CHAPTER THREE
CATACHRESIS OF BODY: WHITE MUGHALS

The Archives as a functional organization and the archive as a record of the past are replete with silences of the silenced bodies. Power often gets crystallized within the material walls of the archives. Here it is empowered with control over the ‘other’ and contains the ‘body’ of this ‘other’. This ‘other’ can be any group that has not been adequately placed or represented on the archival shelves. It can be the marginalized subaltern whose presence is felt only on the margins of the socio-political nucleus, or it can also be the woman whose body has always been placed or mis-placed (in a hyphenated form) as a result of the social conditioning carried forth by the patriarchal structures. Thus in most of the historical discourse, we witness that the body of the woman never finds a deserving place in the historical archives (organization as well as records). This missing discourse around the woman from these shelves forces one to think, rethink and question the status of women and her body, which is excluded from the history (the active participation of women in history) and from the remains of the history (the historical recordings).

William Dalrymple’s White Mughals, is a narrative history that heavily relies on the archives and its records. Using the same it projects forth a cultural hybrid set-up of the history of the British and Mughal relationship which dominated the Indian scene in the 18th and 19th century. It is an enticing piece of historical analysis. The centre story and the plot revolves around the British Resident James Achilles Kirkpatrick in Hyderabad (1797-1805) and his love affair with the beautiful Hyderabadi Muslim woman of high nobility - Khair-un-Nissa, whom he intermarries
and sets forth the example of breaking all the existing cultural boundaries. Marie Louis Pratt in her critique of imperial travel writing, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) has termed this crossing over phenomenon as ‘transculturation’ and ‘cultural hybridity’ occurring in the ‘contact zones’. These are zones where colonial encounters take place, zones wherein historically and geographically separated entities come into contact to establish cogent relations (Pratt 6).

In the text *White Mughals*, Dalrymple through his travel narrates the stories of the White Mughals; the elite Christians who ruled the land of the Nawabs – Hyderabad. At one end the tragic love story of Khair-un-Nissa and James Achilles Kirkpatrick, the British Resident in Hyderabad dominates the pages of this historical text and at the other it becomes a text that is centred around the politics, the trade,
the military dealings of Hyderabad and India of the 18th and 19th century. In writing about this love story and the socio-economic and political aspects that were prevalent in that particular age, Dalrymple takes up the tedious task of unravelling history through what is called the archiveland. In the text we as readers witness right from the start, that the body of the text throws much light on the journey of this historian, who while diving into the research of this era and James Kirkpatrick (transforming into a Mughal) becomes the ‘James Bond Dalrypmle’ - adopting the role of a detective he, dissects whatever little he finds inside or outside the archives. As a result, it becomes his personal journey through the archiveland – his love affair with the hidden, with the unknown from the common eye. As we move down the pages of the introductory chapter, we find Dalrymple’s detective tendencies transforming into novel patent declarations. He writes about the locale around which this journeying and journaling happens to take place- Hyderabad – the virgin land which according to him hitherto had been unexplored and not written about in detail. Dalrymple writes:

It was, moreover, a relatively unexplored and unwritten place, at least in English: and a secretive one too. Unlike the immediate, monumental splendor of Agra or the Rajput city states of the north, Hyderabad hid its charms from the eyes of outsiders, veiling its splendors from the curious eyes behind non-descript walls and labyrinthine backstreets.

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This particular chapter of the thesis delves into how the text White Mughals becomes a narrative that is an outcome of this historian’s writing about the ‘body’ of the ‘White’ who turned into a Mughal – James Achilles Kirkpatrick, the ‘body’ of the ‘untouched locale’ which is likened by him to a ‘virgin land hitherto unexplored’-the
city of Hyderabad, the ‘body’ of the ‘woman’ who made this text a possibility—Khairun-Nissa, and the ‘body’ of ‘archives’, on which the body of the text heavily relies.

Dalrymple begins his *White Mughals* by introducing the hero of his narrative to his readers. He writes:

> I FIRST HEARD ABOUT James Achilles Kirkpatrick on a visit to Hyderabad in February 1997. (Introduction)

The first four lines in Capitals lay emphasis on ‘I’ – Dalrymple’s ‘I’, a declaration which poses a double meaning in the mind of the reader of the text. The question which one may ask here is whether Dalrymple is referring to himself as being the ‘only’ person to have heard about this man or whether he heard about ‘this man’ (Kirkpatrick) for the very first time. This puts the reader in a twofold thought process of Dalrymple’s amazement v/s Dalrymple’s patent discovery of Kirkpatrick, which hitherto was hidden under the sands of time.

The combination of allegedly drawn affinities of the Resident Kirkpatrick, combined with an unending delight in the cultural milieu of Hyderabad made him a figure that was constantly being watched for his actions. According to the sources taken by Dalrymple from the London Archives (from where most of his source is derived), Kirkpatrick was a pro-Hyderabadi whose affiliations and adaptation to the culture of this land and its people had ignited a flame of doubt in the minds of the British. They felt that it was expected of him to defy both his loyalists and his loyalties in Hyderabad and back in his own home country.

*White Mughals* thus become a tale of seduction—seduction of this white man, who was taken in by the advances of the cultural mix of Hyderabad and also was
taken in by the seduction of the fair sex. Comparing the land of Hyderabad to the body of a woman who is virgin and not deflowered till now Dalrymple goes on to write:

This richly romantic and courtly atmosphere had, I soon discovered, infected even the sober British when they had arrived in Hyderabad at the end of the Eighteenth century. (xxxii)

The use of adjectives like ‘sober’ British, and ‘infected’ other culture, leaves one with doubt and speculation at Dalrymple’s intention of writing history just to glorify the West and its ways, which otherwise overshadow the East. Flipping through the pages of the book by and by one realizes that this narrative history is not just the love affair between a white and other; it is but the love affair of this white traveller/historian/archivist/ethnographer with his own lost roots. The book on a close reading makes one aware of Dalrymple’s inclination to his home culture which is reflected in the bombastic and biased re-presentation of the British (mostly drawn from the archives) and a catachrestic re-codification of the native (whose discourse goes missing from the archival shelves). In the process of writing the story of Kirkpatrick, the real narrator here is not just the decoder, but the agency that dominates and cultivates this thought process- the agency of the ruler that went on to have ruled for so long. Thus, what is presented to us in the body of the text becomes less of history and more of his-story. It is an indirect outburst of the reductive Eurocentrism - a view of the agency and agents who had once dominated and dictated this land. It finds voice and liberation only when Dalrymple indulges himself in a deliberate interrogation of the agency and its representatives. He writes:
Since the late-twentieth century implosion of Empire and the arrival in the West of large numbers of Indians, most whom have, as a matter of course, assumed western clothes and western manners, this East – to – West cross-fertilization of the cultures does not surprise us. But perhaps bizarrely, the reverse still does: that a European should voluntarily choose to cross-over and ‘turn turk’ as the Elizabethans put it, or ‘go native’ or ‘Tropo’, to use the Victorian phrase – is still something which has the capacity to take us back. (xliii)

The Empire always had its own mechanic tools to right/write the body- the body of the ruler and the ruled. In the colonial context particularly in relation to the history of India and Indians, historical travel writing seems to re-contextualize the superior status of the Empire and its lost glory. The wayfarer’s adventure on land when writing about land, body and subject becomes a tussle and a struggle with his own feeling of being deserted, dejected and homeless in his own home. But in the case of William Dalrymple, we see that this traveller historian’s deliberate undertakings are less to do with the denial of roots; contrarily it is his unending drive of surfacing the documents in the archiveland. These documents reaffirm and reassure the prevalence of his hidden roots even after it is long gone and dead, as it patents him as a superior researcher and his roots as ‘the only’ superior roots. His textual identification with this White Mughal character is a reflection of his identification with the British leftovers which is writ largely on the body of this voluminous text.

Freight with cultural meanings and laden with heavy imperial encodings, such travel accounts as White Mughals serve to act as transmitters of ‘encoded realities’ which come to us from the coffins of the past. The body of the writer/ historian/
archival researcher/ ethnographer becomes a new topos where the virgin land, the body of the White, the body of the outcast native and the body of the archival resource (the records in red files) that exists on the archival shelves finds altogether a different ontology; based on meanings and drawn out of blindly drawn inferences. Here the native cultural zone is transformed into neo-native contractual zone (zones of contact and contract of the writer/historian with his novel findings whose patent rights are only and only his). Class/ racial identity thus stand ‘chutnified’ through this meaning making and meaning marking process.

In the process of unearthing the dust in the archiveland, we see this historian/archival researcher taking up all pains in the archival grains. He rigorously digs up whatever he finds on the archival shelves. He writes:

The deeper I went in my research the more I became convinced that the picture of the British of the East India Company needed to be revised. The tone of this early period of British life in India seemed instead to be about intermixing and impurity, a succession of unexpected and unplanned mingling of peoples and cultures and ideas.

(xi)

Looking at the introductory section of the text, what becomes evident is the heavily laden controversial and autobiographical undertones. In the body of this text, we see the body of Whites finding more coverage than the non-whites (in terms of representation). White Mughals thus become a clear case of what I would call body catachresis taking place. We witness throughout the body of the text – the whites represented more than the non-whites, the untouched locale of Hyderabad is likened to some virgin woman’s body which was never touched by an insider but which was
waiting for the white man to come and unleash her. Then, there is the body of the archive, which is time and again stressed upon by the writer as to convince the reader of the authenticity of the extracted factual evidence. And lastly, there is the body of the woman Khair-un-Nissa which gets lost in the entire discourse of Kirkpatrick, of Hyderabad, of archival research and of history and historiography.

The text besides Kirkpatrick focuses on other British folks who loom largely on the textual space of the body of the text. They live following what I would like to call “the principle of the five I’s” (mine emphasis) invade, inquisitively inquire, invert their characters into bipolar personalities, inhabiting and exhibiting both cultures and lastly they intermarry. There are characters beside Kirkpatrick like the much referred to General Palmer who married Fyze Baksh – a beautiful Muslim Begum from Delhi. Fyze’s sister Nur was also married to a British – Benoit de Boigne. There is reference to the much hyped character of General Sir David Ochterlony, who had intermarried not one or two but ‘thirteen’ Indian women. Not only this, in writing about and in throwing light on the hybrid era of Kirkpatrick’s residency span, Dalrymple also writes about English ‘memsahib’s’ marrying the Muslim men of prominence and nobility.

Dalrymple mentions another Englishwoman, who had married a prominent Luckhnavi Muslim nobleman of that time and had written a remarkable book entitled *Observations on the Mussulmans of India Description of their Manners, Custom, Habits and Religious Opinions made During Twelve Years Residence in their Immediate Society*. Dalrymple says that this book was published by her under the pen name of Meer Hassan Ali. Here we see a White woman of elite nobility and standards turning to native adaptations, to not project an example of transculturation and
cultural crossovers, but as is evident from the title of her work, she deliberately had turned to the native manners and native customs to be a ‘decoder’ of the same. In order to get away with any accusations of an English woman marrying the Muslim man to get a peek into his world, this woman’s work finds an easy escape from questions and debates the moment she adds to the details of the work being penned by Meer Hassan Ali. Similar undertones pervade and echo in Dalrymple’s self-proclaimed declarations. Finding that he had Indian connections and Indian blood flowing through his veins, Dalrymple tries to satisfy himself and his reader of the real connections which he has with the Indian soil. After such a declaration, if not his birthright it now becomes his ‘blood right’ to write about India and its connections with the West. He writes:

In the course of my research, I discovered that I was myself the product of a similar interracial liaison from this period, and that I had Indian blood in my veins. (xli)

He further elaborates on how no one in his entire family had any idea about all this. He goes on to describe how he had heard stories of his beautiful, dark-eyed Calcutta-born great grandmother Sophia Pattie, who fell in love with Burne Jones. How she would speak Hindustani with her sisters and how she was painted by Watts with a rakhi. To further legitimize his blood right, he says, that it was only after a laborious toil in the archives that he had come upon the details of this woman and her Indian connections. He writes that this woman had descended from a Hindu Bengali woman from Chandernagore and had married a French Officer and for his sake she later had converted to Catholicism. The question pertinent here is that how by mere discovery of the presence of Indian blood in his veins Dalrymple is sanctioned with a ‘carte blanche’ to decode or re-code the body of this land through history writing.
Dalrymple’s archival based research empowers him into transforming himself into the role of a detective, who is very prompt in picking up his clues which he traces from the dust of the archiveland. Noted British historian Carolyn Steedman, in her book *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (2001), writes about the nature and composition of what the dust in the archival walls behold to themselves. She makes use of the metaphor of ‘dust’ to bring out the very essence of the archive. The image of the archive being compared to dust, places the status of the archives and their relevance to the present under forensic scrutiny of the critical mind. Since the archives and the archive both are remains of the past that are virtually untouched, decaying into dust, Steedman writes about the same in the opening paragraph of her book where she calls the ‘dust’ as immutable, obdurate set of beliefs about the material world, past and present, inherited from the nineteenth century, with which modern history – writing attempts to grapple. ‘Dust’ according to her is also the narrative principle of that writing and ultimately all Dust becomes a Joke.

On matters of hybridity, transculturation, multiculturation Dalrymple has throughout the text striven hard to paint the British with all the bright hues. *White Mughals* thus become a catachrestic antidote (which seems balanced but is not) to all such historical accounts, which under the influence of archival dust and its remains paints a stereotypical account of the native who is lost in the whole process of dialogue and discourse – for his voice stands silenced by the agency of truth pacts (the body of archival records) and the agents who narrate such ‘truth pacts’ (body of the historian/archivist/researcher).

In his *Reading An Archive: Photography Between Labour and Capitalism* (1983), the American Photographer, critic, filmmaker Allan Sekula comes up with the
term “anchorage”. He says that any picture relies on an anchor and his anchorage in order to assign it a meaning. In his other essay entitled *The Body and the Archive* (1992) he coins the term “archivalization”, which according to Sekula is a connecting thread between the physical space (that of the archive) and the meanings that are driven from the source material within that space. As spaces of stored memory and scattered material from the past, this storehouse of information becomes a house where happenings from the past are housed in and fed as per one’s selective approach. As a result of this kind of selective approach on the part of the archivist and selective hunt on the part of the historian/archival researcher all such silences that rule these houses of information and memory become deafening. The challenge therefore becomes one of interrogation of the content that makes up the body of the archive.

Not just the archiveland, but also the land where the Nawabs had ruled, finds itself codified and edified both in the hands of this decoder. The locale of Hyderabad around which the narrative is built is decoded and represented by Dalrymple as a virgin body. The body of this land is thus painted with highly gendered brush strokes. Underlying Dalrymple’s explanation of Hyderabad as a virgin territory lies an image of a mute untouched, unexplored locale unable to represent and speak for itself unless it is deflowered by the outlandish outlander from the superior coast. Till now the body of this virgin land was under veil, hidden and kept under ‘cover’ just like the body of a woman is kept behind the descript walls of the Zenana- away from all the curious eyes.

Women were often kept behind all such veils which varied from purdah to ghoonghat, from zenana to the walled forts, from attics of zenana to isolated rooms. Irrespective of caste, religion, time and space women have been adorning the four
walls in veils with difference in only degree and kind. This sets our eye of curiosity on the concept of ‘double colonization’ in Home and Harem - the Home, that of the land of Hyderabad and Harem where the women were kept in seclusion. It becomes an important aspect of study here and gains further importance with the double colonization transforming into ‘triple colonization’ when the women goes missing – from Home, Harem and ‘the Archives’. The body of a woman is isolated in Home, secluded in Harem and ‘lost’ in the red files – the storehouses of the record buildings.

Home and Harem can be seen as a space of seclusion and exclusion both. A space predominantly dissociated with men and their participation. On the other hand archives are also a space of exclusion and seclusion but contrarily it is predominantly associated less with women’s participation (records). Home and Harem have been domestic creations that are linked in particular to woman’s identity formation (as woman’s body is the object of desire by the male here). Archive on the other hand is not a domestic product but a by-product of the colonial hegemonic thinking and later its hangover. Also Archives are patriarchal in nature, as here only man’s identity is given importance (his body is writ large owing to the political affairs which in turn becomes an object of desire for the historian/archival researcher). Home and Harem is a dominant site of exploitation (of woman’s identity , of her body- where her body is placed on the periphery) and archives on the other hand is the centre of manly affairs where women’s discourse is either existing under veil or doesn’t find any existence at all ( sometimes misrepresented and sometimes absent in totality). This makes the body of the woman in Home and Harem a study of speculation, as the structure of the home, the harem, the archive (and the positioning of woman’s body therein) presents forth geography of archives as well as its history to be explored.

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Once we venture into this domain of study through the body of the text, what becomes evident is a range of complex and contested meanings, experiences and relationships which fragment the binaries into public/domestic, productive/reproductive, builder/occupants and work/pleasure. It therefore becomes that occupational text where its occupants bodies (a woman’s body) are scribed and transcribed further as per one’s will. Bill Ashcroft in *The Post Colonial Studies Reader* (2006) states that male is always the dominant one. His presence percolates and dominates every sphere—hold be it in the process of discourse building— as subjects of insurgency, or be it as the objects of colonial historiography. The ideological constructions always have kept the male on the superior shelf. The colonial rule that led to the birth of various institutions also gave birth to the Archives and records, but just like the colonial rule had gaps so does the archives. There are voices suppressed, voices unheard leading to missing and misplaced identities which are lost in the sand dunes of time. Here the woman and her body is kept under deep shadows.

Women’s situation in the formerly colonized societies was subject to the phenomenon of double colonization. Her identity was submerged into two distinct fronts— that of colonization based on rule and that of patriarchy based on gender. Ashis Nandy points in his book *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism (1983)* about the colonization being a phenomenon that is congruent with still prevalent Western stereotypical norms and the philosophy which they represent. It serves to produce socio-cultural consensus in which political and socio-economic dominance further symbolizes the dominance of men and their active masculinity over the abject passive feminity of women. (Nandy 4)

The Harem histories showcase and reveal how relationships, especially social relationships within this space are/have been shaped. It reflects the nature of man-woman relationship, women’s bodies being segregated within these created
boundaries of spatial and cultural privilege. Harem for the body of the woman was a site of alienation, dislocation and affectation, which was carved out of the colonized spatial structural apparatus. It is quite surprising that harems and the harem histories do not find a true place in the archives. If there occurs the presence of the same it is but in a misrepresented form. Private, public or created pieces of accounts busticate the body of these women whom we see seldom surfacing on the public front – in the privatized public archives or in the public records of the past which the decoder archival historian tries to deconstruct and reconstruct.

The *Archons*, which Jacques Derrida speaks about in his *Archive Fever* (1995), are ‘patriarchal bodies’ of speech. They decide the functionality of this mechanical agency. In the book *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003), Diana Taylor emphasizes on the archive alluring the researcher/historian who time and again falls back on it and banks heavily on it for the production of his work. The body of objects and the body of documents, she warns the reader, can disappear even in these recorded organizations. She accuse them for being supervised, just as the male dominated structures have dictated and supervised the boundaries of home, harem, archives and the bodies of woman living and surviving in them.

In Greek, the word *Archive* is the home and house of the ‘*archon*’ (the superior magistrate). Female reproduction in the narratives and the female role-play in domestic versus the public space is what calls for an insight here. The institution of ‘Purdah’ or ‘Naqaab’ was something which regulated women interactions largely. This practice was related commonly to the visibility of the fair sex. Women in Purdah lived under complete cover – a cover from the outer world, a cover from the world that did not belong to them as per patriarchal standards. This purdah was used as a
means to hide the body of the female and this put her visibility in total darkness. Zenana – the larger cover secluded in the corners of the palatial buildings along with the cultural adoption of the veil had its own critical nuances which also demand our critical interrogation. The purdah which veiled the visibility of the fair sex screened their presence, their voices; in fact their very existence. As a result they were/ are left from being recorded and reported – both inadvertently and advertently with self and selfishly driven political motives. No wonder it leads to catachresis!

The Zenana was a body, a larger framework of the patriarchal mindset structured to shelter the woman’s body. Being the most secluded place of the palaces, light seldom penetrated through these otherwise exotic structural and functional apparatuses; structural owing to their structures (being cornered in the palace) and functional owing to the function of women, whose bodies in the harem was but a site of sexual fulfilment. No place was less transparent to both the Mughals and the British colonialists than this exotic body and the body behind its walls- kept in cover. In the National Archives of India Records, one comes across files and documents which throw light on the royal courts concubines, their behaviour in and outside the royal palaces. Such records present a picture of either seduction or defilement. Thus as is evidenced in the recorded documents, the woman and her body becomes the sexual compass around which the life of the male counterparts of the court revolved.
Fig 3.2 Precis of Palace Intelligence, Misc.Volume 361, dated 29th July 1853. A record depicting what passed in the Harem and in the royal courts in relation to the concubines (source: National Archives India, New Delhi)
In the body of the text *White Mughals*, we see a Khair-un-Nissa (the supposed female protagonist) whose body and identity is hyphenated. We witness that she had spent her entire life in strict purdah. Unlike the way in which the hero of the novel is described Khair loses all the rights of visibility. It is only when we reach the third page of the introductory chapter of the text, that we find Khair as the fragile native woman who is kept hidden - behind the veil. Dalrymple writes in this context:

Khair-un-Nissa remained all her life in strict purdah, living in a Separate bibi-ghar (literally women’s house)... she was unable to walk around the side of her husband...(xxxiii)

Fig. 3.3. The separate Bibi Ghar depicted through miniature art where women lived and spent most of their time (Source: National Museum, New Delhi)
Fig. 3.4. Miniature paintings depicting the Women in the exotic and secluded Harem (Source: National Museum New Delhi)
The veil was used as a means to cover the modesty of the fair sex. This purdah/veil acted like an indirect power structure which reaffirms the ineptitude of the male dominated society to rise above such extremities. Imposition of curtailment and adherence to such means as keeping the body behind the walls of the harem resulted in seclusion and exclusion exercises; which in turn had alienated the fair one in an unfair manner. Khair- un- Nissa and Kirkpatrick relationship has been used by this writer /historian to bridge the gap that exists between the West and East. He is seen imparting idealized context here and there throughout the body of the text which buttress his nostalgia of his lost past roots which once dominated the land of Hyderabad. The mingling of the boundaries is a sentimental re-creation on the part of this decoder historian. He ventured like a belated White Mughal in the stories that comes to the reader from the exotic land of harems, hookahs and nautch girls – where the body of the white comes to attract , dominate and set free the sexually impoverished non white woman who till now was waiting to be freed from the clutches of the brown sahib.

Fig 3.5. Young woman being brought to the Harem of a Mughal noble
(Source: National Museum, New Delhi)
In the first chapter of the book, William Dalrymple writes about how Khair, being a Sayyeda, a descendant of the Prophet who would never marry anybody else except for other Sayyeds, has on the contrary broken her engagement and had got into alliance with this white resident in Hyderabad. He writes:

There, were consistent reports that Kirkpatrick had, as Clive put it, ‘connected himself with a female’ of one of Hyderabad’s leading noble families. The girl in question was never named in the official inquiry report, but was said to be no more than fourteen years old at the time. Moreover she was a Sayyeda, a descendant of the Prophet, and thus, like all her clan, kept in very strict purdah. Sayyeds—especially Indian Sayyeds—were particularly sensitive about the purity of their race and the chastity of their women. (5)

The primary concern that rises here in relation to Khair’s hyphenated identity is that; why her name was not mentioned in the official enquiry reports? Was it because she was a ‘female’ as the enquiry report had addressed her, considering that she was a woman her identity did not matter to be given an official importance in the so called official enquiry (forgetting at once who was this woman who had been able to turn the White into a Mughal) and secondly that naming her in the official record would put Kirkpatrick on a backseat (for it was Kirkpatrick who like a true superior white had been able to successfully liberate this weak ‘female’ from the clutches of the ‘weak’ native male). Transculturation for Dalrymple is dependent upon such sexual interventions of the British and their relationships with such Indian womenfolk. He writes in relation to the enquiry in the sexual episode:

Over the course of the following few days Orr and Browser answered, under oath, a series of questions of such intimate and explicit nature
that the finished report must certainly be one of the most sexually revealing public documents to have survived from the East India Company’s India: to read: it is to feel a slightly uneasy sensation akin to opening Kirkpatrick’s bedroom windows and peering in. The two witnesses, whose bright soldierly blushes are clearly visible through the formal lines of Captain Wilk’s perfect copper plate handwriting, were asked how Kirkpatrick had come to meet and have an affair with a teenage Muslim noblewoman who was kept in strict purdah, especially when she was engaged to be married to another man. (8)

Such transculturation that had occurred in the contact zone is re-traced by William Dalrymple within its catalchrestic biased historical cultural zone. He dates it to the first European presence in India, that of the Portuguese who had settled in the subcontinent after their conquest of Goa in the year 1510. Citing from the historical sources which he uses, he points further that the Portuguese commander Alfonso de Albuquerque had encouraged his men to intermarry the women of Muslim lineage and convert them into Christianity. (11)

Thus we see that the body of the Oriental woman has ever been posited as the ‘other’ which lies and lives on the margins without any self worth. Discourse around these women represented them as the oppressed ones who gazed at their significant outsider other – the superior men to come, deflower them and liberate them and bestow upon them visibility through this act of de-flowering them. As is evident in the ‘body’ of ‘the text’ wherein Khair gets importance (whatever little) owing it to the enquiry reports where she gets her stamp of visibility only in relation to Kirkpatrick’s name added to her. Because she is impregnated by a White man so she becomes an important thread in the history surrounding Kirkpatrick and his Residency days in the
city of Hyderabad. It is in this similar strain, wherein the discourse around the fair sex has never surfaced on the archival shelves until there is some connection with the superior agency/agents. The coding is thus, in the form of sexually inflected females looming largely around the ‘body of this text’. The question of real enquiry, thus, becomes an interrogation of the absence/presence of the body of all these women in the body of the archive and of the text. It is these women characters beside the male ones who otherwise made the White Mughals happen in the very first place – both as a historical body of the narrative and also the body of the white who turned ‘turk’ for them and because of them.

Here follows one reference from the archival records cited by Dalrymple which I found in the course of my research in the National Archives of India that is about the zenana and the afseels and maidservants in Kirkpatrick’s mahal. It is a translation of a letter from Monshee Azeez Oola to Lt. Col. Kirkpatrick.
Translation of letter from Mushtaq Khan, a servant, to Judge Muhammad Azizullah, the Magistrate.

After representing the case of a servant named Mushtaq Khan to the judge, it was decided that the servant should be sent to the mission as a messenger. The servant was sent to the mission on the same day and was brought to me in the morning. I complimented the servant and the husband of the girl about the health of the daughter. The husband was extremely ill and desired that my advice might be used to prevent him from all troubles.

The people of the mission insisted on having the mine very early in the morning, and the servant had to be sent to the mission immediately. The servant was sent out of the house accordingly, but the servant did not kiss his daughter and the servant was made to leave the house in the morning. It was late in the evening. One day after this transaction, a man of Mushtaq Khan's village came with the husband of the servant and informed me that a servant named Mushtaq Khan had not come as he desired. I wanted to know if there was anything going to happen to the servant. The servant informed me that the servant was not well and that he was not able to leave the house. As soon as I heard this, I heard what he had to say accordingly after an hour.
Extract from a letter from Banoo Allah Khan to Lieut. Colonel Erskine

I have lately been given to understand that certain persons upon the ground of the favor shown me by the President of which I have frequently written at Madras and at Secunderabad acknowledge, and before them in terms of gratitude, have grounded me in whatever which can have no foundation in truth and my own and civil disposition, say, and make it an injustice to me, to my family, and to my country. I have recourse to you, as I have to my Lord and to my God.
About one with the men of township.
They wished their Presence out of their Policy.
Their orders, and instructions, are written
in a very polished, and a mere-

The Resident has never reported anything of this nature.
He is free from having any kind of

No sentiments, but those of gratitude.

The purpose of the rest of the

The remainder, colonel his patent

of his promise to make him a present

Said.

A true translation.

Said.

Said.
The above record from the National Archives is a Letter in the Foreign Department consultation File dated 15 May No 20. It describes the events that had led a man to abuse his wife and ill treated her following which the woman’s mother had brought it to the notice of the authorities from whom she demanded protection to her daughter. The people in the mehl on hearing all this had ill treated her and angrily had shunned her away. Disillusioned and disappointed the afseel took her daughter away and hired a house for her. The husband of the woman had come to talk about the same to Monshee but the moonshee on his way to the Resident asked him to wait for a day. On his return he is made to realize that the husband has stabbed himself. All this incident is then reported to the Resident who till now was not aware of it. As soon he comes to know about it he calls upon his men to find the afseel and her daughter to learn about the matter in detail and take a ‘rightful’ action. The plight of the woman initially is dependent on the higher authorities (of the palace) from where she is shunt out. Following this later the plight of the suffering woman is worsened when she is shown in a vulnerable state - dependent on the help from the superior authorities (of British Residency). Such records throw light on the place which is assigned to the concubines, courtesans, and womenfolk in general.

Interest in the courtesans besides the elite Muslim women is also displayed by Dalrymple at large in the ‘body’ of the text. We find cross references to names like Nur bai and Ad Begum (reading about whom I felt that it is the version of an eccentric Lady Gaga of that century). Dalrymple writes about Ad Begum:

This was the age of the great courtesans: in Delhi, Ad Begum would turn up stark naked at the parties, but so cleverly painted that no one would notice: she decorates her legs with beautiful drawings in the
style of pyjamas instead of actually wearing them. In place of the cuffs she draws flowers and petals in ink exactly as found in the finest cloth of Rum. (172).

Musing over this woman and her way of presenting herself ‘stark naked’ in parties and public places puts the reader in a dubious doubt of whether Dalrymple is appreciating her creativity, or is placing her character in a defile frame. The words ‘stark naked’ throws light on the nudity aspect highlighted but on the very next instance, Dalrymple veils and puts cover on her nudity by presenting to his reader the picture of colours on her body. This kind of balancing diplomatic act and approach is not just evident here but throughout the body of this text. Be it Mughal India of the Mughals, or the Colonial India of the Whites and the ‘White’ who turned ‘Turk’ and adopted this culture, the Indian woman and the courtesans within the zenana all stood for exploitation; a site of the British refineries and sexual decadence. Thus we as readers witness that there occurs a living current of sexual objectification of the body of the woman that flows throughout the ‘body of the text’.

British men who pursued relationship with these women became the heart of the parallel accounts besides the main one. Emphasis on the wills left behind by such men puts an attempt on the part of the writer to recuperate and brush the congenial nature of the British with the best of colours. He writes: “... from the period rather touchingly confirm the impression of Suroon’s masnavi in suggesting that ties of great affection and loyalty on both sides were not uncommon at this time. Certainly many contain clauses where British men ask their close friends and family to care of their Indian partners, referring to them as ‘well beloved’, ‘worthy friend’ or ‘this amiable
and distinguished lady’. The wills also show that in many cases the bibis achieved a surprising degree of empowerment. (34, 35).

Through the account of all such ‘amicable wills’ Dalrymple very amicably drafts and presents forth a benevolent picture of his forefathers and his cultural roots. Another important aspect which comes to one’s notice on close reading here is that all such wills don’t exist in the Indian archival shelves as when we see the footnote and the reference to these wills it refers to the OIOC London; which is the Oriental and India Office Collections in the British Library in London. What raises an eyebrow here is that why such wills are not on archival shelves of India but of London? This makes it clear to the critical analyst, the reader and the researcher that archive (and the history from the archives) as it is put before us, is but a manipulated version that is meant to suit its creators ‘wills’ (pun intended).

The protagonist Khair-un –Nissa goes missing from the Indian archival shelves. Her body goes unattended under veil and curtain of the archives. She ceases to exist the moment archives cease to place before the reader any further record related to her husband Kirkpatrick. Dalrymple writes in this context that the moment Kirkpatrick dies and we have no more records of his to read and relate to, ‘we’ (Dalrymple and his supposed reader) are but left in utter darkness. Into this darkness die the hyphenated Khair and her hyphenated identity. The documentation around the body of this woman who made White Mughals (the text) and White Mughals (Kirkpatrick and his likes) happen is negligible in the entirety of the archival avalanche; from where Dalrymple like a self proclaimed expert has drawn his material of ‘novelty’ and ‘nobility’. This definitely leaves the reader in darkness for he realizes nothing is boxed all together in the archives or in its records. There are and will be gaps, huge gaps in archives, in home, in harem and therefore in history itself.
‘Purdah’, the cover for the body of the woman was itself the brain child of patriarchal strands of the Mughal order which even the British had adhered to and willingly accepted. The concept had revolved around hiding the ‘body’ of the woman from the male public gaze. Archives too act like this Purdah where the woman and her body go missing. The researcher is unable to locate her body and fails to draw facts which otherwise have been deliberately concealed under cover and are put up in an appropriated fragmentary form thus remaining under the ‘curtains’.

Fig3.6. Miniature depicting a woman in purdah in mid 17th century
(Source: National Museum, New Delhi)

In historical representation woman, her voice and her body is silenced and put under cover and concealment. It cannot be consulted and looked for and therefore it stands unrecognized. India as the country of the colonized era and of the neo – colonial order, has not come to understand itself or its past and its treatment of the fair sex. Thus it stands on a sidelined curvature where her identity is distorted and played with (just like her body). The time for historians is to collect, collate and portray not just what was but also that which was not given place in the socio – political and
geographical space – if there is the archived, there might as well be the unarchived. Gyanendra Pandey in his book *Unarchived Histories: The “mad” and the “trifling” in the colonial and the postcolonial world* (2014) uses the term “unarchived” for histories that are non-existent and are largely disenfranchised in the very process of archiving the documents of the lost past.

We therefore see that the book which began with the love affair of the Kirkpatrick and Khair ends on a sad note with a turn of events. The two children of Kirkpatrick are sent to England so that they are brought up well and given a superior education. This again puts the reader and the critical researcher in a twofold dilemma. One is forced to think in one’s mind, that on one hand the whites adapted to the mughal lifestyle and culture which was the culture of the elite the nawabs, and on the other end there occurs a thought of whites being separate from mughals – in class, in order, in hierarchy or in bringing up their children with all the superior things of life.

The book has dealt with the politics, the military, the trade dealings of the 18th and the 19th century. Dalrymple with his skilful narration has managed to portray the various Indian historical figures (in history) of that era. Indian rulers like Nana Phadnavis, Aristu Jah, Tipu sultan, Nizam of Hyderabad and many more surface the landscape of this historical text. But Dalrymple’s approach in writing of this narrative history from the archive is heavily laden with self driven priorities. Blessed with the perfect knack of shaping his work comprehensively driven from records and documents which have never been written and explored ever before, Dalrymple presents this narrative history as one faithful transcription of memories and memoirs from the dust of the past.

It is the body of the archive that make the body of the *White Mughals* (the text) and the White Mughal (the white man who converted). But in the body of this
voluminous project the larger question is about the woman and her hyphenated body- 
where do these two lie? Accounts of Khair and other women like her be it from the 
high rungs of noble class structure or from the low rungs of class and order who were 
the real indirect rulers contributing to the spatial, political and cultural history goes 
missing from archiveland. After having read the book completely the reader is in 
search of the unsaid, of the unarchived, of the lost Khair. It is only on closing the 
book that Khair is found speaking to us through her mesmerizing presence on the 
cover page of the text, wherein through her half facial expressions she seems to have 
’spoken’ ‘the unspoken truth’ of ‘the broken past ’ to the reader.

Fig 3.7 Khair –un –Nissa’s beautiful half portrait presented as the cover image of 
the book. (Source: Cover page of the text White Mughals)