CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I

As the flowers turn towards the sun, by dint of a secret heliotropism,
the past strives to turn towards the sun which is rising in the sky of history.

Walter Benjamin Illuminations (1969)

Walter Benjamin was right when he asserted that the picture of the past which had once occurred, gradually and eventually flits by. If we try to cast our eyes back onto the panorama of the past, what we will get to witness is the imaginary image of the past which is collated and collected out of archival shelves and sometimes out of archival memory and its fonds. There is no doubt that the past is gone and the members of the past died away, but there is not a percent of doubt that these dead when they lived had ruled as rulers and post death too they are the real rulers. Thus, the past in some or the other way will continue to find its way back to the mortals of the earth. It will always return hunting and haunting the present. The past is never completely dead; its presence is made visible to one and all in the form of monumental remains and documentation that exists and imparts flesh and blood to the dead and gone. These monuments and documents find life again when the historians’ make their selective choice – as to which document should be given life and which not (in their narrative framework). The moment this selection happens, that very moment history too becomes a selected event. Not everything becomes history, and also not everything finds a shelf and a place in the archival dossiers of the archive.
Thus, the archives are hegemonized power laden structures which act as repositories of the socio-political ‘construed’ constructions.

History is what rules the core as well as the margins of the archives. It is heavily driven and dependent on factual remains. As it is dependent on ‘remains’ of the past, so it may turn out to be a representation (often mis-representation) of the hidden, biased, catachrestic version of that which may or may not have occurred at some point of time in the past. Meenu Gupta in *Salman Rushdie: Re-telling History through Fiction* (2009) writes about ‘representation’ being a term inclined towards semiotic understanding. ‘Representation’ according to her, brings forth histories of all kinds. The very word “representations” entail clear images, reproductions, re-codifications, performances and simulations; an act where facts are stated sometimes to influence and affect the mind, body and the actions of the other. In semiotic sense, it is something ‘standing for’ something else. (Gupta 23)

When writing in any genre we make our choices in relation to the subject of our enquiry. This choice is often driven by our specific referential standpoints. Similarly, the historian too is selective in his approach when deciding as to what will be a part of his bordello. It is his personal choice. What historian chooses is his–story, his playing with the memory fonds (the archives – as official records or as personal memoirs) and presenting forth a narrative which is ‘his narrative’. He selects sources which impart definitive boundary to the memories lost in the past. This he does without submitting them to any critical cross examination and that is when the memory with which he plays, in turn plays with him and result in heavy catachresis of land, body, subject and of history itself; because memory as memory deals with the convoluted and forgotten and is full of voids, silences, ruptures and erasures. The
thesis is interested in the ways in which this writer /historian/ ethnographer/ archival researcher William Dalrymple, and his texts, construct their identity and authority based primarily on the evidentiary proof drawn largely from the archival shelves. The narrative authority in Dalrymple is emphasized upon by the writer through his narration of events in a direct manner (first person narration) and also through his effortless involvement with the archival source; which he claims no historian ever discovered before.

The archives on which history, historiography and the historian depends are not a fair playfield. They are not a fair collection of the past and its doings. As a result, history becomes a discourse which is open to decoding, and then recoding the same through the act of re-interpretation and representation (the simulated act of producing a copy of the original piece). Power plays a very important role here. Gilles Deleuze in his book *Foucault (1986)* comments on the role of the external forces that exist in a muddled state of agitation, of modification and of mutation. Deleuze further states that in truth there is dice-throw at work. By using the image of the dice-throw he points to the power play here. The dice-throw that comes up with particular numbers is but the result of the external forces at play in their tumble. Similar to the dice – throw the archives are spaces which are governed by the exterior forces of power and politics. They are endowed with the power to trivialize, to highlight, to contain, to propagate, to privilege and to marginalize whatever falls within its ambit. Possessing such power to contain and control masses of information they thus act as tools of governance, of hegemony and also of resistance. Therefore in archival organizations and in the process of record formation ‘hegemonized power relations’ will always be ruling the core.
This project addresses the issues of power and politics which determine the institutional formation of the Archives (as institutions holding information) and by taking into account theoretical insights, it studies how history written from these archives (by the historians) is often a manipulated form of history. In order to understand the working of Archives as institutions, offering ultimate historical truthful accounts, my study incorporates a three-fold approach. Firstly, it provides an overview of the Archival theory that has been developed since the times of The French Revolution. Secondly, the interrogatory participation on the part of the researcher /writer/historian/ critical analyst in the archival domain, serves to throw light upon the concept of the archive, and puts forth its function within the domain of history writing (with reference to the selected historical works of historian William Dalrymple). In the process, the thesis imbibes largely from a body of scholarship (particularly postmodern in approach) which seeks to subvert and question the reliable status of these archives which otherwise act as neutral repositories of the factual remains of the past. Thirdly, it presents to the reader, a picture of how the critical reading of history from the archives (keeping the archival turn in mind) can add to our understanding of the practical realities of the neutrality pretence which the archives ‘claim’ to possess as one of its prime character, and also how on the other hand they are but contrarily the magnetic field of power and politics. And in this how we as readers of history should understand that history from the archives is much away from reality and truth of the past. Simulations and impressions on the site can never be completely believable and, therefore, close examination from a critical standpoint is the need of the hour.

In academic discourse during the past three decades, there has been a revival of interest in the archives. This in turn reveals that archives don’t just perform the function of being the sole keepers of information, but they also play an active role as
participants in the very construction and the subsequent interpretation of that information. Looking at the traditional history of the archives, we see that the archives had traditionally enjoyed the status of being the primary custodians of the ‘impartial’ truth. Over the years with many scholars taking a plunge in the ocean of archival studies research, the status of archives being ‘impartial’ in character is challenged and questioned by many such scholars who debate and dispute this impartial character.

Carolyn Steedman in her book *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (2002) emphasizes on the mischievous character of the archives which act as the ultimate bearers of what can be said and what not. According to her observation, it is such documents in the archives which act as the ultimate markers of reality of the past. They serve to grant ultimate liberties, or else they forbid ‘the saying’ of certain things. Therefore, archives act as the ideological bearers of the agendas which they serve. Archival practices are not neutral practices; as the very process of the selection, the classification, ordering and description are the result of socio-cultural factors which have shaped up the structure of the archival institutions and the archival documents. These systems are fundamental in determining what documents will eventually become a part of the archival record and how that record will be encoded and then decoded and further recoded. In order to understand the larger framework of the functioning of this ‘warehouse’ of information it becomes imperative for us to have a proper understanding of the meaning of the archives as an institution and as a ‘body of documents’ which store information about the lost times.

II

The origin of the word “archive” is traced back to the Greek word ‘archeion’. Initially it stood for a government building. From here the primary definition of the
word ‘archive’ was constructed. It gradually came to be defined as “a place where records and documents were kept and stored to be preserved in their entirety”. Till the Eighteenth century the archives stood mostly decentralized. In 1790, the central archive in Paris was formally established and this had brought about a major change in the archive administration. This led to the centralization of the Archives. Following this, many other important legislations were passed out of which some were accepted in the year 1794. This resulted in influential developments taking place in the domain of the archival theory and archival establishment. As a result of these developments, for the very first time the Paris central archival holdings were thrown open to the public. This meant that now the public had an easy access to the records; barring the administrative records which were still under state control. Contrarily, any member of the public had now an easy access to the older and the non-current records which previously were hidden and kept away from them. This principle was followed and it still continues to rule the role of the archival records even in the twenty-first century. For many years many modern archivists had considered the Dutch Manuel of the 1898 as the bible of archival theories. It was a construction straight out of the hands of the well known archivist’s Dutch trio - Samuel Muller, Johan Adriaan Feith and Robert Jacob Fruin. These archivists dismissed the private archives which in their view was a conglomeration of the private papers and documents.

With the end of the First World War the government records accumulated at a much higher speed and thus now the archivists had a bigger challenge lying in front of their eyes. The size of the archival dossiers multiplied with time, placing the archivists in a jeopardized state of what to keep and what not. It was Sir Hillary Jenkinson one of the founding masters of the archival theory who published A Manual for Archive Administration in the year 1922. In this manual, Jenkinson tried
to propagate ways to preserve large archival treasures. He propounded and advocated new principles of archival practice. Sir Hillary Jenkinson had a very positivist outlook to the theory of archives and archival practice. He had contended that the archivist’s primary function is “to keep the archives and not select the archives”. Also Sir Hillary Jenkinson, in this manual, was very vocal about his standpoint on the status and the character of the archives being one of impartial and authentic keeper of truth. Jenkinson also advocated that the archives had originated organically (in their office of creation) and they are therefore preserved in the same state – free from all kinds of biases.

Jenkinson was a hard core positivist who believed that the archivists should hold throughout their careers an impartial attitude (in relation to the archives). He motivated the archivists further by emphasizing on their roles of being the sole keepers of the records and documents that were housed in the archival walls and at the same time he infused in them a spirit of being in possession of a treasure-trove which granted them in their career a service of responsible guardianship. He advocated that the archivist will have to bear in his mind the fact that in order to be considered a revered devotee of the truth, his professional labours are to be solely directed to the selection of that truth. He contradicted himself here. On one hand he assigned the archivist with the sole responsibility of being the custodian of the records of archives (which he emphasised upon as being free from any biases), when on the other side, in highlighting the appraisal techniques he called upon the same custodian of archives to cull out ‘selectively’ material that would be placed on the archival shelves. Terry Cook vehemently points out here that by following this kind of twofold approach one inadvertently declares the archival legacy to be of a perverted nature. The very moment it gets severely affected by the state ideology or by its administrative whims,
it results in the death of meaning. Because of its contradictory stance and flawed assertions, Jenkinson’s positive perception was shunned by many.

With the mid twentieth century and the Second World War the growth rate of the records multiplicated and had reached an unbelievable mark. As preservation came to be replaced by selective collection and collation of the documents, this called for a fundamental re-orientation and re-classification in the field of archival practice. Following this, Theodore R. Schellenberg in 1965 published *The Management of Archives* as his second manual after his first publication, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques* (1956). It came to be regarded as the third milestone in the world of record management after the Dutch Manual and Jenkinson’s Manual. The definition of archives which Schellenberg purports in this manual is contrary to Jenkinson’s traditional perspectives. According to him, three factors are essential for imparting a true definition to the archives. The first was to understand the reasons as to why at all materials is/was produced and accumulated over time (creation). In this regard he contended that the materials created or accumulated in the archives was for the accomplishment of some purpose. Secondly, he states that documents and records become archives only when they are preserved for reasons other than those for which they were otherwise originally created (custody). Thirdly, Schellenberg purports that selection as a method is implicit in the very definition of archives. Schellenberg called archives only ‘that smaller portion which had been ‘selectively chosen’ and preserved by the archivist from a larger, original whole which he termed the “records” (the motive of acquisition).

Schellenberg and his colleagues differentiated as to what was to be called “the records” and what were to be called “the archives”. He observed that two values that were pertinent in the archival record appraisal were: evidential value and informational value. Therefore the “records” were preserved by any administrative
agency as evidence of the functions, the policies, the decisions, procedures, and so on. And evidence pertained to that information which was born out of the functional organization of the governmental organizations. On the other hand “archives” came under the helm of those records which were deliberately picked and were adjudged worthy of permanent preservation for any future consultations.

Followed by Schellenberg’s manual the following decades saw another huge shift in the field of archival practice. As was propagated by the Dutch and English archivists, the archives till now were serving the state. The societal shift in the archival turn, led to what came to be known as the Societal Approach to archives. German Archivist, photographer and critical theorist, Hans Booms, was one of the proponents of this societal approach. He came forward with his “Documentation Plan” in 1987. The basic premise of which was that archivists “must first of all establish the value of records before they can decide what to keep and what to destroy” (Booms 25). He asserted, that this value was not intrinsic to the record and therefore could not be traced in the records themselves. It thus can never be established there as its value keeps altering in accordance with its movement from one hand to another. Here Booms was reflecting on the role of the society being the primary recorder and de-coder of all such documents in the archives. He believed that it was the society from which the original material came and for whose sake it should be preserved in its entirety. And so he believed that it was this society only that could act as the keeper and the preserver of this history and its factual grains in the form of documentary heritage. Because it is the public opinion which authorizes the public actions and legitimises political authority, Booms therefore considered the society as the ultimate archive builder—an agency and its agents who contribute largely in the archival set up.
In the 80’s and 90’s, with the emergence of the postcolonial thinking, a new line of thought emerged in the humanities circle which posed a challenge to the very notion of the archive and questioned the veracity of its truth claims. Archives and particularly the colonial archives were then on probed with a critical mindset; not just as sources of historical material and repositories of preservation, but as the active participants in processes of power, conquest and hegemony. Brien Brothman notes in the *Archivaria*36 Autumn 1993, after the emergence of this new line of critical enquiry, the archive which till now represented preservation, origin, authority and permanence was now thrown open for dissection of meanings and multiple readings (Brothman 208). It was much before in the 1960s when archival scepticism had seeped in; owing to the large numbers of historians relying invariably on the archives and records as their resource banks. But it was only from the late 1980s that scholarly work exploring the ‘conceptual significance’ of the archive escalated. This led to the birth of ‘the archival turn’ in the humanities.

This ‘archival turn’ was most notably inspired by the works of theorists like Paul Ricoeur, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida to name a few. According to Paul Ricoeur, the archives represented a pivotal point between memory (which is of the past) and the writing of history (which is of the present and/or future). He pointed to it subsequently becoming a part of the public discourse. Ricoeur with his critical enquiry had questioned the ideological underpinnings which presided over the apparently innocent operation of conserving all such documents. Charles Merewether, another art historian makes a comment on Paul Ricoeur’s observation which the latter has made in relation to the archives and the documents which are housed there. Merewether in his book *The Archive* (2006) writes that Paul observed that documents compartmentalized, stored or housed in the archives should be measured not in
relation to past and present only, but also in the event of its occurrence; as it is the event which eventually shapes up the compartments of archival organizations.

The scholarship of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida offers a microscopic and detailed view of ‘the ideological power’ that is implicit in the document and in the archives. These two theorists view an archival document as a construction which emanates from power and its discourse, and which in turn lends expression to the relations of the powerful. Referred to as the ‘New Archivist’ by Gilles Deleuze, Foucault paved the way for an enormous corpus of work surrounding the power of the archive, its relation to knowledge and the writing of history. Vincent Descombes in his book *Foucault: A Critical Reader (1987)* notes in relation to the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) that in this text Michel Foucault sets out to propound a methodical presentation of the principles underlying the method of analyzing any historical subject matter. As a part of this methodology, Foucault had conceptualised the archives as an underlying structure which governs the thought systems and values of any given society, in relation to its people and in relation to others (Merewether 2011). In other words, Foucault does not view the archive as the institution of records and preservation. For him the archives and the records are not all that which a culture preserves. He elucidates on them being a “body of statements” and “rules of practice”. Within Foucault’s work “archive” functions as a conceptual tool through which to interrogate the “assumptions” upon which and through which historical meaning is decoded and recoded.

For Jacques Derrida, on the other hand, the archive is both a material place of preserving artefacts which acts as a site of power and control. In *Archive Fever: a Freudian Impression (1996)*, Derrida goes on to develop etymological exploration of
the word ‘archive’. Derrida notes that the archive dovetails two principles in one – the ontological principle and the nomological principle. First is the principle according to nature, where things commence – physical, historical, or ontological principle. And second is the principle according to law where men and Gods command and where authority social order is exercised. Being based on these two principles the archives and the archival records in Derridian terms become a material place; which in turn is driven by principles of the power of the powerful who reign the machinery of control, of commandments.

Refiguring the Archive (2002) is another important text in which Derrida goes on to propose an investigation into the archives as “the foundation of the production of knowledge” (Derrida 91). Archives, notes Derrida are simply the power sites that produce power laden knowledge structures and power laden hierarchical discourse. They are in the words of Ann Laura Stoler “technologies which possess authority and rule in them” that can function as “monuments to particular configurations of power”. (Stoler 83-85)

Scholars from the humanities have posed different questions to the practices of the archives and the archive (records) which it ‘contains’ in the red, green or blue files especially in relation to the manifold process involved in the process of collection and further in the selection of the records. In terms of the specific collections which the archives houses, the literature so far in relation to this field of analysis is largely based on its archival techniques or on the archival contextualization. This contextualization, reveals the numerous layers of construction within the body of the text, and in doing so adds an additional layer. Documents that were written by somebody (the act of creation), and then were preserved by other
(‘the custodian’ like a relative, a dear one) and then further they are modified by cultural institutions (government agencies /agents of acquisition) – the archivist. Therefore the archive become an ‘added layer’ – since the documents are removed from their original locations to the archival shelves following which they are imparted new contexts – through archival description, selective arrangement and techniques of appraisal and further documentation. As institutions preserve the sanctimonious acts of the past and as these recordings of the past gets transformed into textual forms, therefore analysis from every angle of formation (when it is created), distribution (how the custodian has the power of distributing it to the various agencies) and dislocation (which may happen post acquisition by a public or private organization) becomes imperative in order to understand the functioning of the “base and superstructure” model of the archive(s).

Thus, we see that formally being established as a reservoir that incorporated judicial and governmental documents for evidence, the archive was initially used to maintain the power of the ruling classes and gentry. It was only after the French Revolution that the archives became publically accessible. Archivists were historically accepted as the impartial guardians of truth and evidence. However, with the stockpiling of documents from modern-day administrations this understanding of an un-biased archive and archivist was challenged through new understandings of how the archival record is formed and what role is played by the archivist in selecting this documentary heritage. New scholarship (particularly post modern scholarship) on archives started to draw attention to its complicity in the history-making process and led to a consideration of archives as ‘material tools’ which later came to be analysed and studied critically as far as history and writing of history from the archives was concerned.
III

Taking into account that archives are mediated both internally within dynamic relationships among creators, archivists and users, as well as through the society and historical context wherein they are created, archives and archivists cannot be regarded as non-partisan custodians of documents and information but should be considered as “sites” active in framing and producing knowledge and powerful structures. Foucault suggests in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), that the archival storehouses are not just institutional and organizational reservoirs of records that happen to preserve different texts and the cultures, but they are the corpus of statements. In a way they are ‘principles of practice’ that give shape to what can and cannot be said. Similarly Jacques Derrida has described the archives as a body which functions to institutionalize and command power. Thus theorists such as Verne Harris, Foucault, Derrida, Ricoeur, all present a significant theoretical body of work with which one can approach and dissect the archives and its catachrestic creations.

According to Antoinette Burton in her book *Dwelling in the Archive* (2005), Archival institutions are established for a variety of reasons. She points to them being the outcome of specific cultural and socio-economic realities and pressures. These pressures are never secure and their predominance on archives both as spaces and as records are manifest in the ever shifting value attached to archival holdings and institutions. Because of the demonstrable influence of socio-political circumstances on archives and their holdings, archives have been increasingly audited by scholars not as institutions containing sources, but as institutions supervised by various forms of power structures. This project attempts to explore and interrogate the various processes involved in ‘archive making’ within a larger critical discourse on archives specifically focusing on use of archive in the writing of history.
Indian archives, just like many other world archives, too had under its possession colossal collections of records and manuscripts which were very rich in information. But this richness of records was soon plundered and taken away by the powerful invaders of India who looted them and took them away. The violent political upheavals of those times followed the closure of the respective regimes. As a result of this, there was a repeated destruction of records in India from time to time. Therefore India turned out to be extremely poor in archival wealth at the close of the last Mughal’s Era. The same trend continued when the Europeans’ had set their foot on this land. As a result of ‘power play’ and ‘force’ these records and manuscripts were not only destroyed, but mostly burnt down and majority were deported to the foreign lands. During the rising of 1857 some of the documents relating to the reign of Bahadur Shah Zafar were seized by the British troops when they had captured and occupied Delhi. Any researcher interrogating the archives today will find some of these documents lying in possession of the National Archives of India, New Delhi.

As I took up this research, in order to have an understanding of the subject of history and history coming to us from the archives, I decided to venture in the archiveland. The National Archives of India, which is the custodian of the archival heritage of the historical dossiers, presents us with some records of the past which I was able to find after much tussle - both with the archival records and the clerical staff of the archives (without their directions my research would not have been easy). There are records that throw light on the life of the British, the Mughals, the concubines of the Mughal courts, the governance of those times, the Mutiny, the Hyderabad diaries of the British rule etc.
His Majesty did not learn the Palace was threatened by fire.

His Majesty did not learn that the Palace was threatened by fire.
Fig.1.1. Documented File called Precis of Palace Intelligence Misc volume 361. Volume that records events in the life of the late, last and lost ruler in history Bahadur Shah Zafar (source: National Archives of India, New Delhi)
If a survey of all such records, which are a part of the Indian archives today (including the major state archives besides the central) be carried out, a revelation will come to picture which will show that the bulk of these records in the possession of these above Archives will mostly be the ‘remains’ of records which were selectively handpicked by the ruling British of those times. It was the British who decided upon the fate of all such records as to what goes where. But in reality, what went where no one knows! Therefore, the study of the archival material in India is restricted to the collection of those documents and manuscripts that were created by the East India Company rulers and later by the representatives of the British Crown in India. There are records that were created here but carried elsewhere; where their true purpose would be fulfilled (e.g. Oriental records that lie in London Archives). Thus we see that the British were the ultimate Godfathers of the reality of the past (be it on land or be it in the archives) and it cannot be overruled that the very idea of the archives was/is the brainchild of the ruling British of the Imperial times.
Fig 1.2 Documents in the National Archives of India: Letters of communication between different agents and agencies of India of the British era.
(Source: National Archives of India, New Delhi)
All such archival material that is left behind by the British in various archives located across the country, serves as the best pedigree for any historical project on which a historian embarks. Through the readings of any history project/book we see that the historian usually surveys history in terms of all such records that are available to him in the archives which form a major part of the footnotes of the text. He revisits the walls of the archival domain wherein these records of the past are protected, records of the past which is backed up by much written evidence. Relying completely on the written evidence that lies under his eyes, the historian in search of the past does not pay heed to the inadequate and partial character of these imprints which they may otherwise bear. This historian looks at his evidence with an eye of a keen observer, but in the process the power of scrutiny and interpretation of the treasure troves completely is his call. Also the power to assign adequate, partial or impartial character to all such records lies with him. But the question to ponder over is that: just because the body of the archives/archive is bearing the official stamps of authority on them, should this premise be enough for one to accept these records at their face value? Should we not probe deep into the dust of the archives? Being products of the post modern world which we live in and are a part of, are we not suppose to firmly question or inquire about the verifiability of all such documentation. The response to this crisis in communication is missing. Let us not forget what Booms meant when he called the society and its members as the ultimate builders of history, of archives and of truth.

We as readers, researchers or critical analysts just cannot write history or believe in it blindly by making ourselves dependent solely on the evidences from the archival records, for these evidences carry socio-cultural and political baggage laden with cultural and personal prejudice. Thus the need of the hour becomes scrutiny, scrutiny
by the historian who is set out to write about a past occurrence, and scrutiny by a reader who with a deconstructive bent/consciousness should seek to discover the material behind them and what impression do they intend to produce. Verne Harris in relation to the appraisal approach in archival practice notes that the very word appraisal entails power which is politically laden. He asserts that in order to make records reliable in form and spirit this appraisal should therefore be as transparent as it can strive to be. Since most of the archival records in India are a creation of the British imperial regime, so they are bound to carry some sort of biases with them and in a way or other they might as well purport to conceal truth, if not completely, may be then some part of it. Therefore, the transparent approach is what is necessary (for the historian/researcher) in both decoding of history and then in writing the decoded history from the archives. In this way archival organizations and the archival records will reflect forth a democratic spirit.

Historians and researchers who go deep into the archives are sometimes totally driven by its content and by the factual evidence it offers about history. As a result of this, they get so profoundly fascinated with the unpublished material which they discover lying on the shelves of the archival institutions that they willingly fall into believing that their work is one of novelty. Pompous about their novel findings, their works out rightly assume novel importance. As a result the rest of the sources which might exist in relation to the period are at once negated and completely nullified by them in the process of their novel and patent inventions. History and writing of history thus becomes a deconstructive interrogation and investigation of all such evidence. It is never a pure objective thing. Rather, it is the historical process of envisaging and quadrating a certain series of events. But it should never be forgotten that in the history of events, the events which never occurred generally go unrecorded.
and unarchived, and the actual events which are recorded and preserved on the shelf are mostly ‘re-presented or mis-represented realities’, for what frequently occurs on the shelves of the monumental records is a ‘mis-representation’ by way of subterfuge as a result of power play at hand.

Elizabeth Kaplan in her article that appeared in the Archival Science “Many paths to Partial Truths: Archives, Anthropology and Power of representation” notes in relation to the records and archives, “that with increasing academic delving the archive have been exposed as intermediaries between a subject and its later decoders, a functionary aspect which is that of interpretation itself” (Kaplan 217). Research of all the monumental records therefore doesn’t mean an end in itself; but rather it stands for procuring conclusions – it’s a means of coming to conclusions – conclusions that may differ, that may be personal or impersonal (culturally or personally driven). Thus history is never virginal in character, but ideologically motivated bearing the fingerprints of its creators and its interpreters. The facts and evidences are looked at with an eye of a decoder. Sometimes in the process of decoding, facts are epitomized as a result of some unseen propagandist leanings. If history and records in archives are decoded and recoded from a propagandist standpoint it becomes a catachrestic act / event that is often culturally or personally driven thus leading to a biased and a self-driven version of history. Michael Holquist in his book Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World (1990) writes that even in the dialogue of the remotest past, meaning can never be fully and finally grasped. He contends that even in the present moment of dialogue there exist great mass of forgotten meanings. Therefore meaning will always have its homecoming festival and this homecoming of meaning where meaning is ‘draped in layers’, ‘coated heavily’ and ‘lost in disguise’ – will at the end result in heavy catachresis.
When diving into the investigation of a particular historical subject, the historians’ normally acquire fragments of scattered information about the same which they might have found from different source banks. Their investigation doesn’t end here. Post investigation they have to find a way of describing it. They are assigned with the task of giving this investigatory account an adequate representation but which in all its adequacies is but a “selective [mis]representation”. This kind of discerning description is befit to dupe one and all. This is bound to happen when historians’ having established both the subject of the history, and the magnitude of detail willingly expunge certain facts about the subject which otherwise given their gradation of detail should necessarily have been included. The clearest example of this kind of bias is in causal explanations, where some of the important causes are outright omitted owing to the biased conviction that they are not important to history in any form. The monologic utterances are but mere abstractions. Valentin Voloshinov in his book *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1986) writes that any finished, written or not expected utterance makes response to something and it is calculated to be responded to in turn. Therefore, it is like a link on link which occurs in a chain continuum of speech acts. In speech continuums of past links, the histories which adapt signs of omission of the necessary and commission of ‘the necessary’ as per the historian’s personal biases are those histories which in turn are bound to be misleading one; owing to their catachrestic nature.

When diving in source and resource banks of great evidential value, sometimes great amount and variety of evidence gets into the hand of the historian as a result of which they end up putting exaggerated account of the subject under study. Contrarily, sometimes the evidence is scarce; it is patchy and hazy. This may result in production of history that can be biased. Biased sources will always yield biased
histories. Biased sources are the sources that are evidence to the past occurrences, but are outcome of power play and hegemonic strains. Archives too are the biased source banks that make events, history and history writing and re-writing possible. It is history whose course is defined by power play and hegemonic strains because someone at some point in the ‘very history of its making’ has influenced the very process of historical reconstruction in accordance with their own preferences in their ‘representational approach’.

Rational standards of enquiry don’t suffice if the historian’s interpretation of the evidence excavated by him is itself a sectarian version. Historians are themselves responsible for all the bias which they themselves allow to be a part of their work. Writers like Hayden White and F.R. Ankersmit have been critical in writing about the literary and subjective sources of historical interpretation. Their studies lead one to come to the conclusion: that although historians infer particular facts about the past from the evidence which is available to them, but meanings are appended in accordance to ones likes and dislikes to those facts. These meanings are drawn out of their own creative imagination and in turn are mostly culturally freighted meanings.

The writer I choose to study is one such writer. He is a world renowned historian, whose writing and researching expertise cannot be disputed. He is a writer of great literary output. William Dalrymple is not a name unknown. His literary creations in the form of non-fictions are mostly historically driven accounts – accounts about the Middle East, about India, about the British in India .His widely acclaimed publications include: *In Xanadu: A Quest* (1990), *City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi* (1993), *From the Holy Mountain : A Journey in the Shadow of Byzantium* (1997), *The Age of Kali: Indian Travels and Encounters* (1998), *White Mughals: Love
and Betrayal in Eighteenth Century India (2002), The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi,1857 (2006) Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India(2009), Return of The King: The Battle for Afghanistan (2012). All these books engage with crucial insights in relation to history, archives, memory and culture. In the process of analyzing the style of writers like Dalrymple it becomes evident that in the process of decoding the history of the colonial/postcolonial space and its subjects in the archives, and through the archives sometimes they end up inscribing the history of their own space - spaces that are culturally dictated and driven by one’s personal interests. And this is where catachresis tends to take place. In my project, I wish to decode this catachresis – committed on three planes: one on part of the archivist, through his selectively chosen material in the process of appraisal of archival records and the second on the part of the writer/historian who further picks up things from the dust of the archives, laden not just with dust but with biases which can be and mostly are catachrestic in nature (inclusive of his biases). On a third plane my project contends that such history is a catachrestic history (catachresis by archivist, by the historian researcher and by the reader of history).

To the reader of history ‘catachresis’ is not a familiar concept. The term ‘catachresis’ comes from the Greek term ‘katakhresthai’ which means ‘to misuse’. In a technical sense it means to misuse words, as in a mixed metaphor, either in error, or for rhetorical effect; this ‘misuse’ can thus either be deliberate or mistaken. But in relation to history, catachresis has a much deeper meaning. The renowned postcolonial theorist, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak goes on to define ‘catachresis’ as a conditioning, re-inscribing and displacing of the record of history. This displacement occurs the moment the records are read differently from their constitution (irrespective of the intended meaning). Therefore reading and interpreting something
differently from its constitution is a result of the bias inherent in the thinkable framework of the one who commits catachresis when decoding history from the archives.

Edward Hallett Carr, too, in his work What is History? (1961) points to history being a corpus of ascertained facts. These facts he says, are available to the historian in documents as inscriptions just like “the fish on the fish monger’s slab” (Carr 24). Thus the historian collects them, takes them home, and cooks and serves them to his reader in whatever manner it appeals to him. History thus becomes an act of interpretation and representation of that interpretation by the historian – thus resulting in a biased version of that which the historian studies (reading archives differently from their constitution).

Building on the work of Michel Foucault, Thomas Richards in his book The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of the Empire (1993) describe the archives as recording and documenting ‘The Empire’. He describes it as a mechanized tool which reinforces and helps to bolster feelings of colonial power, even when it is long gone. According to him, the archive is no building of records and texts, but is a selectively and collectively imagined junction of the known and knowable. It is at once the re-presentation and re-emploioment of the epistemological masterly framework. The petrified non-western subjects have always been showcased as the lost, directionless, mute objects in western discourse. Homi K. Bhabha writes in his The Location of Culture (1994), when knowledge is being produced about the non-western world by the western agents, the object of thought will always be denied three things in particular – culture, language and visibility. It will all at once be veiled/bewailed under the heavy weight of ‘representation’ or one may say ‘mis-representation’.
In William Dalrymple’s work too, we see a writer of European descent who chooses to write Indian history in the form of nonfiction. He has settled down in India to explore India as a Nation and also its historical archives related to the Great Indian Mutiny of Eighteenth century India, and write “otherwise” about its colonial mighty past and its present state of affairs. In the texts taken up for study City of Djinns (about Delhi), White Mughals (about interracial liaisons between the whites and the non-whites) and The Last Mughal (about the position of Dalrymple’s titular biographical subject- Bahadur Shah Zafar, his downfall and establishment of a responsible British rule in India) William Dalrymple is seen writing about the colonial and the postcolonial Indian space, taking a backward journey into the history and culture of this Nation via the course of the archives. Throughout these three texts Dalrymple is seen highlighting the originality of his sources. He time and again emphasizes on the uniqueness of all the documents he has found. This he has done to heighten the novelty of his work as a legitimate ‘archival researcher’.

In order to be fair and not misleading, any description should always describe in detail the predominant trademarks of the chosen aspect of the subject. One way to ensure that all paramount features of the chosen aspect of a subject are included is to provide an all-encompassing detail of events, happenings, and people. If not in totality but in brief, then also a rundown description of the case can be fair. However, anything less than an appropriate description, will be the result of a catachrestic selection. Any such description will reflect both the historian’s preconceptions of the nature of the aspect of the subject being described, and the historian’s particular interests vested in that subject or in its projection. Dalrymple in all the three texts takes up India and its study in an exhaustive manner diving deep in the archival ocean but the picture mirrored and put forth by him is one that speaks exhaustively not about
history, but history driven by cultural and personal interests and this is where hidden biases come to the core in relation to Dalrymple’s works.

Archives, archive and history are all a study of speculation and scrutiny. An uneven space which is the output of uneven dialogic of the colonial encounter. It is also a space driven and dominated by the conceptual schemas of colonialism. This kind of recognition of it raises some fundamental questions regarding the historical scholarship that is overly dependent on it. Through this thesis, I aim to study how history is decoded by a historian in the vast body of the archives. I also strive to look at the silences in the archives and see how the historians interpret those silences and produce their histories; looking deep at those histories which are archived and avoiding traces that remain unarchived and unheard as a result of power play. My thesis tries to delve in a study of the archival silences. It tries to see how such silences are manifested, what are the implications of such distortions for the groups that are excluded and kept on the fringes or lost in dialogue, and overall what is its impact on readership and on society at large. If the records are reinterpreted or manipulated or catachresis happens at any point of time in writing, then the narratives of various groups will stand significantly flawed; as their stories will not get transmitted in the realm of history thus leading to the end of their history.

In the domain of my study, I wish to explore the role of archives in building up the historical narratives, and prove through my study that whatever the archive contains is already a catachrestic reconstruction/reproduction—a recording of history from a particular perspective and it thus cannot provide transparent access to the events themselves. It is just like the panopticon wherein the power of interpretation lies with the historian who is in full control of the facts lying under his direct
surveillance. The facts can never directly speak for themselves they speak only when the historian calls on them and culls them in some particular form. It is he who decides as to which facts should be given a door, and in what order or context. William Dalrymple’s works are studied in this light.

His first text taken up for study is *City of Djinns* where I have attempted to see how catachresis is happening on land. Dalrymple through this travel history, presents a picture of India which itself is catachrestic in character. In his one year stay in Delhi his research on this land and its people encapsulates within its ambit the interactions which happen to take place between him and the people on this land which he is set out to decode- historically and catachrestically. Entitled *Catachresis of Land*, the chapter is focused on how memory is like a record (memory is compared to an archive) which is further recorded (in memoirs or in minds of individuals). This memory is played upon by the archivist, if in the form of a memoir or an official address it reaches the shelf of the archive. It then is further played with when the historian with his catachrestic tools tries to dissect it and present and re-present it. Also the mind is just like the archives and the personal memory stored there is like a record of events. How Dalrymple plays with the memory of the individuals and presents his catachrestic version of events and characters (leading to catachresis happening on land) is what the chapter focuses on. The text’s relationship with history is embroiled through a series of stories about various characters whom William Dalrymple meets in his one year stopover in the land of Delhi. Then there are larger than life historical figures and events which are emphasized upon by these characters. In this way the book paves to historicize the stories of the Mughals, the British and the partition and its aftermath through William’s personal connections.
Followed by this, is the chapter on his narrative history - White Mughals. The text, claims Dalrymple, is a love affair between a Hyderabadi princess and a British Resident who converts to Islam in the name of love. Dalrymple uses this text in a catachrestic manner in order to set out a broader argument in relation to the significance of relationships which had developed in those days between high level East India company officials and the upper class Muslim woman. William Dalrymple uses the term “White Mughals” to refer to the high gentry in the British profile who had willingly embraced cross cultural life- the Mughal life and culture. This chapter is entitled as *Catachresis of Body* as ‘catachresis of body’ is taking place here in the ‘body of this text’; as there is a heavily gendered representation of the city of Hyderabad, of the womenfolk who are lost from the text and from the archival records. Even if they do find some place and space in the body of the text or in the body of the archive, it is in relation to the white men with whom their names are attached. As a result the discourse around woman, her body is lost from the textual framework and from archival shelves thus leading to not double colonization but triple colonization - from Home, from Harem and ultimately from the archives.

The last text which is taken up is The Last Mughal which is a narrative on the life of the last and lost biographical Mughal subject (in history and under British rule) – the last Mughal king Bahadur Shah Zafar II. This chapter is entitled *Catachresis of Subject* for we see that in writing about the mutiny, Zafar and the British what fills up the pages of the book is the Mutiny as a historical subject and the British as the ruling sovereign masters over their subjects – the mutineers and the King. Zafar is depicted as a bootless king who is devoid of power. Dalrymple throws light on Zafar’s plight as a titular head, who is taken later into British custody as a ‘prisoner King’ – a traitor to the British congeniality. Dalrymple delves deep in writing about mutiny and British
but Zafar gets lost from *The Last Mughal* and from the archival grains – for what little we discover in the archives too is a puny Zafar who is a lost subject even in the historical dossiers that were created by the British for the British (the officials) of those times.

Post modern theory and theorists have diverted our attention as readers and researchers from the mainstream realist, objectivist and documentarist history. They have emphasized upon the prevalent paradigm which has a fetish of the archival in history. All these post modernists have analysed the documents as texts; that are construed constructions which are the resultant of inherent biases in ones culturally freighted approach. They all purport an anti positivist rhetoric of history and historiography. Archives as a subject of scrutiny gain attention here. Archives view postmodernism and postmodernists as their enemy. They look at them with an eye of suspicion. For the post modernists, texts are signs which occur in language form that can be interpreted. As a result they are unstable, devoid of a true meaning. The meaning dies the moment the death of the author occurred (Roland Barthes). In Derrida’s views this death of author proves to be advantageous to many who may take the authors death for granted. This, says Derrida, leads to archivization (derridian term) which may produce more than it may record. The archived documents are therefore not static constructs but they are fluid in nature that change according to the interaction that takes place at the interface of the archivist, historian, user and the reader. They thus act as apparatuses of capture (Deleuze) that function in their capacity to capture, to determine and eventually they command and control. They function as machines that manufacture the pertinence of particular kinds of evidence and particular casts of historical actors. By analysing and interpreting these
apparatuses of capture, it becomes possible to explore the mechanisms of the archive and that of history that is written from the archives.

Paul Ricoeur in *Memory History and Forgetting* 2006 emphasizes and states in relation to the role of the historian that the historian needs to inspire his “Me-Researcher” encouraging to use personal experience and knowledge for the achieving the truth and to suppress the “Me-pathetic” imposing selfish value judgments’ (Ricoeur 8). Relying heavily on the archival remains of the archives, Dalrymple’s projection of cultural and narrative history makes this historian’s history not an objective presentation of that which existed in the past but it presents to the reader his “selective approach” in recovering data to recover his lost past. Thus, my project engages into the problematic of re-writing history through the archival interpretation. Based on the investigations carried out, this thesis throws light upon how history is decoded in the archives and how archives is all that reflects power, silence, half-truths. Also how Dalrymple’s writing too reflects the same is then summarized in the concluding chapter.