CHAPTER III:
Non-fictional accounts of the Rising from the English point of view

While dealing with an event of historical significance, the non-fictional accounts and recollections of the same become very important, as they are the personal documentations of events and lives, recording the event as well as the experience. In the case of the Rebellion, these memoirs studied together provide a glimpse of the multiplicity of perspectives associated with it, each true in its own way, being a record of personal fears, apprehensions and loss. It is in this way that they come to form an enriching social document of the period, providing facts for the historians and emotional impetus for litterateurs.

The Rising of 1857 affected the lives of a large number of people belonging to different sections of the society, different nations, different castes as well as biological sexes. Each of these realms of differences contributes in its own way to the comprehensive understanding of an otherwise black and white phenomenon. As class becomes important in terms of loyalty of the pen, similarly nationality influences human sympathy, and caste explains the division which hindered the event from taking on a national colour in the 19th century India, in the true sense of the term. Gender, too, adds an immensely diverse dimension to the mainstream understanding of the Rising, for while men were killing and destroying on both the sides, Indian women were still lactating the children of the Other, while the white women sought shelter from those belonging to their own sex – a process
which later inspired fiction. Unfortunately, in terms of gender, the memoirs and diaries are few on the part of the English women, while there are perhaps none by the gendered Other.

The diaries, memoirs and autobiographies to be studied in detail with reference to the above points shall include the memoirs of Colonel A.R.D. Mackenzie who was the commander of the 8th Irregular Cavalry at Bareilly when they rebelled, the diary of the anonymous lady of Lucknow who came to accompany her husband a few months before the Rising, the letters of Ashton Cromwell Warner and his brother Wynyard, involved in the Siege of Lucknow and the capture of Delhi, respectively, the recollections of Vishnu Bhatt Godshe Versaikar, a Chitpavan Brahmin, whose journey across the Vindhya mountains coincided accidentally with the Rising, Dastambu by Mirza Ghalib and the autobiography of Durgadas Bandyopadhyay, a Bengali employed in the East India Company as he risked his life repeatedly in the hands of his own countrymen in his attempts to remain loyal to the Company. For the simplification of analysis, the study shall be divided into two separate chapters. The present chapter shall take upon a discussion of the memoirs of Mackenzie, the diary of the anonymous lady of Lucknow and the letters of the Warner brothers.
Mutiny Memoirs

Being
PERSONAL REMINISCENCES
of the
GREAT SEPOY REVOLT OF 1857

Colonel A.R.D. Mackenzie, C.B.
Honorary A.D.C. to the Viceroy

Edited by
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"Mutiny Memoirs: Being Personal Reminiscences of the Great Sepoy Revolt of 1857" is divided into nine chapters by Colonel Mackenzie. In the Preface, he writes that these "reminiscences...do not pretend to any merit but that of truth" and offer "a rough sketch of the great Indian Mutiny as it appeared to the eyes of a young Subaltern Officer of Native Cavalry, who had the good fortune to be engaged in its suppression" (Mackenzie 79). As declared, Mackenzie in his records offers all the experiences he had as an eyewitness and claims "conclusive contemporary documentary evidence" for the same (Mackenzie 82).

In the very first chapter entitled 'The Outbreak', Mackenzie dismisses the entire controversy of the cartridges as "absurd" and warrants "so innocent a compound as bees' wax and clarified butter had been applied as lubricant" (Mackenzie 82). He, however, accepts the "cartridge question" to have been "the test as to which was stronger – the native soldier or the Government" and refers to the circulation of mysterious *chupattis* which "have never been fathomed by Englishmen, but there can be no doubt that they were in some way a signal" (Mackenzie 83). While recollecting the "special parade" arranged to "test the willingness or otherwise of the carabineers of his regiment to use the cartridges", where 85 soldiers refused to do so, and describing the consequences of the court martial thereafter, met out on the morning of the 9th of May, one can notice for the first time perhaps the narrative voice as not only that of blinded authority but also a sensitive rational human individual who could describe the punishment as "degrading", and after a graphic description thus conclude on a satiric note: "the impressive ceremony was duly finished" (Mackenzie 83-84). That the author was initially all for the natives
finds expression as he writes that on being informed of the outbreak by his bearer, his "sympathies were all in the wrong direction" and he "would secretly have rejoiced to have seen the insult avenged" (Mackenzie 84). This is the quality which makes Mackenzie's record worth interest especially in this era of plurality and multiplicity.

On discovering the reality and the danger of the prevailing situation, as Mackenzie went through the burning streets and found his sister still unharmed, they took refuge for the night "in the grounds of a small Hindu shrine, strongly built of masonry, on a high plinth, and with only one entrance, approached by a flight of stone or brick steps" (Mackenzie 88). He further records "once there, we were safe from being burnt out, and indeed from any successful attack of any kind" (Mackenzie 89). This brings in an exceptional counter discourse for while religious faith and bias have been cited by many as the cause of the Rising, one may discern here that the same religious faith also offered to the colonizer a successful strategy for refuge and security.

While relating the adventures of another Quartermaster-Sergeant and two young officers being pursued by the rebels, Mackenzie narrates the story of "a sweeper, the lowest and most despised caste of Indian domestics" who "heedless of the certainty that his own life would be sacrificed to the fury of the mob disappointed of its prey, implored them to follow him" (Mackenzie 92). This disproves V.D. Savarkar's claim of the Rising of 1857 as the first war of Independence, because these seeds of mutual differences, rooted in the practices such as Casteism never really permitted a completely integrated nationalistic Uprising in 19th century India. Though many other such heroes who gave away their lives
to save another’s overlooking all apparent differences of colour and nation have slipped down the cracks of mainstream history, Mackenzie adds in his memoirs as a tribute “no more beautiful deed ever brightened the dark days of the ‘57 than the self-sacrifice of this obscure and nameless hero” – a point which further problematizes the interpretation of the Rising as civilizational violence (Mackenzie 92).

While describing their nights and days as refugees in the Meerut garrison, Mackenzie elaborates upon the English concept of retribution and explains the administrative reasons that went behind the delay in suppressing the rebellion. His understanding of the human situation is reflected when he records “it is really difficult to exaggerate the demoralization which at that period seemed to overcome the nerves of certain of the more weak-kneed among us. Every native was to their excited imagination a ‘Pandy’” (Mackenzie 97). As he describes the manner in which the trusted servants were suspected and interrogated, the human face of the author emerges clear in his disapproval of this indignation of the natives.

That the ‘mutineers’ were not wholeheartedly supported by the regional natives either is seen in Mackenzie’s recollections as he describes an event of rescuing some of the English women and children who had been given shelter by the natives of a village nearby. Of this mission headed by himself and Lieutenant Hugh Gough, he writes “only once did we meet with a show of opposition in a large village, but most fortunately we thought it probable that the inhabitants were alarmed at our French-grey uniforms, and took us for a party of mutineers on the prowl. So Gough and I halted the men and rode on
alone. The sight of our white faces reassured the villagers, and our explanations calmed them" (Mackenzie 101). The words “prowl” and “reassured” not only question the gradual nationalist portrayal of the Rising, but also problematize the process of interpretation and reading of history through the regimented colours of the Union Jack or the Tricolour, as human lives are seen to intermingle beyond definite cartographic and nationalistic borders and interests.

However, since no published word can be read to be devoid of ideological motivations, one also comes across justification of the violence perpetuated by the English soldiers in the name of retribution in reading through Mackenzie’s account. As for instance, while describing the journey of his regiment from Meerut to Delhi, he records “on the road we succeeded in capturing several miscreants who had committed murderous outrages on our unfortunate countrymen and women while trying to effect their escape from Delhi. They were given the benefit of a fair trial; and those who were found guilty were duly hanged” (Mackenzie 104). This sentence justifies not only the concept of ‘retribution’ but also claims appreciation for the Christian sense of justice and duty, through the ambiguous use of the “fair trial”, hitherto unaccounted for in the context of the English ‘retribution’ post Rising.

This viewpoint of national pride is further consolidated in the author’s reminiscence of the moment when he reached the Ridge with his regiment as he writes “we knew that the men in these tents were sure, some day before many weeks were over, to storm, the formidable walls of the great fortress, and to carry the British flag in triumph into its
innermost citadel” (Mackenzie 108). However, the humanistic zeal finds an expression at places such as the one where the regiment at Ridge caught one of the sepoys “skulking under a bush” and the author writes “I could not help thinking his luck was very hard; and doubtless my face betrayed my feelings; for the unfortunate man, with an appealing look at me, declared he was no sepoy, but had been my domestic servant; and he implored me to bear witness to his truth and save his life...It was impossible to swear to a falsehood; but I pleaded hard...that he might be allowed to escape” (Mackenzie 112).

Perhaps the only sentence which reveals the authenticity of the authorial voice as a distant onlooker to the posterity is “if the mutineers had been cruel as the most savage of wild beasts, fearful was the revenge which many and many a time was wreaked on them by our maddened troops” (Mackenzie 110). Though this too may be read as an ideologically motivated use of verbiage, with words like “maddened” in response to “savage of wild beasts” justifying to some extent the nature of British violence, nevertheless “many and many a time”, emphasizes the severity of the degree of ‘retribution’, un/intentionally.

Referring to John Kaye’s *History of the Sepoy War in India*, Mackenzie writes “it is an imperishable tribute to the glory of our arms, and no one who reads its narrative of the brave deeds done by Englishmen, civilians as well as soldiers, aided by Sikhs and Gurkhas and the few other loyal races of India...can help feeling his heart fill with honest and patriotic pride, and with confident hope that if ever again so fierce a struggle should be forced on ourselves or our descendants, the old spirit cf the Anglo-Saxon race will
prove true to itself' (Mackenzie 119). This sentence problematizes the concept of nationalism, especially in the context of the 21st century diasporic existence, as Sikhs and Gurkhas also come to be included in the course of one long winding sentence under the "old spirit of the Anglo Saxon race".

That the author owes his record of the Rising to his country and therefore, slips over certain controversial historical facts with an acute sense of political correctness can be seen in his reference to the capture of Bahadur Shah Zafar – "the story of the capture of the old King and the slaughter of the Princes by Hodson is too well known to need repetition" (Mackenzie 124). In an otherwise sweeping record of life and adventures during the Rising, with repeated reference to the heroism of the 'Anglo-Saxon race' and even assertion of a 'fair trial' having been given to the rebels, probably the tone of personal condemnation and disapproval cannot be overlooked in the usage of the word 'slaughter'.

That the Mutiny Memoirs is not just a dry military account of the mis/adventures of the Rising can be seen very clearly, especially on one occasion when the author relates how he was reminded of the tale of 'Morgiana and the forty thieves' – an Oriental narrative, while searching for a certain chobdar. Mackenzie writes "for an hour or more, we hunted without success, when, in a small dark room, I noticed one of the large mud-built jars in which natives store their grain...Morgiana and the forty thieves flashed across my mind...I removed the lid...and caught hold of – a thick beard. A long pull and a strong pull – and out came the 'chobdar' at full length!" (Mackenzie 133). This episode is not
just thrilling but also a wonderful instance of how literature has permeated the realm of history, in the very minutest of occurrences, time and again.

Probably the myriad reality of the Rising is brought out at its best in Mackenzie’s Memoirs when he draws a picture of the English camp in intervals of peace and says how during this time they would hear various stories of the Anglo-Sikh war from the Sikh soldiers who had now joined the English army against the rebels to assist in ‘retribution’. Narrating one such episode he writes of “a fine sturdy old Sikh gentleman” who had told him upon his asking the story behind the scar upon the “bridge of his nose” – “you have heard of the great battle at Chilianwala, and you know how fierce it was, and how stoutly the Sikhs of the Khalsa fought that day. The Sirkar Angrez claims the victory; but believe me, Sahib, we won that fight. Did not the Jungie Lat Sahib retire from the field after the battle? Did we not capture four of your guns and the standards of three of your regiments? Did not our horsemen overthrow the Gora Regiment and the Hindustani rissala?” (Mackenzie 147). The helplessness of the situation lends a tragic splendour to both the sides – the Sikh soldiers as they fight not just the rebels but also the memories of the defeat which changed their lives forever, and the Englishmen as they were compelled to tolerate these proud recollections within their own camp. In one of the early recollections of the outbreak of the rebellion, Mackenzie writes referring to the courage shown by his sister and another Englishwoman who was with her “I learned during that awful night the quiet heroism of which our gentle countrywomen are capable in the hour of need” (Mackenzie 88). A study of A Lady’s Diary of the Siege

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of Lucknow not only substantiates Mackenzie’s point on “heroism”, but probably also interrogates the use of “quiet” as a befitting epithet, even so many years down the event, for if heroism on the part of the man was aggressive retribution, i.e. loss of lives and destruction, that on the part of the woman was nurturing hope and life even under the most negative circumstances till the end, and bearing patiently not only the loss and pain, but also a complete reversal of fate due to no fault of their own.

The diary as a literary genre has an added advantage over all other representations in the sense that it is a personalized record springing from direct experience and perception of events and people. It is therefore able to portray the very process of the making of history by putting forth the primary observations on which the later terms and viewpoints are based. The diaries maintained by the British women living in India during the colonial regime provide an interesting insight into the minutest details of everyday life and social interactions with the colonized Other. Ketaki Kushari Dyson observes “all too often the attitudes of a handful of prominent and powerful men are regarded as all-important, and the views and feelings of ‘intelligent laymen’, including women, are neglected or bypassed. Yet it is in the latter that the real texture of opinion in a period, with all its heterogeneity, confusion and contradictions, is often most faithfully as well as picturesquely captured.” (Das 35) Written mainly for oneself and readers within a defined domestic circle the diaries maintained by the British women present factual accounts devoid of any politicized afterthought. It is from this point of view that A Lady’s Diary of the Siege of Lucknow becomes an important text in the study of the representations of 1857.

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First published anonymously in 1858, *A Lady's Diary of the Siege of Lucknow* specifies that it was “written for the perusal of friends at home” as a subhead on the title page of the book. The writer of this diary is believed to have arrived at Lucknow with her husband in March 1857. In a letter dated 14 December 1857 she writes “I have kept a rough sort of journal during the whole siege, often written under the greatest difficulties—part of the time with a child in my arms or asleep in my lap; but I persevered, because I knew if we survived you would like to live our siege life over in imagination, and the little details would interest you; besides the comfort of talking to you” (Anon Preface). That an exemplification of “the greatest difficulties” would mean a “child” at the very beginning indicates that this is an account of the other side of the Uprising, far away from heroism in battlefield, while “persevered” brings in the human spirit of endurance, invariably associated with the gendered Other in the history of humankind. The “little details” therefore promise a glimpse of that side of the Uprising which in all probability may not have formed a part of mainstream narration of the history of two nations/civilizations.
A Lady's Diary of the Siege of Lucknow

October 8.

A heavy blizzard yesterday, and a heavy gale of the enemy's artillery.
The diary opens with an entry dated 15 May 1857 describing the author’s condition when the news of the outbreak at Meerut reaches them in Lucknow. She records “such awful news has come that I still feel paralysed with horror”, and further “no particulars are known, nor even the extent of the insurrection; or whether it is the people or the Sepoys” (Anon 1). These lines convey the helplessness of the gendered Other within indoors as she hears of the happenings of the outside world and finds herself in a situation where though she can sense the horror, yet she may do nothing save writing about her own fears in a closed diary. However, the well-informed mind of the author can be perceived as she mentions the actual incident: “at Meerut there has been a rising among the native troops” (Anon 01). It would be worthwhile to note here that the event is referred to by the author as “insurrection” or “rising” and the soldiers as “native troops” or “rebels”. The immediate administrative coloring imparted to the event and the people as “mutiny” and “mutineers” can rarely be found in this record.

In mentioning that “the rebels showed fight till they had received a volley from the Rifles, and then they all ran away”, the diary also reveals how the inner chambers of the Residency were misinformed, probably, in order to maintain normality even under such circumstances (Anon 01). The entry concludes with a reference to Captain Douglas who was killed at the Uprising at Meerut, as the author bemoans “one’s heart should bleed for his miserable wife, who little knows now that she will never look upon his face again in this world”, thereby enhancing the pathos of the incident and exhibiting the human
quality of compassion in empathizing with the fate of one of her own kind across the seas, even when she is herself going through such dangerous times (ibid).

In her next entry dated 16 May, she writes “these are fearful times, and it seems as if our tenure in India hung by a thread; for if the native army turns against us, nothing humanly speaking can save us” (Anon 02). Being based on direct experience, this statement reveals the intensity of the Rising and the fear that it generated much better than later historical records or interpretations of the event. Whether or not one may be justified in reading the Rising as the first national war of independence, it is here that one gets to understand the immense impact it had upon the ruling class and the challenge it posed to the established power structure. It also reveals the political insight of the author as she is able to fathom the exact situation from even behind the thickly curtained walls of the Lucknow Residency.

The author further observes “there have been three regiments disbanded, and the men turned loose on the country to foment ill-feeling; whereas, if the first which mutinied had been annihilated with grape-shot, there would have been an end of tumult, and many lives saved”. Almost a couple of centuries after the event, when one reads the text, one cannot but miss the resonance of Machiavellian thought here, as he latter had written in The Prince: “men ought either to be well-treated or crushed, because they can avenge themselves of lighter injuries, of more serious ones they cannot; therefore the injury that is to be done to a man ought to be of such a kind that one does not stand in fear of revenge” (Machiavelli 07). Such level of perception in an English woman of the 19th
century, no matter how one-sided, exhibits a thinking mind, intelligent enough to reason and rationalize.

It would be worthwhile to mention here that in the next entry dated 18 May 1857, written by the husband of the author, he writes: “I really have hope we may ride over the crisis yet; there does not seem to be perfect combination amongst the alien troops, and hence the chance for us. It is certainly fearful to know that this, humanly speaking, is our only hope” (Anon 03). That the lack of a “perfect combination” between the sepoys was quite discernible even at the time of the Uprising, is later asserted by Durgadas Bandyopadhyay as well in his experience of the Rising as a sepoy of the East India Company, as he gives vent to the tendency of sectarian ghettoization amongst the sepoys. This fact has also been admitted by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his documentation of the Revolt of 1857 in Glimpses of World History: “it had no good leadership; it was badly organized, and there were mutual squabbles all the time” (Nehru 480). It must be mentioned here that Nehru was writing of this analysis on 27 November 1932 – a year very significant in being placed 25 years after Savarkar’s claim, 15 years before the independence/partition of India, and exactly 25 years before the celebration of the centenary of the Uprising, organized by the Government of India with Nehru himself as the Prime Minister. This probably is one of the major clues in understanding the politicized need to celebrate the Uprising as an event of national significance in post-independence/post-partition India.
On the same day the author records in her entry “all this discontent and mutinous spirit among the Sepoys has been going on some time, but Government has shut its eyes to and laughed at it, till now it may be too late” (Anon 05). This observation testifies the negligence of the British Government not only towards the management of its colonies but also the grievance it had created amongst its own employees by not rendering proper attention to their circumstances, and therefore, brings out the tragedy of those individuals in the service of the East India Company who fell prey to the enraged sepoys as representatives of the alien government but who did not have much support from their own country either.

The suddenness with which the Rising broke out finds it mention in an entry dated 20 May 1857 where the author writes: “their plots have been carried on so secretly, that till they broke out into open mutiny, they were not suspected” (Anon 06). In the same entry she continues about the sepoys going to Delhi: “they went to the heir-apparent, proclaimed him king, and being joined by the city people, and three regiments of Native Infantry, proceeded with their massacre” (Anon 07). The uncertainty and chaos embedded in the Rising perhaps finds an expression here, much against the charges stated at the trial of Bahadur Shah Zafar: “for that he, being a subject of the British Government in India, and not regarding the duty of his allegiance, did, at Delhi, on the 11th of May 1857, or thereabouts, as a false traitor against the State, proclaim and declare himself the reigning King and Sovereign of India, and did then and there traitoriously seize and take unlawful possession of the City of Delhi” (Nayar 04).
While recording and maintaining facts is the area of history and historical studies, truth is a subjective phenomenon, and is therefore often overlooked in the record of facts. However, a historical event can be brought alive and studied in its complete vivacity only when fact and truth are blended together to re-produce the event in its totality. For instance, the focus of the academic debate about the Rising of 1857 has throughout been on whether or not it may be called the first war of Indian Independence, which is, nevertheless, a question inviting and encouraging binaristic conclusions. However, when read side by side with the personal records of the historical facts, they give rise to that diversity and multiplicity of records and contexts which has been an integral part of the Indian tradition.

In an entry dated 22 May, the narrator refers to Oude as “a country of which we have so lately taken unjust possession” (Anon 11). This reveals the sensible mind of the author, in being able to understand the truth as different from the projected facts of the Empire, i.e. in the context of the annexation of Oude. It is this ability to introspect and assess that makes this diary important, especially from the gender point of view, the position and status of women in England being what it was during the 19th century.

The description of the outbreak at Lucknow found in this anonymous diary probably includes angles obliterated from the otherwise mainstream writing of history. While recording the Rising and the act of escape, the author writes “the B.s have lost every single thing they possessed in the world, and our three large boxes containing all our worldly goods, with the exception of my mourning, and a dozen of linen we had with us,
are all gone too... poor C. is quite ruined, for they had furnished their house so nicely, and had so many beautiful things brought out with them: but we can think of nothing but his merciful preservation" (Anon 17). While guns, rifles, bullets, cartridges, ammunition find ample mention in the context of the Rising, the mention of "worldly goods", "linen", nicely furnished house are rarely found, and this establishes the difference in the perspective of the gendered Other, whose entire business of residing in the Colony was confined to a separate English domesticity, cultivated and preserved within the inner chambers.

Even under such crisis, as the lady wrote to her mother, she did not miss out on the misadventures which probably could be noted only by a female pen: "I have just heard of a lady, Mrs Benson, who escaped with her husband (a civilian) from Harriabad: they were disguised in native clothes. She dressed as an ayah, and had to walk seven miles, when they found some ponies, which they mounted. Her feet, poor thing! Are in the most dreadful state" (Anon 22). While a male pen would have focused upon the heroism of the husband and how they were finally rescued by the officers, the female pen chose to dwell upon the hardships of the woman and thereby reveals the domestic situation of the English household during that time with the extremely important role of the 'ayah', i.e., the Other woman – an easily and perhaps, the only attainable disguise for the English woman during the Rising.

In the context of the Rising, if 'retribution' has always signified the justice met out to the rebels by the English soldiers in the mainstream records of colonial history, A Lady's
*Diary* brings in a counter-discourse to the established fact as she writes “_____ was speaking at dinner to-day, of the iniquity of the annexation of Oude, and thinks the tribulation we are now in is a just punishment to our nation for the grasping spirit in which we have governed India; the unjust appropriation of Oude being a finishing stroke to a long course of selfish seeking our own benefit and aggrandizement. No doubt it is a judgment of God, and that we have greatly abused our power; and, as a Government, opposed the spread of Christianity; while individually, by evil example and practices, we have made our religion a reproach in the eyes of the natives. God grant that this heavy chastisement may bring all to a better mind!” (Anon 33). This perhaps suggests why the rebels attacked the churches and accommodates the often sidetracked area of self-analysis, as power and politics continue to remain realms of aggression, conquest and justification of deeds, instead of retrospection of those actions which might have been unjust from the point of view of the colonized Other.

Another rare description found in *A Lady’s Diary* is that about the uniform of the soldiers, rarely found in the mainstream narratives. She notes: “all the officers have had their white jackets, trousers, and cap-overs dyed slate or mud-colour, partly to save the washing and partly because that colour is so much less prominent a mark for the enemy. They look such queer figures” (Anon 36). This statement illustrates the observation of a woman, not only analyzing the reason behind such a petty change in such hours of crisis as the practical necessity as warfare strategy but also a domestic reality of ‘washing’ which, though apparently, out of context and even humorous to a certain degree, provides
an understanding of the mind of the white woman also taken up with the basic facts of existence as seen from the gendered perspective.

A very interesting fact comes up when the author writes “we had service, and all received comfort in the Holy Communion downstairs in the Tye Khana...we all sleep (that is, eleven ladies and seven children) on the floor of the Tye Khana, where we spread mattresses and fit into each other like bits in a puzzle” (Anon 45). This shows the keen observation and expressive powers of the anonymous author and elevates the diary to the level of a literary piece instead of just another documentation of the Rising.

Amidst a scene of terrible violence and bloodshed, *A Lady’s Diary* provides a very different view from various angles, but the most touching part of the entire narrative probably lies in its elaborate record of how the children fell victims to cholera and various other diseases, and how the author and the other women would take care of them and in the process, nurture the minutest possibility of life with their sweat and blood, though surrounded by death and destruction on all sides, fearing a siege every moment. For instance, at one point she writes “both the little D.s are ill with diarrhoea, and I am up half the night with them” (Anon 50). In another entry she records “I have the sole charge of little Ally D., and now he is getting better, but is not well enough to play about, nor ill enough to lie down as he used to; I seldom have him out of my arms and feel rather as if he must be my own child; he is getting such a darling” (Anon 62). The diary abounds in entries like these from page to page, and leaves one wondering if this silent fight against death and disease within the dampness of the Tye Khana is also not a deed as glorious as...
that of rebellion and retribution, since these facts have disappeared down the pages of historiography among the tales and narratives of greater heroism and tragedy.

With the passage of time, the author continues to record events as they occur, i.e. their gradually improving conditions and transportation to the camp of Dilkoosha. However, the humanitarian understanding of the miserable plight of the others is recorded with the greatest detailing till the end, along with vivid descriptions of nursing the children, healing the wounded, overcoming death etc – the narratives which humanize the lives of those who spent their lives within the thickly guarded walls of the Residency and had their own regular battles to fight in assisting the victory of life over death.

That these silent warriors accepted everything that their came in their way as Providence, is asserted towards the end of the journal as the author writes in the context of the delay of the rebels in attacking the Residency where they had spent some of the most terrible days of their lives as refugees: “if they had had the smallest particle of courage, they could have walked in with the greatest ease; but God turned their hearts to water for our deliverance” (Anon 112). It is in this faith and thankfulness, though continuously fighting against the unknown fears in an unknown land, that the diary attains a tragic splendour, and stands to represent that marginalized section of human population affected by the Rising, who suffered without any valid reason.

A very interesting perspective is ushered into the Siege of Lucknow when one goes through The Warner Letters compiled by June Bush and published in 2008. Since one of
the Warner brothers – Ashton Warner, was present at the Lucknow Residency during the Siege, it is from his letters and in the course of the narrative constructed by June Bush that one gets to know that the author of A Lady’s Diary of the Siege of Lucknow was Mrs. Harris – the wife of “the thirty-four year old assistant army chaplain, the Rev. James Harris” (Bush 58). When read together, these two accounts of the same event – from the points of view of an active English officer and an unfortunate Englishwoman accidentally caught in the Uprising, bring alive the historic incident through the formation of a continuous dialogue between two sufferers/survivors sharing the same past, from two different subject-positions.

Ashton Warner reached India in 1853 and was shortly followed by his brother Wynyard. While the former endured the Uprising at Lucknow, the latter was engaged in the taking over of Delhi after the suppression of the Uprising and pursuing the other rebels thereafter. In one of his early letters after the outbreak of the rebellion in Meerut, Ashton writes: “This is a religious disturbance among all classes in India...every measure is now being taken by Government and the Public to impress on the Men’s Minds that no attempt is to be or has been made on their religion, but when Blacky gets a thing into his head it is most difficult to knock it out again” (Bush 48). The tone of racial supremacy and cultural alienation is distinctly visible in the line above and one also gets to note the general impression among the colonizers regarding the inhabitants of India which, in turn, enables a proper understanding of the reasons behind the mistrust which led to the Uprising and the violence which followed.
As the Siege of Lucknow begins, Ashton writes: "...a bitter revenge will please God be taken for the merciless butcheries these brutes have committed" (Bush 55). He describes in detail the living conditions and hardships within the Residency where accidental deaths, including those of children, due to the random shots fired by the rebels, were becoming common with each passing day, and contextually, writes of Sir Henry Lawrence who fell victim to one such attack, where he mentions Mrs Harris: "Mrs Harris was among those who helped to nurse him over the following two days and he died at eight o'clock on the morning of the 4th of July" (Bush 69).

After a long period of confinement, Ashton prepares a ‘Memorandum’ expressing his desire of distributing his property among his loved ones in case he is unable to survive the Siege and here he writes: "I have to the best of my belief departed this life without bearing malice to a soul, and I trust that my numerous sins will not be looked upon as an impassable barrier to my entrance into a future blessed state" (Bush 73). It would be worthwhile to note here how the soldier anticipating and desiring a “bitter revenge” in one of his earlier letters home emerges to be a completely different self in his private note. This is perhaps the point of intersection of history and literature, where beyond all reasoning and analytical capabilities, individuals involved in a certain important chapter of history are revealed to be themselves – finite human beings fearing the unknown – irrespective of caste, creed, nation or religion.
Meanwhile, Wynyard, as a soldier of the ‘avenging army’, progressing towards Delhi writes to his brother in England: “I hope we shall get a medal, how jolly that will be...”, and further, “…we are to destroy the city and every male inhabitant in the place, there is a great quantity of jewels and all sorts of riches, and I hope to get hold of a nice little diamond or two” (Bush 46, 52). Here, too, one may see behind the professional necessity, the personal desire of a young man far off from his own people and land to seek a future for himself. Once Delhi is re-taken, one finds Wynyard writing in his letter to his brother about the immense amount of treasure he has gathered, only to be informed later how he had to leave behind all his belongings and the settled life of Delhi in pursuit of Nana Sahib and Begum Hazratmahal. Amidst the pages of illustrious history of two nations, one thus gets a glimpse of life in its all-pervading nothingness as individuals cling on to some respite only for while, just to be led on to greater missions and disappear down the cracks of history.

This compilation of collected letters by June Bush becomes a very interesting endeavour at the completion of 150 years of the Uprising due to another fact – June Bush inherited these letters from a family journal maintained by Richard Warner, the father of Ashton and Wynyard, and in this publication she puts together the letters from the two brothers, including those preserved in the British Library. The form of narrative adopted in the book thus becomes one journeying between the actual colonial time in the past and the 21st century of postcolonial existence of the present as Bush cites the letters chronologically and fills in the gaps with her own interpretation, analysis and observations.
For instance, on the usage of racially motivated terms such as "nigger", Bush records: "when I first came across this emotive word amongst the family letters and diaries, my hitherto benign opinion of my ancestors and their friends was momentarily shattered. It was not until I had read a lot more widely that I began to realize the term – which to the modern reader is both shocking and offensive implying the idea of ‘slavery’ – was in common use at the time amongst the lower ranks of officers and men in the Indian Army" (Bush 24). Similarly, while tracing the reasons behind the growing discontent among the sepoys in 1857, she writes: "Ludicrous as it seems to us now, all Native Indian officers of whatever rank were considered subordinate to the most junior European officers and NCOs" (Bush 10). A cultural bridging is thus achieved when the judgmental attitudes of the past are explained and accepted as erroneous from the presentist perspective of global multiculturalism.

Moreover, as she begins her account with Ashton Warner just setting off for India, she offers a view of the individual thus: "Reasonably well educated, courageous, with a sense of adventure, a strong Christian upbringing but with very little money, he believed he was setting off, like the Crusaders before him, to bring peace and stability to the heathen and honour to his King and Country – and hopefully make his fortune on the way" (Bush 11). It would be worthwhile to note here how she brings alive the practical reality of 19th century England where young men became a part of the colonial enterprise hoping to earn a good fortune, and not only out of nationalist zeal. It also reveals the picture of human life indulging in the most ordinary ambitions, without the intention to harm.
anyone and thus the later descriptions or judgmental comments by Ashton and Wynyard may be read as circumstantial transformations in human individuals governed by parochial understanding from the confinement of a complex subject-position, caused by the sudden outbreak of violence in an alien land.

This fact is further emphasized as Ashton writes in a letter after the Relief of Lucknow: “I have hitherto escaped unhurt by God’s blessing, and have volunteered for two sorties against the enemies batteries. I have now done my duty and shall not volunteer again, nothing is to be got by it, and life is precious” (Bush 119). This statement succeeds in communicating beyond the pages of nationalist/imperialist historiography, an alternative understanding of the concept of patriotism – for Ashton’s voice may be held to represent the voice of a common Englishman in India during the rebellion, whose intense struggle, though romanticized back in his country as an act of courage and endurance, was actually at that specific historical time an attempt to survive and preserve his own life – which is a basic human tendency based on practical sense.

Another such romantic myth regarding the Siege of Lucknow exploded by Ashton’s letter is the one regarding General Havelock as he writes after the Relief and the death of the latter: “The Calcutta papers I see Eulogise greatly on Sir H. Havelock’s death, no doubt he was a good soldier, but there are lots more as good, he never proved himself such a ‘Wellington’ as they wish to make out” (Bush 162). It would be worthwhile to remember here that General Havelock had been the subject of much appreciation in imperialist literature as well, where his valour especially in the context of the Relief of Lucknow, has
been described in epic detail. Ashton’s view is re-established by Bush’s own observation as she writes from the present time looking upon the event and the consequences in retrospect: “Had he [Havelock] not died just as the Relief was reaching its dramatic conclusion, he may not have been turned into quite such a legend. But today we still see traces in many of our towns and villages of the huge impact his story made, when fervently patriotic communities were inspired to name their new streets and houses Havelock Lane, Havelock Square or Havelock Cottage” (ibid).

Unlike Mrs Harris, however, whose account of the Siege does not reveal any contact with the outside world, Ashton’s letters show that despite sharing the same physical space and dismal circumstances, the privileged sex had access to the contemporary representations in England as he mentions in one of his letters: “What beautiful cartoons Punch has, that one of the British Lion springing at the Bengal Tiger, is a splendid idea” (Bush 170). This adds a new dimension to the accounts of 1857 as recorded by a male pen and a female pen, for the difference between the private and the public spheres is clearly indicated even in an apparently identical time and space.

The same is highlighted further when June Bush engages in a comparison of the Relief of Lucknow as recorded in these two autobiographical accounts and notes: “Mrs Harris may have been elated, but significantly Ashton writes nothing, for the excitement and euphoria was sadly short lived” (Bush 111). Interestingly, while to Mrs Harris, the Relief signified the end of a confinement and re-union with her own people, to Ashton, it came as a new range of challenges since “it meant the available rations for those inside the
Residency garrison, were now effectively halved" (ibid). One may see here how the perception of the 'real' differs between two people sharing a certain experience as the subjective realization of the significance of a certain incident reaches the authors through the realms of the 'psychological reality' in one case, and the 'practical reality', in the other.

Reality thus comes to assume a pluralist identity, where the 'real' as experienced by two people having shared the same physical space and time portray two different pictures to the reader/s, being perceived by two distinctly individual subjectivities. Further, when the realities of the same situation as offered by two different individuals convey two different messages, the same may be held true of historiography, since it also follows a narrative course to communicate the events of the past. Literature based on a certain historical period, thus becomes a selective representation of time past – in this case, as one may see the popular heroic idea of the Relief of Lucknow being celebrated in Tennyson's poem entitled "The Defence of Lucknow".4

Similarly, the myriad nature of reality is further revealed as Wynyard writes in one of his letters to his brother Dick: "My Mother's letter put me in an awful fright, when she mentions hat Paul Bush says about publishing my letters. Pray never let such an idea enter your head for there have been two instances of men getting into a row of writing what other regiments did and Evans of the 9th Lancers is most likely to be tried by a Court Martial for it" (Bush 240). This provides a very interesting alternative understanding of the English social history during the 19th century, for while these officers were iconized
and idolized for their bravery on one hand, on the other, their communication even with their own families was kept under close scrutiny so that policies being adopted, presumably, to maintain the glory of England in a distant colony would not reach the common reader.

Ashton was later promoted for his service during the rebellion while Wynyard took voluntary retirement on the ground of ill health after having been a part of the army sent to Nepal to capture Nana Saheb. However, one realization repeated, in common, through the letters of Ashton and Wynyard continuously is: “The same confidence can never be put in natives again” (Bush 57). It was this feeling and principle which would govern India through the next nine decades and gradually usher in 20th century nationalism. As the entire nature of British rule changed after the Uprising, including the pattern of recruitment of Englishmen into the Indian Army, both the Warner brothers stood to represent an older order and Ashton’s later letters after the suppression of the rebellion record the rising differences in attitude between the officers belonging to these two distinctly different eras.

These non-fictional accounts of the Rising from the English point of view, being written from completely different subject positions of the public and the private spheres, portray the intense human suffering of that particular time and put forth a vivid picture of all that is otherwise lost in the annals of the historiography of conquest, thereby enabling a deeper understanding of this complex event where every mind had its own different way of thinking, assessing and analyzing, which perhaps cannot be grouped together in terms
of any particular country or race. It is in this diversity that the Rising of 1857 transcends the realms of nationalist history and attains a Universalist character of human suffering and human loss.

Notes:

1. “Men ought either to be well-treated or crushed, because they can avenge themselves of lighter injuries, of more serious ones they cannot; therefore the injury that is to be done to a man ought to be of such a kind that one does not stand in fear of revenge”. (The Prince by Niccolo Machiavelli. Chapter 3, Pg 07)

2. See Chapter 5 – Fictional accounts of the Rising from the English point of view.

3. The cartoon has been included in Chapter 1 – Relocating 1857: The event and the perspectives.

4. See Chapter 5 – Fictional accounts of the Rising from the English point of view.