

A B S T R A C T

This is an attempt at a psycho historic study of a complex personality which I feel does not lend itself to traditional explanation. In many of his acts as Viceroy, Curzon's behaviour was tainted by an obsession to appear superior. The first eleven of the seventeen chapters, of this thesis are devoted to a study of the germination and growth of the oversize ego which entrapped Curzon. The remaining chapters have tried to trace the interplay of that ego upon his Viceroyalty.

The first chapter is on the upper class Victorian environment in which Curzon was born and which was an important factor in defining his personality. Though he died in 1925, Curzon never outgrew the belief that it was the divine right, as it were, of his class to rule. He, however, like many imperialists, brought to it a sense of mission which had its origins in the all-pervading Evangelism of the times.

The Victorian attitude to sex has also been outlined for its contribution to Empire-building; Curzon got married at the age of 36. The role of Utilitarians has been touched upon, particularly of Stephen and Strachey, for their attempt to rally the principle of authority in the maintenance of the Empire. Curzon heard Stephen while he was still at Eton and was influenced by him.

Chapter II is devoted to Kedleston Hall and the twist of fate which made Curzon's father, a younger son of a younger son, come to this inheritance. It was Kedleston Hall and its resemblance to

Government House, Calcutta, that gave Curzon his early sense of destiny.

Biographers have hitherto maintained that Curzon's childhood was clouded by an indifferent mother and a stern cleric of a father. While digging up the Curzon archives in England I, however, found the Scarsdale parents actually gave their eldest son an inflated notion of himself. In Chapter III, I have gone into detail over certain Scarsdale papers, including Curzon's correspondence with his parents, in order to establish not merely that they cared deeply for him but also that he was aware of the fact. The Scarsdales had great expectations in their eldest son and he spent much of his life trying to live upto them.

When he was seven Curzon was put in charge of a governess called Miss Paraman. It was imperative to devote Chapter IV to her in order to demonstrate what delusions Curzon was capable of indulging in later life, in order to live up to the image of a superior man.

Chapter V on Wixenford, Curzon's first prep school, further negates myths about parental deprivation and brutalization by a governess in the nursery.

Curzon's defiance of the masters at Eton has generally been interpreted as a reaction to the neglect and cruelty suffered during childhood (Chapter VI). To the contrary, I have tried to establish that Curzon's rebellion stemmed from not being recognised as someone special. A letter from Housemaster Wolley Dod, accusing Curzon of cheating at the examination, has been cited as an example of the pressures Curzon was already beginning to build upon himself to maintain the high standard that he felt was expected of him.

During this period, Curzon fell off a horse and injured his

spine. The resulting pain plagued him for the rest of his life. And yet he also derived from it a vicarious pleasure. It gave him an opportunity to prove himself superior to the pain. At the same time, he could indulge himself in bouts of self-pity.

Chapter VII deals with homosexual Eton master Oscar Browning who had befriended Curzon. In what became a scandal at Eton, Curzon and Browning were forbidden to meet by the Headmaster. The friendship between the master and pupil, though marked by intense attraction, does not seem to have been an overtly homosexual one. I have quoted from the hitherto unused Oscar Browning-Curzon correspondence to illustrate my point.

Chapter VIII on Oxford dwells on Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol who was said to have sent more Viceroy and civil servants to India than any other teacher. Jowett tried to warn Curzon about his prolixity of speech which he feared gave the impression of self-sufficiency. But even at this stage Curzon felt that he was above the need for advice. An attempt has been made to show how Curzon made a desperate bid to win the coveted Lothian prize in History to compensate for failing to get a First at Oxford.

Chapter IX deals with Curzon's debut in Parliament in 1886 and his journeys to the East. He undertook these odysseys not merely for personal satisfaction but also to fulfil a sense of mission. I have tried to show how on the journeys he saw what he wanted to see - that the Empire was under Providence the instrument for the greatest good to the world. Nor was Curzon averse to practising his own little deceptions if they afforded him entry into normally

forbidden places.

Even before Curzon left Oxford the 'superior person' verse had been floated about him (Chapter X). Curzon had laughed it off then full of the serene confidence of one who believes he is superior. In childhood and adolescence had not practically every force surrounding him told him that in physical appearance and intellectual powers he was extraordinary?

Mary Victoria Leiter came into Curzon's life when he was 31 and made every attempt to show how much she cared for him (Chapter XI). But he kept her waiting for five years, seeming to derive a somewhat cruel pleasure in tantalizing her. This, however, did not diminish Mary's adoration and in conveying this to him, she added her own bit to swelling the Curzonian ego.

Curzon was appointed Viceroy in 1898 and Mary declared "we might as well be monarchs". Chapter XII portrays how the dramatic ascent from being an Under Secretary in Salisbury's Cabinet to becoming Victoria's sole representative of the Indian subcontinent was to shake an already shaken mental equilibrium. Not content at scolding the Indian Princes, Curzon was even issuing a stricture to the Queen! When he did not get his way with members of the Home Government, he thought nothing of going over their heads to appeal directly to his Sovereign.

Curzon had arrived in India with an oversized ego made so by the adulation of family, friends and circumstances (Chapter XIII). Like a typhoon of duty, he had whirled through the country refusing to accept that physically he was a sick man. Neither could he accept the growing political consciousness in India.

I have tried to show how Curzon tried to rule India with the same vigour and authoritativeness prescribed by his mentors Stephen and Strachey 25 years ago. Hitherto he had got away doing things his way. He saw no reason to now change. An effort has been made, however, to also show that it was not merely self-glorification that he hoped to achieve but was animated by what he believed was his duty and was prepared to sacrifice his personal happiness in achieving it.

Chapter XIV demonstrates how Curzon in keeping with his self-styled role of a benevolent despot took a courageous stand against British soldiers' crimes against natives and then spoilt it by simultaneously erecting monuments which would help to fan memories of Indian outrages on the British.

Chapter XV shows how the Viceroy alienated his subordinates by hectoring them for apathy and sloth and then exhausted himself by attending to redundant details. His colleagues might have tolerated his bouts of impatience better had they known of the spinal steel cage in which their chief had to be strapped all day. But Curzon believed himself to be above the need to endear himself to anybody.

Chapter XVI is selective in its treatment of the Curzonian reforms, dealing with them only in so far as they provide a better understanding of the human being. He brought the same undiminished zeal whether it was to the restoration of ancient monuments or to the partition of Bengal. He failed to see in the cries of boycott and Swadeshi that he had touched upon a deep national chord. Doggedly he forged ahead confident that he could do anything in

India and get away with it. Neither odium nor applause could sway him.

In bringing the tough and ruthless Kitchener to India Curzon seems to have deliberately courted danger but he was supremely confident that he could rise to the challenge (Chapter XVII). I have tried to show how having seen during his home leave in the summer of 1904 that the clash with Kitchener was coming, Curzon could have honourably excused himself out of India. But as though craving for self-punishment he flew straight into the storm. Even after being outmanoeuvred, he stubbornly chose to stay back to receive the Prince of Wales. Curzon could not bear the idea of relinquishing an opportunity to preside over a ceremonial, ignoring the fact that to linger on in India would be painful and humiliating. Back in England, neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals, even at the King's intervention, were inclined to give him the honour due to a proconsul of the Empire. It was as though they derived a vicarious satisfaction in humbling a superior man.