Chapter 2

The Historical, Social and Political Scenario

Our King has all the Indies in his arms
And more and richer when he strains that lady.

(Shakespeare: *Henry VIII*)

This chapter is divided into three sections—Section A deals with early (pre 1757) Western Representations of India, Section B sketches the process of the British East India Company's annexations and achievement of political power in India during the period 1757-1857; and Section C discusses the then prevalent ideological trends influencing representations of India. In Section A, major European representations of India during the classical and medieval periods are examined—within these most attention is focussed on early *British* representations. In Section B, along with a chronological tracing of the increasing British political and military power, those textual representations of the period, which are too slight for individual study are also considered. The obvious omission of certain major texts in this section exists because they are reserved for later detailed analysis. The discussion of the ideological trends is intended to foreground both the many strands of thought and also the basic attitudes and assumptions they shared in common. The chapter as a whole serves as a background against which detailed analysis of individual texts can be carried out.
Representations of India in the Western world have a history which can be traced back beyond even Alexander's invasion in 327 B.C. Indeed Alexander's conquest itself is engraved on a palimpsest which already bore the mark of the mythical invasion of India by Bacchus, the Greek God of wine. The earliest reference to an Indian influence in classical Europe can be found in the tradition that Pythagoras (500 B.C.) had visited India and learnt there the concept of metempsychosis.

When we approach historical records from the mysteries of myth, we find that the earliest surviving Western representation of India is to be found in Herodotus (480-425 B.C.). Herodotus' representation of India is subordinated to his main theme of the struggle between Persia/East and Greece/West. The factual knowledge, if any, which he had of India seemed to be limited to only that part which formed a Satrapy of the Persian Empire. He refers to such curiosities as gold digging ants (1954: 54-56) and to the incredibly wealthy and populous nature of India. These are rendered possible by the positioning of India on the limits of the "human world" which gives it the potential for being convincingly a land of marvellous possibilities. At the same time Herodotus also lays the foundation for a study of Asian society, which is represented as functioning on fundamentally different basic principles from those of Greece.

Hippocrates (460 B.C.) puts forward a certain proposition which later formed the core of a particularly dominant political theory about India. He takes the "despotism" of Indian/Asian rulers for granted as also an inherent servility in the people and argues that the climatic conditions as well as established false principles were ontologically conducive for this state of affairs (quoted in Embree 1989: 62). A somewhat different perspective is to be found in the fragments preserved of a later writer Ctesais (416-398 B.C.) who praises the justice of the Indian kings and idealises India to present a Utopian picture (quoted in Embree 1989: 70). It should be kept in mind at this stage that during the early period surveyed in this chapter India and Asia were to a large extent interchangeable names in the West.
With Megasthenese, who was the envoy of Seleucus Nikator (Alexander's successor) to the court of Chandragupta Maurya, we have direct observations in the place of derivations from vague second hand accounts. He gives an account of Brahmins and Fakeers, mentions the holy river Ganges and attempts some description of the flora and fauna of the land. He also has fabulous stories like that of "two cubits long flying serpents" (Megasthenes 1877: 56). Also, he was the first Western writer to state explicitly the thesis that all property in India was owned by the crown and that no private person could own land. This was later used as an explanation for "Oriental Despotism."

A later Greek writer Philostratus uses these early records as source materials in his *Life of Appolonius of Tyana*. The journey of Appolonius to India (now generally seen as fictional) bears a close resemblance to the travelogues of earlier Greek writers. The kings of Taxila are presented in this work as "Philosopher Kings" living in quiet simplicity and a glowing account is given of King Porous. The wisdom of Indian government is made use of here to criticise the West (quoted in Sedlar 1980: 190-98). This was as popular a usage as that which treated the East as apology for western institutions. In either case, the effect was generally to set up and enforce the East as the "Other", the binary opposite of the West.

A Greek Historian of the second century A.D, Arrian\(^1\) made use of the accounts of Nearchus and Onesicritus (both of whom accompanied Alexander on his journey to India). About eight centuries after Megasthenese, Cosmos Indicopelustus (who was in India from AD 535 to AD 547) wrote *Topographia Christiana* which provided various information on trading routes and facilities. This was also developed further in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (75-901 A.D.) which provided a detailed account of the trading ports of India and also the social organisation (Periplus: 1875). Also, as Sedlar points out, India's contribution to the philosophies of many of the so-called Christian heresies was immense (1980: 208).

In the middle ages, occasional travellers made their way to India. A typical example is that of Bishop Jordanus in India about 1323. Another important landmark is

\(^{1}\) An interesting comment of Arrian's: "Nor do the Indians consider it any disgrace for a lady to grant her favours for an elephant, but it is regarded as a high compliment to the sex that their charms should be deemed worth an elephant" (1877: 222).
the *Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (originally written around 1357 and later translated into English). He stresses the myth of a fabulously wealthy India: "the beste and the most precyous dyamaundes bene in India" (1921: 97). He also refers to the Prester John figure—"the grete emperor of Ynde" (1921: 103).

Apart from this translated version of Mandeville's travels, English literature, at this period has few significant references to India. Most prominent among those references which do exist are the *Gestes of Alexander* (early 15th century) and the *Romance of King Alysander* written in a southern dialect nearly a hundred years later (quoted in Sencourt 1990). Chaucer's work composed during this period shows little reference to India—"the great Emeritus, King of Inde" in the "Knighte's Tale" and a mention of "Ynde" in the "Squire's Tale" are all.

Travellers from countries other than Britain, had been making visits to India and recording their experiences ever since Vasco Da Gama's successful trip in 1498. An important literary presentation of Gama's trip can be found in Camoens's *Luciad* (written in 1592).

2 The prosperity of India is indicated by a verse speech he gives to the Zamorin (Ruler of Calicut)

*But should you have the wish in merchandise*

*With us to trade, this fertile land is blessed*

*Of rubies rare, and diamonds we're possessed*

*In heaps, nor deem these boasts or idle vaunts,*

*Our rich and ample store by far exceeds your wants.*

(quoted in Oaten 1991: 73).

A prose translation of the *Luciad* by Atkinson also indicates Camoens interest in providing local colour by observing men and manners minutely (Camoens 1952).

Marco Polo, in the late thirteenth century travelled to China and visited India by way of Sumatra. He refers to religious rites as well as commercial matters and his

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2 The *Roterio Viagem de Vasco Da Gama* is the only extant eyewitness account we have of Gama's visit to India. The authorship is attributed to a fellow sailor. The sailors mistake temples for churches (1998: 30). the perfidy of Arab rivals is referred to (32) and the Malabar people are described as untrustworthy and lazy" (34). [References taken from a Malayalam translation of the original. English translations mine.]
narrative is a valuable source for information on early South India (Polo 1961). Early
during the fifteenth century, the Italian Nicolo Conti and the Russian Athanasius Nikitin
had visited India by the overland route and recorded their impressions. In a bout of
intolerance, Nikitin remarks of the inhabitants of Bidar: "All are black and wicked and
the women all harlots or witches and they destroy their masters by poison" (quoted in
Oaten 1901:41).

Conti, on the other hand generally does not give vent to such splenetic remarks.
When describing the rite of sati or the King's Harem, he certainly intended to be
"diverting" by representing the exotic, but there is no sharp or direct condemnation by
tone" (quoted in Kaul 1997: 63-64).

Ludovico Di Varthema, who was in India around 1502, asserts that though the
inhabitants were not Christians, if they were but baptised, their numerous good works
would ensure their salvation. At the same time he also refers to the custom of wife
sharing and to the almost frightening sexual aggressiveness of the native women
(Varthema 1974: 203).

Apart from these western travellers, a large number of missionaries—Francis
Xavier and Roberto de Nobili being ideal examples—visited India. Though the Emperor
Akbar received them with keen intellectual curiosity and courtesy, nothing very concrete
was really achieved by way of proselytisation.

The first Englishman who is known to have visited India was Thomas Stephens,
who came to Goa in 1579 and became Rector of the Jesuit College in Salsette. His letters
which aroused great curiosity among his countrymen are related only to Goa. Stephens
was followed in 1583 by Ralph Fitch a London merchant who has left significant records
about the cultural and religious practices of the Indians. In 1599 John Mildenhall visited
the Court of Akbar and made him presents, but serious interaction was, to a great extent
foiled by the Portuguese.

The Anglo Saxon Chronicle mentions Sigehelm, who is supposed to have been sent to India during the
time of King Alfred. If true, this would make him the first British visitor to India, but we have no records
During the Elizabethan age\textsuperscript{4}, we find only a few scattered references to India in British literature. These are not of any great significance, though they do indicate that the distant land of India was gradually gaining a symbolic status within the British imagination. The major impression left by India at this stage seems to be one of unbounded material prosperity. This, combined with the immense distance of India from the European metropolis gave the land just the right aura of exoticism to make it suitable for evocative literary' usage.

During the Jacobean period in English History, Sir Thomas Roe visited the Court of Jehangir as an official ambassador from the King of England. His Commission read: "Our true and undoubted attorney, Procreator, Legatee and Ambassador to that high and mighty monarch, the Great Mogoor, King of the oriental] Indyes, of Condahy, of Chismer and of Corosan" (quoted in Oaten 1991: 39). In 1609, William Hawkins had arrived at the court of Jehangir and been treated as an interesting visitor. But he had been unable to achieve anything concrete in the way of treaties or concessions. It was after this that Roe was sent as an official accredited Ambassador in 1615. But even he could manage no official treaty between King James and Jehangir.

In 1616, the noted eccentric, Thomas Coryat was also in India. He scandalized Roe by addressing a flattering Persian ode to the Emperor and accepting a thrown-down gift of hundred rupees. Another of his escapades was to shout out in the native tongue at the time of prayer that Mohammad was an imposter. In this context, E. F. Oaten remarks that only his reputed madness saved him from the wrath of the people. Perhaps it is also possible to imagine that hospitality if not tolerance had something to do with it; the records do not indicate any occasion, when, in these early stages, the natives unleashed any "Oriental fun" on the western visitors.

Other representations of India in English during this period include those by Edward Terry, William Methold and William Bruton. All these writers have recorded their impressions of India, touching the areas of administration, jurisprudence, and religious customs. In the latter half of the seventeenth century, the most prominent western visitors to India were not British, but the Frenchmen Tavernier and Bernier.

\textsuperscript{4}R.C. Banerjee has recorded twenty references to India in Shakespeare (1964: 67-75).
Tavernier published his Six Voyages in 1676 and Bernier's History was published in 1670. Prominent British travellers during this period are John Fryer (1673) Ovington (1689) and Hamilton (between 1688 and 1723) who have all left lengthy accounts of their Indian experiences. These early records do treat India as "different," but it is not really shown as the kind of difference which automatically produces contempt. The experiences were felt to be strange and inassimilable, but the necessity of peaceful trade if nothing else seems to have kept the comments and conclusions within bounds.

During this period, the western visitors were hardly treated as objects of veneration of the Indians. Indeed, the situation is drastically different; as Pere Calmette (writing in the late Seventeenth century) remarks: "In the interior, a white man hardly as yet escapes public ridicule" (quoted in Fisher 1996:15). This indicates a rather different scenario from the one presented by O. Mannoni in Prospero and Caliban where the native's dependency complex induces submission at first sight to the white men.

A merchant expedition sent to Bengal in 1632, records that they were "fain to kiss the Nawab's feet" and considered it a good bargain if trade would thereby prosper (quoted in Oaten 1991: 174). Even in the early Eighteenth century (indeed almost up to Plassey in 1757) the British representatives in India were quite literally "kowtowing" to the Indian rulers. Three letters of John Russell in the early eighteenth century indicate this trend. In 1711, Russell writes to the Viceroy of Bengal, Azimus-Shah-Khan: "with the humblest submission ... dedicating at your feet the life wholly dedicated to your service ... present this petition after kissing the ground on which treads the greatest and most powerful prince." In a 1713 letter to Jahandar Shah, Russell declares that his forehead was to be considered as the tip of the Emperor's shoe. Writing in 1713 to Emperor Faroukshihsiar, Russell presented himself as: "the smallest particle of sand ... with his forehead at your command rubbed on the ground ... and giving reverence due from a slave ... to your throne which is the seat of miracles" (quoted in Fisher: 1996: 14). Just as the period between 1757-1857 was the age of the Nabob, and that between 1857-1947 was dominated by the figure of the Sahib, during the period between the establishment of the British East India Company (1600) to the Battle of Plassey (1757) we see the figure of the trader acknowledging (rather hypocritically perhaps, but
nevertheless acknowledging) the sovereignty of the Indian rulers and taking their claims to magnificence and reverence at their own estimation.

The main note sounded by the travellers of this period in their representation of India is one of luxury and riches, so much so that the Chaplain Edward Terry begins to wonder if he has painted too rosy a picture altogether. So, to counterbalance this, he comes up with the argument:

Lest this remote country should seem like an earthly paradise without any discommodities, very great was the danger there from lions, tigers, jackals in the rivers from crocodiles and on the land from snakes and other venomous and pernicious and pernicious beasts.

(quoted in Forster 1921: 123)

This does sound like special pleading; his own description so far has been enough to produce a picture of Utopia, and all that Terry can come up with to post against this is that the wild animals there are dangerous.

Both Roe and Hawkins refer to Indians as "faithlesse"-an obvious result of being often frustrated in their ambassadorial activities. However, they do not stop begging for the favours of the faithlesse sovereign of this faithlesse people and they also go into raptures while describing the luxuries of the East.

One of the closest approaches to a racism which breeds a superiority complex is to be found in the records of Sir Thomas Herbert (1634) who refers to "the stinkinig weeds of cursed Heathenism" and describes the Zamorin as "a naked Negro, but as proud as Lucifer."(quoted in Sencourt 1990: 118). Both religious and colour prejudice can be seen here. But, it should be remembered in this context that the British during this time had no great idea of coming over and changing or salvaging India; nor did critical portraits dampen their ardour for the riches of the East. They were quite prepared to treat and trade with "cursed heathens" if necessary.

The presence of India appears to be slightly more prominent in the literature of this period when compared to the Elizabethan Age. Walter Mountfort wrote a play (unpublished) titled The Laimchinge of the Mary or the Seaman 's Honest Wife directly related to the voyages of the East India Company. We can find some references to India
in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and in Dryden's *Hind and the Panther*. Dryden's 1675 play *Aureny-gebe* has an Indian setting and characters, though he changes history beyond recognition—for example investing Shah Jahan's chief queen with an incestuous passion for Aurengzebe and making Shah Jahan lust after his son's fiance. Even more significant in this context is Dryden's 1673 play *Amboyna* which specifically deals with the struggles between the Dutch and British East India Companies; a strong piece of anti-Dutch propaganda. The dying hero of the play; an official of the East India Company-speaks as follows:

Tell my friends, I died so as became a Christian and a Man, give to my brave Employers of the East India Company.

The last remembrance of my faithful service
Tell them I seal that service with my blood.
And dying wish to all their factories.
And all the famous merchants of our Isle
That wealth which their generous Industry deserves.

(Dryden 1961:97).

Obviously, by this time, the trade in India was a cause to die for, a noble enough cause to provide martyrdom. We can see the Romance earlier attached to religious causes, here shifting smoothly to commercial operations.

Also significant are the researches of John Marshall in Indian philosophy published in 1674 as *Dialogue with a Brahman on the Origin of the World*. In this work Indian philosophy is treated at a very superficial and simplified level, but it is not ridiculed or contemptuously pushed aside. During Queen Anne's reign we find references to India scattered in different genres—Gay’s *Beggar's Opera*, an epitaph by Pope, a religious treatise by Isaac Watts. Later works which refer to India begin to talk of the Nabob and often use this perspective, as can be seen in the texts of the later 18th century; the period following the victory at Plassey.
This section examines the annexations of the East India Company and its gradual achievement of political power in India during the period 1757-1857. That century saw the Company serially annex or else extend its indirect rule over most of the Indian states—a far cry from the few factories and trading posts it possessed before 1757. The first region in India over which the Company gained administrative control was Bengal. The British army under Robert Clive defeated the Nawab of Bengal Siraj-ud-Doula at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 and put a puppet of their own choice, Mir Jafar on the throne. To show his gratitude Mir Jafar paid a large sum of money to the Company and also ceded to its rule the vast area referred to as the "Twenty Four Pargannas."

Later, Mir Jafar was replaced by Mir Kasim, with whom again the British quarreled on the issue of trade permits. Mir Kasim was deposed and Mir Jafar reinstated as Nawab. The then Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam and the Nawab of Oudh, Shuja-ud-Doula joined hands with the deposed Mir Kasim and met the British troops in the battle of Buxar in 1764. The Company won the war and the Emperor came over to the British side while Oudh had to sign a treaty of submission. After the death of Mir Jafar in 1765, his son was elevated to the throne, but by this time all power in Bengal was concentrated in the Company's hands. Shah Alam, by the treaty of Allahabad also handed over the sovereignty of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the British.

Though the Nawab of the Carnatic was officially deposed only in 1801, from 1765 onwards, the Company had de facto control over his domains in South India. In 1766, the Company received the vast tract known as 'the Northern Sarkars' from the Nizam of Hyderabad. In a much criticized action, Warren Hastings in 1773 captured the province of Rohilkand, erstwhile ruled by independent tribes and also interfered in the government of the province of Benares, which in fact if not in appearance was brought under British rule.
The later Governors General in India, during the process of their annexations had to fight three major wars with the Marathas and four with the Mysore Sultans—Hyder Ali and Tipu. The first Maratha war, fought during Warren Hastings’ time was ended in 1782 on terms favourable to the British. Lord Wellesley superintended the second Maratha war (1802-04) and the third war was fought during the administration of Lord Hastings. Both these wars went in favour of the Company and Maratha power was totally crushed and considerable territory annexed.

The four Mysore wars were also finally beneficial to the British though they had to sue for peace in the initial stages. After Hyder and Tipu Sultan were both dead, their territories were also brought under British domination. Cornwallis also annexed Malabar in South India following the Third Mysore war.

Wellesley, the Governor General from 1796 to 1805 brought many provinces under the indirect control of the Company through the Subsidiary System which consisted of the native ruler paying large amounts to maintain a force of Company troops in his territory and allowing the Company to dictate his foreign policy. Tanjore, Surat and the Carnatic were important areas where the Subsidiary System was enforced.

As a result of the Nepal war under Lord Hastings, the Company annexed Simla and the first Burmese war conducted under Lord Amherst brought it Assam and Nagaland. William Bentinck mainly maintained a policy of non-interference, but Cachar and Coorg were annexed during his tenure between 1828-1835. In 1843 Sir Charles Napier conquered and annexed Sind, and the Punjab which had earlier flourished independently under Ranjeet Singh was annexed in 1849. The Governor Generalship of Dalhousie (1843-56) saw a stream of annexations mainly through the Doctrine of Lapse, according to which the succession of any province where the contemporary ruler did not have direct male issue "lapsed" to the Company. Using this doctrine, Satara was annexed in 1841, Jaipur and Sambhalpur in 1849, Udaipur in 1851, Jhansi in 1853 and Nagpur in 1854. Berar was annexed in 1853 through military force.

The last major annexation, that of Oudh took place in 1856, after a long and chequered relationship. Since after the Mutiny in 1857, the British tried to prop up the remaining Indian rulers as faithful allies, the annexation of Oudh may be considered the
final major annexation and Dalhousie's period both the most prolific and conclusive for territorial expansion.

The process of annexation, was not, by any standards a seamless linear project. While the "men-on-the-spot" in India generally regarded annexation in a favourable light, as pertaining to imperial grandeur, the Company Authorities back in Britain, were more often than not apprehensive about large scale acquisitions. Company records and correspondence provide interesting pictures of how India and her politics were viewed in the metropolitan centres of Britain and how their relationships with the distant colony were constructed.

Even as Clive’s exploits at Plassey were being glorified, it was possible to trace dissenting voices. Horace Walpole in 1764, writes:

Lord Clive has been suddenly nominated by the East India Company to the Empire of Bengal, where Dupleix has taught all our merchants to effect to be King making Earls of Warwick and where the chief things they have made are blunders and confusion. It is amazing that their usurpations have not taught the Indians union, discipline and courage—we are governing nations to which it takes a year to send our orders.

(quoted in Fisher 1996: 14)

Obviously, the suggestion is that, "merchants" would do well to stick to trade and not attempt administration, where all they can achieve are "blunders and confusion." The Indians need to be taught "union, discipline and courage" indeed, but it is not the Company's job to do that. The economic motive was predominant in these early stages and the most ardent advocates of expansion had to provide reasons based on economic factors if these ideas were to be countenanced.

In the beginning at least, the Company was not interested in annexation for empire's sake. Pitt's India Act, 1784, contained the following specific clause:

Whereas to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of domination in India are measures repugnant to the wish, honour and policy of this nation; the Governor-General and his Council, are not, without the express authority of the Court of directors or the Select Committee to declare wars
or commence hostilities or enter into any treaty for making war against any of the country princes or states in India.

(quoted in Mahajan 1969: 80)

In keeping with this policy, we find even as late as 1803, the Governor General Wellesley, referring to the pacific Directors of the East India Company as "a pack of narrow-minded old women." As Fisher points out, many of the Company officials in India regarded, "London as betraying the Company itself by not proving worthy of its conquests, because London was trying to hold back the Company in its expansion across and rule over India" (Fisher 1996: 28). Even on those occasions where the Company itself did not oppose expansion, British national interests were rarely associated with those of the Company.

A letter written by Clive to the then Prime Minister, William Pitt in 1759 and Pitt's reply clearly indicate the two different paradigms both were speaking from. Clive’s letter indicates a desire for imperial expansion, but he is careful to curb his enthusiasm and concentrate on solid economic arguments to further his cause. Obviously, even this strategy was not very successful since Pitt did not sent a favourable reply. Clive writes:

I have represented in the strongest terms the expediency of sending out and keeping up constantly such a force [in India] as will enable us to embrace the first opportunity of further aggrandizing ourselves; and I dare pronounce from a thorough knowledge of this country’s government and of the genius of the people's ... that such an opportunity will soon offer ... Musselmans are so little influenced by gratitude that should he [Nawab of Bengal] ever think it his interest to break with us, the obligations he owes us would prove no restraint ... The natives themselves have no attachment whatsoever to particular princes and ... they would rejoin in so happy an exchange as that of a mild for a despotic government. ... Now, I leave you to judge whether an income of two millions sterling yearly, with the possession of three provinces abounding in the most valuable productions of nature and of art be an object deserving the public attention. This project may be brought about without draining the mother country. ... A small force from home will be sufficient as we always make sure of any number we please of black troops ... who will readily enter into our service.

(quoted in Fisher 1996: 61-63)
Pitt's reply to Clive's secretary who delivered this letter was that while it was possible to annex Bengal, it would not be wise to do so. So large an increase in revenues to either the Company or the Crown would "endanger" our liberties "by concentrating too much financial power in certain hands. Pitt also remarked that "it was not probable that Clive would be succeeded by people equal to the task" (quoted in Fisher 1996: 60). During this early period, the British policy framers were not thinking in terms of the "white man's burden;" the notion of the superiority of the West is indeed accepted; but there is no desperate eagerness to civilise dark areas. Both the opponents and defenders of political expansion based their arguments on economic foundations.

Interestingly, even the men on the spot did not always favour expansion. Their attitudes varied according to changing circumstances since there was no official monolithic policy of annexation. Clive himself, after the annexation of Bengal writes to the Company Directors in a tone very different from that he had used when writing to Pitt:

To go further, is in my opinion a scheme so extravagantly ambitious and absurd, that no Governor and Council can adopt it, unless the whole system of the Company's interest first be entirely new modelled ... by grasping at more, you endanger the safety of those immense revenues and that well founded power which you now enjoy.

(quoted in Mahajan 1969: 51)

The arguments both for and against annexation, even when voiced by the same person, finally come down to economic terms. Even when the Company later changed its stand and began to advocate annexation, the underlying reasons were mainly related to trade and commerce. Of course, this was rarely openly admitted and the authorities made a literal parade of liberal, progressive and "just" reasons for expansion. As will be seen, further Governors General with imperial ambitions had no difficulty in producing any type of reason that was required of them. They constructed their images of India and Indians in such a way that these representations would be more than sufficient and satisfactory justifications after the act of annexation.
In the earliest stages of annexations, British officials themselves often pointed out in clear terms that the claim that Company rule was "good" for the natives was largely fictitious. In 1769, Bucher, the British Resident at Murshidabad wrote:

> It must give pain to an Englishman to have reason to think that since the accession of the Company to the Diwani; the condition of the people of this country has been worse than it was before; and yet I am afraid that the fact is quite undoubted. The fine country which flourished under the despotic and arbitrary government is verging towards its ruin, while the English have really so great a share in the administration.

(quoted in Mahajan 1969: 49-50)

Such admissions grew rarer as the urge for expansion increased. Yet, it is worthwhile to note that the discourse did, at a certain stage provide spaces where such comments could be inscribed. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that an uneasy awareness that such an assessment could be true led the Company officials to insist on the appearance at least of just and fair proceedings, which made the native appear to not only request but indeed clamour for British rule.

Writing not in a post colonial context, but as early as 1867, James Hutton remarks "In India, indeed, the 'outraged people' have never proved very clamorous for absorption into the British Empire, apparently preferring to endure any amount of oppression under a ruler of their own race and religion, to being transferred to the tender mercies of the infidel and the alien" (quoted in Fisher 1996: 186). This conclusion is justified by the fact that no positive records are produced by those officials who insist that Indians badly wanted to be absorbed into British rule. They merely "speak for" the Indians and expect their voices to be accepted as authentic. For example, William Bentinck justified the Company's annexation of Coorg in 1834 by unilaterally proclaiming that "it is the unanimous wish of the inhabitants of Coorg to be taken under the protection of the British Government" (quoted in Fisher 1996: 21). The only proof given for this "unanimous desire" is Bentinck's proclamation itself which is thus to be accepted as its own guarantee.
Sheridan, speaking on the fourth day of the impeachment of Warren Hastings makes the point that to be handed over to British authority was more a source of terror to the natives than anything else. The attendants of the Begums of Oudh, after having been scourged, put in irons and starved, to make them reveal their mistresses' secret treasure are given a "threat of a curious nature":

After being confined in Fyzabad, after being double ironed at Lucknow, after being publicly scourged—now comes the climax, the threat that they would be sent—where? To Chunar Gaur. They are given four days notice that they would be sent into a British fort—into pure British custody ... we will send you from this place into custody purely British and think what your situation will be then.

(quoted in Carnall 1989: 20)

Sheridan emphasises the point that it was unutterably disgraceful to the British image in India that their name and power be used as terrorising agents. Under the circumstances, he seems to indicate, it is difficult to conceive of Indians, on any occasion where they could possibly act as free agents, actually begging to be absorbed into British territory. Nevertheless, "the clamour of the natives" was, for a considerable period used as the primary justification for annexation and absorption.

When this argument simply could not be serviceably used any longer, the officials turned to other justifications. Obviously, it was not enough to just march in and annex territory on the basis of military superiority, "just" causes had to be stated, at least retrospectively. Indeed, it had to be asserted that the British were by no means the only or even chief ones benefiting from expansion, the natives also gained as much if not more. Indeed, Wellesley went so far as to state that annexation benefitted even the deposed native rulers since they were thereby relieved of their debts and the burdens of administration (quoted in Fisher 1996: 29).

A letter from Malcolm to the Peshwa, Baji Rao II, urging him to submit to British annexation and willingly abdicate, is notable for its incredible sophistry:

The tribe to which your highness belongs has been celebrated in all ages for its courage. Brahmin women have burnt themselves upon the funeral pyres of their husbands. Men have thrown themselves from precipices to propitiate...
the deity for themselves or to avert misfortune from their families. The sacrifice demanded from you, is in fact only the resignation of a power which you do not possess and which you can never hope to regain. You are called upon for no such great effort.

(quoted in Edwardes 1968: 183)

Abdication is presented as an act of courage. And what is even more ironic is that the instances of courage—Sati and self sacrifice—held up as examples to the Peshwa are those very practices which later Evangelists were to thunder against. Though employed for utilitarian purposes, the conceptual register in this context indicates a certain ambivalence—these Indian customs were at the same time examples of mental courage and also indications of a lack of "progressive" civilization. These concepts were used in turn, each being foregrounded as the occasion demanded, but within the paradigm they coexisted uneasily.

The other prominent argument was of course that of the inherent superiority of the British systems as opposed to native ones. The "incapacity" of the native rulers was stressed so that the annexations could be justified, primarily to an audience at Home which at any rate was not too impressed with the economic connotations of annexation. This rhetoric, later having taken on the guise of self evident fact was used directly to the Indian rulers themselves. In a Report of a meeting between Bentinck and the rulers of Oudh, Bentinck is shown as saying:

Wherever the country of rulers bound to the British Government by treaty has been taken possession of directly by act of aggression on our part, the annexation has always been justified; upon the ground of the disorders which prevailed and the unfitness of the native government to conduct affairs and their failure to establish a proper systematic Government that should be a source of happiness and contentment to the people.

(quoted in Fisher 1996: 20)

The justification here becomes fact, yet it is to be remembered that in the first instance, it was justification, that an excuse, however inadequate was felt to be necessary. In direct progress from this stage, we see the range of the arguments expanding. In the case of Oudh, the territory in question was at least bound to the Company by treaty. By
the time of Dalhousie, the justification is broadened so as to extend to independent provinces also. In addition to an undoubted superiority of administration, annexation was justified also as practical administrative consolidation, this being the argument likely to carry most weight with the Directors at Home. In 1848, Dalhousie wrote, in response to his critics:

I cannot conceive it possible for anyone to dispute the policy of taking advantage of every just opportunity which presents itself for consolidating the territories that already belong to us, by taking possession of states which may lapse in the midst of them; for this getting rid of these petty intervening principalities, which may be made a means of annoyance, but which can never, I venture to think, be a source of strength for adding to the resources of the public treasury and for extending the uniform application of the system of government to those whose best interest, we sincerely believe will be promoted thereby.

(my emphasis; quoted in Fisher 1996: 23)

The fact that there were critics of imperialism, who for purely practical reasons at least, sought to curb expansion, also needs to be accentuated. Economic arguments had to be put forward to counter this attitude. But, at the same time, the fiction of a "just" cause had to be kept up, incongruous though it appears among the other pragmatic arguments. Obviously a continued murmuring of the "just cause" clause served as a lullaby to soothe some conscientious doubts, which were existing, though mainly regarded only for their nuisance value.

To this preoccupation with recording (at least after the act) "just causes" we may apply Stephen Greenblatt's formulation of "linguistic actions performed entirely for a world elsewhere," other than the site of performance (Greenblatt 1991: 56). Greenblatt records Colombus's account of his taking possession of America on behalf of the Spanish Crown. With regard to the natives who were around at the moment of the declaration of appropriation, Columbus remarks "no opposition was offered to me" (quoted in Greenblatt 1991: 52). Obviously the natives, under the circumstances—a speech act in an unknown tongue and incomprehensible visual signs—could not be capable of either assenting or contradicting. But within the formalism of the act, all that matters was that there was no opposition, the question of why this was so is not permitted to arise. It is
possible, of course, to argue from this linguistic formalism that "words do not matter, that language is a mere screen for the brutality of power." But the absurd declaration of Colombus is also "a sign of ethical reservation" (Greenblatt 1991: 64-65), a kind of textual resistance which demanded at least the appearance of legality and justice. Within the colonial context in India, a retrospective justification seems to have been necessary on the same principles—a justification which is not actually intended for the affected natives, but for a world elsewhere, the observers at "Home". Obviously the concepts of equity, fair play or justice were overlooked in colonial practice, but they had to figure rhetorically in statements of colonial theory, which reveal their own absurdity and strain the semantic resources of the language to an almost unbearable degree.

By the 1840’s the attitudes of the Company Directors with regard to expansion in India had undergone considerable changes. Far from acting as a brake on the Governors-General’s imperialism, they started advocating a policy of aggression. The major factor in this, of course was that the economic benefits which could accrue from expansion now began to appear in larger than life proportions. An 1841 letter from the Directors to the Governor General touches both on this economic factor and the constant preoccupation with the "justness" of expansion. The Company in this letter, urged the Governor General not to abandon "any just and honourable accession of territory or revenue which could be had ... by annexing states into British control" (quoted in Fisher 1996: 71).

This change in the metropolitan attitude, was reflected prominently in the discourse of expansion articulated by the men on the spot in India. Sir Charles Napier, who spearheaded the annexation of Sind could confidently write in his diary: "How is all this to end? We have no right to seize Sind, yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality it will be" (quoted in Fisher 1996: 236). Despite its surface wry honesty, the notion of "justice" is not abandoned here, only concealed. In view of the changed atmosphere, Napier could speak of annexation as a "piece of rascality," but he could not leave it at that. It had to be characterised as “useful, advantageous and humane,” the last adjective at least referring specifically to the supposed betterment accruing to the natives from British rule. "Advantageous" and "useful", seem to refer to British interests, contrasting rather too obviously to the supposed “humanness” of the action.
In the large major annexation before 1857, that of Oudh, we can see an uneasy juxtaposition of grimly pragmatic assertions with convoluted attempts at ethical sophistry with which to justify expansion. No rhetoric was at this period specifically "wasted" on the natives themselves. Colonel Sleeman, requesting (in effect commanding) the King of Oudh to dismiss an official not preferred by the Company does not even bother to argue that the man is guilty of something. He merely states that "there is no necessity to prove his guilt, as the appointment imposed on him is not his Jageer or hereditary property. Therefore, it is not necessary at the time of his dismissal to investigate the proofs" (quoted in Fisher 1996: 268-69).

At the same time in explanation of the actual act of annexation, Dalhousie had to write, in quasi-religious terms: "The British Government would be guilty in the sight of God and man, if it were any longer to aid in sustaining by its countenance, an administration fraught with suffering to millions" (quoted in Mahajan 1969: 204).

Obviously, the imperialists fully understood the unequal nature of the terrain where they rehearsed their policies and politics. But in their discourse, they maintained the fiction of imperialism as "just" procedure and even heavenly mandate. This rhetoric cannot stand up to a cross checking with the contemporary documents (those addressed to the natives and those circulated among the actual expansionists themselves) which reveal, in explicit terms, the arbitrary and fundamentally economically motivated nature of expansion. The highly poised rhetoric loses its effect from such contradictions which reveal clearly that on most occasions, the perpetrators of imperialism did not actually believe their own rhetorical flourishes. However, as will be seen, the rhetoric was as necessary on a psychological level as military might was on a practical level. The contradictions weaken the imperial edifice as a construction if it is examined in retrospect. But at the time of construction, they functioned as essential constituents of the structure.
In this section, the ideological trends which influenced early British attitudes to India are examined. The major trends analysed here are a paternalistic spirit of Conservatism, Utilitarianism, Evangelicalism, Commercialism, "pure" Imperialism and Romanticism. The two ostensibly opposed political theories which influenced early British rule in India were Conservatism and Utilitarianism. Indologist expertise was generally allied to Conservatism, while Utilitarianism offered its services to the Whig trends of reform. In the early stages of expansion, it did appear as if Conservatism was in possession of the upper hand. During Clive's tenure, for example, the British were far more concerned with commercial and military activities than with the subtleties of administration or reforms. Eric Stokes in the *English Utilitarians and India* points out that even when the British had to fashion an administrative machinery of their own, they continued for quite a long period to regard themselves as inheritors; rather than innovators, as the revivers of a decayed system and not as the vanguard of a new one. A conscious attempt from London, under the Lord North ministry to introduce English principles in India was strongly resisted by Warren Hastings, who argued in favour of preserving Indian society and its institutions against what many viewed as the anglicising "danger."

The Conservatives firmly upheld a belief in the necessity and sanctity of permanent institutions, established by tradition. Indologist research into Vedic society provided the picture of a highly institutionalised and traditional society which was duly eulogised. Edmund Burke, in the course of his opening speech during the impeachment of Warren Hastings emphasized this view: "Faults, this nation [India] may have. But, God forbid we should pass judgement upon people who formed their laws and institutions prior to our insect origins of yesterday" (Burke 1987: I 41). He repeats the point in a later speech: "Let me remind your Lordships that the people of India lived under the settled laws to which I had referred you, and that these laws were formed whilst we, I may say were in the forest; certainly before we knew what technical jurisprudence was" (Burke 1987: II 5). Since Burke functioned as the very embodiment of Conservative
philosophy, his testimony may be accepted for the apparent reverence bestowed by the Conservatives on an "ancient" India as a result of which they opposed overt Anglicisation of India.

The *Annual Register* which presented the Conservative viewpoints gives a laudatory account of Hyder Ali in a 1783 issue:

Hyder Ally [sic] was undoubtedly one of the greatest princes, as well as the greatest warrior that India has ever produced. His mind was so vast and comprehensive as at once to reach to and embrace all the parts of war and government. If he was not a legislator he had, however, the merit of establishing, so mild and equitable a system of government that the new subjects of so many countries were not only attached to his person in a most extraordinary degree but the neighbouring nations showed on every occasion their wishes to come under his protection... He might profitably have been considered as one of the first politicians of his day, whether *in Europe* or in Asia.

(my emphasis; quoted in Bearce 1961: 14-15)

This report, which showed one of Britain's most indomitable foes not as a benighted native, but as a formidable warrior and statesman bolstered up the argument that India had reached a level of development which rendered Anglicisation superfluous and unnecessary. The phrase "one of the foremost politicians *in Europe* or in Asia" has to be foregrounded in a discussion of the Conservative principle. In the first place, the argument ran, India had developed according to its own natural genius. In the second place, these developments, at least in the case of particular individuals were formidable, even when compared to *European* achievements.

With regard to the natural genius of the Indian people, William Robertson, the Conservative historian writes: "under a form of government which paid such attention to all the different orders of which society is composed, particularly to the cultivators of the soil, it is not wonderful that the ancients should describe the Indians as a most happy race of men and that the most intelligent modern observers should celebrate the equity, the humanity and the mildness of the Indian policy" (Robertson 1981: 268). The argument is that the Indians have, using, traditional and gradual steps devised the best possible institutions for their own government. It is to be noted that the Conservatives do not
suggest that the empire be given up. It is up to the British to see that India is governed properly, but, from the Conservative perspective, the tools used for this process, by British administrators ought to be Indian in origin and nature.

Despite a conviction of the necessity of continued British rule, the Conservatives did attempt to dispel ignorance and prejudice regarding India. James Cumming, senior official at Company Headquarters and a staunch Conservative sharply criticizes certain British tendencies which were undermining the traditional institutions of India. He accuses the British of not being content with making their fortunes in India, but also insisting on "indulging their national bigotry and pride and their learned vanity." He finds deplorable the prejudiced attitude which allows British reformers to turn to the people of India and say:

You are all a parcel of poor, ignorant, semi-barbarians; you do not even understand your own language and system as well as we enlightened Englishmen who have been at regular grammar schools. ... we have studied jurisprudence and history and political economy. We will show you how to administer justice in India and how to conduct its internal government.

(quoted in Bearce, 1961: 31-33)

Given that the principal aim of British rule was to govern India pragmatically, with an eye on benefits for Britain, philosophical Conservatism did not have much of a chance of becoming the paramount ideology. The Reformers and Utilitarians very often succeeded in making the Conservative view of India appear totally reactionary and opposed to both British and Indian interests accusing it of preventing modernisation and progress. Though traces of paternalist Conservatism did continue to exist, the tide of Anglicisation surged forward during the tenures of Cornwallis and Wellesley. On a surface level at least, it is possible to claim that Utilitarian and Reformist tendencies were able to supersede Conservatism. Of course, a closer examination of the underlying similarities between these two ostensibly opposed ideologies reveal that any perfect binary opposition set up between them is a facile construct. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that Reformist and Utilitarian attitudes to India defined themselves and other ideological trends against Conservatism.
Unlike the Conservatives who were attracted to the traditions of ancient India, the Utilitarians and Reformers presented Indian culture as primitive, immoral and rude. They adopted a dismissive attitude towards Indologist claims on behalf of Indian culture. The Utilitarians were intimately connected with Indian affairs—in 1819, James Mill and later, his son J. S. Mill were in the executive management of the East India Company. Jeremy Bentham, the "founder" of Utilitarianism cherished an ambition to be the law-giver of India and had taken considerable efforts to formulate a suitable legal code for India. Eric Stokes points out that Bentham's essay "On the influence of Time and Place in Matters of Legislation" was composed with the objective of considering what modifications, if any were required in order to transplant his legal system to Bengal (Stokes 1982: 49). The Utilitarians primarily regarded India as raw material waiting to be shaped by the colonisers, as the ideal laboratory for trying out Utilitarian doctrines, without too much domestic protest against experimentation.

Liberal reformers normally recommended that in the interests of good government India should have western political institutions, such as, a Legislative Assembly. James Mill, representing the Utilitarian viewpoint did not endorse this argument. In an *Edinburgh Review* article of 1810, he argued instead that:

> The stage of civilization and the moral and political situation in which the people of India are placed, render the establishment of legislative assemblies impracticable. A simple form of arbitrary government, tempered by European honour and European intelligence is the only form which is now fit for Hindustan.

(quoted in Bearce 1961: 68)

Thus Mill recommended an authoritarian British government in India as the best possible system. Other reformers, following the trope which presented India as the benighted Other of civilised Europe, often came around to this view. The “upliftment” of India took on the aspects of a mission and some officials at least were imbued with a crusading zeal for reform.

This reformist spirit, together with a total lack of understanding of Indian customs, often produced an effect of unintentional comedy. W. H. Carey records that the first Chief Justice of the Calcutta Court, contemplating the bare legs and feet of the
natives who gathered to welcome him, remarked to a colleague: "See, brother, the wretched victims of tyranny. The Crown Court was surely not established before it was needed. I trust it will not have been in operation six months before we shall see these poor creatures comfortably clothed in shoes and stockings" (Carey 1980: 78). It is tempting indeed to speculate on how beneficial exactly this reform would have been and how the Justice proposed to bring it into effect.

On the surface of it, the Utilitarians and Reformist Liberals were as staunch supporters of the Anghcisation (in varying degrees) of India as the Conservatives were its opponents. The Conservatives, helped by Indologist research placed ancient India on a pedestal, while the Utilitarians dragged it down as far as possible. Yet, despite this apparent polarity, the two groups were in some ways merely positioned on two sides of the same coin.

Both ideologies emphasise "ancient" India, either to glorify or degrade India as such. Contemporary India did not enter the picture so prominently, and was mainly a backdrop on to which the differing conceptions of ancient India could be projected. Along with the glories of Indian tradition, the Conservatives also emphasized a certain unchangeability of Indian society. This procedure successfully denied much importance to Indian history between the Vedic Age and the age of colonisation, except perhaps as an unfortunate interlude. Many Conservatives and Indologists—Burke and Jones as prime examples—thereby managed to reconcile a genuine respect for India's past, with a patronising attitude towards contemporary India which helped to sanctify the imperial mission.

While deriding Indologist claims for Indian culture, the Utilitarians conveniently accepted the Indologist idea of the "permanency" of Indian institutions—a process which they regarded as akin to stagnation. James Mill insists that whatever crude institutions India may have developed at one stage, they were later allowed to stagnate beyond redemption. He regards India as not having changed or evolved in any significant way since despotic rulers opposed change and prevented the country from entering the mainstream of world history as Europe had done. He argues:
[From] the writings of the Greeks, the conclusion has been drawn that the Hindus at the time of Alexander's invasion were in a state of manners, systems and knowledge, exactly the same with that in which they were discovered by the nations of modern Europe, nor is there any reason for differing widely from this opinion. Their annals from that era till the period of the Mahometan conquests at least are a blank.

(Mill 1978: 120)

The language and the tone as well as the intended effect may be different. But basically, Mill and the Conservatives argue that India has not changed much from Alexander's conquest to the British one.

Neither Conservatives nor the Utilitarians were too appreciative of contemporary India; the former regarded it as having lapsed from an original purity and the latter as the natural evolutionary stage from an already degraded past. Either way, the imperial mission was justified by a construct of India, which as Said puts it in *Orientalism* served for "dominating, restructuring and having authority" (Said 1978: 3) over the country.

The Utilitarians and the Reformers openly advocated varying degrees of Anglicisation, which in fact meant total British control. The Conservatives stressed the need for preserving Indian institutions, but also implied a convoluted theory which could be a forerunner of Kipling's concept of the "White Man's Burden." According to this theory, the tools of government in India ought to be Indian and not British, but since contemporary Indians were incapable of "good" self-government, it was up to the British paternalists to see that these tools were used properly. This concept is presented in William Jones' "Hymn to Ganga". In the "Argument" to the poem, it is stated that the Hymn is "feigned to have been the work of a Brahmin in an early age of Hindu antiquity, who by a prophetical spirit discerns the toleration and equity of the British government and concludes with a prayer for good laws well administered" (Jones 1976: XII 322). The concluding lines of the poem are:

Nor frown, dread Goddess on a peerless race
With liberal heart and martial grace
Wafted from colder isles remote
*As they preserve our* laws and bid our terror cease
So be their darling laws preser'v'd in wealth, in joy,
in peace.

(my emphasis, Jones 1976: XII 333)

The Conservative argument encapsulated here is that the British rulers are responsible for "preserving" Indian laws. In short, if Indian laws are to be successfully implemented or if India is to be Anglicised, the Empire has to continue what is more, it has to continue for the benefit of the Indians themselves. The Conservatives and the liberal Reformist categories melt into each other, sliding as it were to fit into mutual areas of ambiguity to provide a surface concrete substratum, at least ideologically, for continued imperialism. As will be seen in the chapters dealing with representative figures like Burke and Mill, internal contradictions abound in these ideologies. However, what is most significant is that these, far from being weakening fissures, were paradoxically the essential components which allowed respect for tradition and liberalism to coalesce into a support for Empire.

This leads us directly to that ideological strand which may be referred to as "pure" Imperialism, which by its less subtle and more overt presence exposes the contradictions in both the Conservative and Utilitarian arguments. George Bearce remarks that Britain had no specific philosopher of imperialism and that imperial attitudes more often came from policies and action than a comprehensive statement of theory. (Bearce 1961: 35). Ignorance, prejudice, national pride and a Romantic attraction to grandeur contributed to the desire to maintain and expand the Indian Empire even at high economic and moral prices.

The spirit of imperialism as seen after the impeachment of Warren Hastings was in some ways different from what had gone before. To a certain extent, it was a reaction against the stereotypical "Nabob" represented by men like Clive and Hastings. A major fear of the Conservatives in Britain was that the British officials who went out to India may end up corrupted by India. There was a fundamental conflict between the novaeaux riche Nabobs, allied to the rising commercial classes and the traditional land owning elite of Britain.
Samuel Foote's 1772 play *The Nabob* dealt with the exposure and discomfiture of the Nabob Sir Mathew Mite. Robert Sencourt points out that "the type was at once familiar and thoroughly unpopular" (Sencourt 1990: 210). Mite's leading character traits are ostentation and unscrupulousness and with the wealth of India, he has also brought to Britain the vices of India. The subtitle of the play *The Asiatic Plunderer* is evocative of Burke's fulminations against Warren Hastings. The author refers to the notion of "geographical morality" when he asks "Why rob the Indian and not call it theft?"

After the East India Company itself was arraigned in the person of Warren Hastings, the attitude prevailing was one against Nabobism. The new officials were not encouraged to become Indian in any way and they were expected to continue imperialism while also demonstrating British martial and moral superiority. However, though the Nabob's parade of irritating ostentation in Britain may have been reduced, it seems that imperial grandeur and ostentation increased proportionately in India itself. From the earliest period, Company agents in India had insisted upon pomp and splendour as the best method of overawing the natives and ensuring their subjection. The Rev. Mr. Anderson's account of the pomp of the President of the Calcutta Fort indicates the extent of this ostentation:

> He had a standard bearer and bodyguard, composed of a sergeant and a double file of English soldiers. Forty natives also attended him. At dinner each course was ushered in by a sound of trumpets and his ears were regaled by a band of music. Whenever he left his private rooms, he was preceded by his attendants with silver wands. On great occasions when he issued from the factory, he appeared on rose back or in a grand palanquin or a coach drawn by milk white oxen. Led horses with silver bridles followed and an umbrella of state was carried before him.

(quoted in Carey 1980: 17)

The conviction that ostentation was necessary to overawe the natives continued even after the impeachment of Warren Hastings. The "new" imperialism, at least till 1857, ensured to a certain extent that displays of Nabobism were subdued at "Home" but they certainly flourished in India. The chief officials in the colony were beginning to identify themselves with legendary military conquerors and explicitly put forward this identification as sufficient justification for their ornate mode of living. Wellesley's friend
Lord Valentia justifies the Governor-General's costly construction of a magnificent residence in Calcutta on these grounds:

The sums expended upon it have been considered as extravagant by those who carry European ideas and European economy into Asia, but they ought to remember that India is a country of splendour, of extravagance and of outward appearances, that the Head of a mighty Empire ought to conform himself to the prejudices of the country he rules over, and that the British, in particular ought to emulate the splendid works of the House of Timour [sic].

(quoted in Bearce 1961: 47)

Both the Conservative and the Reformist philosophies had opposed the idea that the British officers should become Indianised in any way. The Reformers, of course, were for Anglicisation of the natives themselves. The Conservatives, while they considered that Indian traditions should be preserved, desired the British rulers to remain as father figures above these traditions, applying them to individual cases with unbiased minds and just hands. But, the ground realities of imperialism were viewed with regard to British prejudices as to what "native prejudices" were. The Indians were depicted by British observers as wanting/needing pomp and spectacle and British imperialists, when accused of "going native" often retorted that they were merely catering to native prejudices so as to keep the Empire going. A close examination reveals that in this argument the British position was logically untenable from either side.

If they claimed that their ostentation and aggression were only to impress the natives, then in effect, it meant that Britain had not succeeded in "reforming" India and that native inclinations still dictated the style of government. On the other hand, if at all "Nabobism" was presented as inherently luxurious and enjoyable, then the process of Indianisation was complete; India, as feared by many, had succeeded, with her indolence and luxury, in corrupting the representatives of the temperate West. Caught in this double bind, it was no wonder that formal theorising of Empire was not carried beyond a certain dangerous frontier in this period. Yet, the double vision was necessary—so that ostentation could be attacked and defended simultaneously, while imperialism continued its progress.
In effect, the theory of Empire was constantly trying to reconcile the irreconcilable and it was when confronted by this aspect; that many officials argued that Empire was an entity in itself almost free of human constraints. In the *Political History of India*, Sir John Malcolm argues that "Empire is a substance which has hitherto defied and will always defy the power of man to fix in any desired shape. It is mutable, from causes beyond the control of human wisdom" (Malcolm 1826: I 9). This, then, is what a large part of the early theory with a pro-Empire slant comes down to-a quasi mystical system which is dependent on both contradictions and a willing blindness to these—even while dealing in them—to maintain its coherence.

The point is not so much that this detached concept of Empire is not tenable, as that in the early stages the proponents of Empire could not provide a more factual basis for their arguments, despite their conviction of the superiority of Western rational Empiricism. Considering the evidence we have of the immense amount of planning and deliberation that went into the construction of Empire, it is possible to firmly agree with Edward Said when he argues that "By the beginning of World War I, Europe and America held 85% of the earth's surface in some sort of colonial subjection. This, I hasten to add, did not happen in a fit of absent minded whimsy or as a result of a distracted shopping spree" (my emphasis, Said 1990: 71). Indeed, Empire was planned and constructed, but the constructing blocks were illogical and ill-assorted enough to force the makers themselves to cast a mystifying veil of rhetoric over the entire process. But, as I have been arguing—this rhetoric as well as the gaps which it covered up were, paradoxically, not just gaps but necessary constituents of the construction also.

Dreams of Imperial grandeur, it has to be remembered, did not devalue the important motif of commercial aggrandizement and profit. As discussed in Section B, the officers in India had in most cases to put forward sound economic reasons to justify their political actions. Indeed, during the early period, the East India Company was divided over the question of whether to concentrate on its commercial or its political functions. In the initial stages at least, the Directors of the Company held that costly wars were quite incompatible with successful trade, and tried to curb the imperial ambitions of some Governors General. The Company, however, was not the sole arbitrator of British economic interests in India. In his *John Company at Work*, Holden Furber reveals "a
much more complex pattern of British economic interests in India, including an extremely vigorous private sector operating in the interests of the Company's monopoly" and suggests a number of links between the economic contact between India and the West and the rise of British Imperialism" (Furber 1948: 321).

Changes in the political situation also often led to drastic changes in economic policy. For instance, before the conquest of Malabar the Company had been trying every way in its power to force the natives to sell them pepper at reduced prices. When they obtained sovereignty, however, the entire picture changed and it was argued that it was in their interest now, not to reduce, but to raise the price as much as possible, as long as there were foreign competitors to purchase it. At the same time as demonstrated by Pamela Nightingale, it was the question of the monopoly of the pepper trade and the stiff economic competition offered by the French from Mahe that led to the annexation of Malabar in the first place (Nightingale: 1970). Economic and imperial interests thus functioned hand in hand and it was a very small minority of staunch pseudo-imperialists who could put forward plans for expansion without listing corresponding economic advantages. There were, of course, some individuals like Charles Grant who argued that the joint prosperity of both Britain and India had to be the chief goal of imperial economic policy. However, in most cases, the imperial power was used to safeguard British interests rather than Indian ones.

It was argued that only under British rule could the Indians develop sufficient taste and achieve enough prosperity to buy British goods and so be a flourishing market for private trade. At the same time, immediate economic gains would not be possible if a large share of the profits were to be invested back in India itself and the shareholders demanded quick returns. Within this double bind, it is not surprising that while imperial rhetoric catered to the theme of India's economic resurgence, imperial policy often pursued British interests at the cost of injuries to the Indian economy. The end result was that the concept of India as a market for British goods was gradually shaded off into the picture of India as a source provider and the British interests were declared paramount. An appeal made by a British silk industry worker to maintain protection of British interests encapsulates this attitude:
I certainly pity the East India labourer, but at the same time, I have a greater feeling for my own family. I think it is wrong to sacrifice the comforts of my own family for the sake of East India labourers because his condition happens to be worse than mine [sic].

(quoted in Bearce 1961:216)

Obviously such a paramountcy of British interests could be maintained only if the British possessed the necessary political power to enforce it. Beneath the grand rhetoric of paternalist imperialism, the profit motif stands firmly entrenched. Though it is not possible to specifically attest cause and effect relations for each particular case, it is still necessary to regard commerce and Empire as symbiotic processes.

With regard to religion, two distinct strains of thought prevailed with regard to India in this early period of imperialism. The first trend was a Romantic idealization of India as a spiritual Utopia, the Promised Land. This motif has been thoroughly examined by John Drew in his India and the Romantic Imagination. Traces of this attitude can be seen in the philosophy of Coleridges and the work of certain Indologists. However, later in life, Coleridge rejects his earlier fascination with Indian philosophy and even attacks it fiercely from the point of view of a committed Christian apologist. Even those Indologists who spoke passionately about the glory of Indian culture, insisted on the supremacy of Christianity as the only "revealed" religion. However, a lofty idea of Indian philosophy did work on the Romantic imagination for a while, and not all authors labelled Indian thought as "monstrous"—as Southey does in the Preface to his Curse of Kehama.

This attitude, however, did not have much influence on imperial policy or practice in India and is to be traced mainly in works of the imagination. The real struggle over religion was between the missionaries who wished to convert the "benighted" Indians and those imperialists who feared that missionary "interference" may disturb the smooth process of administration and trade. The major question debated was whether Christianity would help or hinder the process of imperial rule. The early missionaries received little encouragement from the Company officials and on occasion were even actively discouraged. To counter this attitude, committed Evangelists like Grant and Wilberforce formulated arguments which sought to prove that conversion would actually be beneficial
to the Empire. Grant stated that "by planting our language our knowledge and our religion in our Asiatic territories, we shall put a great work beyond the reach of any contingencies, we shall probably have wedded the inhabitants of those territories to this country" (quoted in Bearce 1961: 62). Claudius Buchanan also argued that Christianity could strengthen the Empire because "there can never be confidence, freedom and affection between the people and their sovereigns where there exists a difference of religion" (quoted in Bearce 1961: 83). Just as Imperialism had to be justified by economic arguments, missionary work had to be justified through imperialistic arguments.

It was the missionary impulse which produced the darkest pictures of India. Wilberforce declared in 1813 that "our religion is sublime, pure and beneficent, theirs is mean, licentious and cruel (quoted in Bearce 1961: 82). Most missionary travel accounts and records of the time indulge in gruesome descriptions of Indian religion, apparently on the principle that the worse these pictures appeared, the more zealous would be the support for Evangelical activity. However, even if we grant that a few missionaries were sincere in their desire to spread the gospel, it is evident that those who actually, politically governed India, were not at this stage too concerned about the soul of the Indian. The "Nabob" was far more concerned with "oriental luxury" and with providing a reasonably strong administration; it was only much later that we have "Christian administrators" like those shown in W.D. Arnold's Oakfield, who agonize over the spiritual fate of both Indians and of Britons in India. It is safe to say that despite the many pious proclamations of deliverance through Christianity, the missionary impulse would not have been encouraged, if it had not proved that it was at least not actively opposed to imperialism.

The common purpose of the ideological stands so far discussed was the—preferably profitable—perpetuation of Empire. It now remains for us to see the presence of these ideologies in the discourse of Romanticism. On the one hand, Indological research and Conservative thought helped to propagate the notion of India as an idyllic, "natural" counterpoint to a corrupted and mechanical Europe. "Ancient India became a sort of Utopia for the Romantic Imagination." (Tharu and Lalitha 1991: 43). Shelley's Alastor, set in Kashmir, and Moore's Lalla Rookh furnish us with excellent examples of
how India is seen as an idealised locale, an earthly version of Paradise and Eden. Raymond Schwab links imperial advancement and related the idealisation with the "overturning of individual bondage to rationality" which constructs the "Romantic Sublime."

It was logically inevitable that a civilization believing itself unique would find itself drowned in the sum total of civilizations, just as personal boundaries would be swamped by over-flowing mobs and dislocations of the rational. All this together was called Romanticism, and it produced through its many re-creations of the past, the present that propels us forward.

[Schwab 1984:16]

This idealised India, however, co-existed with a Gothic version well illustrated by Southey's *Curse of Kehama*. The origin of such grotesque and fearsome conceptions of India can be traced back to Utilitarian and Evangelical attempts to debunk Indian culture. James Mill, in his *History* bluntly states that:

No people, however, rude and ignorant whatsoever who have been so far advanced as to leave us memorials of their thoughts in writing have ever drawn a more gross and disgusting picture of the universe than what is presented in the writings of the Hindus. In their conception, no coherence, wisdom or beauty ever appears, all is disorder, corporal passion, violence and deformity.

(Mill 1978: 1187)

The Gothic aspect of the Romantic imagination, with its fascination for the unknown, especially in its more outlandish versions avidly seized on this particular attitude towards representing India. We see in the Romantic paradigm a compromise being delicately maintained between the duality of an Edenic India inhabited by "noble savages" and an effectively thrilling horror chamber inhabited by unpredictable barbarians, who worshipped monstrous Gods. Individual accounts shade off from one

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5 Goethe's lines: "Would thou the young year's blossom, the fruits of its decline And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted, fed? Would thou the earth and heaven itself in one sole name combine? I name thee, Shakuntala, and all at once is said!" (1964:168) exemplifies the sheer power and charge this discovery of the East had.
perspective to the other without much concern for internal coherence—and ironically, this contributes to a kind of stability for the overall structure.

The images of India, finally delivered up by both Conservatism and Utilitarianism, as well as the conviction shared by both that imperialism should continue, were appropriated by Romanticism/Gothicism and covered over with flashes of brilliant imagery which enhanced the "effect". These aesthetic Romantic depictions of India, in turn, fed back into the ideological and administrative processes, and the cycle continued unbroken; hiding its inconsistencies through calculated silence or overpowering rhetoric.