CHAPTER V

ATONEMENT

Men will forget what we suffer and not what we do.
- Alfred Lord Tennyson,
  (in The Defence of Lucknow)

BHOWANI JUNCTION

TO THE CORAL STRAND

THE HIMALAYAN CONCERTO
BHOWANI JUNCTION (1954)\textsuperscript{163} is the most celebrated among all the novels of John Masters. Night Runners of Bengal put him strongly on the saddle as an author and helped him earn his much-needed livelihood. Bhowani Junction not only won the race for him, but it also brought him a fortune that he had never dreamt of. The Times Magazine in England wrote about Masters, in the obituary column: "He is perhaps best known as the author of Bhowani Junction, which dealt with the dilemma facing Anglo-Indians on the eve of independence and of which a popular film was made with Stewart Granger and Ava Gardner in the principal roles. But he made his mark as a first-rate story-teller, if not as a profound writer, with his first novel in 1951, Night Runners of Bengal, which dealt with the Indian Mutiny, and which was considered by several critics to have been outstandingly his best work."\textsuperscript{164}

From the graph of sale of his books, we can see that Bhowani Junction, is at the top. The book was published on 10th May 1954 (coincidentally it was the 97th anniversary of the Mutiny). Masters writes about this book in these words:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{163} John Masters, Bhowani Junction, MJ., London, 1955 (Originally May 1954).
\item \textsuperscript{164} The Times London, dt. 9th May 1983, p - 12
\end{itemize}
This book might have been dedicated to the Anglo-Indian communities of India and Pakistan. But so many thousands of Anglo-Indians, over so many years, have dedicated their lives to the service of the railway that I am happy to follow their example.\textsuperscript{165}

The total number of sales was a whopping 310,203. Besides, the novel was selected by the MGM to be made into a film for $155,000. The amount was very huge during those days. It was like a windfall for Masters. The film was made with Ava Gardner playing the role of Victoria Jones. The film was supposed to be shot in India but, there was a lot of opposition from the Indian Government as it felt that “the book was a caricature of Indian politics and life, far from complimentary presentation of the communal life of Anglo-Indians and a libel on the British Army. It revelled in the vulgarity and sex and the clumsy device of slandering Indian leaders and the Indian character through the mouths of Anglo-Indian railwaymen and British colonels.”\textsuperscript{166} But later, the film was shot in Lahore in Pakistan.

A close reading of Masters’ fictional autobiography \textit{Pilgrim Son}, gives us a hint that Masters probably had two subjects at the back of his mind when he started constructing a plot for this novel. The first was the plight and suffering of the victims of racial prejudice. Secondly, the railway network

\textsuperscript{165} The Times London, dt. 9th May 1983, p - 12
in India, was a part and parcel of the imperial power. No one had yet attempted to write on the railways using it in the backdrop. Regarding his feelings of racial discrimination he writes:

Racial prejudice is not the worst sin the world. Some peoples, notably the Jews and the English, could not have survived without a heavy endowment of it. Our neighbours in Mystic were honest, generous, hard working, and essentially worth-while to humanity and the United States. But each man’s shoe rubs in a different spot, depending on the peculiarities of his feet. I had been driven out of a country where we would have been welcome to stay and finish it if it hadn’t been for our attitude of racial superiority and the social snubbing based on it. I owed my life and reputation to coloured people, and for hours on end had shared holes in the ground with them, fighting a common enemy, who was sometimes white, sometimes coloured. I was taught race prejudice under the guise of race pride. I had grown out of it. I did not want to have anything more to do with it.167

Secondly, the railway by itself is a symbol of imperialism. The advantage of the science and technology helped the colonisers to hold on to the power with a better grip. The railway fascinated Masters right from his childhood. In his fictional biography, Pilgrim Son, he writes: “I spend some leisure hours on my hobby - railways - long neglected for harsher pursuits; and even taught Barbara (his wife) and the children some of the finer points

---

of the rite. Railways have always been something special to most male Britons; ... and the railways have responded with an unflagging determination to amuse, mystify, and alarm the British traveller."¹⁶⁸

Kathleen J. Cassity, an Anglo-Indian student doing her research in the University of Hawaii, writes in her article: *Identity in Motion: Bhowani Junction Reconsidered:*

Anglo-Indians played key roles in the day-to-day operation of the British Empire’s infrastructure: communications, education, health care, government services and most especially, the Indian Railways. Between 1857 and 1947, one third of all the Anglo-Indian men comprised more than half of all railway workers, and most Anglo-Indian residential communities - called “railway colonies” - were located in the vicinity of major railway stations. So closely are the Anglo-Indians associated with the Indian railways, in fact, that in narratives of empire, the term “railway men” functions as euphemism for “Anglo-Indian.” ... It is rare to find Anglo-Indian characters in novels concerning the Raj, and even more unusual when they are central rather than peripheral characters. In that regard, the publication of *Bhowani Junction* stands as something of a watershed in terms of literary representation of the Anglo-Indian people.¹⁶⁹

Masters had fancied the idea of becoming a railway engine driver at quite a young age before he had the maturity to think. Both of these points,

on which he kept on ruminating, gave him the subject matter to take up for his next novel. The railway engine itself is the symbol of power. If the post-colonialists consider the railway as an image of exploitation and suppression by comparing themselves to the track on which the colonialists' engine would run; the colonialists viewed it differently and considered themselves to be the engines of reformation pulling the colonised to instil momentum in an otherwise lethargic state of despair. For Masters, perhaps, the railway engine suggested the power of libido for, he speaks through Rodney Savage and says: "A steam engine is a libidinous symbol representing lusts that absorbed into your subconscious at the age of one month while you lay asleep in a cot in your parents' bedroom. In and out and round and round..." (339). He writes:

Thoughts of railway engines filled my head. Steam engines, Indian steam engines, working heavy loads up jungle grades in the hot weather, the Indian fireman leaning out on the shady side, the Anglo-Indian driver hunched forward under the canopy. The Anglo-Indians were a point of conflict. Not quite of the sort I had listed in my original list of the thirty five books I could write about the British in India; but one that should have been there. I could tackle it now. I was acquiring the technique ... Trains, going somewhere - that fitted the requirement for movement, to interest the reader in where these people are going. That would apply to the Anglo-Indians on trains, where they belonged in
real life, their English background perhaps trying to send them one way and their Indian background another, like a junction.\textsuperscript{170}

The Anglo-Indians as a race, suffered annihilation at the hands of both the British and the Indians. And the Anglo-Indians were an inseparable part of the Indian railway. Masters thought of finding out from experts on the mechanism of the railwaymen’s working life and responsibilities. He writes that “only Kipling and Nevil Shute have so far written novels about work, where a man’s work is a part of him. Most novels are about what men do in their spare time, at home, etc. But his work is really part of a man ... Must also make the railway not background but integral to the story, the plot, the characterization, everything. Big drivers turning, hot wind blowing, sex in the sleepers behind. Great!”\textsuperscript{171} A person called Bill Oaten counselled him on the working of railway. Bill Oaten read the draft of \textit{Bhowani Junction} and apart from correcting some technical mistakes that Masters had committed, he mildly warned on the excessive stress laid on the description of sex. Masters’ editor Helen Taylor, was also of the same opinion. Masters got annoyed at the comments which he defended explaining that the word ‘obscenity’ was a selective one. He said that he always ‘used the exact word to convey the exact meaning.’

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid, p - 202
Commenting on the descriptiveness, Masters wrote:

As for descriptiveness, they wanted me to stop outside the bedroom door. On what grounds? If I am not to describe what goes on in there, why do I describe what goes on in the storeroom, the engine shed, the barrack? There must be a reason for the inclusion, of course, but showing a sexual compatibility can be just as important as showing a technical skill. But the damnable core of the problem is that what titillates one reader shocks another, informs a third, and bores a fourth. My lights must be my own.¹⁷²

Masters did not yield to the pressures but, however, agreed to change only a few words. The success of the novel proved that Masters saw the reader's mind better than what his contenders did. John Clay, his biographer, writes:

The book gained 'a succès de scandale' because of 'its subject matter, the Anglo-Indian issue, being fully exposed in English fiction for the first time. This controversial subject touched on sensibilities still attuned to the colonial past, more so in England than in America. The loss of the Indian Empire was still recent and the adjustment to its loss hardly begun. Victoria Jones' sexuality stirred up strong reactions. The active sex life of the seemingly uninhibited half-caste girl stimulated curiosity and an almost voyeuristic appeal.¹⁷³

The plot revolves around an Anglo-Indian girl called Victoria Jones, daughter of a railway engine driver. She is unable to resolve her own identity. Born in an Anglo-Indian family, she is neither English nor Indian. She wants to be accepted by the English but they would not welcome her idea. Her love affair with an Englishman called Johnny Tallent in Delhi ends with disappointment as he ditches her and leaves. Later, she wants to marry an Indian - Ranjit Kasel - but, abandons the idea as she feels that she could not fit into the environment of Sikh religion. She gets attracted by an English Army Colonel, Rodney, and leaves him after realising that their two cultures cannot meet. Ultimately, she returns to her own racial fold and marries an Anglo-Indian, Patrick Taylor, whom she had loved earlier in her childhood. John Clay, the biographer of John Masters, describes the book in the following words:

Essentially the book was going to be a psychological study of the Anglo-Indian community at this cross-roads of their existence. Set in 1947, when the British decision to withdraw from India had thrown their lives into confusion, the book would tell the story from the point of view of three protagonists, each of whom would tell his or her version of the same events - 'presenting the characters from the inside, thus allowing the reader to understand a great deal which he could not otherwise have done.'

The prominent characters in the novel are:

1. Victoria Jones, Eurasian girl, unmarried, twenty-eight years old and the daughter of Thomas Jones, driver, Delhi Deccan Railway.

2. Patrick Taylor, male, unmarried, Eurasian, twenty-six and working in Bhowani as a non-gazetted officer in the Delhi Deccan railways as traffic controller.

3. Lt. Col. Rodney Savage, English, thirty-four, serving in the 13th Gurkha Rifles, Indian Army, currently on a civilian mission to protect railways from the sabotage attempts by the leaders of the National Movement.

4. Ranjit Kasel, a Sikh young man assisting Patrick in his office and his mother is an active freedom fighter.

5. Govindswami, a South Indian ICS Officer serving as the District Collector in Bhowani.

We have many other characters like Macaulay an English Captain who is killed by Victoria when he tries to rape her; Surabhai, a local Congress leader, K.P.Roy a militant freedom fighter who has gone underground and has probably entered Bhowani, Rose Mary, sister of Victoria who flirts with many dreaming of going to England, Lanson, the District Police Superintendent etc.
The imperialistic attitudes are unfolded through these characters in the novel. Masters' biographer John Clay describes:

The treatment of Anglo-Indians was personal in terms of his own family, but at the same time Masters wanted to use their plight as a microcosm of British imperial history. The period he was going describe was the one he had lived through - the last stage of the British presence in India - and its multiple cross-currents would underpin the book.\textsuperscript{175}

The dominant attitude of the British towards the Anglo-Indians has drained them of their self-esteem. Patrick Taylor explains how they have been looked upon:

\begin{quote}
\begin{quotation}
I felt her (Victoria's) taking a good look at me. Her own skin was the same colour as mine, perhaps a little browner, less yellow. We didn't look like English people. We looked like what we were - Anglo-Indians, Eurasians, cheechees, half-castes, eight-annas, blacky-whites. I've heard all the names they call us, but I don't think about them unless I'm angry. (13)
\end{quotation}
\end{quote}

The dilemma with these Anglo-Indians is that they do not belong to either of the countries. Patrick keeps on dreaming that he would go back to England along with the British when they would leave India soon after.

independence. He hardly realises the fact that he would not be accepted there. Victoria doesn't want him to call England his 'home' as he imitated the English calling their country 'home':

"Home was where the English came from and went back to, though I never could. Home was where they did not have a city and a cantonment in every big town, so that the officers could laugh themselves sick at an Anglo-Indian who talked about how he was going 'Home to Southampton Cantonment.' Our house was Number 4 Collet Road, a bungalow sitting on a tired piece of land belonging to a country which Pater and everyone who lived in the house repudiated." (129)

For Victoria, India itself is 'home'. She makes him understand that England could not become 'their (Eurasians) home.' Patrick sits down to think which place he belonged to:

Victoria sat up with a jerk, very pale, and she screamed, "Home? Where is your home, man? England? Then you fell into the Black Sea on your way out? I don't want to see the Congress ruling here, but I am only asking you, what else is there that can happen? I am only asking you to think, man!" She pushed back her chair and ran out of the dining-room.

I sat there, feeling a little sick. That last thing I had said, about going Home, was mere foolishness, and I knew it. The whole point that made it impossible to give way, even to argue was that we couldn't go Home. We couldn't become English, because we were half Indian. We couldn't become Indian, because we were half English. We could stay only where
we were and be what we were. Her Colonel McIntyre was right too. The English would go any time now and leave us to the Wogs. (25)

The fate of the Anglo-Indians is never going to change. The destiny is predetermined for them. And there is no hope at all. Victoria is convinced of this hard truth:

She said, 'We think God fixed everything in India so it can't alter. The English despise us but need us. We despise the Indians, but we need them. So it's all been fixed- the English say where the trains are to go to, we take them there, and the Indians pay for them and travel in them.' (24)

But she would like to hope against the hopes that the English should continue to stay and rule India as ever. There is a wishful thinking because as long as the English stay in India their (Anglo-Indians) positions are protected. Therefore, Victoria is of the opinion that English cannot leave India. India would need their services to maintain law and order especially to maintain the communal harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims. Their stay would be inevitable for all of them. Thus it is suggested indirectly that Indians cannot administer the rule of law and they are unable to govern themselves without the help of the British:

Victoria said, 'He (Col. McIntyre) knows nothing about St. Thomas's! But he thinks the English will leave India very soon,' and I shouted, 'They won't leave, man! How can they leave, with the bloody
Mohammedans and the bloody Hindus cutting each other's bloody throats every day?' (25)

The rulers have sufficient grounds to come to such a conclusion. The Indian National movement was wrought with violence, communal clashes and what not. The bickering among the so-called leaders added fuel to the fire. The replacement of one imperial power by another does not serve the purpose in any way. Therefore, Masters seems to put forth his own views through the character of Patrick and suggest that 'known devil is better than the unknown.'

The point is that in 1942 that sanctimonious little bastard Gandhi had decided he'd rather have the Japan than the British. Rather, he said that if the Indians all sat down and were non-violent the British would go away. The Japs might come, he said, but they would only raise their hats, say, 'So sorry', and go away again. What Gandhi's non-violence turned out to mean was derailing trains all over the country, and pouring petrol over village policemen and setting them on fire, and dragging people out of trains to beat them to death. I'd been through that time, so you can see why I was sitting on the edge of my chair. I didn't want 1942 again. (30)

But the Anglo-Indians were taken for a ride. They had become the laughing stock for some as we notice in the following words:

No, it was the fact that she was a half-caste that made his eyes flicker. Anglo-Indians weren't brave, or even despicable. They were never in
situations where they could be either. They were only comical. They tried to marry British soldiers. They spoke like Welshmen. They wear topis at midnight. (341)

But, Victoria knows what is what. She does not mix up the issues like her sister Rose Mary. Victoria knows well that the ground under the feet of both the English and the Anglo-Indians was sinking very fast. The fight to stop it would not only be in vain but useless too. She thinks:

That ride was like a time of slack water in my life. I was not English or Indian or Anglo-Indian. I was Victoria Jones and sat alone in a boat with everybody equally far away from me. There were two things, which, so to speak, pointed my boat in a certain direction. One was the obvious truth that the English and the Anglo-Indians were sinking. I don't say I would not have gone down with them, and very happily, if I had felt any real affection for even one of them; but I hated all of them. Colonel Savage and Patrick Taylor were their representatives. (119)

But Patrick is still hopeful. He thinks that it was time for the Anglo-Indians to assert their existence strongly. Someone should rise to the occasion to save his or her community:

It was about us - us Anglo-Indians. If we didn't stand up for ourselves, no one else would. If we weren't interested, no one else was. Victoria looked at us as if we were strangers. Perhaps all this seemed small to her after Delhi, but it was not small to us, and she would have to realize that again. (23)
Patrick feels that his presence is very essential to run the railways in India. Without him the system would collapse. The loss would be irreparable. The structure needs the support of the skilled and committed employees. They work for no returns. It is just the service - a white man's burden shared by a half Englishman. Neither do the British admire their work nor do the Indians take cognition of their service. That is why Patrick says:

"That's not the point, Mr. Jones," Patrick shouted. "They said I was essential! I had to stay and run the railway. There were no medals for that, though there was danger too. There were strikes and derailments sometimes, and men burned alive on the footplate in forty-two. There was plenty of danger on the railways, Colonel Savage, I tell you, but there were no medals." (81)

The treatment meted out to Patrick by the British is not different from that of Indian. Macaulay addressed Patrick as a 'cheechee'. Patrick is angry and hurt. But he has to bear it, as there is no alternative. The most he could do was to pass on the experience to treat the Indians. Look at the following words that Patrick uses to describe Indians in front of Victoria:

"Indians are dirty and lazy, Victoria. They will run around like chickens with their heads cut off if the English Government ever leave them to their own devices. God forbid!" (185)

And later, we find him talking of the experiences of the Mutiny as though he was also a part of the English system. Pater said, 'Ah, the Mutiny
was a bad time. We learned our lesson then, Colonel, didn’t we? You can never trust the niggers.’ Pater shook his head and puffed deeply at the cigar. He was very happy. (80)

The Sirdarini, mother of Ranjit Singh reminds Victoria that the English were not going to protect the interests of the Anglo-Indians. She tells her that the English would leave them to the care of what they called ‘wogs’. It was the price that they (Anglo-Indians) had to pay for the loyalty shown to their English masters. She says:

She cut in. ‘You must!’ She stood, feet apart, by the sigri and fixed her eyes on me. She said, ‘Have you ever met an Englishman who didn’t insult you? Haven’t your people worked for them for a hundred years? And now how are they going to reward you? You know. They’re going to leave you here to us. And what do you think we’re going to do? We’re going to make you realize that you are Indians - inferior Indians, possibly disloyal Indians, because you’ve spent a hundred years licking England’s boots and kicking us with your own boots that you’re so proud of wearing. Isaw the soldiers pissing on our people at the station. I saw you. You didn’t look happy. Why don’t you see that you’re an Indian, and act like one? We’re strong now. We’ll look after you.’ (128)

At times Victoria felt that the Indians were right. After all they belonged to India. Since the English could not accept them, she feels her community should accept Indian way of life. She thinks that the English exploited them and left them in the lurch. She hates all that was English:
I (Victoria Jones) was beginning to sympathize with anyone who was against the British, and Congress was certainly against the British. Ranjit wasn't angry with Savage or the soldiers. He had said, that night after Macaulay had gone, that Colonel Savage was only a representative of the system - imperialistic capitalism. (77)

Victoria does not tolerate the words the English used to describe Indians. She feels that the words were like goads. Words like 'chee chee', or 'blackie-white', 'niggers' or 'wog' were painful to hear. For that matter, even soft words like 'nigger' smacked of imperialistic tone. She resents the 'highhanded way' Colonel Savage dealt with the Indian striking workers. She thinks that he would not have done the same if the English were there in the place of Indians. Macaulay, the Captain under Col. Savage who tried to seduce her, was typically English. She hates him for his behaviour. She thinks:

The presence of Macaulay was very strongly on me. He was typical of the British. He was pleasant when it suited him, cold when it suited him, and all the time selfish, cunning, lord of all he wanted to take. I know he was unbalanced, but I didn't take that into account then. Colonel Savage was a cruel bully. Johnny Tallent pretended to love me and then told all his friends I was free for the taking. Patrick was as bad as any of them, and a bigger fool besides. Rose Mary. Mrs. Williams. Sir Meredith Sullivan. (129)
Thus we see the imperialistic attitude of exploitation everywhere. Colonised human beings were not different from the commodities. On the other hand, we see the Indians also introspecting in their own hearts to ascertain the cause for such a state of affairs. Ranjit Singh knows that Indians by themselves were partially responsible. The English merely used the opportunity. He thinks:

The railway is merely a mechanical thing. It takes our bodies from one place to another that is all. It is material. But the mind, the soul, is what is important to India. There are so many bars here that it is like a prison for many people. India is like a giant chained, and not all the chains are ones that the British have tied on. (167)

There were separate recreational clubs for the English and for the Indians. The Indian officials were not allowed to enter the English clubs. It was a practice followed all over India. The Indian railway also followed the suit. Patrick gives us the description of these clubs:

There were two Railway Institutes then, of course, one for Europeans and Anglo-Indians, and the one for Indians. The Indians had not made theirs into anything, while ours was a fine big building with a dance floor and card rooms and a bar, just like the Club in cantonments. The Indians seldom used their Institute. They never spent any money on beer, rum and whisky there, so there was no profit to improve it with. It was the same at the station. We had two running rooms there for the drivers, firemen, and guards who had to stop over an hour or a night
between trains. The European running room was twice the size of the Indian one, and had comfortable beds and a room with chairs and magazines and packs of cards. (42)

In the latter part of the novel, we see Mrs. Lanson, wife of the Superintendent of Police, Bhowani, making a snide at Ms. Jones for entering into the English club and as if she had intruded upon their privacy. Victoria happens to go there along with Rodney Savage. Mrs. Lanson asks whether it was not boring for Ms. Jones to hear about Englishmen and women always talking of 'home' and other English ways of life. Mrs. Lanson says:

Oh, yes, Miss Jones. But you see, this club was supposed to be a place where we could get together and never see an Indian face - except the servants, of course- and remember our homes so far away. (279)

In an article, Club Members?: Reading John Masters's Bhowani Junction, Alan Johnson writes how the clubs were part of the imperial dreams with the designs that were simultaneously 'expansive' and 'contractive'. He writes:

The topological site of the club emblematizes these in-between people, who are alternately allowed entrance and barred, depending on what is expedient to the door-keepers. For at the heart of colonialist politics - a dyadic politics of exclusion and inclusion that also largely defines nationhood - is the disciplining effect of its bio-political ambition, an ambition which the nation-state adapts for its own ends. Let us recall the touchstones of this imperial ambition, its contradictory vision of an
expansive and yet contractive dream. The imperial dream is expansive in so far as it aims to encompass distant territories and cultures; contractive in that, in the most differential terms, it excludes from the precincts of the imperial "Home" (and full citizenship) those who presume to possess equal membership. Thus the Indian was called a "citizen" of the colonial British empire, but clearly not entitled to the same privileges, or member services, as was the English citizen. There is consequently an alternating not claustrophobia and spaciousness that marks Indo-Anglian literary representations of colonial India, just as imperialism's expansive/contractive rhythm finds its spatial correlative in, for example, Masters's longing (recorded in his autobiography) for the subcontinent's open "space" (such as the Himalayas) on the one hand and its confinements - the bungalow, the club - on the other.¹⁷⁶

Heat and dust are a part of the Indian experience. Patrick could feel a sense of superiority with his Norton motor cycle riding with Victoria Jones. He explains how the Indian countryside looked while racing on his motorbike:

The ride was hot and dusty. I drove fast because I was in a hurry to get up there, get the work over with, and get on with our picnic. That was a good bike, and I was strong enough to hold it down. We roared past everything-villagers on foot, bullock carts, children playing among the houses, old women, donkeys. The bumping rattled my teeth-and Victoria's too, I suppose. The dust hung in a long spreading cloud behind us. The fields and huts seemed to race toward me, then passed

in a flash and disappeared in the dust. The exhaust made a terrific racket against the houses and I felt a lot better. (19)

The description of the Indian soldiers is yet another example of how the British looked at them. Actually the Gurkhas were the most loyal of the Indian soldiers. The English military officers liked them for this great quality. But the imperialistic ego could not tolerate some qualities in the Gurkhas. The Anglo-Indians would also call them dirty just because the English officers called them so. Patrick would imitate the tone of the English:

The Gurkhas were dirty and quiet and of course small. They weren't like the sepoys of Indian garrison battalion that had been here before, nor like the soldiers I'd seen walking about in clean, starched uniforms in Agra. They all formed up close by us, and they smelled of the train and ammonia and the cardamom seeds a lot of them were chewing...(52)

On the other hand, we find how Rodney treated one of his orderlies - Birkhe, who was a Gurkha, whom Rodney loved very much. Rodney calls him 'one of the nicest people' he had ever known. Birkhe was not mean, but he was shy and intelligent who 'pulled his (Rodney's) legs' whenever he felt like. Rodney always addresses him 'my Birkhe' which shows the intimacy between them. Rodney feels very sad when Birkhe dies accidentally falling under a train. Rodney picks up his half body, which was cut into two pieces and pays his rich tributes. The attitude of love and hate is really strange to understand. The character of Rodney is almost an 'alter-ego' of
Masters himself. There are many indications to prove this. There is an attraction for the country and its people. He very proudly calls India 'my India':

This was my India, not because of the capering or the drunkenness but because these people had no desire to become like me, nor I like them. There had been a place for me round such fires as this for three hundred years. They read Paine and Burke and spoke in English because the ideas they were trying to express did not exist in their own language. If I and my sort had an idea, it was to make Indian wood into better wood, not change it into a bakelite. In general, though, our great virtue was not having an idea. (328)

Hunting the tigers or leopard is again a common experience. Rodney kills a leopard in the jungles of Bhowani when he takes Victoria for outing. We should note the words describing Indians 'looking like Savages' but they were really 'not'. This was an unsolvable riddle the English experienced till the end of their regime. The more they tried to probe the riddle the more complicated it became. Almost all the Anglo-Indian officers felt this. The reason is perhaps quite simple; the English tried to understand the Indian culture through the glasses of European culture. Rodney's hunting experience is described in these lines:

The leopard's carcass, white and bright light-red, lay out on the grass among the dark brown men. The bloody pelt hung loose, held to the body at a couple of places only. Several of the villagers were drunk.
When the work was finished they began to caper about the grass, waving their knives and long-handled axes, their faces bright and their black hair streaming behind them. They looked like savages, but they weren't.

(327-8)

Rodney's interpretation of Victoria's predicament is totally different. He thinks that she belonged to the place from where she came from. And ultimately she returned to that place. Rest of all the happenings in her life were only transitory. The shaky foundation, on which she was standing, forced her to oscillate from one end to the other.

Actually many friends of Masters who read the manuscript did not support the idea of Masters, leaving the Anglo-Indians in a hopeless state of things. It was then that Masters thought of the idea of Victoria marrying Patrick Taylor. Rodney's analysis is as follows:

She (Victoria) couldn't desert her people, and he (Patrick) was one of them. Even his luck was Anglo-Indian. She had wanted to go, first with Ranjit and then with me. But she physically could not. She had always loved Patrick. They'd grown up for each other. Then the great changes swept across India and the world, and she had searched, not by deliberate plan but because the wind of change blew through her too, for ways of escape from a life that had come to seem small and doomed. Patrick was a part of that life. He had become petty, helpless, and hopeless. She tried becoming an Indian - but she wasn't an Indian. She'd tried becoming English- but she wasn't English. An idea of the
future, or herself as a dweller in India, had sent her to Ranjit. Sexual passion, the knowledge of herself as woman, had sent her to me. But this was Bhowani Junction.

She was a big girl. She hadn't come out of all this like a Hollywood film star, with her hair metallically immaculate and her face untouched by thought or pain. We talked about the future of her people. When we English left India they could look beyond the telegraph lines and her railway lines. There would be nothing they could not achieve then, depending only upon themselves. From Bhowani Junction the lines spread out to every Indian horizon for them. (345)

Stephen Hemenway says that John Masters gives India's non-violent but activist Congress Party short shrift by caricaturing Surabhai the local leader as a fool. He also opines that "Masters must have felt as if he had lost a limb or a vital organ when Indian Independence made his services to Imperial India no longer necessary. The novels serve as surrogate battles, as historical narrative asserting the disappointment that accompanies the upheaval of the status quo for those with vested interests." But at the same time, Hemenway observes, that Masters "is more objective than most of the pre-1924 Anglo-Indian novelists. Whatever his personal feelings about leaving India, he makes no secret of his displeasure with the attitudes of many of his fellow countrymen and officers." He continues:
Both the novels (Bugles and Tigers and Bhowani Junction) abound with British blunders, Forster Style, and an overall conviction that the poor souls giving their lives in the name of Empire are mere stooges in an economic scheme, which brings them precious few benefits. There is also a tacit consent that Indians indeed should have the right to determine their own destiny. Masters regrets the British errors and indifference, which prevented the Empire from achieving for Indians the lofty goals and freedoms cherished by Englishmen.\textsuperscript{177}

M.K.Naik writes: "John Masters, abundantly blessed with the Armyman's earthly sense of humour, turns Surabhai, the Indian National Congress leader into a clown, and the nationalist agitators in Bhowani Junction into figures of broad fun. Surabhai's dress is described as a ludicrous hotch-potch of 'a collar and a tie, a European coat, a white Gandhi cap and white dhoti' while on different occasions he is said to favour outrageous colour-combinations like 'green socks and violet sock-suspenders,'\textsuperscript{178}

Allen J. Greenberger comments that the "Eurasians are imagined to be basically concerned with their place in an imperial world that was falling apart. British sympathy with this group - something which is completely new - is probably associated with the feeling of the British in India about

\textsuperscript{177} Stephen Hemenway, \textit{The Novel of India}, Writer's Workshop, Calcutta 1975, p - 146,147,155
themselves. They, too, were finding a conflict between their constant reiteration that England was home, their love for India, and their growing realization that they had place in neither country. This problem is the heart of John Masters' *Bhowani Junction*. The Eurasian heroine, Victoria Jones, has suitors who represent all sides of her character - an Englishman, an Indian, and an Eurasian.179

Meena Shirwadkar, talking of the image of woman in the Indo-Anglian novel, writes that the Eurasian women suffered from racial prejudice and the women themselves were not taken as a whole, above blame. She writes:

The whole class of Eurasians was supercilious towards the Indians, servile before the Europeans, never above snobbery and hypocrisy. These Eurasians, mainly Anglo-Indians, were the objects of ridicule in both the worlds. The terms applied to them reflect the view about them as seen, for example, in *Bhowani Junction* (1954) by John Masters. The attitude of the Anglo-Indians towards the Indians is shown in the description of Mrs. Jones who is 'very brown and her stockings always hang in wrinkles around her legs, and she chews betel-nut in secret'. Her good qualities remain unseen. A derisive tone exposes Rose Mary with her shrill voice and eagerness to get an English husband. Only Victoria, the Anglo-Indian heroine, tries to assess their shortcomings with clear eyes. "I could see in Patrick the worst trademarks of our

people, inferiority feelings, resentment, perpetual readiness to be insulted, all things I was determined to get rid of in myself.\textsuperscript{180}

Shamsul Islam is of the opinion that Masters 'grudgingly' accepts the fact of impending independence though he is not sure whether the Congress can rule the country efficiently; the Congress will at least need British-trained and Westernised native administrators like Govindaswamy if India is to be saved from total chaos. The concluding paragraph says:

Thus there remains a slight gap between his fiction and non-fiction as far as Masters' attitude towards the imperial idea is concerned. This discrepancy, as suggested earlier, is caused by the fact that he started writing after independence of the sub-continent; he simply could not ignore a historical fact. However, acceptance of the fact of independence in his fiction does not necessarily imply his rejection of the imperial idea in which as indicated by his non-fiction, he seems to firmly believe. By accepting the changing realities of the Indo-Pakistani political situation, Masters is only showing his pragmatism or historical sense rather than a real change of heart. As compared to Forster or even Kipling, he remains a conservative, a supporter of the imperial idea.\textsuperscript{181}

Vimala Rao concludes her article on \textit{Bhowani Junction} with these words: "Such, then, is the \textit{Bhowani Junction} - a very significant title and junction indeed. A junction where not only trains meet one another, but


also communities and political parties meet and clash; a junction where people change not only trains, but try to change their beliefs and their religion. Masters is obviously not interested in slinging mud and blackening one party and whitewashing another. He only has an instinctive sense of history and blends this with the imagination of an artist to give in this book a 'feel' of the times.\textsuperscript{182}

The novel To The Coral Strand,\textsuperscript{183} is set around 1947, the year when India got its independence. Rodney Savage of Bhowani Junction returns back, this time not as an army officer but as a consultant working for a private mining firm, McFadden, in the Independent India.

Masters' biographer, John Clay, writes that To The Coral Strand is "another part of the Savage sequence, with a contemporary Indian setting, continuing where Bhowani Junction left off." The important characters in the novel are:

1. Rodney Savage - Retired Colonel
2. Magaret Wood - A missionary and a widow
3. Sumitra - Rani of Kishanpur, wife of Dip Rao
4. Janaki - Wife of Max, colleague of Rodney
5. Ranjit Singh - An Indian ICS Officer

The novel opens with the death of Henry, a medical missionary, who had taken up the work of reformation around Bhowani, the central part of India, which is backward in all respects. His wife Margaret Wood is mourning.

over her husband's death. Left alone to complete the work her husband had taken up, she is crestfallen and unable to decide what to do. At the same time, she feels that she does not want to go back leaving the mission incomplete.

Henry was dead. His work, his life had been this mission. He had carried it forward through a thousand trials, a thousand disappointments. Now the work was hers. She clasped her hands together so tightly the nails bit into the palms. She was so tired. Already they had written to her from England, accepting that she must close the mission when Henry's slow inevitable march to death reached its end. It would be easy to give up, and leave this burning, desolate land to its heathenism, to the pagan sexuality, which could live even in dead stone and seemed to wink and laugh everywhere, just under the decorous surface of life. (11)

The entire situation is highly symbolic of the period when the colonial world had collapsed and the zealous reformers were left so shocked that it was difficult to reconcile with the changes. They were not prepared to go back leaving the mission of reformation behind them. They are sure the 'heathen' would not be able to fend for themselves. Margaret prays God to give her strength so that her husband's work lives after him through her.

She had landed in India exactly on the 15th August 1947 when the country was celebrating its independence in Bombay. The Rockets 'fizzed
across the sky, thunder flashes exploded everywhere, and bonfires flared in the roadways', to mark the celebration. There was a drunken Colonel (Savage) who was announcing before a crowd, "You are taking over this country as a gift from me" ... and turning to a man in the dhoti he added "It is not about time, my friend, because you will make an unholy mess of it."

(14) The words are the result of desperation. The Colonel was angry and helpless. He stamped his foot and proclaimed:

"Certainly. I do! It is not your country. It is mine. I made it, from a hundred countries. I and my great-great-grand father, and my great-grand father, and so on. But don't forget my father, whom you murdered yesterday because he loved you. ... You are ignorant, superstitious, lazy buggers. You don't believe in India, because you're too, too small to understand India. Only understand your own dungheap" (14)

He tells that only the Mahatma had understood, but they shot him for that. So we can see the underlying psychology of the frustrated Englishmen in these words. Imperialistic attitude had become part of their thinking process. He gives a list of the English reformers right from the period of Clive. There is unrelenting pain in his words. But yet he confesses, in front of Margaret, that "I am rude, and I am not afraid, and ... I love them. But it's time to go. That's the whole sad sad story. Time to go, But I'm not going. Never. See?"
There is some hope that the country is likely to be saved. It is because of the ICS tradition, the tradition his people have left behind. He consoles himself that "Eight hundred Englishmen hadn't ruled four hundred million Indians by forming committees. They'd gone out and done something, in person at once. All Indians joining ICS had learned the lesson." (18)

Though Rodney is not in power, he is still popular with the tribal Gonds in the central part of India. When the DC of Bhowani, Ranjit Singh, wants to visit the tribal area, they do not allow him to enter their area since they are not yet prepared to join the mainstream of the Independent India. They demand that they be given separate identity. But, Rodney tries to mellow them down by virtue of his clout with them. Rodney's great grand father, William Savage had weeded out Thuggee from the area. Since then the Gonds revered him and worshipped him as the 'Deliverer.'

The characters get linked to the earlier characters of Masters' novels like *The Deceivers*, *Night Runners* and even *Bhowani Junction*. Rodney takes pride and pleasure in telling the stories of his association with India in the past and how popular were his ancestors with the local people. He had never met Sumitra, the Rani of Kishanpur and the wife of Dip Rao Rawan (Rodney introduces Dip Rao to Victoria Jones in *Bhowani Junction* as his 'honorary brother'). They had married quite young and as a sad part of the story Sumitra never lived with Dip Rao of Kishanpur.
Rodney tells Sumitra that he had solved the tribal problem without getting 'trampled on'. He says: "I travel all over India. I have responsibility. In a way, I'm getting many of the advantages of the Raj without the disadvantages. ... It doesn't seem very different, sometimes. And yet - it's strange, being an outsider. Just watching India, instead of being a part of it. On that basis I can't get trampled on. But sometimes I can hardly bear it. I was not born to to be a bystander, not in India. I would rather have the involvement." (41) Thus he describes how difficult it is for a man who was in action till recently and now all of a sudden watching things as a bystander.

Rodney was working with a private mining company called McFadden after relinquishing his military post. But, now he has come to know that the company is going to be sold to the Indian Congressman called L.P Roy (brother of K.P.Roy, the Communist activist whom Rodney had killed in Bhowani) and that they are going to retrench all the foreign national employees from the Company. Rodney knew that axe would fall sooner or later and he was mentally quite prepared for that. But, he says that he is not going to take the humiliation lying down. "No, the bell has sounded. I realise now that I've been waiting for it, listening for it, ever since Independence. ... I am not going to go quietly. I'm going to fight Max." (48)
Rodney's friend Max asks him to be patient and to just wait a bit. "Remember your friends. India badly needs people like you, and there are enough of us, and we're strong enough not to have to take dictation from anyone, not even Nehru. If you want to stay, we'll find something good, and worthy of you."(49) Thus we find Rodney trying to fight back, fight not just for his own survival but for the survival of the country and its people for whom he and his people have been working for the last nearly two hundred years. At the back of his agitated mind there is a deep sense of conviction not to spoil the hard work, sacrifice and dedication his people have put in. However hard Masters tries to plead that he was not an imperialist, the imperial sense sneaks in unconsciously and even unintentionally, and that is because of the training he had got and the environment in which he had lived in.

Rodney's sight catches up an inscription written on the Pearl Mosque in Delhi, when he goes there along with Sumitra, which reads, "If there be a heaven on the earth, it is here, it is here". The words become more meaningful to him. He ponders over the words again and again. His love for the land is so much that he really does not want to go. But the independent Indians do not want to keep him. L.P.Roy tells him that he did not want English men like him to 'fatten' on India. Rodney feels extremely
humiliated. His feelings reflect, symbolically, the humiliation suffered by all his countrymen.

Rodney buys an old Forest Rest House on lease in Pattan near Bhowani, and starts a travel center to entertain the Western tourists especially from the United States. In fact, it was the plan of Masters himself. He wanted to plan it in the States as soon as he landed in America. It was probably the only opportunity open before him since no one had yet tried it out on India. Masters was badly in need of some kind of financial support at that time to look after himself and his family until his entire pension settlement etc. was done. He contacted many of his friends in America to seek guidance from them on this project. But, the plan could not be pushed though for the lack of patron-ship:

'I began to work out the details as though the devil and Roddy McLeod were at my heels. Staff tables, finance, clothing, gathering at U.S. rendezvous, air transport to India, transport from airport to roadhead, accommodation, insurance, details of Himalayan route, fishing and game licences, pack animals or porters, cooks, catering, medical ... I wrote to the firms in India which ran Himalayan treks, and fishing trips. I spoke to the sales departments of K.L.M. and B.O.A.C. about group fares, commissions, baggage rates.'

Those frozen ideas and plans find expression in this novel through the character of Rodney establishing the travel center in Patten. He was sure of things that would make the 'Indian experience' complete. Rodney's writer friend suggests it to him and tells; "Well, yes, you might fix up a bare-ass holy man or two, and a snake charmer, and maybe arrange a visit to a maharaja". (113) Without these elements Indian experience would not be complete. The imperial experience could be exploited commercially too.

Rodney could not continue with his plan for long. He is asked by the DC to pack off - another big blow to his pride. He thinks that the entire country owes him respect for the work he and his ancestors have done. But instead, the reward today is that he is treated so shabbily, even denying him an opportunity to lead a graceful life:

There was no denying that the creation of these people, this India, was the object, acknowledged or not, of my ancestors - but the wheel had turned full circle, the clock again reached twelve. They were forcing me back to the coral strand where old Jason Savage must have landed, if ever existed - but where were the magnificent kings who had then walked the sands of Coromandel under the golden umbrellas? (125)

There is a clear sense of wreaking revenge. Many of his clan thought the same - that the country would slip back to the heathen times. Almost all the political leaders in England, the civil and military administrators
who served in India, held the opinion steadfastly that years of hard work to eradicate chaos, superstition, drudgery, corruption, tyranny - all would collapse like a house of cards. The pain was unexplainable - 'the falcon cannot hear the falconer'.

Sumitra, the queen of Kishanpur, who joins hands with Rodney to fight against the Indian government to establish her own independent state, asks him if he was interested to go back to England. Rodney answers in the negative:

"Why England?", I said. "We are here. We have work to do here. There is a sink of corruption to be cleaned up before the genuine ideals of the Chambal people can be realised. Who knows, perhaps, our son will be prime minister, and finish what we begin." (225)

After the unsuccessful attempt, Rodney is chased by the Indian military officers and he is on the run. He comes to Margaret Wood’s place for the treatment of his injuries as well as to seek assistance from her. She is already in love with him. She makes it clear in front of Sumitra that is if at all she has to live, it should be for the sake of Rodney. Incidentally, Sumitra is also in the same predicament. There is an undeclared war between the two ladies. General Dhudhwal, who was once a colleague of Rodney in the British India, and now serving the Indian Army after the independence, tells Margaret that both of them have something in common.
He says:

"Mrs. Wood", he said, his brown eyes steady on hers. "Rodney Savage and I have had a special sort of relationship for a long time. He is not just England, he is England-in-India. And I am not just Indian, but a special sort of Indian. I wish that much of what has happened between us had not happened - not just the imperialism and the rest, other things as well." (273)

The love affair between Sumitra and Rodney is an illicit relationship. The relationship ends in the still-birth of a child which neither could retain. But neither could forget. The whole sequence appears to be symbolic in the sense that the relationship of India and England ended in producing nothing.

Summing up the plot, John Clay writes:

Rodney becomes brigadier-cum-diplomat in a small Princely State whose independence is threatened. He has an affair with the Rani of a neighbouring state, who later betrays him. He must leave and just escape arrest, retreating to a beach hut outside Bombay; Masters drew on his own experience and his stay at Juhu with Barbara in 1943 for the details. In the final part of the book, ensconced in his lair, Rodney reflects on British Indian history, disillusioned by the awareness that all that power and sacrifice has ended in defeat. A young English widow, who, like most of the women in the story, lost her heart to him- the book has its expected quota of sexual episodes, told with characteristic frankness - and looks after him; the book ends with a question mark over their future. Masters identified in some ways with Rodney and his
nostalgia for the old India, but once again Masters is using his novel to
test out ideas, such as the merits of staying in India. He seems to be
implying that there is little place in the present-day India for the likes
of Rodney or himself. History has moved on. The book conveys this by
its authentic picture of that troubled period in Indian history.\footnote{185}

Thus we find Rodney disillusioned with the independent India. John
Clay suggests that Rodney’s retreat to a primitive ‘hovel’ on the beach to
find out Sumitra, was an attempt to find an outlet for his longing for the old
India.

THE HIMALAYAN CONCERTO

*The Himalan Concerto* is the last of the Indian novels to be published. Masters wrote it in 1975 but the setting of the novel is 1979. Masters writes, "The time is 1979. It may be that by then (I am writing in 1975) real changes will have overtaken the ones I have imagined." Masters' visit to India (1974), nearly after ten years, refreshed his memories of the country. He traveled through most of the areas he had served and met many of his erstwhile colleagues. He enjoyed his journey. Though so many changes had taken place outside army life, the army he thought, still remained intact in the same shape since the days he left. But outside, the country was unable to come to terms between capitalism and socialism. John Clay quotes him saying:

I think Indians have got to accept a strange idea, that India's a young country. Ideas of fundamental importance, such as socialism versus capitalism, freedom versus direction, excellence versus universality, the genius of the individual against the responsibility of the state, all these are being fought out here, and the battlefield is going to be untidy for some time to come. Untidy, but stimulating.  

---

The protagonist of the novel is Rodney Bateman, a music hobbyist. Presently he is on a mission to work on a musical composition that he is going to call "Himalayan Concerto". He has come down to Kashmir thinking that the natural beauty of the land and the quiet environment all around would be an ideal location for his job. He has become restless for the last few days. He is unable to compose. He attributes the reason to two things. First, his inability to understand India and secondly, his difficulty in understanding his wife Indreni who "wasn't doing a thing, except sit back in England, with the children, withdrawn from nearly all contact with the real world, refusing to go back to India, hating England." (13)

He has hired a boathouse from Mrs. Katherine Sanders (Kit), a travel agent hailing from US, but working in Kashmir. She owns a fleet of boathouses, all called Dilkhusha but differentiated by numbers - like Dilkhusha - I, II etc. The fleet belonged to her late husband Mike Sanders. Mike was a retired British officer in the old Indian Army who opted for the Indian citizenship and stayed back. He had married Kit who was twenty years younger than him. But later, he had disappeared without a trace. The Indian government had used him for espionage activities - thinking that he was a good conduit - to collect information on the insurgency as he had the British looks.
Rodney saves a Bengali journalist cum poet, from drowning while he had gone out for fishing. His name is Chandra Gupta. He is the son of an ICS officer from Bengal and he speaks very good English. Both of them become friends. Incidentally, both of them were born on the same day i.e. June 12, 1942. Rodney later learns from Ayesha that this Bengali was secretly in love with Kit and there was something ‘fishy’ about the disappearance of Mike. Nothing is ascertained.

Later, we are introduced to a charming lady called Ayesha Bakr, a lady working in the Home Ministry, Govt. of India. She knows Rodney since 1972. He had provided her with some very sensitive information regarding “a ring, whose operations also had undertones of military espionage and political intrigue - particularly in that hot corner where India, Nepal, Sikkim, and Chinese controlled Tibet joined.” (30)

And later, he had helped the Government by providing information about a group of Maoist student radicals. Now, tracking him, she had come down to Kashmir to seek his help in yet another crisis. There was a problem in the Himalayas - from Arunachal Pradesh right up to Kashmir. The trouble is fomented by the Chinese along with the Pakistani government. There have been secret transmitters working in the region. The Indian government is unable to trace their origins. Moreover, the secret messages
are encrypted. Ayesha seeks the help from Rodney to bust the gang and to
gauge the likely areas of trouble. The Indian Government is of the view that
Rodney’s knowledge of music might be helpful to decode the ciphers. The
local Kashmiri separatists have also joined the band. Thus we find the
‘imperial mind’ of Masters working in the direction that India cannot protect
its own territories unless someone like Rodney comes to help the Home
department by spying. The order from Ayesha is like this:

“Travel along the Himalayas. Be inquisitive. Keep your ears and eyes
open - same thing you did in Darjeeling in ’72. Look for the anomaly,
the thing that isn’t quite right, and follow it. We are not in a position
to say, “such and such” is going on, get us the details. The question
we are asking ourselves - and you - is, what is going on?” (31)

Next, Rodney sets out to Nepal to collect information. Chandra also
accompanies him there and helps him as a guide. When Rodney roams
through the Himalayas the beauty and Chandra Gupta describes the
significance of the Himalayan range. He says: “India would not be India
without Himachal. It’s a shield, and the soul that the shield protects, at
the same time.” Rodney intercepts and asks him what would happen if the
Himalaya is pricked? Chandra tells him that India would bleed to death.
He adds that soon there would be new souls and it would be reborn. (68)
After some days both of them come to know that they were working for the same Indian Government. We have all the spices of the plot of a Bond movie in the narration of the novel. Rodney seems to be ingenious in his profession. Chandra wants to know about Rodney’s deduction of the situation. He tells him, “It’s only you who are writing a Himalayan Concerto”. Rodney answers: “It’s possible, but again, I don’t think so. I have involved in this music from the beginning, as a lover of mountains and above all of the Himalayas. I think ... I know ... that we are hearing an overture, a prelude, not the main work.” (230)

The following lines explain the observation made by Rodney about the Indian way of life and Indian habits like throwing the dead bodies in the river, people squatting doing absolutely nothing, people stealing etc. etc.

Rodney picked his way carefully among the white-sheeted bodies, looking like corpses, settling down on the sidewalks. Perhaps some of them were corpses, he thought. None would know the difference until they began to reek, then they’d be thrown into the Hooghly to join the bodies which the crocodiles and fishes had not fully eaten of the hundreds floating down the river. On the beaten earth of a big open space more people were gathered in their thousands, some smoking, some asleep in the twilight, some doing absolutely nothing, all separate, all entirely unaware of each other. There a woman squatted in the open, relieving herself, there another fed her baby from her bared breast, there five boys were beating a paraiah puppy to death with rude clubs, there a
man had stolen some small object belonging to another and was running away through the crowd. There were no police in sight, no aura of authority, just people at the bottom of the human pyramid - existing. (230)

The imperial looking glass makes note of all these things. Sloths, unhygienic conditions, unemployment, starvation, carelessness, cruelty to animals, lawlessness - all are observed with meticulous details. John Clay writes that Masters adhered to the belief of J.K. Galbraith who described India as an 'anarchy that works'. Clay says: "India, with its contradictions and paradoxes continued to function absorbing change and intervention as it had done throughout its history."188 The recent Indian experience of Masters, gave him a contrasting picture of the country which he had left nearly thirty years ago. On the one hand, there was rapid progress - progress in science and technological fields, growth of the cities and civic amenities and so on. But at the same time, many other things like superstitions, insolence and lawlessness continued to persist. For Masters, India continued to be a land of surprises, riddles, mysterious and irreconcilable paradoxes. It was the picture, which his forefathers had seen way back, in the 17th century. In that respect India had hardly changed.

Rodney finds out that India, China and Russia were making their own plans to safeguard their territory by helping the insurgency in Arunchal Pradesh, Kashmir and Pakistan in order to keep one another in a defensive position. Plots, counter plots, double cross etc. became the part of the espionage game. Rodney convinces every one that there was no reason to feel insecure. Letting loose the army power would only end in catastrophe for all. As an Englishman, he surpasses all the other agents like Kit of Russia, Chandra of China and Bengal. Rodney understands the intricate designs whereas others fail.

The novel *The Himalayan Concerto* is not as gripping as his earlier novels are. It appears as though Masters was running out of the steam. He had realised it too. The abandoning of his project to write thirty-five novels on Indian theme, and concluding it with the tenth novel itself, is a proof of his realisation. Though he tried his best to shift the subject with every successive novel, he could not help running out of fuel. It appears as though he was convinced of the fact that the subject of imperial theme had lost its relevance in the West as well as in the East. The Post-colonial world had come out of the nostalgia.