CHAPTER FOUR
CATACHRESIS OF SUBJECT: THE LAST MUGHAL

The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 holds a seminal place in history and in historiography. Time and again many historians have plunged deep into probing the nemesis of the Mughal Empire and its aftermath on the Indian soil. What the Mutiny reflects is a past that had witnessed resistance from all ends – a past where the subject of “rule” (The last Mughal in the line of Timori rulers- King Bahadur Shah Zafar II) became the subject of the “ruler” (The British rulers) and the “ruled” subjects (mutiny sepoys) became the ruling subject of the history of the events of 1857 Mutiny. The cultural hegemony and the colonial schizophrenia of the British master over its subject of rule, was given a hard blow as a result of the rebellious mutiny. Mutiny is often represented by many historians as the most brutal side of the savage natives. It was a blow in the face of British sentimentalities which had forced them to retaliate and act with pure vengeance. Shashi Tharoor in his An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India (2016) criticizes Scottish historian Niall Ferguson’s positive analysis in his Empire: How Britain Made The World. Tharoor curtly rejects the British liberalism which Ferguson celebrates. According to Ferguson the liberal Empire’s subjects had greatly benefitted from their benign rulers. He says that the indolent subjects due to their subjugation to the British were able to benefit greatly from the imperial centre. Tharoor rejects the claim put forward by this historian and by any of his likes.

This chapter focuses on the varied aspects of how the subject under rule (particularly the Mughal King) internalizes the cult of the ruler’s superiority and in the process becomes the lost and the last Mughal. It will also focus on the archives
being a source of macrohistory and not micro history. Having received a jolt from the subject under rule (The King and the sepoy mutineers), the British made efforts to camouflage the events of 1857 by eliciting voices that justified British rule and also justified the involvement and the unfair trial of the lost last Mughal King- Bahadur Shah Zafar.

In the words of historian APJ Taylor, all the historians impose a pattern in the shape of a dialogue on all events which they encounter in the process of their findings. According to him between the events and the historians what occurs is a constant interplay. There exists a huge gap between ‘reality and its narration’, and thus narrative remains nevertheless, ‘an inappropriate vehicle for historical explanation’. The historians’ historian’s endeavour is to impose on events a systematized rational patterning in relation to how they occurred and why they occurred. There occurs no such historian per se who would begin to write or search history with tabulae rasae (blank mind) (Taylor 1-5). Thus, when looking at the evidence in the archive there is already a picture in the mind of the historian/researcher which he may as well project onto his readers. This reflects the entire body of the archive being a non innocent entity, for there is no innocence – not in the archives or in the evidence it offers to the historian. This may eventually result into catachrestic writing of history.

Keeping in mind what Taylor proposed, we as readers of history and as potential critical minds cannot act indifferently to the fact that when history is being written, the toolbox which the historian makes use of is bound to give shape to history and his-story both. History thus becomes a decoded and a loose narrative construct which is largely based on dogmatic positioning. It is a language based manufacturing process, where everything is prefabricated and in which historical interpretations about the past are congregated and are further interpreted by the historian. Michael
Foucault and Hayden White accuse language of being a total ideologically contaminated medium. What it can and cannot do is dependent upon the use to which it is directly or indirectly put. It is dependent on the social and political purposes with which it is heavily laden. Therefore, truth is mostly manipulated and distorted. It is often linked to the statements of power that produce and help sustain it. A question often posed by historians and philosophers of history like Hayden White, R. G. Collingwood, Louis Mink and Arthur Dento is that: “What is the significance of narrative in generation of historical knowledge and historical truth?” Narrative refurbishes events and explains why they occurred. They are overlaid by the deductions which are held by the historian. These deductions in turn are forces that influence the nature of causality. These might just include individual or combined elements: the elements like race, gender, class, culture etc. So while individual statements may be true or false, narratives as a collection of such statistics coming to the reader is mostly ‘collated statistics’. This imparts a catachrestic character to the narrative which in turn becomes a biased recoding of the recorded facts from the past.

Dealing with Dalrymple’s second venture into narrative history after his *White Mughals*, this chapter is a study and reflection of the catachrestic conglomeration of facts – some found, some inferred, some coded and some decoded by this writer/historian. This piece of narrative history is a saga of the fall of the Mughals with the rise of British forces in the backdrop of the sepoy mutiny. It deals with the titular head of the state who became a subject under the rising rule of the British in 1857. In *White Mughals*, the reader goes through the journey of the white who turned a mughal. Here too, the text focuses on this white (as in pale) mughal who is incapable of any good governance. This provides Dalrymple with an authority with which he once again justifies the forgotten glory of the British and their rule which made India better in every aspect.
There is no room for doubt, that the past is transacted only when the historian represents it in its narrative particularity, playing with the toolbox of historically driven facts from different source banks. The question is whether these facts really had existence in the past or were they manipulated and then imprinted in the present form. History exists for the reader in the form of ellipses until the historian/historiographer writes it in its binding form which is called ‘The Narrative’. What is meant by Narrative then? When we explain history or historical occurrences we plan its contents as events in a sequential order. This process is similar to the process of storytelling. Thus history’s power to explain itself lies in its fundamental narrativized structural layout. The post modernists are often of the opinion that when we take up the act of writing about the lost times, our attempt gets restricted for one is under the pressure of carving and casting events in a particular narrative form. The post modernists have questioned the adequacy of the cognitive power of the narrator, the act of narration and the elements of a narrative. They further dispute and debate over how capable it is to explain the past as a perfect and a plausible entity. The big question is what is the role of the historian in re-creating and re-writing the past? Also whether historians retell the narratives as it had actually happened, or do they always individually impose and emplot their own catachrestic version on the evidences of the past making history his-stories (the historian’s stories/interpretation) or is history which is there in the archives in the form of records, if not completely catachrestic it can be said that it is partly catachrestic in character—as history in archives is largely macro in form and not microhistory.

The cynical aspects of the narrative seem to derive from its capabilities of emplotment (providing a refined storyline to the haphazard chaotic occurings), configuration (polished organization of complex structures into defined concepts) and
providing metaphors (which can at times result into catachresis). Unlike fiction where the author knows what he wants to write, historiography is where the events of the story are partially coded, encoded and then decoded. The narrator remains out of it for the narrative needs to be the resultant of the sources and voices found within those sources.

When we read fiction, we realize that the narrator who is not completely wary of his surroundings cannot be relied completely in his narrative content. He is accused of unreliability. On the other hand, in historiography such reservations rather license the historian with a kind of professional sanctity. Thus, all in all for the historian, this process of arranging the events of the past in a narrativized framework which is never free from his inventing and discovering the lost voices is never questioned, and that too when his authentic discovery is but a mediated and regulated consultation with the dossiers in the red, green and blue files of the archives.

Because the historical sources are both too thick (macro) and thin (micro), thus there occurs an exegetical strategy adopted by the historian, casting his material in such an order as to construct certain moving patterns of images (under his study) in which the form of the historical process is to be simulated by him. A historical narrative is thus necessarily an admixture - a mixture of adequately and inadequately explained events. It is at once a ‘representation’ that is an ‘interpretation’ - an interpretation which passes on as a ‘catachrestic explanation’ of the whole process that is eventually mirrored in the narrative. Thus, this narrative is a narrative where the historian delves in a trajectory of myriad narrative explanations – explanations around questions of mutiny, its occurrence, its impact and its end, around why Zafar was a weak subject in the hands of the British and why he was incapable of rule and
around justifications as to why the British were the only capable rulers to have ruled this nation which was devoid of all good things.

The text *The Last Mughal*, therefore becomes a historical narrative explanation of all the above cited occurrences and is less about the lost ruler – Bahadur Shah Zafar. When the first section of the book is introduced, what the reader gets to see is a picture of the fragile Zafar. It highlights the dramatic esquisse of Zafar and his fate. Throwing light on the burial of this subject who was a toy in the hands of the British rulers, Dalrymple’s history moves back in time to his incarceration and then back into the past to offer the narrative of downturn of the Mughals and the simultaneous ascent of the British, followed by mutiny and British subjects winning over all the Mughal subjects. Bahadur Shah is the titular king and it is only in name that he holds this position. Subjected and subjugated under the British affabilities at times, and at times to their antagonistic behaviour he becomes a subject who is senile in character – a subject who is not just “physically imprisoned” by the British on being suspected to side the mutineers in brutish killings (pun intended) of the whites, but a subject who was “imprisoned psychologically” much before the British took him and charged him for being the man behind the Mutiny and the killings of the English. The King was already suffering from psychological influx. The political captivity came much later.

Zafar from the start and as is evident in the archival records can be seen as a “subject” who could never take any step to cause the British any kind of displeasure. He was thus aware of his timid position as a pensioner from the British exchequer. Therefore this subject was psychologically imprisoned by his superior gentries much before his political trial took place. In the final hearing of his trial the Judge-Advocate General F.J. Harriott while accusing this subject points to him and his family members being beneficiaries of the British protection in every which manner. He points to the vulnerable condition of this subject (who was prisoner at the time of his
hearing) and says that the prisoner’s grandfather Shah Alam had not only lost his throne, but his eyes were put out and was subjected to most indignity and humiliation unless and until the British came to his rescue. He points to how the British under Lord Lake came forward as his deliverers and with all generosity rescued him of his ill fortunes and bestowed on him rank and pension, which to this day was being drawn by the traitor subject King – Bahadur Shah Zafar II.

Following is the record from the trial papers, wherein the Judge accuses Zafar of gaining from the British loyalties and in turn defying these loyalists in the longer run by igniting the mutiny and the rebellious mutineers to wage wrath against them.

Examined by Judge Advocate.

**Question.**—Can you give the Court any information as to the circumstances under which the Kings of Delhi became subjects and pensioners of the British Government in India?

**Answer.**—Shah Alam, Emperor of Delhi, after having his eyes put out and having suffered every indignity from the hands of Ghulam Kadir, fell into the hands of the Maharrattas in the year 1788. The Emperor, although vested with nominal authority over the city of Delhi, was kept in confinement more or less rigorous, until the year 1806, when General Lake having seized Aligach, marched with the British troops against Delhi. The Maharratta army drawn out at Patangpanj, six miles from Delhi, was attacked by General Lake, and utterly routed. The city and fort having been evacuated by the Maharrattas, the Emperor Shah Alam sent a message to General Lake, applying for the protection of the British authorities, and on the 14th of September, the date since rendered more memorable by the successful assault in 1857, the British troops entered Delhi; from that time the kings of Delhi have become pensioned subjects of the British Government, and have exchanged the state of rigorous confinement in which they were held by the Maharrattas, to one of more lenient restraint under the British rule. The prisoner succeeded to the titular sovereignty of Delhi in 1837. He had no power whatever beyond the precincts of his own palace; he had the power of conferring titles and dressing of honour upon his own immediate retainers, but was prohibited from exercising that power on any others. He and the heir apparent alone were exempted from the jurisdiction of the Company’s local courts, but were under the orders of the Supreme Government.

**Question.**—Was there any limit to the number of the prisoner’s armed retainers?

**Answer.**—The prisoner requested Lord Auckland to be permitted to entertain as many men in his service as he thought proper. The Governor-general, in reply, accorded permission to his entertaining as many men as he could pay out of the income allotted to him.

**Question.**—Can you state the amount of pension granted by the Government to the prisoner at the time of the outbreak?

**Answer.**—He was in receipt of a stipend of one lanka of rupees per mensis, of which 98,000 rupees were paid at Delhi, and 1,000 at Lucknow, to the members of his family there. He also was in receipt of revenue to the amount of 1½ lakhs of rupees per annum, from the Crown lands in the neighbourhood of Delhi. He also received a considerable sum from ground-rents of houses and tenements in the city of Delhi.

The prisoner declines to cross-examine.

The witness withdraws.

Fig. 4.1. Court proceedings on the Fourteenth Day of the trial where F.J Harriot, the advocate general accuses Zafar of drawing benefits from the British.

(source: archive records)
This book written by Dalrymple does not focus primarily on the historical subject who was the last Mughal ruler of Delhi but on the elite who manoeuvred the culture and presented itself as the most stable change which the contact zones in those times were in need of. Dalrymple has a polished yet diplomatic art of manipulating his vision and version of what he sees and writes. *The Last Mughal* is about the last incapable rule and ruler and the shift in the power from the hands of the incapable administrator to the capable administration. In the process of proving the same, Dalrymple tries to achieve and place an equality status to the kind of records which are found in the ‘dust of the archives’. He tries his best to picture the democratic character of the archives which itself is the brain child of the British remnants. Archives are thus painted by him in shades of a neutral tool of hidden truth that bespeaks reality about one and all from all rungs of the society- the high, the middle, the low. Dalrymple nowhere acknowledges the archives as uneven. For him, the archives are the most apt and democratic tools which ultimately help impart voice to the hidden occurings of the past. The picture which Dalrymple draws in the text too is one which depicts the archives being less about the non elite characters and more about the high rungs of the ruling times.

*The Last Mughal* thus becomes a historical narrative that emphasizes and talks about the elite classes of those times who ruled not just the historical subjects but history as well. As a result, catachresis of subject takes place in two ways here. Firstly, when the elite subject – the titular king of Delhi, Bahadur Shah is called an incapable ruler whose rule was rightfully replaced by the British power. And secondly, when elite (British and British history) dominate the archival shelves and non elite subjects are but rendered homeless in their own home country. Dust is what devours them completely!
This situation is not just limited to Dalrymple but to many histories from the past. Archives have always given shelter to the powerful, their voices, their existence and the voice of the less powerful is often manipulated and lost in the ‘ideological set apparatus’, (mine emphasis) which in this case is the archive. In the context of history and the context of record holdings in the archives the absence of the ordinary subject from the archival shelves bespeaks about the gaps in the archives, thus problematizing its otherwise ‘democratic’ character. As part of Dalrymple’s claim for original groundbreaking archival research Dalrymple tries his best to establish *The Last Mughal* as the primary truthful dissection of sources hitherto unused and unexplored. He asks in an authoritative undertone as to why till date no one attempted to use such wonderful mass of historical material.

Following is a record taken from *Miscellaneous Volume 361 of the Foreign Department (NAI)*. This is the same record from where Dalrymple had borrowed much information related to Bahadur Shah Zafar and his day to day dealings which he added to this text. It is a voluminous file which goes on to narrate every day activities of this historical subject. It is in the form of a diary that was maintained by the British to keep a record of His Majesty’s daily activities. Entitled as the *Precis of Palace Intelligence*, whatever is seen in the record file is less about the ‘last ruler’ and more about the ‘lost ruler’ who had indulged in more or less the same activities contributing less to governance, depending on the superior powers for all his decisions. This Diary on the archival shelves is all about the superior gentry. Also we cannot ignore the fact that it is penned down by a British and for the British.
Fig 4.2. Precis of Palace intelligence Record Miscellaneous volume 361, Dated 29th March, 1852

A record maintained of the daily activities of His Majesty The Last Mughal Bahadur Shah Zafar II. (Source: National Archives of India, New Delhi.)
Therefore we see that the last mughal king – Bahadur Shah Zafar indirectly ruled as a British subject and sustained feebly standing threatened by the external dominant forces.

Fig 4.3 The King Bahadur Shah Zafar II with his subjects in his court
(Source: National Museum, New Delhi)

Dalrymple’s interest in the imperial history is evident in the Introduction itself where Dalrymple writes:

No longer were Indians seen as inheritors of a body of sublime and ancient wisdom as eighteenth century luminaries such as Sir William Jones and Warren Hastings had once believed; but instead merely “poor benighted heathen”, or even “licentious pagans”, who, it was hoped, were eagerly awaiting conversion. (10)

The text then moves further to ameliorate the readers’ view of the British in India by shifting the blame for any imperial unpleasantness onto contained targets. In this manner Dalrymple succeeds in his endeavour to preserve the positive and hybrid
facets of the lost empire. Dalrymple’s treatment of the subject of history, and the
historical subject within history - the last mughal ruler – Bahadur Shah Zafar, 
highlights the rehabilitation of the reputation of the British in India. This is evident in
Dalrymple’s statements such as:

“India in the 1840’s and 1850’s was slowly filling up with pious
British Evangelicals who wanted not just to rule and administer India,
but also to redeem and improve it.” (61)

He further states that the British felt that they had nothing to learn from their subjects
but to convert them and govern them entirely. In this context he says that the British
were setting the agenda and India would be governed entirely according to their
tastes, traditions and judgments. Shashi Tharoor in *An Era of Darkness* (2016) points
out how the British saw pre-colonial Mughal era as an era lost in tastes, traditions and
judgements and how its history consisted of a linear narration of events that was
devoid of context or a factual analysis. J.S. Mill too dismissed them as being histories
drawn from fables and not from the face of the facts. Tharoor criticizes the British for
replacing all such versions. According to him they reconstructed the same adding
contextual analysis to it in a well structured ‘European’ style. He concludes by saying
that it was all done with self and selfishly driven teleological motives which in turn
served to legitimize the British rule in India.

Throwing light on the plight of this subject and how he was dependent on the British
for all his day dealings Dalrymple writes:

To enforce his right to rent from his own lands, Zafar had to make an
application to the British courts. He could not present gems from the
crown jewels even to his own family members without first informing
the Resident, and was occasionally, humiliatingly, made to ask for the
return of unauthorized gifts if the agent came to hear about them. (37)
Fig 4.4. Precis of Palace Intelligence Record, Miscellaneous Volume 361 dated 14th March 1851, pg No. 52/53

Throwing light on Zafars conduct (Source: NAI, New Delhi)
The record proceeds to detail how the agent was received by the clockmaker, and the subsequent conversation that ensued. It notes that the agent proceeded to explain the terms of the contract and the expected delivery date. The clockmaker agreed to the terms, and the agent departed, leaving the clockmaker with the task of completing the order. The record concludes with a summary of the agreement and a note on the next steps.

Saturday

The agent proceeded to explain the terms of the contract, and the clockmaker agreed to the terms. The agent left the premises, leaving the clockmaker with the task of completing the order. The record concludes with a summary of the agreement and a note on the next steps.
Thursday, 4th. His Majesty before sunrise proceeded to the head of Robt George, where his barge with good cheer drew, but Charles and the other guards having remained behind with the Majesty's footmen. His Majesty was much displeased and directed his attendants from thence. His Majesty proceeded to Harry, having been there an hour or some. He returned — but it was clear that the Boats were going to be taken to the Intention mentioned at the marriage of Mrs. George. His Majesty directed that the papers were to be sealed, that the date of the marriage and that letters were received of the king from Government. His Majesty ordered not delaying his departure to move.

Mrs. George reported that the Commandant Palace Guards assumed, per request, he would direct the soldiers of the Palace. However, the guards reported that his Majesty to the Commandant order he had not renewed so many of the Guards, but that on the news of some diversity with his son he had resolved on living in the City.

Friday, 5th. His Majesty being in the town, and after some time passed, His Majesty was in the town of George, where he was entertained by the Lord mayor and host to the town. His Majesty went to the residence of the Governor and the effect of the journey.
Records depicting the plight of Zafar where every move of his was dictated to the British and by the British (Source: NAI, New Delhi)
The above record taken from the National Archives *Precis of Palace Intelligence* Miscellaneous Volume 361, gives an account of Zafar and his pitiful condition. Flipping through the pages of this volume, it is realized that Zafar remained a pawn in the hands of the British to whom he had to inform and ask every move of his. Dalrymple attempts to write about the ‘last’ Mughal in this book. But on the contrary, his work puts forth and paints the positive picture of the British. Tutun Mukherjee in her essay titled *Colonialism, Surveillance and Memories of Travel* writes about ‘The Empire’ being an agency that denotes control and containment of ‘one’ by the all sovereign ‘other’ (society, individual or sovereign state) which is achieved as a result of usage of overt political force. She further adds that this kind of sovereignty entitles and empowers economies with the final claim over territories, possessions, culture and individuals. Similarly, Gyan Prakash who is a well known historian and critic also throws light upon the false representations of the British and their benign rule. In one of his articles entitled *Inevitable Revolutions*, he emphasizes the role of history and historiography that projected the British as the high gentry. He writes in the same article that in historiography the historian seeks to remap and redraw the lost portraits of the British and their rule.

In this historical text, the actions of the British before and during the mutiny give an opportunity to the author to downplay the master - subject relationship. By emphasizing on the macabre and gruesome picture of the mutiny and the savagery committed by the mutineers in the name of religion, Dalrymple tries to defend the ‘brutish’ actions of the British on their ‘subjects’ under rule (the mutiny sepoys, the King and the ordinary civilians). Thus on reading the text, we as readers see that much of the mutiny coverage in *The Last Mughal* is less about the Indian subjects. It is manoeuvred and presented from the standpoint of the British solely. In the text, the
dramatic rehearsal of violence inflicted (in Indian killings later) by the British and its forces on the Indian soil in 1857 functions as a ‘cathartic penance’.

The last mughal’s chronicle of suffering and violence is a gory and sickening episode in the historical past. Dalrymple’s deft narrative prowess which he is blessed with makes the reader witness the British gentry as the benevolent force to have ever ruled the Indian soil. With his paint brush painting bright the flamboyant characters like Thomas Metcalfe and Sir David Ochterlony, Dalrymple reiterates:

It was certainly true that the British community in Delhi were an eccentric lot, even by the standards of Victorian expats. (105)

The British Residents in Delhi from 1851, Sir Thomas Theophilus Metcalfe, is described as keeping a friendly but nonetheless firm eye on Zafar’s daily life. Metcalfe closely observed all the actions of Zafar – who was influencing him and who not. He writes:

Metcalfe was at a loss how to react, and blamed what he saw as the increasingly baleful influence of Zinat Mahal. He wrote:

Hitherto when alone with HM I have always found him most plausible and rational, but he has of late surrendered himself so completely to the guidance of his favourite wife, the Nawab Zinat Mahal, and her confidential advisor, the Chief Eunuch Mehbub Ali Khan, [that he] is induced to commit many unreasonable acts. (48)

The master-subject relationship is also depicted in the relation which Zinat Mehal, the chief begum of the subject king had shared with her husband. Zinat, the favourite Begum of the King had persuaded Zafar to choose her son Mirza Zawan...
Bakt as the heir to the throne. She had gone to extremes to achieve this end. She had turned against her own husband by transforming her role into an informer of the British. To fulfill her selfish desires, she even wrote letters to the British to nominate her son as the heir. The record consultations in Delhi resulted in me finding one such record where Zafar is less of master in this master subject relationship. The Fort William Series dated 29th August 1856 includes one such letter from S.Frazer Esquire, The Agent Lt. Governor NWP, New Delhi to A. B. Thornhill Esquire, Officiating Secretary to Govt NWP Agra. This letter is dated 14th July 1856. It’s a letter wherein the incapability’s of the last mughal ruler is highlighted. It reads as:

The surviving sons of the (Govt) King, have no special marks of nobility, or peculiar recommendations, calculated to attract the sympathy of the native population; and adverting to the advanced age of H.M, I view the present reference as simply a last effort on the part of the favourite Begum to secure for her son the long desired post of Honour in the family.(Fort William Series dated 29th August 1856 , NAI)

The book presents a picture of the helpless state of Zafar- the historical subject who was not only ruled by his chief wife’s decisions but was rendered impotent as he was devoid of any self governance. Writes Dalrymple :

As it gradually became clear, however, that nothing was going to change the British position, Zafar sank increasingly into impotent gloom, as he often did when frustrated. He announced that if his wishes were to be so blatantly ignored, he desired to abdicate and go on the Hajj. (48)
He wrote to Metcalfe in this connection:

It is to be regretted that my wishes do not meet the sanction of government and I feel greatly distressed on this account. I therefore feel anxious that I should no more prove troublesome to the government and go on a pilgrimage to Mecca and pass the few remaining years of my life there. Because I see that I have lost this world, [but] I may not lose the other also, and I find myself unable in my old age to suffer grief. (48)

Here in these lines the reader is made to confront with the plight of ‘this subject’ and how he confided all his interests in the ‘institution of the rule’ that was to take over the Mughal era.

The very subtitle of the first chapter is *A Chessboard King*. Witnessing the plight of the King in the course of the chapter, it becomes clear why it is called *A Chessboard King* – Zafar is just the titular ruler who is being protected and protracted by the British. Thus we see that Zafar’s political position is quite weak just as is the case in the game of chess where the King is the King in name (sans his sovereigny). Likewise Zafar is completely dependent for all his ‘securities’ either on the British or on his subjects (the sepoys) whom he thinks will inevitably conquer his superior rulers – the British. This Dalrymple calls an unrealistic optimism of this subject ruler. He writes:

By early august, he had retreated into writing poetry, with verses that, like his moods, swung from gloom to unrealistic optimism. (298)

He further supports his calling Zafar a subject ruler in the hands of the ruling British. According to him, Zafar is an “unreal optimist” who felt that the sepoys will fight for
his liberation. Dalrymple indirectly with a tinge of sarcasm mocks Zafar for relying on all such securities. To prove his point he quotes one of Zafar’s poetical utterances where Zafar seems to write back to the Empire:

\[ O \text{ Zafar, we are going to take London shortly.} \]
\[ It \text{ is not far. (298)} \]

Contrarily, the table is turned and as is evident in the above picture we see a weak and wretched man Zafar looking for his liberation and for his liberators (subjects whose actions resulted in his being taken in British custody as a “prisoner king”). This picture serves to draw a comparison with a previous picture where Zafar is in bright colours, and is ruling his subjects with authority. In this black and white photo we see a feeble Zafar, who has lost all hues of authority and in turn becomes ‘a subject’ of the ruled authority (who in the picture is represented by the British). Elleke Boehmer in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (2005) writes that whenever the colonizers established their supremacy in the form of settlements around, they
proclaimed the beginning of a new history. As a result of this approach, the other histories lost their significance and became non-existent (Boehmer 24).

This kind of importance assigned to the British residents is evident in the pages of not just archival history or mainstream history but also in Dalrymple’s history. Sir Thomas Metcalfe is presented as a slight, delicate, bookish figure with an alert, intelligent expression, bald pate and bright blue eyes. Dalrymple gives this character quite importance and goes on to write and acquaint the reader with this character’s idiosyncratic ways. He writes:

Certainly he was a notably fastidious man, with feelings so refined that he could not bear to see woman eat cheese. Moreover he believed that if the fair sex insisted on eating the oranges or mangoes, they should at least do so in the privacy of their own bathrooms. (49)

Dalrymple’s descriptions of Metcalfe’s idiosyncratic views on the conduct of women implies an outdated approach to governance. Also Dalrymple tells us that Thomas Metcalf when got widowed lived all alone and arranged that his London tailors, Pulford of St. James’s, should regularly send out to Delhi a chest of sober but fashionable English clothes. Here Dalrymple’s affection and tolerance for conservatism is evident, and forms another in a series of representational links between Dalrymple and his British historical subjects. Sigmund Freud in Civilization and Its Discontents (1961) elaborates that men’s abilities in devising control mechanisms and parameters of segregation, is owing to his impulse for cruelty and for achieving a mastery over everything around (Freud 8).

Throwing light on Metcalfe’s behaviour as that of fastidious idiosyncratic British Resident of that time, Dalrymple balances the transculturation aspect here
showing one British Resident as who never went on to adopt Indian dressing of pagri or pyjama being compared to another whose one benevolent gesture acted like a saving grace for the Indian state by taking to himself thirteen ‘Indian wives’ in marriage - the character of Sir David Ochterlony. William Dalrymple has been so enamoured by this character that he is found on the pages of all the three texts which are a part of this thesis project. Here Dalrymple writes:

...Sir David Ochterlony every evening was said to take his Indian Wives on a promenade around the walls of the Red Fort, each on the back of her own elephant. (49)

Thus, we see that in the first chapter of the book the writer goes on to write about the British Residents and their eccentricities. It leaves the reader with a doubt of whether the chapter is about ‘the chequered King’ Bahadur Shah Zafar or the indirect chessboard rulers – The British. The second chapter titled Believers and Infidels too reflects how the Evangelicals came forward to convert the Indian subjects to Christianity. Dalrymple with his manipulative skills writes in the concluding lines:

The histories of Islamic fundamentalism and European Imperialism have very often been closely and dangerously interwined. In a curious but very concrete way, the fundamentalists of both faiths have needed each other to reinforce each other’s prejudices and hatreds. The venom of the one provides the lifeblood of the other. (84)

Here too the reader is left bewildered as to how the title of the chapter stands justified- who the ‘believers’ are and who are ‘the infidels’? Are the Indians – both Hindu and Muslims believers for not leaving their faith and converting to Christianity, or are they the infidels who in the name of religion committed the gruesome killings
of the British women and children. Or is it the believers of the English Protestantism who in the name of religion wanted to spread the gargantuan network of the Empire? These pertinent questions in the mind of the reader make the reader see how history and historiography can be catachrestic in many ways. What makes the infidels pose as the innocent believers here is the possession of power. Michael Foucault in his Discipline and Punish: The Birth Of the Prison (1979) writes in this connection, that power is a powerful ploy of technology throughout the social body. It is the functioning of the rituals of this power in hand that set up and establishes non-egalitarian asymmetrical relationships (Foucault 24)

White Mughals is shown as a text which painted hybrid picture of the British crossing over all the boundaries of cultural and social set up. The Last Mughal on the other hand becomes a chronicle that reflects the cultural and religious facets of the unrest, showing lack of cultural understanding being the primary cause of mutiny and unrest between the British and the Indians. But what goes parallel in the two texts is that both underline the British as the superior gentry culturally more cultured, and administratively more technical in their approach. What we as readers see in The Last Mughal is a farrago of White Mughals and the historian’s take on the British (on the Indian soil) . Dalrymple’s picturization of violence and its aftermath puts in front of the reader and critical analyst the picture of a belated white man figure who is unafraid to come across any macabre discoveries he makes on the archival shelves. It is because of this attitude of Dalrymple towards violence which has enabled him to colour the British as the attractive forces to have plundered and reinvigorate this falling Nation. This biased approach of Dalrymple leads to catachresis (the projection of events not as they were).
Homi K. Bhabha notices that the predominant strategic function of the colonial discourse has always been one that strives hard to create power laden spaces; spaces for the colonized through the production of knowledge. It is like a continuous mechanism of surveillance and creation of stereotypes. Such strategic implementation, he says, helped the colonizer to further culturally and politically colonize and legitimize his superior authority over the inferior other. He observes in his *Location of Culture* (2004) that with power play in colonial discourse what happens is consolidation and marking out the body of the ‘subject nation’. (Bhabha 101) This play directs, appropriates and dominates the entire sphere of its activities and ultimately results in a visible and knowable ‘othering; of the subject nation and the subject inhabitants. Sumit Chakrabarti in his article *Moving Beyond Edward Said: Homi Bhabha And the Problem of The Postcolonial Representation* (2012) writes that this consistent ‘othering’ of the colonized subject is used to situate the West in a position of binary superiority. He concludes by saying that Bhaba’s slow but sure movement towards a psychological critique of imperial politics is perhaps a ploy to address this catachrestic flaw (Chakrabarti 8).

Walter Benjamin in his *Illuminations* (1969) writes that the nature of this sadness stands out more clearly if one asks with whom the adherents of historicism actually empathize. The answer is inevitable: with the powerful victor. And all rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them. Hence, empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers. Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of power play. And just as such a document is not free from power and its hegemonic strains; it at once taints the manner in which it was/is transmitted over time from one owner to another.
As a result of this power and its role in the ideological positioning of the powerful, historical evidential source banks carry within their ambit history that is macro in form and spirit devoid of a micro character (macro details overlap the micro details). What occurs on the micro level never reaches the shelf of the archives in its microform but in the macro form. Zafar’s political, social or economically beleaguered position as a British subject finds place on the archival shelves but his emotional or personal predicament goes missing from the pages of history and likewise from the pages of archives. In the pages of the archives too the powerful victor dominates and the powerless subject seems to lie in a prostrate position. What little we can find is the poetry of Zafar, which in a way depicts his personal temperament in the last and lost days of his rule. To Dalrymple, his ghazals are full of imagery of the caged bird who is longing to be freed from the bars of his prison and his prison hood.

_I want to shatter the bars of my cage,_

_With the flutterings of my wings._

_But like a caged bird in a painting,_

_There is no possibility of being free._

_Morning breeze, tell the garden_

_That Spring and Autumn for me are alike._

_How should I know,_

_When one comes, and the other goes? (38)_
Zafar indirectly expresses his chequered subject position through such lines of his poetry as:

*Whoever enters this gloomy palace,
Remains a prisoner for life in European captivity.* (38)

The king’s desire in the above lines is one of escape, of freedom from the British rule. The daily doings of the King are recorded in the archival records and so is the plight of the King as a politically subjugated entity. These Ghazals when decoded by the main stream historians’ or the popular historians’ are King’s artistic expressions – an aesthetic side of the King’s creative imagination. At no point in history one tries to see the emotional and the psychological effect of Zafar’s environment on him (which is meted out to him from his rulers or from the ones he is ruling as a titular sovereign). This goes missing from the archives and from the very act of the historian’s interpretation and re-interpretation of all such macro material which should otherwise be studied in its microform. This may result in “catachrestic presentation” of such material in the archives and in turn in “catachrestic representation” in the historian’s history.

Dalrymple in his writing about the Last Mughal in *The Last Mughal* with his art of manipulation balances history and his-story both. He presents a precarious position of the King who as a British subject is at the mercy of the British, the precarious position of the sepoy mutineers who in the name of mutiny blames British for their wrong doings and commits savagery over any white who happens to cross their paths. Also the precarious position of the British is presented, who after having witnessed so much bloodshed of their white brethrens are perturbed and intrigued and are bent on taking revenge, which from a personal and emotional standpoint of
the British is justified after having lost so much. The precarious position of King in
front of his own subjects - the mutiny soldiers is also highlighted in the pages of the
text. This position out of all is the most precarious of all, as it is this state of the King
that leads him to his most precarious position in the end – one of a ‘prisoner king’
under trial and under exile.

Dalrymple paints the picture of the King with all empathy and sympathy as a
suffering subject in the hands of his rulers. But wherever Dalrymple strikes a point or
two with his pen of sarcasm, one is made to doubt him and his intentions. It’s evident
throughout the text that Dalrymple in writing this text is not glorifying the Mughal
rule and its last representative but he is gory-fying the plight of the lost ruler and his
lost rule. In one of the chapters entitled *The Sword of The Lord Of Fury* Dalrymple
concludes Zafar’s precarious state after the fury filled mutineers have committed
much bloodshed in the name of rebellion and in the name of the King- their Lord. He
writes:

> By combing the Company’s own Indian armies with the still potent
mystique of the Mughals, Zafar’s hesitant acceptance of the nominal
leadership of the revolt in due course turned it from a simple army
mutiny- albeit one supported by an incoherent eruption of murder and
looting by Delhi’s civilians- into the single most serious armed
challenge any Western empire would face, anywhere in the world, in
the entire course of the Nineteenth century. (192)

With a penchant for convincing his readership abroad or in his own home
country through such lines as above, one is made to derive two conclusions. Firstly,
words like eruption of murder, looting by Delhi civilians makes his readers in India
happy for they empathize with the mutineers for committing heinous acts of crime
and bloodshed in the name of religion (the cartridges which they used defiled their
religion). Secondly, the western world is shown as magnanimous powers which till
date have never been challenged. It is ironical that Zafar, the lord of the mutineers in
all this picture of fury is left without a sword. This becomes evident in the concluding
lines where Dalrymple says:

Yet for Zafar the more immediate question was whether, for all this, he
had merely exchanged one set of masters for another. (192)

Here the subject position of the King is indirectly pictured by the historian/writer.

William Dalrymple’s chapter on the trial of the king which the King had to
face in his last days of exile is entitled The City of The Dead. He writes:

By the end of January 1858, when all the noblemen of his durbar had
been tried and hanged, it was the turn of Zafar himself to face the trial.

(431)

Dalrymple goes on to elucidate, how the British went onto making
preparations for this trial, which according to them was to be historic in character. He
goes on to brag about how the British brought in translators’ from all corners of the
subcontinent, and how with the help of digging up the great stash of paperwork in
different archival remains they retrieved data. Having decoded the data retrieved by
them, they then decided upon the King’s fate that he was to be charged with grievous
charges of having ignited rebellion, committing treason and murdering innocent
people. He was not to be tried in his relation and his allegiance as a British subject by
a Military Commission. The following record refers to a list of charges which were
put up against the prisoner king.
RETURN to an Address of the Honourable The House of Commons, dated 17 June 1859—fol.

"COPY of a LETTER of the Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, forwarding to the Governor General of India the PROCEEDINGS on the TRIAL of the KING OF DELHI."

India Office, 29 June 1859.

J. W. KAYE,
Secretary in the Political and Secret Departments.

No. 50.

(Political.)

From R. Temple, Esq., Secretary to Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, to G. F. Edmeston, Esq., Secretary to Government of India with the Governor General.

Lahore, 29 April 1858.

Sir,

I am now directed to forward, for submission to the Right Honourable the Governor General, the proceedings* and papers in the trial of Moulumud Bahadar Shah, ex-King of Delhi. As a supplement to the above, I am also to transmit translation of evidence of Ahsan ollah Khan, late confidential physician of the ex-King, taken before the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner. It will be in the recollection of His Lordship the physician's life was guaranteed on the condition of his answering satisfactorily such questions as might be put to him.

2. The trial was commenced on the 27th January 1858, and was concluded on the 9th March 1858. The proceedings are very voluminous, and have only recently been received from the General commanding Meerut division. The evidence relates not only to the specific charges on which the prisoner was arraigned, but also to the origin and character of the outbreak; and it lays bare the policy of the King's Government and the internal economy of the rebel army during the siege of Delhi. On the whole, it is deeply interesting and instructive, whether viewed practically, politically, or historically.

3. In brief terms, it may be said that the documentary evidence comprises the system in which the General Government was conducted; the raising of loans; military arrangements; the communications with foreign powers and neighbouring chiefs; the passages in the native newspapers relating to the war between the English and the Persians. There are also, of course, many papers of a miscellaneous character. The oral evidence describes the occurrences of the outbreak, and the sad circumstances connected with the massacre of the Christians in the palace; it also throws some light on the origin of the mutiny and the rebellion. The general effect of the evidence, documentary and oral, is to present to the mind a wonderfully vivid picture of all that happened at Delhi during the eventful months between the 12th May and 20th September 1857.

4. The papers referring to the system of the King's Government exhibit in a remarkable manner the active personal share which the King himself took in the conduct of affairs. However wrongly he had assumed his position, it must be admitted that his orders were not unworthy of the situation. He did make some effort to preserve order in the city, to repress rapine and murder in the villages,
On a close observation of the trial, we see that the trial which is presented to the reader is of partisan character. Dalrymple through Zafar's victimization in the hands of the British presents his sympathetic attitude towards the lost and last subject of the British and of History. The trial that took place and which out rightly had
dismissed the prisoners self defence in front of the Chief Justice highlights the 'mock justice' which the king as a prisoner was meted out. What is of catachrestic character here is the trial that occurs in the pages of historical evidence, and the ignorance on the part of the writer/historians personal approach in writing history with a partisan bent.

The following record is a copy of the trial of Bahadur Shah Zafar. It refers to the final day of the hearing of the accusations against the prisoner king and the final decision given by the deputy Justice Advocate General, Government Prosecutor Major F.J. Harriott.

The arguments in reference to a Mahomedan conspiracy are now closed. I do not mean that many others might not be deduced from the proceedings before us, for I have selected only those that appeared to me the most prominent. I would wish, however, before sitting down, to quote one question and answer from Captain Martin's evidence: "Did you ever hear any of the sepoys speak complainingly of the efforts of English missionaries to convert natives to Christianity?" Answer.—"No, never in my life, I don't think they cared one bit about it." I believe there is no officer whose duties have given him much experience of the sepoy's character or any insight into his feelings and prejudices, but will readily confirm the correctness of this opinion. There is no dread of an open avowed missionary in India. It is not the rightful conversion to Christianity that either sepoys or natives are alarmed at. If it be done by the efforts of persuasion, of teaching, or of example,—the only means by which it can be done,—it offends no caste prejudice, excites no fanatical opposition. A candid undisguised endeavour to gain followers to Christ, has never, that I am aware of, been viewed with the slightest sign of disapprobation by any portion of the natives, and were it more constantly before their eyes, who can doubt that it would remove this present dark and delusory error that Christianity is itself a caste, and its only distinguishing tenet the privilege of eating everything. If this degrading idea were removed, the chief fear of the Hindus would vanish with it. Let them see that it is impossible to make converts to Christianity by force, and you deprive the seditions of their most potent weapon of mischief. Christianity, when seen in its own pure light, has no terrors for the natives. It is only when kept in the shade, that its name can be perverted to an instrument of evil. But I may, if I proceed further, be teaching on questions of State policy. I beg then to tender my thanks to the Court for the patient hearing they have given me, and to Mr. Murphy, the interpreter, for the able assistance he has, in that capacity, afforded me in this and the other State trials. His very high attainments as an oriental scholar have been most conspicuous. In the fluency of oral and written examinations; in the quick readiness with which all kinds of papers, in different hands, have been deciphered and read; and in the correctness and spirit of the written translations of documents of no ordinary difficulty, his complete knowledge both of Urdu and Persian has been thoroughly attested. The notes appended to many of these papers are valuable in themselves, and speak more forcibly than I can do of Mr. Murphy's very high proficiency as an interpreter. I should be wanting, both to him and myself, if I did not thus record my obligations to him.

Delhi, 9 March 1858.

F. J. Harriott, Major,
Deputy Justice Advocate General, and
Government Prosecutor.

The Court is closed to consider its finding.
Fig 4.8. The Final Judgement on the last day of Zafar’s trial that declared him guilty of all charges preferred against him. (source: archival records)

Claude Levi Strauss argues in relation to historical factcity. He opines that there occurs in historical factcity a two-fold antimony. Therefore, historical accounts are inevitably and essentially interpretative in character he says. According to Strauss, any historical episode in a revolution or a war can be resolved into a multitude of individual psychic moments. These in turn then can be ‘translated’. Thus Levi-Strauss concludes, historical facts are not ‘given’ to the historian in any frame of form, but they are rather ‘constituted’ by the historian himself as per his mindset. He further attributes that if historical facts are “constituted” rather than “given”, so they might as well be “selectively chosen and picked” accordingly in order to suit one’s selective narrative purposes. Therefore originally constituted as “data” by the historian, such historical facts should be constituted a second time as elements of a verbal structure which is always written for a specific purpose. This means that, in Strauss’s view, “History” is never simply his-story, but always “history-for”, history written in the interest of some personal aims and vision- history that can be largely catachrestic in form and spirit.
The above conception bears a striking resemblance to those of Northrop Frye and R.G. Collingwood. Both these thinkers analyze the element of “construct” in historical representation. In Frye’s views the poet works “deductively” from an apprehension of the pattern that he intends to impose upon his ‘subject of operation’, the historian on the other hand works towards the unifying form of his narrative, after he has finished his “research” with his source bank. Following the contents of the research process, history thus becomes a resultant of emplotments leading to a ‘set’ sequence of events. But what is important in this context is that, in the very act of construction and of emplotment one needs to avoid the act of catachresis following which if not true history but an unbiased history will reach the general readership.

Collingwood in his analysis of historical interpretation and in his seminal work on history, The Idea of History (1994) goes on to discuss about the level to which historians’ go beyond what their authorities tell them about all that occurred in the past. Following this Collingwood further postulated a two-fold interpretative strategy: The Critical and The Constructive. By ‘criticism’ of the documents, the historian establishes and maps out a rough outline of his narrative body. But this can be loose criticism as the documents are taken by the historian/writer at their face value. By using the term “constructive strategy”, Collingwood points to the construction and the culling out of inferences from what the historian finds in his hand on the shelf of the archives or elsewhere as evidence. This kind of constructive culling out he says leads to the emplotment of the narrative structure in a number of different ways owing to the selective workings of the constructive imagination of the historian.

Therefore in history one element in the historians’ analytical interpretation of the events depends upon the selective choice of his evidential sources which he banks on for writing history and his- story both. As has been concluded by many a critics
like Frye and Collingwood, the historian thus employing this technique chooses to transform a chronicle of events into a “history” which is then comprehended by its readers as a “story of a particular kind”—events are thus narrativized and fractionalized facts are thus semi fictionalized and given a historical framework. All such representations and interpretations of the evidence can thus be of catachrestic order as a result of biases that act as their driving force.

*The Last Mughal* as a text, too presents a detailed emplotted narrative. It is a product of Dalrymple’s extensive research, his diving hard into the findings of his sources which according to him is the resultant of careful pouring over all such primary tools, while trying his best to patch it together to write about a history subject (mutiny) along with a historical one (Zafar). The problem with such an approach is that, it would have worked in a more effective and non catachrestic order had it not been driven by cultural and personal likes and dislikes. Because of the biases, the flow of the narrative gets marred by the historian’s “fractured patchwork”. A patchwork that is left for the passive reader to ingest (freud’s term). These ingestion images should not be consumed by the reader as they come to him/her. The need of hour then is to place the subject of enquiry under a critical observatory and to analyze it with the critical and deconstructive tools which critical theory provides us with. In the body of the text we see that there is undue importance attributed to the aspects which may distract the reader from the real subject of history. As a result one pertinent question that arises in the mind of the analyst and the reader is whether this text is about Zafar and the mutiny or whether it is about the British and their answer to the subject of their rule (Zafar and mutineers)

Dalrymple’s histories are deliberately inclined towards Empire and their lost glorious rule. At the end of *The Last Mughal* this representation shifts dramatically and Dalrymple skilfully absolves the British of their sins and justifies their control over this land. He writes emphatically:
If Hindustan was to lose the Mughals, its rulers of nearly three hundred years’ standing, it would at least now be ruled by a properly constituted colonial government rather than a rapacious multinational acting at least partly in the interest of its shareholders. (456)

This text and its writer do not attempt to make himself realize and make his roots realize how brutish they had been. Mutiny itself screams about the violence, wrath and inhumanity shown by the British to their subjects. The British loom large over the body of the text. This leaves the narrative as a biased representation wherein the native is placed on the fringes; incapable of any self-rule, self-identity and any self-worth. At the end, the King is held in captivity with most of his children murdered. The life of this subject held in British custody had been a life of trials and tribulations. He was humiliated, put on trial on account of being the evil mastermind behind mutiny- a pure accusation only to justify and glorify the British way of governance. The old and senile subject was not rendered a logical conclusion. The verdict was already framed by the judge. It was a complete irrational and concocted verdict. It was flawed in every sense of the word as the judge had accused Zafar for the uprising, for the massacre committed in the garb of his islamophobic obsessions. On reading the trial one realizes that it was a purely concocted accusation leading to a catachrestic judgement. And just like it was concocted, irrational and flawed, so are the sources from where such details of past are driven (archives). The power of judgement was with the Judge. In similar manner the power of judgement of which sources are to be placed where, was also in the hands of the powerful structures dominated by power who decided the course of what goes into the red file and what not. Looking at the trial details we witness that in the court proceedings and hearings too, the Indian witnesses are given less weight age and more importance is assigned to the British witnesses.
Archives thus exist as half bodies of truth narrating half stories. It exists as dust, as ruins of the forgotten remains of the past. What we hear and see is patchy, hazy and dusty as it has much which is and lies hidden from the eye of the observer. There is much to it which may not and cannot be seen or be discovered altogether. It is gone. It is dead remains which lay as cold bodies, just like the dark and forgotten remains of Zafar Mahal and the history around it which stands in a distorted and dilapidated form in the Capital.

Fig. 4.9. List of Charges against Zafar. (source: archival records)
Fig 4.10. The hathi or The Elephant gate entrance to the ruins of the mahal which was one of the last to be constructed by the Mughals: *The Zafar Mahal.* (source: Google)

Fig 4.11. Inside the remains of Zafar Mahal (source: Google)
Fig 4.12. The Portico of the Zafar Mahal (source: Google)

Fig 4.13. The Open area in the Mahal (source: Google)
To conclude, History thus remains a camouflaged picture and representation of the past and so does the sources from the archives. At once on visiting the remains of the past it seems they want to speak to us about the past, about the dead, about incomplete stories. But all that we are left with is silence which is buried deep in history, historical monuments and records surrounding them. The structure of the archives is like a stupa of all such remains. Some relics do find order some not, some are given form and structure some not. And in writing of the subject from the ruins of the past, or from the dust in the archives the picture the reader gets is one of catachresis, of distortion, of the last subject of history (somebody like Zafar) and of the lost subject in history (the happenings of the past).