Chapter 3

Tribal India in Colonial Narratives

The Tribal as Noble Savage and Subject to Be Civilized

After having presented a brief history of Tribal India, I would like to discuss a few fictional works by colonial (particularly Anglo-Indian) writers in this chapter. For this purpose I shall discuss the works of Rudyard Kipling, Verrier Elwin and John Masters. Most of the Anglo-Indian writers were directly or indirectly involved in the administration of the Empire. Also, they were in a privileged position compared to their subjects in terms of location. Their narratives represent the tribals as the ‘Other.’ It is worth explaining these ideas in detail. The phenomenon of the ‘Other’ in the context of European colonialism, is rooted in the perception of racial difference. The dissemination of this perception is a prime aspect of colonial discourse. Homi K. Bhabha suggests that the objective of colonial discourse was to “construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (154). In Orientalism, Edward Said’s seminal work on the subject, the author states that, “the very designation of something as Oriental involved an already pronounced evaluative judgment. [. . . ] Since the Oriental was a member of the subject race, he had to be subjected, it was that simple” (207). In this observation, Said hints at the fundamental basis of power for the institution of the Other; the ready willingness of
people to be influenced, if not controlled, by a perceived sense of reality without seeking out less illusionary truths.

There are important non-literary sources that must also be looked into in order to understand the concept. In *Beyond Anthropology* (1989), McGrane demonstrates that the Western perception of the ‘Other’ has undergone several interesting transformations over the last few centuries. During the Renaissance, the non-European races were perceived as ‘demoniacal and infernal.’ This was modified somewhat in the so-called Enlightenment period that merely dealt in modalities of ‘ignorance’ and superstition. In the Nineteenth century, the ‘Other’ was tied to the evolutionary development of humans through fixed stages of progressive civilization. Finally, McGrane suggests that the Twentieth-century response has been to embrace notions of cultural difference and controversy although not un-problematically.

The Euro-centric notion of progress is central to colonial discourse, particularly in its basic assumption that humanity moves from a state of relative ignorance to one of knowledge or enlightenment. As Anthropology blossomed into a science of legitimation, Western thinkers seized on this idea and took it a step further by saying that by studying the ‘Other,’ we are offered the rare chance to study our own past. This had been one of Freud’s contentions in his *Totem and Taboo* (1918). Freud says: “We can thus judge the so-called savage and semi-savage races; their psychic life assumes a peculiar interest for us, for we can recognize in their psychic life a well preserved, early stage of our own development” (3).
Freud saw in the study of the 'savage' races a means of understanding of the neuroses of his own 'civilized' race, an opportunity to use time travel to gain evidence for his psychoanalytic theories and designs. Anthropologists, taking the same approach, saw in the primitive cultures, a ready field for the study of the human race. Brian V. Street, who has worked on representations of primitive society in English fiction in his book *The Savage in Literature* (1975), suggests that "the evolutionary framework of thought enabled the European to accept the unity of mankind without the intellectual discomfort of ascribing to 'primitive' customs the same value and significance as of those of Europe" (5). R.S. Khare labels anthropology "Europe's discourse bearer on the non-European Other" (6). This description correctly implies that this discipline was established with the aforementioned intention of justifying the treatment of the 'Other.' McGrane, suggests that anthropology has been "an extremely subtle and spiritual kind of cognitive imperialism, a power-based monologue, a monologue about alien cultures" (127). McGrane is not alone in holding the opinion that anthropology is to be held largely responsible for furthering the stereotyping of the 'Other.' Johannes Fabian takes a careful look at this issue in his book *Time and the Other* (1983) and offers many insights into why the study of human beings began as cognitive imperialism. Fabian describes a fundamental contradiction in anthropology's approach to the study of the Other. He writes:

On the one hand we dogmatically insist that anthropology rests on ethnographic research involving personal, prolonged interaction with the Other. But then we pronounce upon the knowledge gained from
such research, a discourse, which construes the Other in terms of
distance, spatial and temporal. (xi)

Abdul R. Janmohamed highlights another aspect of colonial discourse in the
following statement:

Just as imperialists “administer” the resources of the conquered
country, so colonialists’ discourse “commodifies” the native subject
into a stereotyped object and uses him as resource for colonial fiction.
The European writer commodifies the native by negating his
individuality, his subjectivity so that he is now perceived as a generic
being that can be exchanged for any other native. (83)

Stereotyping indicates a certain relationship between the colonizer and the
colonized, and indicates that this relationship is established by the colonizer. At the
most basic level, the ‘Other’ is defined within the colonial framework as anyone non-
European or non-white. There are many other ways of thinking about the ‘Other.’
From a psychoanalytic perspective, for example, the ‘Other’ is viewed as the Self’s
double. Such a reading would appear, at first glance to lack the politics of the purely
racial construct. These prevalent notions have shaped the Anglo-Indian writers’
perception about the tribes. In the narratives of these writers, tribals are also
mentioned, though they do not occupy a central position. They appear as a backdrop.

We discussed in the previous chapter the colonial legacy of the term ‘tribe’
and how the colonial rulers and anthropologists perceived the tribal people and
portrayed them. The fiction writers’ views were not very different from that of the anthropologists and the administrators. To know how these perceptions were shaped we need to go back to the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries. It was then that a number of thinkers started reflecting on the concept of primitiveness. The Eighteenth century took interest in the noble savage led by thinkers like Rousseau. The ancient myth of the Golden Age and the traditional dichotomies between nature and art or town and country were discussed. The age of pre-civilized man was portrayed as the age of innocence, peace, morality, un-polluted purity, prosperity, equality, satisfaction and non-corruption. For instance these qualities are described in Aphra Behn’s novel *Oroonoko* which was very popular in the Eighteenth century though it had been published in 1688. The novel is based on the classical concept of the Golden Age describing primitive people in ‘their state of innocence.’ Aphra Behn comments on the superior simplicity and morality of both African slaves and the indigenous Indians.

In the Eighteenth century, praise and admiration for ‘the noble savage’ became very popular. Rousseau was one of the thinkers who brought this concept into the field of philosophical discussion. In his essays—*Discours Sur Les Sciences et Les Arts* (1750) or *Discourse on Sciences and Arts* and *Discours Sur l’Origile de l’ine’galite* (1755) or *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, he extolled natural man over his civilized counterpart. He contrasted the innocence and contentment of primitive man in a ‘state of nature,’ his mode of existence determined by none but genuine needs, with the dissatisfaction and perpetual agitation of modern social man. In the Eighteenth century, Oliver Goldsmith’s well-known poem, “The Desereted
Village," carried some of Rousseau's ideas and celebrated the idyllic pastoral life of Auburn, the "loveliest village of the plain." The poet lamented the growth of trade, and the migration of the peasantry to urban centers. The same idea is reinforced in George Colman's play, *Inkle and Yarico*, Richard Cumberland's play, *The West Indian*; Mrs Inchbald's *The Child of Nature*, and Robert Bage's novel, *Hemsprong*. A number of travel writings also emerged depicting the life of Islanders, Eskimos, Laplanders, Negroes, etc. There was also much curiosity about the phenomenon of the 'wild child' which one finds later in Rudyard Kipling's *Mowgli* and Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan of the Apes*.

The Romantic movement had also imbibed some of these ideas. Its stress was on Nature, freedom (both political and artistic) and the natural man. The Romantics saw and felt things brilliantly afresh. They virtually invented certain landscapes—the Lakes, the Alps, the Bays of Italy. They were strenuous walkers, hill-climbers, sea-bathers and river-lovers. They had a new intuition for the primal power of the wild landscape. Terror, Passion and the Sublime were the essential concepts of Romanticism. The Anglo-Indian writers who wrote about India were also influenced by Romanticism. This has been reflected in their writings on the tribals. They were fascinated by the landscape of the tribal areas, nature untouched by modernity, and the tribal population in their 'Arcadian' simplicity. When we look at the representations of the tribals we find similar images—the tribals as exotic, innocent, loyal, simple, superstitious, etc.
If we look at the situation in colonial India, we find that fiction, translation, ethnography, and fiction formed a significant part of the colonial discourse. Fiction on India was responsible for shaping images of India in the minds of a number of readers in England. Some of them came to India with these images and prejudices. Translation was necessary for the administrators in obtaining information to know their subjects. Anthropology and ethnography in the same way played a significant role in the administration. This perhaps prompted the American anthropologist, Kathleen Gough in an article, “Anthropology and Imperialism” published in 1968, to describe anthropology as “the child of western imperialism.” Ethnography provided a vast quantity of detailed, meticulously collected information about the socio-cultural institutions of its subjects. The close connections between imperia and studia can be seen in the resolution passed at a meeting in 1920 attended by government officials and University and British Museum representatives asking for the establishment of an Imperial School of Anthropology. It states:

In the highest interest of the Empire, it is necessary to extend and complete the organization of the teaching of Anthropology at the Universities of Great Britain [so that those intending to spend their lives in outposts of empire] will acquire sound and accurate knowledge of the habits, customs, social and religious ideas and ideals of the Eastern and non-European races subject to his Majesty the King Emperor. (qtd-in Niranjana 73)
Thus, the rise of anthropology and ethnography in the colonial era helped in establishing fieldwork as an important methodology for imperial rule. In this context, it is interesting to see how tribal India was depicted in colonial fiction and ethnography. There have been several attempts to represent different tribes in ethnography and fiction by the Anglo-Indian writers during the colonial period. These writings on the tribals evoke different kinds of images and feed into the ethnographical and administrative inputs to colonial discourse.

Rudyard Kipling was one of the most distinguished novelists in the Anglo-Indian tradition to have written extensively on Anglo-India. In some of his stories, tribals do find a place even if they are merely a backdrop. The story “The Tomb of His Ancestors” is a fine example. To understand Rudyard Kipling’s perspective on tribals, it will be useful to look at Kipling’s life in brief. Kipling was born in 1865 and spent his early childhood in India. At the age of six he was sent with his sister to England to begin school. He went to a lesser public school in England designed for children of the colonial servants. He returned to India in 1882. He worked as a journalist with the Civil and Military Gazette and The Pioneer. Kipling left India in 1889. Later, he stayed for a while in the United States and South Africa. He won the Nobel Prize in 1907. Though Kipling did not live in India all through his life, he wrote about her from his memory. Because of his upbringing and his affection for India, Kipling is not considered an alien. As Edward Said rightly points out, “Kipling wrote not only about India but he was of it” (Culture 166). Kipling arrived in the literary scene when Imperial rule was beginning to be strong. The first half of the Nineteenth century witnessed the pragmatic and utilitarian impulse and reforming
zeal. The Mutiny of 1857 was a major jolt which continued to haunt Anglo-India and its cultural productions upto, and beyond, Independence. If we put Kipling’s early literary career within the time frame divided by A J Greenberger, Kipling will fall under the Era of Confidence where the supporters of the Raj shared a common faith in the value of the British Empire. Greenberger’s *British Image of India* (1969) puts the writers of fiction on India into three periods. While admitting the possibility of “arbitrariness in any such division,” Greenberger calls “the period from 1880 to 1910, the Era of Confidence, the period ranging from 1910 to 1935 the Era of Doubt, and the period from 1935 to 1960 as the Era of Melancholy”(5).

As a result of his background and upbringing, Kipling’s Indian fiction is marked by profound concerns over imperial security. His stories give evidence of the way power is exerted over the native. It is worth looking at how his early fiction relates to power, particularly his famous collection *Plain Tales from the Hills* where the narrator-figure represents Kipling and his views. This particular aspect has been dealt with in detail by Moore-Gilbert in *Kipling and Orientalism*. For example, in “Miss Youghal’s Sais” the narrator is initially linked to the censorious Anglo-Indian opinion of Strickland’s habit of going ‘Fantee’ among natives. Many of Kipling’s narratives take place in the context of the rules of the master-slave dialectic. “The Tomb of His Ancestors” is as an example of Kipling’s stories representing the treacherous servant. This is clearly a metaphor for India in revolt. Apart from the *Plain Tales*, the famous *Jungle Books* also show evidence of Kipling’s imperial attitude. Jatindra Nayak and Sujit Mahapatra explore this aspect in their study of the *Jungle Books* in an article titled “The Taming of the Jungle: A Reading of Kipling’s
The Jungle Books"(2000-01). They point out that taming the jungle by man is
celebrated by the writer. Kipling’s narrative of Mowgli taming the jungle shows
Mowgli, the man-child, playing the role of any man in the jungle, and the other
animals viewing him with respect.

This may be taken to be emblematic of man’s superior position in the theory
of evolution. He is the first to survive. Mowgli is introduced in the first story of the
Jungle Books, “Mowgli’s Brothers” as a “naked brown baby who could just walk”
(Kipling, Jungle Books 10). He is even respected by Shere Khan, the tiger, king of the
jungle. The superiority of a human baby to a fully developed and ferocious animal is
emphasized here. Mowgli does not cry as we expect a human child to do but laughs
when he sees father wolf. Mowgli grows up as a wolf-child. It is to be noted that
Mowgli has in Romulus, the founder of the Roman Empire, the first great empire in
the Western imagination, a famous antecedent. Romulus too was suckled by a she-
wolf. Kipling perhaps sees the British Empire as a sequel to the Roman Empire.

With his advent in the jungle, Mowgli establishes his superiority. As a man-
child, Mowgli gives ample evidence of this superiority. Bagheera and Baloo find him
an extraordinary pupil. Being a man-cub he learns all the laws and masters all the
words of the jungle: this is what protects him in emergency situations. Thus Mowgli
represents the typical colonizer. The idea was that to be an effective imperialist, one
must become thoroughly familiar with the ways of the colonized, as Mowgli was with
respect to the jungle and its inhabitants. Sir William Jones’ learning of Sanskrit to
avoid being tricked by the pundits in court acquires a special resonance here.
Strickland, the police officer in several of Kipling’s stories tries to find out as much about the natives as he can, so that he can control them better. Mowgli finally knows more about the jungle than his teachers. Unlike Baloo, he masters the snake language too. He now feels reasonably safe against all accidents in the jungle, because, “neither snake, bird or beast” can hurt him.

Later Mowgli is made to realize that he does not belong to the animals (wolves) but to man. This realization is the turning point in his relationship with the other animals of the jungle. This is again an aspect of colonial thinking. The colonizers killed wild dogs to “protect” the herbivores. They also saw themselves as the saviour of the forests. Mowgli refuses to flee and in this invincibility he becomes a man. So he decides to attack them. As he himself says, he likes nothing better than “to pull the whiskers of death and make the jungle know that he was their overlord” (Kipling, The Jungle 241). Mowgli thus does what the colonizers wanted to do in India. i.e., exterminate the entire species of wild dogs. The wild dogs were also victims of a cultural bias on the part of the colonizers. Wild dogs were blamed for thinning the forests of herbivores. They were regarded as cruel killers. Hence in “Red Dog” they have been presented as the marauding Huns, wantonly killing anything on their path. They are shown as so terrible that tigers desert their kill for the wild dogs, and even Hathi gives way to them.

For the British, the wild dog came closer to the ecologically profligate tribal hunter. This is because the tribes would not kill wild dogs even if money were offered to them: the tribals probably considered the wild dog as a fellow hunter or comrade.
We come across the colonial imaging of a tribal hunter in “The King’s Ankus,” the story that comes before “Red Dog.” In this story, a Gond is presented as a wanton killer just as the wild dog has been described. Gonds are the dominant tribe of the Central Provinces. But in this story, the Gond probably stands for any tribal. The Gond steals the king’s ankus from Mowgli. It is puzzling why he steals it because it is not clear if he knows its value or whether he can trade with it. Yet, he is represented as killing any one who appears to be a possible obstacle for the sake of the ankus. It illustrates a clear case of prejudiced representation, since the Gonds killed almost always only for food.

Mowgli, once recognized as a man, becomes the lord of the jungle. When he behaves like a man he acts like a master. Mowgli as an astute general, engineers the death of Shere Khan with the help of his commanders, Akela and Gray Brother. After the native children, it is the turn of the native adults to submit to Mowgli’s authority. Baldeo, who had bullied Mowgli earlier, is not allowed to skin the tiger and is spared only when he proclaims Mowgli as the ‘Maharaj.’

Hathi who is known as the king of the jungle accepts Mowgli as the master. It suggests that to Hathi Mowgli is a brown baby, but in spirit, he is a white man. Further, when the jungle is let in, a Gond remarks that only the white man could check such a rampage. Since Mowgli orders the carnage, if any one can stop it, it is he. Thus Mowgli appears more and more in the role of a white man. He seems to be the prototype of Kim with whom he shares many similarities. Although Kim’s colour was brown like Mowgli’s, the faintest trace of the white man in him was enough to
make him the colonizer. Thus, Mowgli appears more and more in the role of a white man.

After knowing the jungle well, the pleasantest part of Mowli's life begins. Again, this is because he has become the absolute ruler. He also becomes the lord of the Middle Jungle, i.e., the life that lay close to the earth or under it by humiliating the smug cobra in "The King's Ankus." His position as lord is acknowledged at the council Rock where he had earlier been looked upon as an outcast; he now sits on a rock higher than that of the leader.

In "Red Dogs" Mowgli's role as the Lord of the Jungle is tested. The news of the coming of the wild dogs spread in the jungle. Mowgli can save himself, but it is his responsibility as the lord of the jungle to save his subjects. This is again a colonial kind of thought. The encounter with the Gond allows Mowgli to occupy another rung in the evolutionary ladder. Mowgli gets the better of him and demonstrates that there is no human or animal left in the jungle for him to conquer. After the killing of the wild dogs, there is no room to doubt Mowgli's status as the veritable lord of the jungle.

_The Jungle Books_ thus glorify the taming of the jungle and the evolution of man. Kipling has put Mowgli's story in an evolutionary framework. Mowgli has been represented as a leader or master. Others should follow him. This indicates the colonial attitude of the writer.
Kipling’s “The Tomb of His Ancestor” is another instance of the portrayal of the white man as superior to the Bhil tribes of Central India. John Chinn has been appointed as an Army Officer in the Satpura region in Central India. The Chinn family had a long history of working in different capacities in this region. Their inheritance goes back to the time of war at Seringapatnam in 1799. It is said that one member from the Chinn family assisted in the capture of Seringapatnam in 1799. John Chinn’s father, Lionel Chinn and grandfather John Chinn, the first, also worked in this area. John grows up here as a child and comes back from England to work here. The regiment that he joins as an officer is populated by a lot of Bhil people. Kipling describes them as “the strangest of the many strange races in India. They were, and at heart are wild men, furtive, shy, full of untold superstitions” (Kipling, “The Tomb” 110).

Kipling further claims that the white men were responsible for bringing the Bhils to civilization and that if this had not happened the tribals would be making themselves crazy thieves and cattle stealers. Kipling here reifies the contributions made by the British in civilizing the tribals. Indians have not lagged behind in such reification. It is a known fact that “leaders of underprivileged castes in India from Sree Narayana Guru to Ambedkar also preferred colonial rule to feudal governance, and welcomed the liberating influence of western education and egalitarian democracy” (Satchidanandan 12). Some Dalit scholars (Chandrabhan Prasad and others) even in our times believe that the British were instrumental in providing them education and employment, which was denied to them by Hindu society for centuries.
Though this might be a fact, Kipling's reinforcement of it shows his superior attitude and proves that his ideas are identical to that of the colonial rulers.

John Chinn the First (John Chinn’s father), proved himself to be a strict administrator and was successful in administering the Bhils. They were frightened of his stern rule. He attempted to ‘civilize’ them as well. The Bhils who were in regiments were taken for shikar as they had to be humoured. According to Kipling, even after joining the regiment, the Bhils had not given up their hereditary traits: “The uniformed men were virtuous in many ways, but they needed humouring. They felt bored and homesick unless taken after tigers as beaters[...]”(111). John Chinn joins the regiment and is liked by the Bhils. Some of them recall their childhood days and are happy that the same child whom they used to carry has come back to them. Bukta, the headman is one of the happiest persons to see John Chinn back. He says: “I bore you in my arms, Sahib, when I was a strong man and you were a small one—crying, crying, crying! I your servant [sic], as I was your father’s before you. We are all your servants.” (113). This is how they acknowledge their loyalty and offer their service. Thus the Bhils are shown as very loyal and subservient people. Bukta here is like a ‘Bhakta’ or a devotee of John Chinn. He is ready to do anything for him. He not only offers himself but promises that his family members would also serve the master. He says, “my nephew shall make a good servant, or I will beat him twice a day”(113-114). It is interesting to see how Kipling makes Bukta proclaim his subservient position. Bukta has a sense of fulfilment that his ‘Bhagwan’ or God himself has come to his door step. He is happy that John Sahib remembers his people.
He has not forgotten them. He remembers his own people as his father had remembered them before. Bukta further says:

Now can I die. But first I will live and show the Sahib how to kill tigers. That that yonder is my nephew. If he is not a good servant, beat him and send him to me, and I will surely kill him, for now the Sahib is with his own people. Ai, Jan baba--Jan baba! My Jan baba! I will stay here and see that this does his work well. Take off his boots, fool. Sit down upon the bed, Sahib, and let me look. It is Jan baba! ("The Tomb" 114).

John Chinn on the contrary has a condescending attitude towards Bukta. For instance, when he jumps into the river for a bath, very naturally stripping and leaving Bukta by the clothes, Bukta stares at him. Chinn says: "How the little devil stares!" (118). He calls him names. He has contempt for the tribe. This is not unlike the condescending attitude of many white people who worked among the tribes. For example Bronislaw Malinowski, the famous anthropologist, who had done extensive research on tribal communities wrote negatively about them in his diary. Clifford Geertz in an essay titled "From the Native’s Point of View" in his book *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (1983) highlights this aspect.

John Chinn on the other hand has a different plan in mind. He wants the Bhils to be vaccinated. This has been tried by the Maratha official, but he has not been successful. The vaccinator comes with lancets, lymph, and an officially registered
calf. The Bhils are angry with him and bind him and keep him captive. John Chinn takes leave and goes to Satpura. His grandfather was buried there. The Bhils believe that his grandfather rides a ghost-tiger. He used to be a mighty hunter. May be it was the tiger’s revenge, or perhaps he’s hunting them still. He goes to the tomb of his ancestors and makes a plan. He tells them that he is the incarnation of Senior John Chinn and if they obey him he will not ride the ghost-tiger anymore. Thereafter, he asks them to undergo vaccination.

Chinn kills his first tiger and comes to Bukta’s village. The villagers feel honoured that John Chinn reincarnated has come to their village after killing the first tiger. Chinn comes to know that his family name and pedigree serve him well. They tell him that he should take care of the appearance of his revered ancestor. This is because when a local god reappears on earth it’s always an excuse for trouble of some kind. John Chinn visits the tomb and comes to know about the devotion of the tribals for his grandfather. As Kipling narrates: “The weathered marble four-square tomb of Jan Chinn was hung about with wild flowers and nuts, packets of wax and honey, bottles of native spirits, and infamous cigars, with buffalo horns and plumes of dried grass. At one end was a rude clay image of a white man, in the old-fashioned top-hat, riding on a bloated tiger” (128).

When he visits the tomb of his ancestors, he recalls them as members of his family. He also realizes his supremacy as a ruler. He says, “I have come this far only because the Satpura folk are foolish, and dared not visit our lines. Now bid them wait on me here. I am not a servant, but the master of Bhils” (129). He goes and sits near
the tomb. Bukta, like an intermediary, calculates the situation and tells him in the morning that the people are terribly afraid, and that the best thing would be to give them orders. Chinn can do that. In the following morning, he appears and orders them to bring before him the bound-up vaccinator. When they bring in the Mahratta vaccinator, he gives them the impression that he himself is the reincarnated Jan Chinn, and proclaims:

'I have come on foot from my house' (the assembly shuddered) ‘to make clear a matter which any other than a Satpura Bhil would have seen with both eyes from a distance. Ye know the Small-pox, who pits and scars your children so that they look like wasp-combs. It is an order of the Government that whoso is scratched on the arm with these little knives which I hold up is charmed against Her. All Sahibs are thus charmed, and very many Hindoos. This is the mark of the charm. Look!' (131-2).

Then the aged diplomat Bukta himself comes forward and shows his arm. He proves himself to be a ‘good’ colonized subject:

He fell to Chinn’s hand, and dared not cry out. As soon as he was freed he dragged up a companion, and held him fast, and the crisis became, as it were, a child’s sport; for the vaccinated chased the unvaccinated to treatment, vowing that all the tribe must suffer equally. The women shrieked, and the children ran howling; but Chinn laughed, and waved the pink-tipped lancet.
'It is an honour,' he cried. 'Tell them, Bukta, how great an honour it is that I myself should mark them. (137)

The tribals, as we find in this story, are represented as servile, and very loyal and devoted to their masters. Once they believe in somebody, they have great faith in that person and are ready to do anything. The tribal chief Bukta is like a worshipper of the Chinns. He says that he and his people are born to serve the Sahibs. Kipling gives a hint about their loyalty when he mentions the Dussera ritual of the Rajput ruler. He mentions that the ordination of a Rajput king is not complete till he has been marked on the forehead with blood from the veins of a Bhil. However, this could be read as the last shadow of the tribal’s old rights as the original owner of the soil. Kipling sees them as brave and courageous and highlights their innate love of hunting. Though they are appointed as soldiers they have to be entertained. They feel homesick and bored unless they are sent after tigers as beaters. They shoot tigers on foot. They follow a wounded tiger as unconcernedly as though it were a sparrow with a broken wing. Kipling’s story also reflects the stereotypical images of the tribals as barbarous and superstitious. The fact that they believe that the Senior Chinn is wandering on a horse is a case in point. The white perception about the tribals as barbarous is seen when the Major warns John Chinn saying: “Take care they don’t send you to your family vault in your youth and innocence” (128). On the other hand the Bhils are respectful to the person they worship as ‘God’ and have a firm belief in reincarnation, in life after death, and in the superstitions that characterize the Bhil mind. The Bhils refuse to get themselves vaccinated thinking the ‘Hindoo’ who came armed with a needle and calf is there to cast a spell on them and kill them using a
knife. John Chinn finds a way of placating the Bhils, assuming that he, John Chinn I reincarnated, would no more ride the Hills of Satpura at night. He has to use this occasion to get the Bhils vaccinated also. In the end, John Chinn comes out triumphant in not only killing the man-eater, but also combating smallpox. Thus the tribals are treated as children who can be easily cheated or tamed. The British attitude towards the tribals has been that they are immature in mind and can easily be taken for granted. Moreover, because they are considered savages and don’t know what is good for them, they need to be educated and civilized. Kipling’s own attitude is that it is the white man’s burden to civilize the noble savage, and this is reflected in this story. Ashis Nandy, who has studied Kipling’s narratives in relation to colonialism, rightly points out that “Rudyard Kipling (1862-1936) thought he knew which side of the great divide between imperial Britain and subject of India, he stood. He was certain that to be ruled by Britain was India’s right; to rule India was Britain’s duty”(64).

Verrier Elwin’s works, especially the earlier ones, show some of the above-mentioned characteristics of colonialism. Elwin came to India as a missionary. He came to know about Gandhi’s freedom movement when he was in Oxford. His ideas of India were shaped by conventional readings. Indians for him were ‘wogs’ or ‘natives’ incapable of self-government, and had to be kept in their proper place. Later, his introduction to the writings of Tagore and Gandhi and books on Indian philosophy, changed his mind. He thought he would make reparations for the damage done by his countrymen to India. He left Oxford and came to India in 1927, and joined a monastic ashram called Christa Seva Sangh in Poona. Its objective was to
Indianise Christianity. Later, he heard about the tribals and decided to work among them. He lived among them and studied their culture and wrote a number of ethnographic accounts about them.

Apart from his ethnographic works, Elwin has two novels, *Phulmat of the Hills* (1937) and *A Cloud That’s Dragonish* (1938). The novel *Phulmat of the Hills* tells the story of a Pardhan girl of extraordinary sweetness, a gifted dancer much admired in her village. Struck by leprosy, Phulmat is abandoned by her lover. In grief she takes to the road, and after a long and difficult journey opens a shop in a distant village where her antecedents are not known. Here she lives out her days, selling cigarettes and betel nut and thinking of her lost lover.

The narrative is full of poems, riddles and stories put in the mouth of its characters, interspersed with straight dialogue. Elwin’s novel highlights the beauty of tribal women. The description of Phulmat’s sexuality is a case in point. About her he writes: “Phulmat’s face was demure, so demure it seemed that it was a virtue to gaze at it, it was almost Madonna-like till her smile lit it, and then it shone with the bright spirit of mischief and allurement. Then you saw that her lips were full and soft, apt for a lover, her teeth shining white, her hair brushed straight and smooth on either side […]” (Elwin, *Phulmat* 13). We may take the description of another girl called Adri as another example. Elwin writes:

And there was Adri drawing water, alone. She was a glorious golden brown; that was what you noticed in her—colour; form, line, contour hardly mattered in that brilliant orange gold. She wore a white sari
bordered with red. So as you looked at her you had an impression of red and gold and white—it was a royal sight. Her hair was a rich brown, carefully hidden beneath the fold of her sari that passed over her head, but when she was excited it would begin to stray over her forehead—shy little creepers of enticement were those curls; you would see them for a minute, and then they were back under their shelter; but after that you knew that they were there. And you could not forget that thought. When she smiled it was as though a field of yellow ramtilla were lit by sunlight suddenly. Her whole body smiled; eyes, nose, mouth, breasts, hands and feet were suffused with that brilliant joy.

But there was no more to her than that. She was a perfect animal of the forest, coloured, balanced, formed for every delight of the senses. (Phulmat 108-109)

Elwin not only celebrates the beauty of tribal women but also relates many things found in tribal society to his own society. He compares the smile of Phulmat with that of Madonna, and the tribal dance with the European ballet. The novel is like an exercise in ethnography which informs his own people about the clan, height, and totems of his subjects. Talking of Bhuta in the same novel Elwin writes: “Bhuta belonged to the Baria clan of the Gonds; his totem was the cobra; all his life he had revered and protected snakes”(14). Thus he highlights some aspects of tribal life that he found strange. For instance, he describes the Phag festival as follows: “It was the time of Phag,
the festival when Gond women arm themselves with sticks and cudgels and avenge themselves on mankind. They have the right to beat any man they can catch, and to go on beating him till he buys them off with a present” (17).

Ramachandra Guha in his book on Elwin, Savaging the Civilized (1999) rightly observes that the novel is “a tale of some ethnographic interest, held together by the focus on the fate of its central character” (112). This aspect perhaps prompted H.E. Bates to think that the book was “a piece of the best kind of romance, rich in emotion, unsentimental, rich in colour but firmly rooted in fact […] realistic and frank, in its portrayal of love as Maupassant” (qtd. in Guha, Savaging 112).

Elwin’s other novel, A Cloud That’s Dragonish (1938), describes a mysterious series of deaths in the village of Sitalpani, of livestock, pets and human beings. The villagers believe these deaths to be the handiwork of the witches and the suspicion shifts from one woman to another. Finally they realize that the culprit is Motihari, a Gond girl. But the Gond Gunia (‘medicine-man’) Panda Baba appears and through his inferences uncovers the real murderer. This is a Pardhan youth, Lamu. Lamu’s mother had been persecuted as a witch and killed in another village by Motihari’s father. Vowing revenge, when he grows up Lamu kills the murderer and is determined to kill the daughter as well. On being exposed by Panda Baba, he commits suicide. It is significant that Elwin’s novel is set on the theme of witchcraft. Each chapter starts with an epigram on the persecution of witches in medieval Europe. This is done perhaps to remind the readers that medieval Europe was no better than the tribal world. The implication is that tribals are not savages as seen by the Europeans.
On the other hand tribals are cultured people. It is important to note that the novel does not end with superstition but with an awakening in the end. The tribals themselves discover that all the mishaps are caused not by any witch, but are the handiwork of Lamu. This is made known to them not by a saviour from outside but by the tribal Gunia, a medicine man.

In his ethnographical writings also Elwin initially concentrated more on what he thought was lacking in the tribal people. Indeed, many things were strange and peculiar to him. He highlighted what he considered strange. For instance, Elwin takes pleasure in describing Panda Baba, the medicine man, who once came and asked for a little dung from Elwin’s rabbit-run. He wanted to touch the feet of a newly born child with it, “so that the boy would run as fast as a hare” (Elwin, *Leaves* 7). We find in Elwin another instance of the ‘Other’ being represented in strange terms. He writes: “In our village there was a child with prolepses of the intestine. The mother caught a river crab, roasted it whole and gave it to the child to eat and the child recovered” (17). Be it the practice of Gond witchcraft, which Sleeman also discusses in his *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official* (1844), or other issues, Elwin keeps on adding more puzzles in his style. Elwin’s ethnographical works give evidence of his perception of the tribals. The privileged position of the author is quite obvious in his representation of the tribals. Elwin mentions in his diary that his main activities were to improve the lot of the poor tribals. His diary, which he wrote between 1932 and 1936 reflects the Christian belief that the poor and the meek are blessed people and that they inherit the earth. He thought of his role as an ‘improver’ of their condition by teaching the primitive people the light of civilization. Elwin evidently
looked at the Gond tribes through the eyes of a person with a sense of racial superiority.

Elwin's early ethnographic writings also show his patronizing attitude. He emerged as an eloquent spokesman for the tribal communities of the Indian heartland. He shifted his activities from social work to writing. His friend, Shamrao Hivale took over Elwin's earlier charge of providing education and health. Elwin devoted his time to writing on the tribals. He said: "The pen is my chief weapon with which I fight for my poor" (qtd. in Guha, Savaging 2379). As a part of the series on ethnography, he wrote a book on the Baiga entitled *The Baiga* (1939), in which he describes all aspects of the Baiga tribe such as the cult of Bewar, magic, the diagnosis and cure of diseases, their knowledge system, recreations, and their art of love, their dress and ornaments, their festivals and ceremonies, their food habits and taboos. *The Baiga* was the first book in which the erotic life of an Indian tribe has been described with such intimate details and deep knowledge. Elwin's other work *The Agaria* (1942) is considered to be a classic of Indian ethnology. Here he has shown the common features that the Agarias share with the Baiga, such as kinship rules, avoidances, the law of inheritance, pregnancy and menstruation rules. He also mentions that the Agaria have a striking and distinctive mythology which controls and vitalizes the material culture of the tribe. Elwin was also impressed by the Agaria's contribution to magic, and "the tribal neurosis of fear and magic." He points out in the Preface that "the marriage of myth and craft is the central theme of the book. The Agaria are people absorbed in their craft and their material; they seem to have little life apart from the roar of the bellows and the clang of hammer upon iron. Very few of them
live to a great age, they have poor memories, there are a few outstanding personalities among them” (ix-x). His book *The Aboriginals* (1943) is a polemical tract, directed at a wider public. He pleads with the people who practice home rule that the aboriginal be given full freedom of the forest and privileges. Elwin’s *Maria Murder and Suicide* (1947) is a study of the reasons that drive the unsophisticated primitive men to kill and wound their fellows. In this book, after a brief sketch of Maria life and customs, the author examines the records of one hundred cases of murder and fifty cases of suicide, and finally makes valuable suggestions for improving the treatment of aboriginal criminals in jail. The commonest motives for crime as he points out among the Bison-horn Maria are sexual jealousy and resentment or shame caused by public rebuke, but drunkenness and a weakening of self-control also lead to murder sometimes. In *The Muria and Their Ghotul* (1947), Elwin defends the ghotul, the village dormitory system of the Muria tribals. According to him the Bastar ghotul is one of the most highly developed and carefully organized in the world. It is an institution, tracing its origin to Lingo Pen, a famous cult-hero of the Gonds. All unmarried boys and girls of the tribe are members of the ghotul. This membership is carefully organized. After a period of testing boys and girls are initiated and given a special title with a graded rank and social duties. Elwin says that it helps the youth to mingle freely and helps them in developing a positive attitude towards sex.

To sum up, Elwin’s ideas about the tribals are that they are children of Nature, and that they have an intimate knowledge about birds and animals, that the forest provides them food, fruits, medicine and material for housing and agriculture. They call themselves the children of *Dhartimata*, the mother earth, who feeds and takes
care of them. They have intimate relations with the forest. He says that the Gond "idea of heaven was miles and miles of forest without any forest guards," and his idea of hell was "miles and miles of forest without any mahua trees" (Elwin, Baiga 58). He greatly appreciates their community living. Elwin gives an instance of this aspect in one of his novels. He states how one day the villagers go to get wild mangoes from the jungle, and at the end of the day, "half the village was sucking mangoes" (Elwin, Phulmat 91-102). He also recognises that women in Gond society enjoy a high position. His ethnographic enquiry among the Baigas taught him that the Baiga did not have any notion of sexual dreams. He finds that the tribal attitude to children is very healthy, they have unity and a sense of solidarity and lead a communitarian life.

Elwin's account of the tribals is rather personal. It is also marked by some sort of ambivalence here and there. At first, to his credit, he is unlike his predecessors who had negative things to say about the Indian tribes. However, Elwin's deference to tribal people and their culture makes him romanticize them and glorify their culture. His perception of tribal women is that they are beautiful, well-built and sensual and in this he reacts to the unsympathetic and contemptuous representations of the tribals by his predecessors such as James Forsyth, who described Gond women as "great robust creatures who are more like monkeys than human beings" (Forsyth 182). Elwin's description of the tribals is that they are the children of Nature and that their culture is pure and therefore should not be contaminated by the outside world. This of course is controversial and open to debate. Nevertheless, Elwin's approach is more acceptable than his predecessors because the attitude of Elwin is that of a recognition of 'difference' rather than 'deficiency.'
Tribals appear in the works of John Masters, another noted Anglo-Indian writer. Masters has more than fifteen novels on a variety of themes. Born in Calcutta in 1914 in a family which served the Raj for five generations, Masters was an active participant in the Empire, first as an army man and later as a writer. His novel, *To the Coral Strand* (1962), depicts the tribals colourfully even though they constitute only the backdrop to the events described by him.

The Gonds are depicted as primitive people far away from civilization. Masters states: “[they are] a race of aborigines, living widely scattered over these Vindhya Hills of Central India and completely out of touch with the modern world. They [are] not a relic of medieval times, nor yet of India’s Golden Age, but of pre-history” (Masters, *Coral Strand* 21). His intention to describe them as the ‘Other’ is evident from his description of their physical features. He describes the appearance of the tribal chief Gulu: “He wore a loincloth, and nothing else, and carried a small long-handled axe in his hand. He was short, square and very black, with short grizzled hair over a wide, angular wrinkled face” (27). The representation is also marked by ethnographic vocabulary. He describes their habitat, diet, drink, and dress in addition to their occupations and means of entertainment. Like an ethnographer Masters portrays them as small, dark people with bows and arrows (27). They eat meat and fish, not “mice or worms,” and “curried vegetables and chapattis.” They live in small compact huts, “and two or three families lived in caves” (29). They drink fiery mahua arrack, and dance vigorously. The visitors are provided with female companions.
Masters not only characterizes them as primitive, but highlights their poverty and misery. For instance, Rodney Savage, the protagonist of the novel, faints at the sight of an eight year old Gond girl who has been starving to death and is lying unconscious in front of the old temples. Savage swears that he would eat the same food as the poorest of the Gonds just to know what it was like to starve. The poverty of the Gonds cannot be separated from the poverty of Indians in general. In portraying the poverty of the Gonds, Masters makes them pitiable and wants to impress upon the English readers in India and abroad that the Gonds need help. H.S. Mahle feels that their poverty is actually the result of the economic exploitation by the British which Masters overlooks in his novel.

Masters portrayal of the Gond women is exotic and romantic. He says: "Many women wore the red garghara, the short swinging skirt of the peasant women, feeling that it was more proper—as the temple carvings often showed—to lift them or have them lifted while they danced and coupled, rather than go stark naked" (Coral Strand 102).

The portrayal of the two girls Kunti and Devi in the novel proves that Masters highlights the lustful and seamy side of tribal womanhood. He does this to lure the Western lovers of the primitive to read his record of a vanishing civilization and in order to be pleased with the exotic and romantic. His description shows the white man as masculine, overpowering India, which in turn is viewed, as feminine. Rodney’s sexual encounter with these two girls is a case in point. He says: "[...] all I could feel was flesh, and all I could smell was ...India" (33).
Masters perceives and presents tribal culture from a European standpoint and in relation to his ‘superior’ culture. In *Bugles and a Tiger: A Personal Adventure* (1956), he declines to call the tribal dances by the word ‘dance’; the more appropriate word is the Indian word ‘nautch’ since the word ‘dance’ “gives to Westerners little impression of these shuffled Oriental ballets, where dancers and assisting chorus act out in move and pause and countermove some long fairy tale of Hindu gods and devils” (182).

Masters does not like the Pathans too. The Pathans are the nomadic tribes of the North West belt of India. They combine nomadic life and tilling of the barren land. They come down to the plains through different routes such as the Kabul river, Khyber pass, the Kurram river, the Tochi river, the Gomal river and the Balan pass. They sell blankets and dry fruits, and lend money on loan at a high rate of interest. The Pathans have been portrayed as homosexual. In his *Bugles and a Tiger* Masters highlights the strange aspect of Pathan life. He picks up a Pathan song “Zakhmi Dil” which also suggests homosexuality. He mentions that the Pathans’ main occupation is kidnapping and robbery. He finds the Pathans to be cruel towards women and captives. He narrates different forms of punishment administered by the Pathans for different crimes such as adultery. It is a known fact that adultery is not permissible. It is considered illegal and immoral. There is punishment for it.

The narratives written by the British during the colonial period reflect various images of the tribals. They construct the tribals as the ‘Other’ of the British civilized self. And naturally, it becomes the white man’s burden to civilize these people. This
attitude has been reflected in their writings over and over again. Tribal India for the British is something interesting, exotic and strange. Hence, it becomes a subject for them to be studied for various reasons. They adopt the typical manner of the colonial ethnographers, fixing the stereotypes in a timeless present. Mary Louis Pratt, in her study of colonial representation, sums up this tendency brilliantly:

The portrait of manners and customs is a normalizing discourse, whose work is to codify difference, to fix the ‘Other’ in a timeless present where all ‘his’ actions and reactions are repetitious of ‘his’ normal habits [...] He is a suigeneris configuration, often only a list of features set in a temporal order different from that of the perceiving and speaking subject. (Pratt 120-21)

These narratives also reflect the contemptuous and negative attitude of the British towards most tribes. Nevertheless, some tribes are seen as loyal and benevolent, and as easily tamed. The Anglo-Indian writers’ attitude towards the tribals is that of ‘alienation’ and ‘exclusion’ of the ‘Other,’ a criterion to be placed either to assert British superiority in terms of culture and civilization or to show the tribals as a sharp contrast to the ‘rational civilized’ being of the colonizer. The tribals are also viewed as a race that is to be eulogized for its ‘pristine innocence’ ‘animism’ and intimacy with nature and natural things—a thing of beauty which should not be allowed to be disrupted by civilizing forces. They are also seen as a race that is degenerate, and the British are cast in the role of their saviour. The ‘civilizing
mission’ of the British highlights the poverty, belief in unscientific things, magic etc of the tribals. The hierarchical positioning is evident in all these perspectives.

In conclusion this brief exploration of the writings of Kipling, Elwin and Masters points to the implication of these writers in colonial rule. One would expect this from them—primarily because of their participation in British rule, which by its very definition demarcated the colonizer from the indigenous colonized. It would be interesting to see whether Indian English writers are in any way different from the Anglo-Indian writers or whether they also have the same ‘superior’ outlook towards the tribals. The next chapter discusses the narratives in English written by Indian writers.