the surrounding dominant richness.

Avocado pear trees grew ... as casually as any bush; their fruit, only just out of flower, were tiny but already perfectly shaped, with a shine they would soon lose ... Beyond the gully ... Mr Biswas saw the tall immortelles and their red and yellow flowers ... Under the immortelle trees, he saw the cocoa trees, stunted, with their branches black and dry, the cocoa pods gleaming with all the colours between yellow and red and crimson and purple ... Then there were orange trees, heavy with leaf and fruit (pp.396-397).

It is only appropriate that this primal landscape should be signposted Christopher Columbus Road causing Mr Biswas to reflect thus: "The silence, the solitude, the fruitful bush in a broken landscape: it was an enchantment" (pp.396-397 & p.399).

Despite the images of profligate abundance, a note of warning can be heard which, as before, is inadvertently voiced by Mr Biswas himself. His response to the new environment is both a truthful expression of its effect on him, and an ironic betrayal of its ominous potential. Through its connections with the world of magic and illusion, the word "enchantment" subtly undermines the tactile, burgeoning luxuriance of the Shorthills estate. Enchantment suggests beauty, but also hints at

delusion. Hence the reader is cautioned to re-interpret the presence of dry branches in an otherwise fruitful land, as a warning that perfection is imperilled and is likely to disappear, like the shine on the skin of the avocado pear.

The unsettling apprehension which underlies the above description is strengthened by a subsequent narrative account of weddings which take place in what we can now sense is the uneasy peace of Shorthills. The description of the weddings justifies our premonitions about Shorthills, for all the "energy" involved in wedding preparations is solely expended in acts of "plundering" (p.403). "Sisters and husbands remarked again and again that it was wonderful not only to have so much bamboo so near but not to have to pay for it either" (pp.402-403). Further, to accommodate the guests, the "cherry tree [was] cut down, the artificial mound partly dug up, the swimming pool partly filled in" (p.402). It is at this point that one can appreciate the ominous significance of a previous reference to the "swollen parasite vines" which "veined" the towering saman tree growing in front of the house (p.397).

If the novel's exploration of Mr Biswas's needs vis-a-vis the Tulsis is seen as a metaphor for the relationship between the individual and society, the above account of the weddings confirms that both the particular and general relationships concerned must be understood in terms of illusion and disappointment. It cannot therefore be a gratuitous narrative gesture that the following description should once again describe darkness in terms recalling Mr Biswas's misconceptions of Hanuman House. The verbal and conceptual links between these later events in the novel and those encountered earlier is unmistakable. "On the night of the weddings many small flickering flames seemed to be suspended in the darkness: trees outlined, not

illuminated, looked solid; and the grounds felt protected, a warm cave in the night" (p.4039, [underlying mine]. Here, the lesson which Mr Biswas manages to learn through experience is no longer implied but clearly spelt out by the narrative - an attractive appearance may only be just that - it lacks the solidity of substance.

The repetition of the words "darkness", "protected" and "warm", within a context of misleading appearances, emphasises the ease with which misjudgements can be made. Further, the narrator goes beyond Mr Biswas's particular experience to suggest 'natural' reasons for the conflicting interpretations of darkness. Darkness is the time for sleep and rest and therefore is the environment of repose symbolised by "a warm cave in the night". Yet when one considers how darkness can seriously hamper our visual perceptions, it is not surprising that the expression "being in the dark" denotes an absence of knowledge. Now one can appreciate even more the basis for Mr Biswas's initial blinkered appraisal of Hanuman House, for it was a conclusion formulated "in the dark".

It is now possible to appreciate why Naipaul calls his first major work on India An Area of Darkness. On the one hand, darkness denotes the ignorance and philistinism which he recognises in Indian attitudes. But on the other hand, the darkness of ignorance also applies to his lack of experiential knowledge of the country he wishes to claim emotionally as an ancestral homeland. In philosophical terms the bewildering frustrations which assail the displaced Indian - Mr Biswas and his creator - can be seen as a dramatisation of Hindu philosophical concerns. The pitfalls and uncertainties characterising the individual's struggle exemplify the difficulty in differentiating between the beguiling face of illusion and the essence of reality.

While it is still obvious that the Tulsis are the main focus for narrative attack, the novel at this point is also moving beyond a searing indictment of the particular, to a judgement of colonisers and territorial trespassers in general. Narrative evocation of primal landscapes telling of the dawn of creation, where "Mr Biswas found it easy to imagine the other race of Indians moving about this road before the world grew dark for them" (p.397), makes it clear that the depredations carried out by the Tulsis is a metaphor for the exploitative destruction of natural innocence and abundance, carried out throughout historical time. And yet the natural occurrence of "stunted and dry" growths suggests that local vulnerability partly accounts for the success of the plunderer. The ambivalence present in the relationship between Mr Biswas and the Tulsis can therefore be said to characterise the relationship between colonised peoples and their rulers.

That the narrative intends a connection between the two is confirmed by a reference to a significant detail from Indian colonial history. When supporting the cause of perpetuating family tradition, Shama determinedly nags Mr Biswas into agreeing to a "house-blessing" ceremony at The Chase (p.158), his response to her request is: "What the hell you think I look like? ... The Maharajah of Barrackpore? And what the hell for I should get Hari to come and bless this place? ... Is bad enough as it is" (p.148). His words turn out to be both witty and poignant, for in being disparaging about The Chase, Mr Biswas does not spare his own feelings. On the superficial level, "Barrackpore" is descriptive of The Chase which consists of "a long straggling settlement of mud huts" (p.142). As Mr Biswas implies, to be the ruler of such a fragile "kingdom" is therefore a dubious honour, the irony of which is further underlined by the fact that Barrackpore is

actually a place of sound historical importance. It was at Barrackpore in India that the Indian Mutiny of 1857 against the British first began. In highlighting the incongruity of conducting an auspicious ceremony in the most unprepossessing of places, the narrative expresses a poignant awareness of the disparity between historical significance and ritual solemnity on the one hand, and Mr Biswas's present circumstances on the other.

The allusion to history is not however only a means of creating poignant situational contrast, for the events of history are thematically relevant to the novel. Although the Mutiny of 1857 ultimately proved unsuccessful it did herald the beginning of concerted Indian resistance to British rule. In the same way, The Chase represents Mr Biswas's earliest efforts to shake off his dependence upon the Tulsis. It marks the beginning of his struggle to seek and maintain individuality in the face of conformity demanded by extended family life, symbolising the colonised person's struggle to liberate himself from the domination of colonial rulers who also failed to recognise the individuality of the ruled. Tulsi disregard for Mr Biswas's position within the family is analogous to Britain's concept of itself in relation to India.

Mr Biswas had once mistakenly thought himself "especially favoured by the Tulsis" (p.97), but he soon realises that "they had married Shama to him simply because he was of the proper caste" (ibid). In being a Brahmin he initially meets the Tulsi requirement of social and religious propriety, and later, when he fathers children, he fulfills yet another Tulsi "ambition" - a wish for their daughters "not to be childless" (p.160). But in spite of his crucial role in shoring up their social credibility, he finds he is still of little importance in the Tulsi scheme of things.

Mr Biswas is therefore useful to the Tulsis because he fits into their idea of a socially credible family in the same way that Guy Perron in Scott's A Division of the Spoils sees India was essential to further "England's idea of herself" (Scott: DSp,p.105). Perron chooses the year 1900 as an arbitrary date marking a watershed in British policies towards India, a description of which debunks any pretensions to nobility of action. "Up to 1900 the part India played in our idea of ourselves was the part played by anything ... we believed it was right to possess". Subsequently India became a part of another "English idea of Englishness ... of something we feel it does us no credit to have". As a result India was granted independence with little British "qualm of conscience" because by then the country no longer formed "part of our idea of ourselves" (ibid). What Perron essentially establishes is that to the Englishmen in general "India does not even begin to exist" (p.106). The Indian is therefore as much of an abstraction to the British as Mr Biswas is to the Tulsis. Hence the resulting insensitivity to the suffering of the 'real' human being who is the hapless pawn in the respective power games.

Evidence of Tulsi indifference to Mr Biswas's wishes was evident in the way they arranged his marriage to Shama. This is further demonstrated in their total lack of interest in his return to Hanuman House from Pagotes, to which he fled in anger not long after his marriage. He had hoped that his behaviour would be seen as an act of defiance, deserving "silence, stares, hostility and perhaps a little fear" (p.103). But he is disappointed. "The interest in his return was momentary and superficial. No one referred to his absence or return, not Seth, not Mr Tulsi, both of whom continued, as they had done even before he left, hardly to notice him ... such events were insignificant because he mattered little to the house" (ibid). Tulsi

arrival at The Chase, which turns out to be a literal and symbolical invasion of "space" (p.142), then reinforces Mr Biswas's sense of being persona non grata. The peripheral nature of his presence as far as the Tulsis are concerned, is conveyed by his retreat to "the boundary of the lot" (p.152). The words he then uses to express his sense of being made to feel "a stranger in his own yard", can be interpreted as a symbolic communication of the colonised person's realisation of being dominated by an alien power in his own land: "But was it (the yard) his own?" (p.151).

It is not only in his position as the new son-in-law that Mr Biswas is made to feel this crushing sense of personal insignificance, but the feeling is reinforced even after he becomes a father. The rebuffs he suffers whenever he makes any moves to establish his rights as a father prove he is considered a nonentity in the home. In matters concerning their children, Shama defers to the wishes of her mother and ignores any contradictions voiced by her husband. When Mr Biswas complains to Shama about Mrs Tulsi forcing their daughter Savi to eat fish, Shama forestalls any argument: "Fish? But the brains good for the brain" (p.186).

In not bothering to argue with Mr Biswas and in her automatic repetition of Tulsi dietary opinions, she is not only mindlessly expressing her unquestioning allegiance to her mother, but simultaneously demolishing any hopes Mr Biswas may entertain about having a say in his daughter's upbringing. It is against this grouping of Tulsi mother and Tulsi daughters that Mr Biswas has to fight to exercise any authority he may have over his children. Unlike Shama, he is forced to seek reassurance regarding his children's loyalty only to discover that both Savi and Anand consider their primary allegiance is to the Tulsis. Even though their mother agrees to leave Hanuman

House for Port of Spain, both "Anand and Savi were not easily persuaded to leave Hanuman House" (p.334), reinforcing Mr Biswas's prior recognition that "Anand belonged to the Tulsis" (p:216). Indeed it is Mrs Tulsi and Owad, (Shama's brother), who eventually persuade the children to join their parents in Port of Spain, once again testifying to the strength of matriarchal influences.

What deepens the poignancy of Mr Biswas's helplessness is that Savi herself inadvertently contributes towards his sense of impotence and his knowledge of being an outsider in the Tulsi establishment. After a disagreement with Mr Biswas, Shama leaves The Chase for Hanuman House taking Savi with her. On subsequent periodic visits to the House, he criticises Mrs Tulsi's method of straightening the child's bow-legs. Savi at first insists she likes the "heavy boots with long iron bands down the side of her legs and straps over her knees", even though they make her look "ugly ... like a cripple". Then she amends this opinion to: "At least, I don't mind" (p.185), thereby communicating her desire not to expose her grandmother. Protecting her grandmother however involves a rejection of her father, which is explicitly confirmed by the action accompanying the child's words: "She threw out her hand, then put them on her hips and walked away, just like one of her aunts" (p.1859; [underlining mine]. As far as Mr Biswas is concerned there can be no more eloquent gesture of allegiance.

It is clear that Savi's rejection of Mr Biswas's criticism is made against her own convictions, and is intended to shield her grandmother by effectively silencing Mr Biswas's anxious questions about any possible mistreatment by the Tulsis - Savi either "shook her head" or replied 'They shout at everybody'. Whereupon her father is forced to concede: "She didn't seem to need a protector" (pp.184-185). It is in his baffled response that one sees how anxiety on his daughter's

behalf is also prompted by his need for a role in her life. The sense of ineffectuality he experiences in this situation exposes the unfortunate fact that the self-image of parents is so often dependent upon the influence they can exercise over their children. This in turn is a measure of how much the colonising power's image is dependent upon the tractability, or lack of it, of the peoples they dominate - a theme which Scott explores in his novels and which was earlier discussed in relation to Johnnie Sahib.

It is the humbling aspect of this realisation which dawns upon Gower in Scott's The Alien Sky when Gower acknowledges "the ... years of self-deception standing between myself and reality" (p.64). All along he had held the outlook of "the Burra Sahib believing in his own omnipotence; this possessiveness, this feudalism, this benevolent despotism which passed for racial understanding" (p.82). He obviously believed the Indians needed him. But when the Indian, Gupta, expresses local rejection of the Englishman's 'progressive' experiments at the model village of Ooni, Gower "surveyed the place that once had given him pleasure" (p.137) and convinced him that "A man and his world ... could not be separated" (p.138). He looks at it now and questions, "But what was his world?" (ibid). Without Ooni and with the hope of another job at Kalipur dashed, he did not have "anything left" (p.197). Without India he had no identity for it was not so much that he had given to India but that he had taken from her. Hence his recognition of the justice in letting the jungle "take back what I've stolen" (p.137), and his attempt at suicide.

It is through Tulsi's disregard of Mr Biswas as a person that we see the insensitivity in both colonisation and family relationships. In addition to this obvious and much discussed injustice we also see how

Mr Biswas exposes the fragility of the coloniser's image of himself. The irony in the fact that the vulnerability of both oppressed and oppressor can be part of the same person is then further underlined by the following incident.

Despite his fears for Savi's well-being at Hanuman House, Mr Biswas does not intervene when she is subjected to a beating. As Shama "moved about in comic jerkiness" hunting for a hibiscus switch to give the child "a dose of licks", Mr Biswas "finds himself tittering nervously" (p.197). His protests merely amount to "phlegmy little noises" which do little to deter Shama (p.198). All this from a man who is scathing about Tulsi beatings being "a form of showing off" (p.199) to be "admirably" recalled later on (p.155). Moreover he who exposes Tulsi authoritarianism soon displays a partiality for dictatorial methods himself. Although Mr Biswas does not subject his children to the same degree of brutality carried out in Hanuman House, he begins to impress his authority upon them as soon as the Tulsi grip on him begins to slacken. Once 'his household [is] established in Port of Spain "Mr Biswas set about establishing his tyrannies" (p.337). Significantly, his own need for security does not lead him to instill a similar feeling in his own children. He seems to have easily forgotten the detrimental effect of the Tulsi high-handed approach to their vulnerable offspring. Ironically the tyrannies he practises are as ridiculous and petty as those which he derides. For instance when he calls out to Savi he expects her not only to come but to "come and answer". He insists that all her expressions of assent should end with "Pa", without which all statements indicating obedience are deemed insufficient -

"All right". "All right what?"

"All right, Pa".

"Good". (ibid)

The exchange between father and daughter seems pathetically redundant as all Mr Biswas eventually wants of Savi is for her to hand him over "some cigarettes, matches and a Sentinel notebook" (ibid).

The connection between his methods and those adopted by the Tulsis is finally forged by the outcome of this process which Mr Biswas calls "training" and Shama refers to as "strictness" (p.340). She is now able to 'tell her sisters with pride, "The children are afraid of him"' (ibid), in a manner reminiscent of the way Tulsi floggings are "admirably" remembered. Parental authority based on fear is now as much a part of the Biswas household as it was part of Tulsi organisation and, by extension, this is also a psychological weapon familiar in certain post-colonial regimes. The narrative therefore underlines the ironies implicit in human behaviour, illustrating how the dividing line between attraction and repulsion continually wavers. The above discussion on Naipaul's perception of the way women consciously or not define the man's sense of his own validity within the extended Hindu family in the Carribean, leads on to the concluding section of this thesis, which examines the portrayal of men in India, and how this is influenced by the fears and expectations which women have in their relationships with one another.

THE WEAKER SEX

In connection with Naipaul's depiction of women as strongly distinctive characters who overawe their menfolk, and as a preamble to an examination of the male characters in Jhabvala's novels, it is interesting to consider a theory advanced by Joseph Campbell in Myths to Live By. Campbell claims that male social behaviour is a reaction to the way men perceive women. Campbell claims that institutions like "the men's secret society" originated among tropical tribes, where the young male was confronted with two fundamental forces. One was the natural fearful aspect of nature outside his home, and the other was "the village compound" which was "relatively stable, earthbound, nourished on plant food gathered or cultivated by women". Consequently "the primary psychological task for the young male of achieving separation from dependency on the mother is hardly possible in a world where all the essential work is being attended to ... by completely efficient females". It is therefore within the 'safety' of these secret societies "where no women are allowed" that "symbolic games flattering the masculine zeal for achievement can be enjoyed in security safe away from Mother's governing eye" (p.41), [underlining mine].

In contrast, there is Germaine Greer's point-of-view, which sees the division of mutually exclusive gender groups in terms of a female reaction to patriarchal attitudes and practices within the society. She believes that it is the social restrictions placed upon women that accounts for the existence of dominant female groups and the closeness between mother and child. Women organise themselves into groups in reaction to their exclusion "from the public sphere and their generally low levels of literacy ... There is very little in the way

of public or commercial amusement; entertainments and celebrations take place in the household and children are included ... Men on the other hand, "may go to the coffee house ... for their entertainment" (1).

Let us first examine Campbell's description of the way the young male perceives the female figure. Campbell's account supports Naipaul's description of the wonder with which Mr Biswas watches Shama working efficiently at The Chase, where her "assertive" approach achieves a "miracle" amidst derelict chaos (p.146), while he appears unable to do anything until she gives him direction. "He followed her about, watching, offering help, glad to be told to do something and enjoying it when she reproved him for doing it badly" (p.145). And in another description where there is overt mockery of female activity, there is no denying the latent respect for women at work.

The cooking was being done ... over an open fire-hole in the yard. Sisters stirred enormous black cauldrons brought for the occasion from Hanuman House. They sweated and complained but they were happy. Though there was no need for it, some had stayed awake all the previous night, peeling potatoes, cleaning rice, cutting vegetables, singing, drinking coffee. They had prepared bin after bin of rice, bucket upon bucket of lentils and vegetables, vats of tea and coffee, volumes of chapattis (pp.155-156).

The narrative viewpoint is one that is supposedly detached and condescendingly amused. But the accuracy in visual and factual detail testifies to an unconscious recognition of the efficiency with which women work. That each of the chores documented above could so easily be identified and precisely schematised to ^{suggest} orderliness, could only mean that the collaboration among the sisters must have been relatively tension free. Mr Biswas meanwhile retires to his room where he contemplates his clothes that hung despairingly from a nail on the wall. They were definitely "the clothes of a small man, comic, make-believe clothes" (p.157).

While Naipaul shows Mr Biswas retreating into a world of literary fantasy and not a secret society in order to nurse his battered ego, Jhabvala seems to suggest that the coffee house, where Greer states men congregate for amusement, is the modern equivalent of the secret society, as it fulfils similar needs.

In A Backward Place, Bal and his friends often meet in the "cosy and familiar atmosphere" of the coffee house (p.52). This is an exclusive male club where men "sat around in easy attitudes and drank coffee and ate potato-chips or nuts", conveying relaxed jollity. However the mood of easy conviviality is neutralised by a reference to the cafe as "a homely place for all of them" (ibid). The description suggests that the cafe possesses a significance far deeper than its recreational value. This conclusion is further reinforced by a narrative repetition of the words "familiar" and "accustomed" in connection with the cafe - terms normally associated with a place to which one is attached, i.e. a home. The air of bonhomie now appears to be a facade hiding an inner emptiness.

If we now examine the narrative description of the men themselves in conjunction with the atmosphere of the coffee house, we begin to understand why these establishments are attractive as places for a regular rendezvous. These happy-go-lucky individuals, who habitually congregate in cafes, are society's failures, looking to each other for reassurance. They are "aspiring actors, unpublished writers and many other different kinds of unemployed graduates or double graduates ... They gave one another good advice and spoke with confidence about their future plans ... In these congenial surroundings ... All practical difficulties fell away ... and one's mind could jubilantly soar on the wings of that success that lay ahead" (ibid).

The impeccably polite tones with which social criticism is delivered could be interpreted as the condescending attitude of an outsider personally removed from the bleak and desperate scenario which she writes about. However, it is possible to trace compassion in the narrative approach. While attention is drawn to the purposelessness characterising the lives of these young men, the use of words like "haunted" and "drifted" (p.52) elsewhere in the description creates an effect which prevents wholesale condemnation. The narrator is therefore someone who, while not making excuses for the characters, is basically concerned with highlighting a predicament and not merely with pronouncing dismissive judgement.

The combination of the words "haunted" and "drifted" with their attendant connotations of a ghost-like existence and the lack of direction, creates an effect of sadness which ironically undermines the show of exuberance. This discrepancy between appearance and reality testifies to a situation where the characters themselves are unaware of their own plight, the implications of which are only too obvious to the narrator, who sees that each individual is able "to enter into the spirit of the thing, so that his scheme took on a kind of reality" (ibid). The absence of condescension is however borne out by the fact that what lingers on in the reader's memory is the sadness underlying such lives and not the narrative exposure of spiritual emptiness.

What adds to the pathos is the relevance of Campbell's reference to the secret society as a place where "symbolic games flattering the masculine zeal for achievement can be enjoyed". These young men return again and again to the coffee house because they need the reassurance of its familiar surroundings and the guarantees of spurious comfort which it promises. The lack of solid achievement in their lives, and

their inclination to live in their own cosy world of fantasy, justify the narrative description of these young men as beings who "haunted" coffee shops and "drifted around" - words which poignantly sum up their plight. They are ghosts who populate a world of illusion, the insubstantiality of which is conveyed by the way they cling to "schemes" and "abstract" topics. They are people for whom the intangibility of talk becomes "concrete" reality.

It is not surprising to then discover that these men who hide from the reality of their own plight should prefer the darkness of the coffee house to the "white glare" of the world outside where everything was "clear and harsh" (p.53). The interior of the coffee house, the indistinguishable noise and the 'quality' of its food, perfectly matches the lack of definition and discrimination evident in their attitudes. It was "a very dark place in which it was difficult to see one another's faces clearly and ... it was easy to talk and talk amid the hubbub of voices and the familiar smell of fritters and coffee and yesterday's crumb chops" (p.52).

The above extract from A Backward Place is not characteristic of all Jhabvala's portrayals of Indian men. For instance, there is Prem in The Householder for whom the superficial lifestyle favoured by Bal and his friends holds little attraction. Prem takes his role as a grihastha (householder) seriously and is frequently troubled by the knowledge that "he was failing in everything - as a husband and as a teacher" (p.37). Then there is Ram Nath, the nationalist freedom fighter and idealist, who prefers the life of a recluse rather than the material rewards of a politician's career (EI).

That male characters with a sense of moral responsibility appear in earlier and not later novels is not in any way indicative of a change in narrative attitude. Jhabvala is always aware of the variety in

human nature, for in Esmond we find both the idealistic Ram Nath and the materialistic Har Dayal. What a reading of Jhabvala's novels reveals however is that, even in those novels where men are public figures, they are subservient to the women in their lives.

"Husbands who worked on the Tulsi land" were soon absorbed into the Tulsi

family "their names were forgotten; they became Tulsis" (p.97).

While the loss of identity in Tulsi sons-in-law is narratively emphasised by their relegation to the background of Tulsi affairs, the exposure of male compliance in Jhabvala's novels is approached with greater subtlety. The exposure in her novels however is more of an indictment, because her novels deal with men who are financially secure and self-sufficient in a way that Tulsi sons-in-law are not. Jhabvala's novels therefore point out that manifest economic security does not automatically rule out the kind of psychological vulnerability experienced by Mr Biswas, who had to fight for both his economic and psychological independence.

The docile husband or partner who appears in Jhabvala's novels is someone who has carved out a niche for himself within society. As a result of personal financial independence, the role of the family as a supportive institution is of lesser importance as a source of social credibility - a function it performs in Mr Biswas, where daughters and husbands "were given food, shelter, and a little money ... and they were treated with respect by people outside because they were connected with the Tulsi family" (p.97). Consequently in Jhabvala's novels - unlike Naipaul's - it is through the couple's relationship with one another, and not their relationship with the family as a whole, that Jhabvala highlights the tractable nature of men who, despite their overt professional success, have surrendered authority within the home. However, it is still considered important, especially

by the women, to be seen to belong to a successful family. The onus on the men, the traditional bread-winners, to fulfil this condition in order to maintain domestic harmony, is strong. It is through marital and extra-marital relationships that Jhabvala highlights the disparity between the public and private faces of both her male and female characters. We are shown the anxiety beneath the mask of assurance.

For instance, Har Dayal is a leading public figure in post-independent India. As proof of his powerful position he is able to provide his family with a comfortable and luxurious lifestyle. His home is often the venue for "committee meetings" (EIp.40) attended by a sprinkling of important government officials like "Professor Bhatnagar from the Ministry of Education, the Secretary to the Board of Developments, an Under-Secretary from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, a man from the Treasury and a deputy from the Income Tax office ... Har Dayal was keenly interested in all cultural matters and he enjoyed presiding over committees" (p.42). In keeping with nationalist sentiment following independence, he "now mostly wore Indian dress" when once he always "dressed very smartly and meticulously in London suits" (p.40). It seems laudable proof of their pan-Indian sympathies that in India's capital city, Har Dayal and his associates should be interested in issues such as the "advancement of literature in the regional languages and an exhibition of folk-art from the backward states" (ibid). From the above it would therefore appear that Har Dayal is a man singularly endowed with lofty aspirations and good fortune. His influence is felt not only in Delhi but also in the country's more remote areas.

Yet the narrative reveals that the present course of Har Dayal's career has been shaped by his wife Madhuri. It is because Madhuri

wishes it, that Har Dayal pursues a wealthy lifestyle despite the lip-service he pays to the Gandhian ideals espoused by his ascetic friend Ram Nath. This is made clear on the occasions when Har Dayal renews his acquaintance with Ram Nath and returns home feeling "depressed and somehow self-abasing" (p.73). It is then that Madhuri has to reassure her husband that their way of life is the 'right' one. She counteracts Ram Nath's "unsettling effect on her husband" (p.72) by persuading the latter that "it was a far finer thing to be a scholar of leisure, a gentleman, respected and respectable, with several friends in British official circles, than to be a Congress worker without money or position and with a police record" (p.73).

Since we are already told earlier on in the narrative that Madhuri values "money ... property ... and one's proper social status", conditions which make her own life "safe" and "comfortable" (p.22), we can see that what she wants for Har Dayal is that which is of fundamental importance to her own well-being. Knowing Har Dayal's character and that of his friend Ram Nath, (the "Congress worker" whom Madhuri disdains to name), it is clear that the narrator intends us to view Madhuri's priorities with irony. She attaches importance to that which is external to the individual and comes from the outside - like society's 'respect' based on what a person appears to be. And it is because Har Dayal allows her views to prevail against his own occasional better judgement, because he too is so eminently obsessed with appearance, that we can see the extent to which his identity is very much an extension of hers. "Har Dayal, in all he had done or not done in his life, might have thought of himself as a free agent, but a more detached observer could locate the mainspring of his actions elsewhere" (p.168).

Her power over him is suggested through narrative portrayal which evokes royal splendour both in her personal bearing and in the running of her home. Swathed in her exquisite silk saris, she reclines on her chaise-longue ready to "receive" (p.69) her guests. There was even "a set time for her conversations with her husband" (p.92). It is with a "solemn and ceremonious" (p.95) air that one of her well-trained bearers places a tray of food on "a carved Kashmiri table" (p.95). So flawless is the picture of gracious elegance she presents that Uma is inspired to cry out with unintentional irony "You are like a little queen" (ibid), and queen she is especially in the remoteness of her position, a fact which is unassailable in more than one sense.

Although it is Har Dayal who has a high public profile exuding dynamism and exuberance, it is ironic that he possesses less resolve than the more private figure of his "frail", less "well-educated" wife, who "had not been out of the house much" (p.168). As the narrative points out, the retiring Madhuri "knew how to arrange her life and the lives of those around her. The house was run entirely according to her plans" (ibid). She gives or withholds approval according to whether her wishes on any issue are observed. The narrator subtly stresses the strength of Madhuri's influence on such occasions by contrasting it with her apparent physical frailty.

When Har Dayal incurs her displeasure he holds her hand "small and delicate and yellow, the skin finely wrinkled" (p.25), in a gesture asking for forgiveness. He can only tell whether his unspoken appeal has been granted if she allows "her hand to rest in his" (p.173). His sense of well-being is wholly dependent on her moods, for when "her frowns vanish ... she would be kind and nice with him again" (ibid). The conditional nature of their relationship is narratively confirmed:

"She is ready to give her consent to her husband's plans if he followed hers" (p.174). The word "followed", with its visual connotations of one individual going or coming after another, is a narrative indication of what her idea of the relationship should be.

That Madhuri's and not Ram Nath's influence prevails over Har Dayal is borne out by Har Dayal's apprehensions as to their daughter Shakuntala's choice of a husband. He fears that her vocal idealistic stand might encourage her to consider marriage to Narayan, Ram Nath's son, who is the hard-working community doctor. In so doing she might refuse a more suitable proposal on behalf of Professor Bhatnagar's son, a Harvard graduate who "was coming home to take up a high post in his father's ministry" (p.123). In other words, a Har Dayal clone of whom Madhuri would approve, thus ensuring domestic harmony in the home and the possible persistence of Madhuri's wishes.

Har Dayal however redeems himself to a certain extent when in a rare introspective moment he describes himself as an "inanimate jellyfish" (p.181) whose life lacked something "vital" (p.182). The implication that certain ways of living are actually tantamount to spiritual death is implicit. Such reflections cannot be associated with the Tulsi sons-in-law, thereby proving how much the latter are controlled by a narrator who uses them to express his particular view of relationships between men and women.

There is a certain similarity between the Har Dayal/Madhuri relationship and that between Gulzari Lal and his mistress Kusum in Get Ready for Battle. Gulzari Lal's description recalls Har Dayal in the same way as the picture which one is offered of Kusum is strongly reminiscent of Madhuri. "Tall, stately, dressed in white leggings with a loose knee-length white shirt over them, [Gulzari Lal] moved with the grace and command of a hereditary overlord" (p.25). Similarly, Har

Dayal in a cosmopolitan gathering is "the only one in Indian dress - long, buttoned coat and white jodhpurs - and this gave him a special distinction" (EI,p.61).

Like Har Dayal, Gulzari Lal is a smooth opportunist who cultivates and entertains the 'right' kind of people - 'contacts' with social and official clout and often little else. They however serve an important purpose in Gulzari Lal's life - they are exploitable. "Everyone could be of use to someone else ... There was a Commissioner who was stimulating to a number of fairly high ranking civil servants ... who were ... stimulating to a number of middle ranking civil servants ... and a Maharaja ... who, now that his kingdom and ... income were gone, was taking an interest in business affairs" (p.7). Since conversation at the party proves "difficult" and wives are said to have "accepted their boredom" (p.8), the repeated use of the word "stimulating" is clearly for ironic effect. This gathering is reminiscent of the vacuous discussions presided over by Har Dayal, where "a sense of satisfaction" is inevitable "whether anything had been settled or not" (EI,p.46). The narrative conclusion - bland in effect but critical in implication - could easily apply to Gulzari Lal's party: "It was not what they said or decided that really mattered but the mere fact that they were there at all" (EI,p.46).

As in Esmond, it is the man who is seen in public and it is the woman who remains in the background. Kusum "swished in silk between kitchen and dining-room" although occasionally "she peeped into the drawing-room" (p.8). From this it would seem that Kusum's role in Gulzari Lal's life is an unflattering one - she serves a functional purpose by attending to the necessary culinary arrangements. But the lack of

significance in activities associated with men nullifies any overt importance their public social role may convey, while the perceived effect of female authority belies their less ostentatious portrayal.

Like Madhuri, Kusum does not resent what appears to be her peripheral role in the household, for she is confident of her emotional hold over her partner. Significantly, both women seek to register their inner confidence by symbolically imposing their personalities on their respective households. We have already seen how Madhuri's insistence on precision and order are features which distinguish her home. Similarly "in her thoughts - as she had done over so many years - [Kusum] furnished [Gulzari Lal's room] anew "with ruffled curtains ... a lilac silk bedspread ... a dressing table that reflected an array of little bottles in its heart-shaped mirror" (p.155). The identity of the "gentleman's room" (ibid) will soon be lost in the frills of the woman's identity. That this is a strong possibility is already apparent in their choice of a "mutual pet name" - "Chuchu" (p.23). The puerile overtones heard in the sound of a name which is distinctly feminine combine with the suggestion of a dominating relationship in the word "pet", and are signs that do not augur well for the already submissive Gulzari Lal. One can predict the impending pattern of this relationship in Kusum's confident statement: "You need a woman here who knows how to manage a household". Gulzari Lal can only "humbly" reply, "I know it" (p.34), [underlining mine]. There is no doubt as to who will be at the helm of affairs and who will acquiesce.

But before she can permanently impose her stamp on Gulzari Lal's house, Kusum maintains a strict regime reminiscent of Madhuri, especially with regard to the attention to detail. After a week's absence "the first thing she did was get after the servants, check the stores, look at accounts, discover door-knobs that had not been

sufficiently polished and stains on the marble floors; ... she ... roundly abused everyone and sent them scuttling off in all directions to devote themselves vigorously to their allotted tasks" (p.11). Even at the same party where she does not venture into the drawing room, she is "supervising" dinner preparations, she "bullied" servants, or "arranged" dishes (p.8). The controlling and autocratic aspects of her personality thrive in an atmosphere where she is in "full charge" (p.9) of household and of the suppliant Gulzari Lal, "who tried to prove to himself that he could do without Kusum but never succeeded" (p.111).

When she stays away he seeks her out and finds her "reclining on [a] sofa ... plump and powdered, in a crisp white sari with a design of red cherries" (p.23)". The picture of delicately scented femininity is reminiscent of Madhuri on her chaise longue "fresh and fragrant with talcum powder ... wearing one of her exquisite silk saris" (EI,p.20). The narrator however suggests an ironic discrepancy between the careful and obvious effort expended on their toilette, and the air of idle ease conveyed by their reclining positions.

However, despite the similarity in visual effect the description also indicates how the woman wishes to be seen by her partner. The "red cherries" on Kusum's "crisp white sari", besides possessing visual appeal, suggest a quality of voluptuousness present in Kusum but absent in the more distant Madhuri. It is not surprising then that Kusum is "plump" and appetising like mouth-watering fruit, while Madhuri is fresh and untouched. The contrast in the description of these women fits in perfectly with what we know of their personal relationships.

While the narrative contains details of the physical relationship between Kusum and Gulzari Lal, no reference is made to any sexual intimacy between Har Dayal and Madhuri - she successfully maintains her distance in all areas of her personal life. By remaining inaccessible, Madhuri exploits Har Dayal's uncertainty about her feelings towards him and adroitly keeps him in thrall. Although the relationship between Kusum and Gulzari Lal is also characterised by a similar manipulation of the man by the woman, Kusum's tactics are more blatantly conniving. The reason for this may well be that Kusum does not have the advantage of marriage to consolidate her hold over Gulzari Lal.

For instance, she curtails her visits to his house because she believes "it is necessary to be a little bit strict with men .. It is not good always to say yes to them" (p.13), and when she does return she makes a hasty departure as soon as he returns from work. However she sufficiently slows down her flight so that Gulzari Lal believes "he had seen something ... disappear out of the rear gates". The narrative adds the comment, "and maybe he had been meant to" (p.14). On other occasions she feigns illness in order to win his sympathy, but soon allows him to see through her pretence. However, what these psychological games, differing in degree if not in intention, imply is that they are an external symptom of a hidden vulnerability in both women, and this is what makes them resort to such tactics. It is because Jhabvala sees vulnerability as a primary cause for the female attitudes and behaviour towards men that her narrative treatment of women differs from that seen in Naipaul's novels.

Whenever repeated attention is drawn to certain visible aspects of character and setting in Jhabvala's novels, this is usually a narrative device prompting the reader to look beneath superficial detail. Hence Madhuri's air of self-possession reflected in her flawless appearance and her tastefully furnished home, is not meant to be taken at face value. In fact the woman who seems to be the unchallenged despot in the house is not exactly secure. Madhuri, whose word is law, needs the affirmative support from her son Amrit. She also wishes that her second son Raj could join with her to "make an effective stand against Ram Nath" (p.73), a thought which she reiterates later: "I only wish that Raj were here to give me his support" (p.124). Here the language of warfare and negotiation casts doubts on the apparent stability of her rule, and as in Mr Biswas the narrative hints at the presence of unseen tensions.

The inflexibility of her routine, the undisturbed aspect of her home which "gleamed and shone ... in bright untarnished colours", the ornamental rather than functional use of cushions which "sat plump and tight and smooth" (p.123), are not necessarily the marks of an accomplished housewife but of a person who, unsure of her convictions, requires that her environment should continually reinforce her own values. The visible trappings of "money ... property ... and a social status" are but other forms of external reassurances revealing her need to always feel "safe and comfortable" (p.24).

It is therefore ironic that although she fears the "unsettling" effects of Ram Nath's code of "Simple-Living-High Thinking" (pp.72&73) on Har Dayal, whom she describes as "unstable", (repeated twice on page 73), it is Ram Nath's disturbing effect on her own carefully constructed world of certainties that seriously unnerves her. This becomes clear when she repeatedly tries to convince herself

that "it was good to have ... a son" like Amrit who believes in the 'good life', and Raj too, "she was sure", would have supported her view against "Ram Nath and his insidious talk" for "he was all right, one could be sure of that ... Yes it was good to have such sons" (p:73).

By revealing an anxiety of which the character herself is unaware and implying that this is the possible reason for an intimidating exterior, Jhabvala succeeds in humanising Madhuri. It must however be pointed out that nowhere in the narrative does Madhuri herself explicitly articulate her fears. It is through the unhappiness experienced by Ram Nath's wife Lakshmi, that one can see why Madhuri tries so hard to regulate her life so that it remains predictable and smooth-running.

Though Lakshmi's life is presented as a contrast to Madhuri's well-cossetted existence, the lives of both women could have taken a similar course. They both begin married life with similar advantages and expectations. But while Madhuri manages to preserve her world, a similar fate does not await Lakshmi. Jhabvala places the conduct and plight of these two women within the perspective of the traditional woman's world - a world that desires the repetition of old certainties as this implies stability and emotional security. It is therefore not surprising that Lakshmi should only experience uncomprehending frustration at political forces which totally destroy her girlish dreams. Lakshmi does not see any sense or logic in the Indian Independence movement which robbed her of basic certainties like 'jewels ... clothes ... property', to place her in poorly maintained rented accommodation solely because the "Gita said it was a good thing" (p.109).

She thus corroborates Madhuri's definition of the sacrifices demanded by the Indian independence movement as "the general madness" (p.168). Although fate has placed them in contrasting worlds, the two women share a similar basic outlook on life. It is this that enables Lakshmi to gauge correctly Madhuri's reaction to the idea put forward by the idealistic Uma and Ram Nath, that Shakuntala would be happy living in austere surroundings as Narayan's wife in some remote village. Lakshmi astutely predicts that Madhuri will not "allow her daughter to live such a life" - a life that is free of attachment to "worldly possessions" (p.110).

Ram Nath, whose capacity for self-enquiry and detachment often makes his role synonymous with that of the omniscient narrator, is sympathetic towards Lakshmi. He is aware that her predicament mirrors that of other women like her - women who have had their lives "warped by circumstances to which they could not submit because they could not or would not understand them" (p.50). He can see the reason for his wife's unhappiness for she had imagined "she would be able to lead the sort of life she and all her female relations had always led - live in a large house with many relatives and many servants ... go to weddings in costly saris, weighed down with the jewellery she had brought from her father's house" (p.51).

While the underlying implication of his thoughts points to the superficial nature of preoccupations with the ostentatious, the narrative hints at a tacit acknowledgement that these shared communal events are important to women. This is conveyed through narrative itemising which produces the effect of cyclical events that are ever old but ever new. In a few lines the significance of an entire way of life has been captured. She would lead the life she had always led, live in a large house with many relatives, go to weddings. Here again

there is an echo of that 'other' life where such a lifestyle has been made possible. The reference to weddings recalls the opening chapters of the novel where Indira initiates a discussion on wedding presents, a subject which Madhuri "tackled ... with seriousness" (p.19).

It is cruelly ironic that Lakshmi, who is named after the goddess of wealth, probably in the hope of material blessings, should be forced to lead such a life. As a corollary, Madhuri's sense of self satisfaction at having "successfully steered [Har Dayal] into a safe and comfortable harbour" (p.169), is understandable. (Note again that she sees herself as the guiding force in the family and that here too she wishes for her husband what she really desires for her own well-being - namely safety and comfort).

Like the two women mentioned above, Kusum in Get Ready for Battle rates respectability and proprietorial ownership as important social attributes. She specifically mentions a "sense of dignity and possession" (p.112) as the two satisfying effects derived from visits to Gulzari Lal's home. However, her need to enhance her self-image is greater than Lakshmi's or Madhuri's and in this lies her vulnerability. As Gulzari Lal's mistress she is aware of the precarious nature of her position - "a moment's pleasure, a two-anna toy to be played with and broken and thrown aside" (p:24). She knows her position carries no basic guarantee of permanence and security, and that is why, unlike Madhuri, she cannot risk being cold or angry with Gulzari Lal in case this precipitates the end of their relationship. After one of her tantrums she is forced to confess to him that, "I am like this only for love of you, for love only" (p.25). Later she confesses to her servant that "Life is hard when a woman is alone" (p.112). Her insecurity is compounded by her loneliness. Jhabvala however does not allow sympathy to lead to sentimentality.

Just as Lakshmi and Madhuri are foils for one another, Kusum's pretensions are deflated by the presence of Tara, a self-evident prostitute whom Gulzari Lal's brother-in-law Brij Mohan employs.

It is not only in their functional positions vis-a-vis the men in their lives that the narrative persuades us to consider the two women contiguously, but their affinity is suggested through associative detail. "Peacocks" (p.23) are mentioned in connection with the ornamental detailing of Kusum's room, and later in the novel peacocks reappear in connection with a setting imagined for Tara. (p.136) Although this evidence may appear flimsy, it is supported by Brij Mohan's realisation that the way Kusum "cast down her eyes and coquettishly fidgeted her sari reminded him ... of Tara" (p:49). Tara's 'honest' plying of her trade indirectly exposes Kusum's pious air of dignity when she discovers Tara in Brij Mohan's house. The irony in this is that Kusum fails to see that in the uncertainty regarding personal relationships, she is like Tara whom Sarla Devi describes as someone who is "not an old pair of shoes to be thrown away" (p:137) words reminiscent of the allegation Kusum throws at Gulzari Lal, mentioned above. In contrast to the view apparent in Mr Biswas, where the male protagonist is shown suffering the effects of female domination, Jhabvala's novels provide a clue to the understanding of why the woman wants this assertive position.

The psychological insecurity seen in middle-class Indian women today has affinities with the predicament of the much-hated British colonial memsahib. As amongst India's modern westernised women, the Raj saw a similar hunger in women to be seen to be important. A caption to one of the photographs in Allen's Plain Tales provides a reason for the

prevalence of intense status-consciousness. The caption reads: "The memsahib, Collector's wife, Belgaum. Often a victim of her own conventions, the memsahib found it hard to acquire a positive role in a male-oriented society". The references to loneliness and the secondary social role enjoyed by women which made them feel insecure, prefigure aspects of the modern Indian setting. If this reasoned realisation is grafted onto our consideration of Madhuri's and Kusum's lives, one can perhaps see why they insist on rigorous household standards. Similarly one can also understand why Lakshmi craves worldly honours and why Uma, who played an active role alongside her husband, does not feel the need to impress her personality upon her household.

While Jhabvala exposes the vulnerability of women, she does not depict women joined together by bonds of solidarity. For instance, in Esmond and the short story "Rose Petals" (How I Became a Holy Mother), the bond of closeness exists between father and daughter, between mother and son, rather than between mother and daughter. Shakuntala feels closer to her father than to her mother. She feels she has little to share with Madhuri who "never cared to follow her husband and daughter's cultural interests" (p.20). It is in her father's presence that Shakuntala feels "safer and therefore less defiant ... because he, she knew, was on her side, believed in the things she herself believed in" (p.46).

Similarly in "Rose Petals" the mother does not share her husband's enthusiasm for his job and her general air of indifference "annoyed" the daughter Mina who looks severely at her mother and Biju (a friend) "as if we were two children that were not to be trusted" (p.55). Mina is like Shakuntala in the same way as her father, the Minister, is like Har Dayal. Here there is a replay of the social

behaviour and attitudes seen in Esmond. It is Mina who "pours the tea for him and any guests there might be and takes an interest in what is being said. She ... likes it that her father is a cabinet minister" (p.53). In both cases the daughters consider their fathers as role models rather than their mothers. As in Esmond, it is the daughter and not the mother who "enjoys her father's parties and mingles with the guests" (p.54). While the differences between mother and daughter do not erupt into defiance as seen in Esmond, there is nonetheless little rapport or mutual support between Mina and her mother and the mother's disillusionment with the father is not shared by the daughter. This is like the situation in "The Housewife" (How I Became a Holy Mother), where Shakuntala's daughter Manju fails to understand her mother's dissatisfaction with a marriage that ensures material comfort but leaves her sexually unfulfilled. Consequently Manju is demanding and querulous on noticing her mother's "air of distraction". Together with the old aunt Phuphiji, Manju "drove Shakuntala crazy" (p.90). The husband meanwhile is "satisfied with her" (ibid), and does not listen to any insinuations against his wife for "he didn't come home to be pestered and needled by a pack of women" (p.100). Thus we see that in both Esmond and the short stories the two rival "sides" are therefore not men against women but rather mother against daughter.

It is not surprising then to discover that in Esmond, it is Amrit, "bathed and breakfasted, plump and clean and satisfied" (p.124), who more accurately reflects Madhuri's ideas of order and propriety. Shakuntala on the other hand usually "looked ... rather windblown - her hair loose about her shoulders, the sari not drawn discreetly enough over her well-developed breasts" (p.70). She defies her mother's efforts to make her into a model of circumspection reflecting the older woman's own neat and well turned-out figure.

In connection with this particular pattern in family relationships let us once again consider the narrative detail mentioned earlier concerning Madhuri's instructions about supper - "she ordered egg curry, for this was a dish of which her son Amrit was fond" (p:11). No mention is made of what the daughter may prefer. This omission on Madhuri's part could very well be illustrative of a more general attitude. In it one can trace the cause of both Shakuntala's open defiance of her mother's lifestyle and Amrit's acquiescence; or one could also say that it is because of the signs of affirmation she sees in her son that Madhuri is solicitous about his comforts, which include his culinary preferences. It is therefore not coincidental that Shakuntala the daughter is the one who flouts convention, while Amrit turns out to be a model of convention, holding down a lucrative job.

If we now compare Amrit to Vishnu, the well-to-do son in Get Ready for Battle, we will again see how ultimately profound the mother's influence on her son can be. At first glance it appears that both Amrit and Vishnu are photocopies of their fathers: rich, well-educated men who have attained a certain level of social success. There is however one welcome difference between the two. Vishnu is at least dissatisfied with his life. Bored with his job as a Junior Director in the family business (Gulzari Lal Properties), Vishnu is restless. He no longer seeks the company of his many friends who like him are also "doing well, in their father's and uncle's business ... Vishnu was tired of comfortable and prosperous people" (p.15).

The key factor accounting for the difference between Amrit and Vishnu is the mother. It is because his mother favours the status quo that Amrit in Esmond is what he is and it is because Sarla Devi has opted out of a life of meaningless luxury in order to lessen the misery of

the poor that Vishnu, unlike Amrit, questions the premises of his own existence. Jhabvala however is also aware of the ironies arising from Sarla Devi's action.

From the point of view of those with a social conscience in the western sense of the phrase, Sarla Devi's work with the poor is decidedly praiseworthy. Yet what is perceived as a social ideal by the outside world is interpreted as socially threatening by those within the society. Thus to the Indian who wishes to belong or at least to be seen to belong to a traditional - i.e. united - family, Sarla Devi's social work is seen as an abdication of family responsibilities. As a result Sarla Devi's daughter-in-law, Mala, prefers the presence of Kusum - her father-in-law's mistress. This is because Kusum's presence in the house can be guaranteed and this, along with the supervisory duties Kusum undertakes, does not negate "traditional" ideas of Indian family life. Stability and constancy are important to the young Indian wife, for promoting these ideals is the role she foresees for herself. So when confronted by her mother-in-law's actions, which ignore the importance of social values, Mala can only express the opinion of the socially orthodox, describing such behaviour in conventional terms: "How to neglect my child and leave my husband" (p.13). As Gulzari Lal affirms, Mala was "as the woman of the house should be ... she hardly left the house and had no interests outside it ... She was everything that his own wife had not been" (p.111). Mala's words therefore carry with them the condemnation of a society whose fears are aroused when a maternal figure who should preserve tradition chooses instead to live according to her own ideas of what is right. It is significant that Mala reserves her venom for Sarla Devi and does not pass any judgement on Kusum, although by the traditional moral codes of both western and

Indian societies, it is Kusum who is the more serious offender. Mala's reaction implies that social priorities preserving social continuity override moral considerations.

Furthermore there may after all after all be a grain of truth in Mala's outburst, for towards the end of the novel, when Vishnu tells his mother of his plans to leave the family business, he is disappointed. "He realized then that what he had come for was her love and approval, and he was disappointed that she was showing him neither" (p.158). Sarla Devi's concern for the slum dwellers of Bundi Busti and the prostitute discarded by her brother has numbed her responses to her son's needs.

It is Jhabvala's status as the outsider that makes it possible for her to discern the tangled ironies which make up certain social predicaments, just as it is her 'distance' from these same fraught situations that makes her aware of the woman's need to free herself from society's expectations. Ultimately what Sarla Devi desires is "to be free from her own body and from the sense of that of others. All her life she had wanted to be free and alone ... and all her life she had been tugged back by her compassion into a world where nothing could be accepted and everything had to be fought against" (p.122). The mother's need to divest herself of social and family pressures in order to seek the forbidden joy of freedom, which comes in various aspects, is a theme that Jhabvala often touches upon. Like Shakuntala the housewife, Sarla Devi is someone who is torn between duty and individual needs. Jhabvala recognises the unease and guilt experienced by women who do not range themselves on the side of those who belong to the world of convention. In wanting to be with her music master,

Shakuntala knows she is being socially wayward. "And the worst of it was that she was on their [her daughter and the old aunt] side, she knew she ought to be absorbed in their problems and blamed herself because she wasn't" (p.90).

While Jhabvala shows how women in a stable environment want to be free of social constraints, Naipaul explores a contrasting situation where in an uncertain world women draw closer together in order to seek the security lost through displacement and which solidarity appears to promise. As is usual, Naipaul links his portrayal of women to his exploration of joint family life and the man's position within such an organisation. We have already seen the strength of Shama's loyalty to her mother and sisters in her unquestioning and determined defence of her family's code of behaviour, where the rules laid down by Mrs Tulsi cannot be challenged. Hanuman House demands submission, and the sisters' strict adherence to the principle of uniformity extends to all areas of life with painful consequences for the children. The ideal of family "unity" is sustained by a negative emotion - the fear of being alone. It is this fear of being seen to be an outsider guided by and approving of standards other than those upheld by her family, that lies at the root of Shama's decision to destroy the doll's house which is Mr Biswas's Christmas present to Savi.

The gift makes the Tulsis feel exposed and this is evident from Mrs Tulsi's sarcastic remark. Her face "tight with anger", she self-righteously declares, "I am poor, but I give to all. It is clear, however, that I cannot compete with Santa Claus" (p.127). Mr Biswas's individuality of approach which brings pleasure to his daughter has succeeded in singling Savi out from the crowd, thereby threatening the Tulsi requirement of absolute uniformity. The consequence of this further exposes the vulnerability of the children. The other Tulsi

sisters, who are clearly envious, proceed to give vent to their negative feelings by hurling dire and undeserved threats at their children. The potential for rivalry resulting from a weakening of joint family bonds is immediately displayed: "The affronted sisters drew closer together, and Shama stood alone. Her eyes were wide with dread" (p.217).

In violating the Tulsis' most important norm Mr Biswas cannot hope to rely on Shama's support. "She stared accusingly at Mr Biswas" (217), and proceeds to heal the family breach by destroying the object of discord - the doll's house. Once again the father is thwarted from expressing fatherly love and assert^{ing} parental rights simply because the mother wishes to appease her mother and sisters. It is therefore significantly appropriate that although Savi subsequently informs her father that "..Ma mash it up" (p.219), it is her initial disclosure which unconsciously acknowledges the real force behind Shama's action: "They break it up" (p.218), [underlining mine]. Challenged by Mr Biswas, Shama's "eyes widened with fear and guilt and shame" (p.220), but the hope of family support sustains her. Sure enough, once she senses that through her action she has regained the position she temporarily lost among the sisterly ranks, she begins to speak "more surely ... and he could see that she was gaining strength from the approval of her sisters" (ibid).

It is this same sense of sorority which makes the pregnant Shama behave differently when her sisters are around. "With Mr Biswas she continued to be brisk, uncomplaining and almost unaware of her pregnancy. But when she was visited by her sisters ... she fanned herself and spat often, which she never did. when she was alone, but pregnant women were supposed to behave in this way" (p.160). Though the narrative contains a sarcastic jibe at Shama's expense, her

behaviour is symptomatic of a great deal of group behaviour where, in order to feel secure, it is necessary for both the group and the individual to see the signs affirming their common identity. It is not innate discomfort that makes Shama put on what appears to be ridiculous, stereotypical behaviour, but it is because she is "anxious not to disappoint [her sisters] or let herself down" (ibid). It is here that we see the need to belong asserting itself. One must however balance Naipaul's observations with a reference to the positive aspect of female groupings. Germaine Greer establishes the importance of the female "support system" (3), which is invaluable not only at the most significant period of an Indian woman's life - childbirth - but also later on when the children are growing up. To confirm how women provide one another with mutual support, Greer cites evidence from Amrit Wilson's research study entitled Finding a Voice: Asian Women in Britain, where a Bangladeshi woman recalls experiences paralleling those of many Indian women. "Children under the age of five or six are looked after by the whole family..one daughter-in-law baths them all. Perhaps the youngest daughter-in-law has cooked the meal. Another woman feeds them ... the other women help a lot" (p.25). Here it is possible to see how women are essential to the smooth running of the domestic organisation - a fact which is not brought out by Naipaul's version of Tulsi life in Mr Biswas.

Although Naipaul's novel makes us aware of the injustices and the comic irony springing from the woman's aim to safeguard family solidarity, the narrative also highlights her predicament. As in Jhabvala's novels and short stories, the woman's plight is a reminder of the social pressures placed upon the Indian woman, whose role in life is not an expression of her own personality but, as Kakar points

out, illustrates her "connections with others, her embeddedness in a multitude of familial relationships", the relative importance of which she has to continually prioritise (4).

Kakar however also refers to another reason which deters women from breaking out of the traditional mould. "The fact that women gain a powerful voice in family affairs as they age, that seniority holds out enormous rewards not just in status but in actual decision making, is one of the factors that contributes to ... their tenacious resistance to any separatist and divisive tendencies in the extended family" (ibid). Perhaps this also explains why the Tulsi daughters continue to conform, despite Mrs Tulsi's partiality for her sons whom Mr Biswas nicknames the "young gods". Where the Trinidadian-Indian woman is concerned, her behaviour may well be governed by yet another impulse which also influenced early Aryan settlers in India. The preservation of "the established pattern and ideals of life", which originally formed part of the "Hindu or Aryan-Brahmanic society and culture in a "hostile geographical and human environment", could only be achieved through "the rigid disciplining of its members" (5) Kakar notes that this historical aim to preserve tradition and discourage dissension is especially strong among Indian women, in whom "conservatism" is particularly strong (p.121).

The above focus on Indian women therefore shows how a multiplicity of reasons affect social and familial behaviour within Indian society. It is hoped that understanding the dynamics involving tensions between the group and the individual, between man and wife, between mother and daughter, between parents and children, between tradition and rebellion can provide an insight into the struggles between belonging and not belonging in areas of life beyond the Indian milieu.

1. Greer, Sex and Destiny, p.23
2. However it is also necessary to point out that Mr Biswas's feeling of personal insignificance in the eyes of Tulsi women is part of a larger fear which continually haunts him - the prospect of being the kind of person who is dispensable and easily forgotten. Such sombre thoughts are recorded earlier in the novel, although they point forward to the time when as a magazine reporter, Mr Biswas revisits the place where "he had spent his early years". All that meets his eye is an expanse of land covered by "oil derricks and grimy pumps ... The world carried no witness to Mr Biswas's birth and early years" (p.41).
3. Greer, p.22
4. Kakar, p.62
5. Chaudhuri, To Live or not to Live, pp.112-113

CONCLUSION

"He might have found reasonable explanations but he would not have told the truth which, being a territory, is explored more easily than told" (CSF,p.74). The image of the explorer symbolising the human urge to understand the unknown, and his discovery that there is not just one explanation for what is, appropriately expresses the essence of this thesis. Belonging and Not Belonging has fundamentally been a study of the hidden processes underlying human behaviour and why they are so variedly expressed in literature.

It is through a questioning of the reasons governing human responses, that the thesis has sought to uncover those "reasonable explanations" which by initially clarifying the particular, build up a comprehensive understanding of a greater subsuming truth. However, as the thesis has demonstrated, this "truth" became an increasingly difficult thing to define, seemingly changing with every change in the position of the observer. Hence the title of the thesis, which recognises the importance of acknowledging an-other point-of-view, if truth is to affirm its all-encompassing attribute.

India's historical connection with Britain was an appropriate background against which to begin this study of human encounters with the Other, however muted or overt the interaction may have been. This is because the colonial relationship is an area of experience in which the outsider can be easily identified and the condition of being an outsider most easily grasped. It is those individuals who do not belong culturally or socially, who have ironically been the means of defining the sense of belonging which, as we have seen, was based on openly shared values and attitudes.

Where the British were concerned these attitudes included a literal distancing from the local population - a position which symbolically reflected their sense of racial and moral superiority. But the attempt of the group to remain inviolate vis-a-vis the local alien population proved precarious, simply because of that basic human attraction for the Unknown. Hence the public policy of keeping the outsider at bay was undermined by the surreptitious but powerful demands of the forbidden, to which those who belonged to the ruling group succumbed. The ambiguities and conflicts resulting from threats made by the Unknown upon the equilibrium of the familiar informed the love-hate relationship between Britain and India.

What is interesting about this love-hate relationship is that it was also reinforced by the Indians. Through their lifestyle, westernised Indians underline one of the most ironic results of colonisation - colonised nations chose to emulate and thereby perpetuate British customs and attitudes. Moreover, unlike the British memsahibs under the Raj, there was none of that silent struggle to resist 'alien' influences among middle-class Indians.

The paradoxical nature of the Indo-British relationship can however be understood if one looks beneath superficial difference to identify similarities. The hierarchical structure of the two societies and their prejudice about colour were but two of the most obvious factors that proved equally responsible for the attraction between the two peoples and the bitter suspicion that kept them apart. Witness therefore those same conservative reactions to an alien environment, seen in both the British and the Indians. It is clear therefore that to be both attracted and repelled by the Other must needs imply a great affinity to it.

It is as much the effects as the reasons for two nations confronting each other which invite discussion. The sycophantic attitude, which often accompanied the conscious choice on the part of Indians and West-Indian Indians to adopt a western lifestyle, naturally became a target for comic satirical narrative treatment. However all three authors show the tragic side of comedy by drawing attention to the painful effects of colonial policies. The thesis has shown how, unsure of their cultural status, colonised peoples became vulnerable to the potency of western culture which, cruelly enough, did not then provide them with a refuge. Having been made to feel they did not belong, the Empire-builders have executed their own revenge, the long-term and acutely felt effects of which could not have been initially imagined. There is however the corresponding pathos among westerners exiled in the tropics, for whom a return to their homeland is no longer a welcome prospect. Their predicament is sensitively explored by Scott and Jhabvala.

However, what Jhabvala, Scott and Naipaul highlight is the fact that homelessness is not necessarily an Indian predicament, nor is it necessarily brought about by cultural displacement. The journeys which westerners make between two cultures, or two continents, can be an expression of a dissatisfaction with their own personal circumstances. If this is considered in conjunction with the Indian's conscious decision to imbibe western ways of life when no longer compelled to do so, one begins to see how the outsider-culture has become part of a general human search to fill an inner void. The novels therefore demonstrate that the attraction of another world increases in proportion to the inadequacies of one's private world. The journeys from the old to the new, from the familiar to the strange, express that transcending human wish to arrive at a destination which will

somehow offer a much sought after resolution. It is because the hopes for fulfillment in such circumstances are so high, that the potential for disillusionment is just as great. There is however a 'positive' note which sounds through all these searchings. This dissatisfaction with one's immediate condition constitutes a defiant protest against a complacent acceptance of the status quo, which has stimulated inquiry and literary output.

The colonial predicament, with its attendant yearnings, its fragile hopes, its irresolutions therefore epitomises the complexity of life itself and the human desire to transform it. This is most poignantly perceived in Naipaul's A House for Mr Biswas, which tells both a general and a personal story. The narrative attitude challenging inherited values speaks of a spirit that has broken free of cultural ties and views the world afresh - displacement has endowed the exile with a 'second sight'.

Yet the euphoria of independence is tinged with sadness, for there is still a need for that comfort which so evidently accrues to those who form part of the traditional group. It is in Mr Biswas that we saw the plight of the colonised individual, the coloniser and indeed of all human beings who know that to strike out on their own carries with it the risk of forfeiting familiar securities. This was for example seen in Miss Crane's sadness on being socially snubbed by the Anglo-Indian community, in Daphne Manners' endurance of ostracisation, and in Mr Biswas's overt rejection of Tulsi domination which concealed his unconscious need for their support. Loneliness invariably overtakes those who struggle to define the frontiers of 'self' which leads them to oscillate frustratingly between belonging and not belonging.

The angst, which accompanies a consciousness of one's indeterminate status, was also seen to be part of family life and was expressed through the interactions between men and women. Men were portrayed as weak characters lacking in substance and subservient to the wishes and whims of their wives, their mistresses or their mothers. Consequently we encountered women working efficiently in groups and strong maternal figures exercising considerable influence over the destiny of their husbands and offspring. Naipaul showed how women see themselves as the core of family life which they reinforce by blatantly excluding men from participating in joint family activity. Husbands who rebel against the collective female code are made to feel their outsider status even more acutely. Although women in Jhabvala's novels were shown to be more subtle in undermining male credibility, they too are nearly always confident of their paramount position as architects of family cohesiveness.

What was seen as significantly revealing about the portrayal of female characters however was that it revealed the sadder aspect of the woman's position linked to the fear of not belonging. While women may be adept at making men feel they do not belong, they are themselves even more afraid of being rejected by their own gender group. A female sense of security was seen to depend on the supportive presence of other women, and was clearly evident in A House for Mr Biswas. Desperate to remain within the collective fold, women consciously made decisions that proved hurtful not only to husbands and children, but also to themselves. The wishes of the Joint Family supersede in importance the needs of the individual.

Women not only have to suffer the pressure exerted on them by other women but in sustaining general social ideals, they do not necessarily experience any great sense of power. Madhuri in Esmond in India may

appear powerfully effective in manipulating her family and keeping it united, but her self possessed exterior hides a person unsure of the influence she wields - in private she remains anxious about ways to maintain her credibility. The obligation to uphold family togetherness could also run counter to personal inclination, the indulgence of which incited social disapproval, as was experienced by Sarla Devi in Get Ready for Battle. The examination of Indian joint family life was therefore a means of drawing together the several strands of discussion regarding the portrayal of women, who are crucial in establishing the patterns of family life and yet are still very vulnerable within society.

The alone-ness of women, suffering under the constraints of social expectations, is a subject which offers the potential for further research, especially if one includes the lonely women figures in Anita Desai's Fire on the Mountain and Where shall we go this Summer?. Such a study could easily include Jung Chang's Wild Swans and Maxine Hong Kingston's Woman Warrior, where fact and fiction offer similar portraits of women from other Oriental cultures, as seen through the eyes of writers estranged from their ancestral homelands. Together these writers provide material for an engaging study of the intensely fraught internal but silent lives which women continually lead.

The broad scope of the thesis encompassing colonial, gender and family relationships endorses the universal nature of the experience explored in the thesis. Belonging and not belonging can be understood by all simply because, in some form or the other, it is experienced by all. A means of explanation has therefore been offered for a great deal of complex group and individual behaviour.

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