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Peripheral Citizens: “colonial Christians,” Caste, and the Politics of Minoritization in Postcolonial Literature

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PERIPHERAL CITIZENS: “COLONIAL CHRISTIANS,” CASTE, AND THE POLITICS OF
MINORITIZATION IN POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

by

Suchismita Banerjee

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

PERIPHERAL CITIZENS: “COLONIAL CHRISTIANS,” CASTE, AND THE POLITICS OF MINORITIZATION IN POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

by

Suchismita Banerjee

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2023
Under the Supervision of Dr. Kumkum Sangari

My dissertation looks at the politics of minoritization of Christian communities in post-independent India. I use the term “colonial Christians” as a descriptive category to analyze the three Christian groups (Anglo-Indians or Eurasians, poor domiciled Europeans employed by the Raj, and lower caste Christian converts) that were formed in the colonial period either by interracial mixing between the British and South-Asians or due to Christian missionary conversion. The communities are not united simply by the virtue of their faith. The internalized hierarchy based on class, gender, caste, skin color, European lineage, and access to the English language creates a crucial axis of minoritization for the underprivileged members of the group. Colonial policies and their legacies in the postcolonial nations, the internalized racism, classism, and sexism that defined colonial bureaucracy, and later, absorbed into the scaffolds of the Catholic and Protestant Churches in India provide a postcolonial lens to analyze the multiple processes of marginalization of colonial Christians in post-independent India. Overall, the dissertation is interested to explore the duality of this group, being Indian and Christian, and how this hyphenation is played out in postcolonial literature published after India’s independence in 1947. The politics of minoritization serves as a theoretical framework to analyze how members

of colonial Christian groups evaluate multiple histories and various determinants to contextualize their own marginalization. The contested relationship among Christian characters, the awareness of ambiguous colonial policies, and the resultant internal hierarchization based on race, ethnic origin, class, and skin color are explored in the postcolonial texts to show the various axes of minoritization of the fictional characters. This dissertation will look at different genres of literature: short stories, memoirs, post-1947 Raj novels, and Dalit writings to complicate the understanding of minoritization by exploring questions on citizenship, national belonging, dislocation, and marginalization that this heterogeneous minority group faces in independent India.

To explore the complex orchestration of minority politics in postcolonial fiction, the dissertation will look at only three Christian groups (not the whole community) that have a complicated entry into the project of nation building after India's independence. Though there is rich scholarship on each of the three Christian groups focusing mostly on hybridity and marginalization, I believe the interconnectedness, as well as the tensions and contradictions among and between the groups, have not received enough attention, particularly in the discipline of literary criticism. This dissertation addresses the gap in scholarship to interrogate the narrative space of postcolonial fiction.

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To
My Late Parents

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INTRODUCTION

"In every hotel room she found the same massive Bible on the bedside table. How much had the Bible helped the world she wondered" (Hyder 61).

The above quote comes from Qurratulain Hyder's short fiction, "The Story of Catherine Bolton," published in the collection titled, *The Street Singers of Lucknow and Other Stories*. The narrator's skepticism revealed in the quote exemplifies Hyder's bitterness about organized religion in post-independent India. The story brings together all the three groups of colonial Christians I analyze in this dissertation: an Anglo-Indian young woman, Catherine, born out of wedlock to a low caste, converted Christian mother, Martha, and a poor British soldier, Arthur Bolton. Catherine was raised by Celia Richmond, a working-class, domiciled European, unmarried lady who owned a residential inn at the hill station in Mussoorie. The relationship between these three Christian characters is complex, and there is no solidarity based on their common religious faith. The confined situation for Catherine—her partial European ancestry and her white skin and blue eyes are not enough to wipe out the untouchable or Dalit label from her identity. Martha, even though she is born into a converted Christian family, suffers multiple levels of marginalization based on racial prejudice, caste hierarchy, and patriarchal desire. Arthur's and Celia's marginalization is mostly due to their lack of family wealth and social class. But the factors that marginalize Catherine put her in an impossible bind. She cannot see herself as a fully accommodated citizen in postcolonial India. For her, the conflation of race, caste, class, and gender put her in a multiple marginalized position.

The internal triangulations of these three Christian groups we see in Hyder's story help to conceptualize the politics of minoritization that forms the theoretical framework of this dissertation. The different determinants of minoritization of this group are broadly dependent

upon deferential and discriminatory colonial policies, the entrenched caste system and caste hierarchy that forms the fabric of South Asian social structure, and the ineffectual and sometimes hostile state legislation of post-independent India. The term "colonial Christians" is used as a descriptive term to bond together three diverse Christian communities that were formed during British colonialization. It is also used as an analytical framework to conceptualize the marginalization politics that construct this heterogenous group as impossible citizens of secular India.

Christians in colonial India comprised several groups¹. First were the European British subjects who were not domiciled in India but worked for the East India Company and, after its abolition, were direct employees of the Crown. The second group constituted domiciled Europeans who were often designated as "Natives of India" and legally not considered Europeans because of their domiciled status. The third, Anglo-Indians or Eurasians, were a mixed racial group formed out of an alliance between European men and native women and often included within the category of Domiciled European for legal purposes. The next group was Christian missionaries and social reformers who worked either in collaboration or opposition with the Raj. Finally, the group comprised of native Christians, often lower caste Dalits, who were converted by European missionaries to different Christian sects (Mizutani 96). My dissertation will focus on Anglo-Indians, domiciled Europeans, particularly the subaltern class of poor whites, and lower caste Christian converts.

Complex History of Christianity in India

Christianity has a long tradition in India. The first Christian community was established in 52 A.D. by Syrian or Thomas Christians. Robert Eric Frykenberg notes in his article,

¹ In my work, I'm not looking at pre-colonial Christian groups like Syrian Christians who migrated to the south of India following their persecution under the Byzantine Empire in 431 B.C.

"Christians in India: An Historical Overview of Their Complex Origins," that the arrival of Christian refugees, settlers, and traders in the western part of India happened before and after the rise of Islam and their influence is well documented by certified deeds confirming endowments, gifts, and privileges that were granted to them by local kings. European Christians came to India in 1498. Coming in the wake of Vasco da Gama's arrival, this group of Portuguese Christians were Roman Catholics. Historical documents confirm the existence of a strong Christian presence along the Southern shores. They show that where Portuguese rule became established, such as in places like Goa, Daman, Diu, and Mumbai, European clerics were engaged in aggressive, disruptive, and destructive actions. However, these aggressive proselytizing actions were met with steady resistance from indigenous institutions. While several monastic orders became involved in missionary activities, some of the most important carriers of Catholic influence beyond coastal enclaves were Jesuits. According to monastic records, the most famous mass conversion that occurred in the coastal region was among the fishing communities of *Paravars* and *Mukkuvars*. For the *Paravas*, this event was more of a political strategy. When this seafaring community, which was engaged in fishing, pearl diving, trading, and piracy, felt threatened by Arab sea power and the land power of the *Nayaka* community, they turned to the Portuguese for protection and adopted the Christian faith in order to strengthen bonds of mutual obligation. At this point, however, the *Paravas* were Christian only in name. They knew next to nothing about their new faith until Francis Xavier landed at the Fisher coast. These shoreline Christian communities retained their religious autonomy. Their religion, while Christian, remained conspicuously Hindu. Ceremonials, rituals, and social structures reflected their caste influence. They celebrated Christian festivals like those of Hindus; for example, at the festival of the golden car each year, thousands of people dragged the huge, wheeled vehicle bearing the

Virgin Mary on its annual *Rath yatra* through the streets of Tuticorin, doing so to the beating of drums, chanting of hymns, prayers, and festooning of garlands (44).

By 1706 German Evangelical missionaries began to arrive in India, and missionary activities, conversions, and cultural interactions between the native population and European missionaries increased. Evangelical and Catholic institutions spread widely, and by the beginning of the twentieth century, they reached the remotest tribal villages of the coastal area. By the nineteenth century, Christian communities were increasingly overshadowed by the military and administrative presence of British imperialism. Hostility towards missionaries was a common attitude, and conversion was discouraged on the grounds of antagonizing the native population. The British Raj needed a huge number of people to join the army, and they predominantly came from high caste Hindu families who owned lands in their villages. The civil servants also came from upper caste families. Since the structural reality of the Raj was dependent on Hindu and Muslim communities, the colonial bureaucrats did not want to shift the paradigm by converting people to Christianity. The colonial officials were careful not to interfere in private religious matters, and caution was taken not to anger the Hindu and Muslim subjects. It was only after the Charter Act of 1813 was passed that foreign missionaries were allowed in large numbers in British India. It was after many generations of missionary teachers and physicians, both male and female, had come to India in increasing numbers and after missionary schools, colleges, and hospitals had proliferated across India that official colonial attitudes towards religious missionaries began to soften (59).

The historical discussion of the long trajectory of Christianity in India is an important context for this dissertation because it challenges the idea that Christianity was something foreign that was imposed upon the minds and bodies of an unassuming native population. It also

provides the historical and political context of colonial Christians. The complex history of conversion also creates a counternarrative to the claim that Christianity was popular only among the Dalits or lower castes and that Dalit conversion only took place to mark an exit to caste oppression. A historical study of conversion will reveal that early conversions, especially in the Bengal province, took place among upper caste, English-educated Bengali men who converted to revolt against their family's Hindu orthodoxy and escape from arranged marriages. Kali Charan Banurji, a wealthy, upper caste lawyer and a prominent Indian nationalist, was the founder and leader of the Christo Samaj (Society for the believers of Christ) that came into being in Calcutta in 1887 (Michael 52).

The continued indigenization of Christianity and the simultaneous presence of both Christian and Hindu ritualistic practices in Church service also challenge the idea that conversion means a clean swipe out of one's religion of birth. In his sociological study, "Dalit Encounter with Christianity: Change and Continuity," S.M. Michael observes that upper caste Hindus who converted to Christianity retained their caste of origin within the Church. It is not uncommon for high caste Christians to append their caste suffix to their names. Such caste names are read in the Church during marriage ceremonies, funerals, and other occasions. Normally Christian converts follow caste customs and ceremonies during their lifecycle celebration such as birth, puberty, marriage, and funeral. For marriages, every caste follows its own customs, except for the nuptial blessing in the Church. They also follow the food, dressing habits, and other customs of their Hindu counterparts. In some instances, if the converts fail to comply with caste customs, they are ostracized from the community. Hence, practices of social distance, untouchability, and social stratification are common among Christian converts. This caste-based discrimination is very prominently seen in Tamil Nadu, which has the second-largest population of Christians after

Kerala. In Tamil Nadu, it is often seen that there are two different chapels, one for Dalits and the other for non-Dalits. In some parishes, liturgical services are conducted separately. Separate seating arrangements are made within the same Chapel. Dalits are usually seated in the two aisles of the Church. Even if there are benches or chairs, they are often made to sit on the floor. Separate cemeteries are also common in these communities. In some places, Dalits are forced to receive Communion after the non-Dalits. It is forbidden for them to be an altar boy or lector at the sacred liturgy. The upper caste converts restrict the Corpus Christi gathering, Palm Sunday procession, and other processions only to their streets. The feast of the village patron Saint is also celebrated separately (Michael 58). The postcolonial literary texts I analyze, particularly Bama's polemical autobiography and Esther Lyons's memoir, testify to these discriminating practices. In Lyons's case, wealth, social class, family background, and caste of birth played crucial roles in minoritizing the Anglo-Indian characters in her memoir.

To understand the caste politics faced by the Dalit converts, it is important to note that the trajectory of Dalit Christianity is not linear. A sociological study of caste politics shows that Dalit Christianity upholds regional diversity in their conversion and adoption of Christian faith. John Webster's article, "Varieties of Dalit Christianity in North India," points out that Dalit Christianity proliferated faster in the Southern states than in the North. Christianity was late in establishing itself in North India. Its initial base was Agra, where the Jesuit priests, invited initially by the emperor Akbar, had created a small Christian community that continued a precarious existence beyond the abolition of the Jesuit order by Pope Clement XIV in 1773. When the East India Company Charter was revised in 1813 and again in 1833 to allow first British and then other missionaries to work among the Indian population, Protestant missionaries moved into the North through the Bengal province. Up until 1857, new conversions were few

and slow in coming. Christianity was a novelty, and social sanctions against converts were severe. Later, the Baptists and Anglican missionaries found that the *Chamars* in Delhi had a considerable interest in Christianity, and the majority of their conversion came from the *Chamar bastis* or neighborhoods. In the Moradabad district, there were small group conversions, first among Mazhabi Sikhs and then among some Chamars. However, the major Dalit-initiated rural mass conversion movements began later in the 19th century and continued through the first half of the 20th century. One was a Chuhra movement which was most pronounced in central Punjab, and the other was a Bhangi movement in the western districts of the United provinces (99). The Dalit Vankar community in Gujrat (western India) converted due to educational opportunities and social reform. The Catholics in Gujrat formed an organization called Catholic Sudharak Mandal and started participating in several reform movements, including promoting higher education for children and abolishing child marriages. Similar changes were brought about among the Dalit converts in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and other parts of India. However, as the above discussion suggests that caste discrimination was much more prevalent in the Southern Dalit communities compared to those of the North.

The epistemological study of Christian conversion, therefore, brings out the contentious position of "Indian Christians" or converted Christians. The hyphenated identity of being an Indian and a Christian at the same time creates a problem of national belonging. The category of converted Christians was always a suspect in the nationalist discourse. As Geoffrey Oddie argues in his article, "Indian Christians and National Identity, 1870–1947," there are three basic phases in Christian relations with the nationalist political movement: (a) an early period of hope and enthusiasm, including the active involvement of Christians especially in the Indian National Congress; (b) "a phase of disillusionment, increasing suspicion, and withdrawal, largely in

response to the rise of militant and anti-Christian "Hindu" nationalism; (c) the period of partial recovery encouraged by a growing disillusionment with the British" (346). As it became clear that after independence, the Congress party would be in power and a Hindu-dominated regime was inevitable, the Christians demanded more political representation. The converted Christians were not a homogenous group, and there were internal differences based on social status, profession, and educational level. Upper caste converts consciously maintained a distance from lower caste or Dalit converts, and Anglo-Indians and domiciled Europeans never identified with the group because of internalized racial superiority. Because of this internal differentiation and lack of solidarity, Oddie has argued that the native Christians were more concerned with individual family needs rather than carving out a pan-Indian identity (362). This individualistic sentiment solidified the claim of the Hindu nationalists that the Christians were foreigners; they practiced a foreign religion and adopted a European style of living. This othering further makes the Indian Christians an easy target for a hostile state that has serious reservations against Indian Christians and missionary conversion. The direct impact of this suspicion was seen in the anti-Christian conversion campaign by the Niyogi Commission's *Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee in Madhya Pradesh*, published in 1956. The Committee provided a detailed study of Christian minorities and the issues around conversions, but it was cherry-picked and weaponized by the far-right Hindu organizations to create a false narrative that most Christian conversions, especially the ones done by European missionaries, were unethical because they were done through 'bribery, coercion, force, and inducement' (Pinto 633). Based on this argument², opponents of conversion completely disregarded the provision provided in Article 25 to "freedom of conscience and free profession and propagation of

² See Ambrose Pinto's article "Hindutva Vs Ambedkarism: Views on Conversions." *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 7, 2000, pp 3633-3636.

religion" (*Constitution of India*) and recommended to ban conversions that are unethical. They argued that most converts belonged to either the Muslim or the Christian community and that both these religions were "foreign" since their sacred places of worship were outside the country. Hence, these converts have no loyalty to the land and, therefore, can be seen as traitors (Pinto 3633). The Hindu right, particularly the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has argued for a sectarian and narrow understanding of citizenship based on Hindu identity. According to their argument, India is a Hindu country, and Hinduism is the national culture. To convert, therefore, is going against the national identity. The BJP's slogan is, therefore, "one nation, one culture, and one people," implying a forced loyalty to the majoritarian religion (Pinto 3633).

This hostility against conversion and Indian Christians has led to widespread violence and killings of European missionaries, nuns, and other Church authorities in India. The Human Rights Watch organization reports that a series of attacks took place between February 1998 and June 1999 in the state of Maharashtra. On February 14, 1998, a hospital run by the Catholic Hospital Association of India was attacked and ransacked, allegedly by members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in Latur, Maharashtra. On October 16, a prayer hall gathering in Kumbale village in Nasik was attacked. The prayer house was also destroyed. On December 25, armed activists from the Bajrang Dal accosted about 1,000 people attending a dance at the St. Francis School in Borivill, Bombay. In June 1999, the Shiv Sena launched a renewed series of attacks against Christian mission-run kindergarten schools, allegedly because they were not giving admission to the Shiv Sena activists' children. On June 26, suspected Sena members vandalized the Sacred Heart school in Worli, Bombay (HRW.org). These incidents of violence indicate that despite the Constitutional promise of religious tolerance and protection of ethnic and religious minorities, the hostile state policies and a rising Hindutva consciousness

have resulted in a state sponsored minoritization of colonial Christians. This reference to the current political scenario and a socio-historic analysis of Christian conversion will bring out the complex orchestration of minoritization of the fictional characters in the postcolonial texts. The multiple processes of marginalization that I explore in this dissertation are corroborated by the social and historical reality of caste and class politics, controversy over conversion, and internalized racial prejudice triggered by colonial history and its ambiguous policies. The politics of minoritization I explore in these texts are not imaginary; they are rooted in the socio-historical reality of a postcolonial nation. The fictional representations also point out the different ways colonial Christians self-minoritized themselves within their respective communities. For example, in Esther Lyons's memoir, *Unwanted*, we see her ambivalent attitude towards the majoritarian Hindu community. Her initial hesitation in continuing the courtship of her would-be husband because he was not a Christian and her decision to convert him before marriage shows her own internalized prejudice that reflects colonial ethnocentrism. She says that when Narinder agreed to become a Catholic, she felt a sense of accomplishment because it was her life's mission to "save his soul" (352). She confesses that she was brought up to believe that Christianity was the only "true religion" and to convert a non-believer was a great service to the Christian faith. She writes, "even though I could not become a nun, I could still be a good Catholic setting a good example and saving souls for Jesus, our leader and founder" (352). In her jubilation of soul saving, she completely forgets to reflect on why she could not become a nun. In one of her rants against the Catholic Church in her memoir, she mentions that her biracial and "illegitimate" status hindered her from entering the nunnery. She is also extremely critical of the Church for not recognizing the marriage of her parents. However, she has no qualms about getting married or baptizing her husband in a Church and seeking the blessings of a priest. She willfully accepts

the very structures of oppression that have marginalized her family and kept them in a cycle of poverty. Lyons's comments on Indian women and their lack of freedom and her self-proclamation at different times in the memoir that Anglo-Indians identified more with their European ancestry and were indifferent towards their Indian origin bring out the complexity of minoritization of this hyphenated group. Lyons's contradictory claims and choices point out how her own internalized racism creates a duality in her consciousness. On the one hand, she readily accepts the Indian culture by speaking Hindi, wearing a saree (to hide her supposed foreignness), watching Hindi movies, and cooking local food, but these adoptions seem superficial compared to her major decision to migrate to Australia first and then to the United States despite having a support system in India. Her motivation to leave her country of birth is a major question in exploring the politics of minoritization. She mentions that she felt that a white, Christian nation like Australia would be more accepting of a biracial person (410) than her own country, which, she felt, was becoming more hostile. However, how much of this perception is self-constructed based on her own conditioning of race, religion, and gender, and how much is based on the discriminatory practices of the state, is an important question to explore in the case of Anglo-Indian characters in the memoir.

Catherine Bolton, in Hyder's "The Story of Catherine Bolton," and the Anglo-Indian characters in the two postcolonial novels, *Staying On* and *Chinnery's Hotel*, also reveal similar self-minoritizing behavior. The Anglo-Indian characters are placed in a paradoxical minoritization—they self-consciously identify with their European ancestry and reject their indigenous roots, and in turn, face ostracization from the mainstream culture because of their perceived otherness and the fear of miscegenation. The impossibility of being an accommodated citizen of a nation-state is partly self-imposed by the members of the group. The two-way

marginalization of Anglo-Indian characters is quite different from Bama's *testimonial*. In her polemical autobiography, she interrogates the politics of minoritization for Dalit converts like her. She questions the various articulation of hyphenated identities—being a Dalit and a Christian, a Dalit and a woman, and, most importantly, being Dalit and an Indian citizen. Bama criticizes the Catholic Church for perpetuating caste hierarchy, and, at the same time, she is critical of the failure of the nation-state to protect its religious minorities. However, unlike Lyons, Bama is acutely aware of how Dalits and members of her own group mirror the same oppressive behavior as that of upper caste communities. The intra-caste discrimination aids in perpetuating the myth of caste hierarchy that in turn, marginalizes the social and economic position of Dalit converts. To interrogate the different axes of minoritization, it is important to understand the various connotations of a minority and to see how these articulations are reflected in the postcolonial texts I look at in this dissertation.

Understanding Minoritization, Literary Minoritization, and the Postcolonial Text

The politics of minoritization refers to the process through which a minority group is marginalized or made to feel inferior to the majority group in society. This can happen through policies and practices that discriminate against the minority group or through cultural attitudes and biases that perpetuate stereotypes and negative perceptions. The politics of minoritization is often used as a tool of power and control by those in positions of authority, leading to feelings of exclusion and injustice among the minority group (Mufti 124). Minoritization, as argued in the above section, can also be self-imposed by minority groups to preserve their self-identification. In order to understand the problematics of minoritization, it is important to look at the definition of a minority. Richard Werbner, in his article, "Challenging Minorities: Difference and Tribal Citizenship in Botswana," argues that it would be a great mistake to think of minorities and

majorities in terms of opposition. Instead, the process of minoritization must be conceptualized as a changeable negotiation of opposition and cooperation, sometimes through a deliberate co-opting of potential enemies. Minoritization is not a uniform process but varies across the country, from ethnic minority to minority, and one cannot tell from knowing one minority how every nation-state must work for other minorities. Some minority groups legitimize homogeneity. They conform to majoritarian expectations and are attracted to opportunities for upward mobility by concealing what might be denigrated as their minority origin. Others become assertive about their marginality, insist upon being recognized as a minority, and demand what amounts to affirmative action to compensate for a history of negative discrimination (673). A major question that is explored in the problem of minoritization is minority rights. In the article "The Endorsement of Minority Rights: The Role of Group Position, National Context, and Ideological Beliefs" Maykel Verkuyten and Ali Asian Yildiz argue that not all minority groups receive equal protection from the state. In Turkey, for example, the Kurds have been the target of a long-standing assimilationist policy to create a nation-state based on Turkish ethno-cultural identity (530). In this nationalist policy, the unity and security of the Turkish state are central, and recognition of minority rights is seen to be a threat to the integrity of the nation. The issue of minority rights gets further complicated in states that profess multiculturalism. Françoise Lionnet, in her article, "Feminisms and Universalisms: "Universal Rights" and the Legal Debate Around the Practice of Female Excision in France," talks about a controversial law introduced in 1981 by the French Penal Code. Article 312 (2) of the code states the various types of legal sanctions that can be used to punish people or groups who are found guilty of assault and battery. During the following decade, several controversial judicial cases that raised complex cultural questions would be tried on the basis of this law. They all involve African families whose

daughters were subjected to female excision. Viewed as intolerable by western critics since colonial times, excision consists primarily of clitoridectomy but can also be accompanied by excision of all or part of the labia. It can be fatal and is considered in the West as a violation of basic human rights (369). The debate opposes two conflicting versions of human rights, one based on the western notion of the sovereign individual subject and the other on a notion of collective identity grounded in cultural solidarity. By criminalizing the practice and sending to jail the parents of the three excised girls, the French courts hastily judged the parents as guilty when their behavior was in accordance with the deeply held sociocultural and religious belief about the nature of femininity and the function of sexuality in their respective cultures (370). Viewed from a western perspective, this practice was interpreted as violent, dangerous to young girls, and, most importantly, in conflict with the western ideals of freedom and agency. However, in western societies, excisions of different forms, such as male circumcision, tonsillectomy, and appendectomy, are viewed as regular surgical procedures without having any cultural connotation (371). This case complicates the notion of rights because the practice of female circumcision is deeply rooted in patriarchal control of female desire and is physically and psychologically harmful to young girls. However, the case does problematize the notion of multiculturalism when minority cultures clash with the majoritarian notion of right and wrong. The main premise of punishing the parents was not so much about protecting the rights of young girls but more about criminalizing immigrant cultures that do not conform to the western notion of modernity.

The notion of rights also gets complicated in the case of colonial Christians in India. The Constitution of India defines them as religious minorities based on numbers and census data. The 2011 census data reveal that Christians constitute 2.3 % of the Indian population

(Censusindia.gov). However, in the case of Christian converts, the definition of a minority gets complicated when the state denies to give them their Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe status for economic and educational benefit despite knowing that among the twenty million Christians, almost fourteen million are Dalits or lower caste. The Schedule Caste Order of 1950 states that the central government's programs for the Dalits, such as post-matric scholarships and reservation of jobs, were restricted to Dalit Hindus. They were later extended to Dalit Sikhs and Dalit Buddhists but not to the converted Christians (Michael 56). Many Christian organizations say that their denial of Scheduled Caste status goes against their fundamental rights. For example, a letter (dated 23-7-59) from the Deputy Secretary of the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi, to all state governments and union administration mentions that the Scheduled Caste of other religions who reconvert themselves to Hinduism will be entitled to all the privileges of the Hindu Scheduled Caste (Michael 57). This implies that if Christians of Dalit origin reconverted to Hinduism, they would be entitled to all reservation benefits of the government, but not otherwise. Because of their lack of reserved status, the Prevention of Atrocity Act of 1989 also does not protect them from caste-related violence. Here we see the state acting as a deterrent to minority rights by complicating the very notion of a minority. The argument put forth by the state in denying the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe status to Dalit converts is essentialist in nature. The state argues that because caste is not practiced in Christianity, Christian converts are not affected by caste discrimination. This assumption, as pointed out in the previous section, is not true, and Dalit converts face violence and discrimination in all walks of life.

In this dissertation, I explore the problematics of religious minorities by analyzing the literary texts published after 1947. The texts are either written by or written about the three

Christian groups that I analyze in my research. There is important sociological and anthropological research on these groups, but the scholarship is thin when it comes to the literary analysis of the internal contradictions within the Christian community and how different Christian groups have responded to some of the discriminatory state policies and hostilities of the majoritarian group. Even though few literary analyses have looked at the varied factors of minoritization of colonial Christian characters, the possibility exists because literature is a cumulative product of the social, cultural, political, and historical forces in society. The aesthetic choices made by the author, the narratorial interventions, character development, and the intentionality of the text are influenced by societal forces. Postcolonial texts, in particular, that deal with the material conditions of colonialism and operations of power, subalternity, hybridity, temporality, historicity, and the need to decenter Eurocentrism must look at the various destabilizing principles that guide narrative choices. My dissertation looks at contemporary, postcolonial texts written after India's independence and the horrors of partition based on religion. The first chapter looks at Qurratulain Hyder's "The Story of Catherine Bolton," which was written in English, just like her several short stories and novellas. The original publication date is unclear, but it is anthologized in two collections, *Contemporary Urdu Short Stories*, published in 1991, and *The Street Singers of Lucknow and Other Stories*, published in 2008. The second chapter analyzes *Unwanted: Memoirs of an Anglo-Indian Daughter of Rev. Michael De Lisle Lyons of Detroit*, Michigan, which was published in 2005 by Esther Mary Lyons, a member of the Anglo-Indian community. Paul Scott's Raj novel, *Staying On* published in 1977, and Jaysinh Birjépatil's 2004 realist novel, *Chinnery's Hotel*, are subject matters of the third chapter, and the fourth chapter looks at Faustina Mary Fatima Rani or Bama's autobiography, *Karukku*, published in 1992, and her

fiction, *Sangati* that came out a year after *Karukku*. I use these contemporary texts to interrogate the inter and intra-community tensions, contradictions, discrimination, and prejudice that exist among members of the Christian community. Christianity is not a binding force for this minority group, particularly the "Colonial Christian" community that is informed by the exclusionary and ambivalent laws of the colonial bureaucracy.

The fiction and non-fiction work that I look at in this dissertation can be read as postcolonial texts because they provide resistance and counternarratives to the hegemonic forces of colonization, racial supremacy, patriarchy, and caste hierarchy. They deal with subaltern characters who have the audacity to speak despite being at the periphery. They display what Robert J.C. Young has mentioned in his essay, "What is the Postcolonial?" that postcolonialism deals with "human experience of the kind that has not typically been registered or represented at any institutional level" (13). Talking about the representative space of postcolonialism, Young contends that postcolonial theory offers a language of and for those who have no place, who seems not to belong to those whose knowledge and histories are not allowed to count. It is above all this preoccupation with the oppressed, with the subaltern classes, with minorities in any society, with the concerns of those who live or come from elsewhere that constitute the basis of postcolonial politics and remains the core that generates its continuing power. (14)

Therefore, postcolonialism does not merely deals with the material and psychological conditions of colonization, but it is a discursive space to create counternarratives of the oppressed, the marginal, and the subaltern, whose voices have been silenced in the Eurocentric discursive model. In postcolonial discourse, migration and dislocation of space occupy a significant role because it suggests a change in the paradigm. In my first three chapters, all the

protagonists go through cycles of migration, expatriation, and repatriation from their country of birth to negotiate their national and emotional belonging.

In Hyder's short story, Catherine Bolton, a young Anglo-Indian woman with an invented identity, becomes an unaccommodated subject in a newly constructed nation-state. Her lower caste converted Christian mother is never allowed to exercise her rights of motherhood because of her multiple marginalizations. She is a Dalit who works as a servant at Miss Richmond's household. Celia Richmond is a domiciled European who had limited privilege because of her middle class status. However, she has more agency than Catherine's mother, Martha, and has the authority to construct a false narrative of birth to boost Catherine's social position as an Anglo-Indian. Catherine's white skin, blue eyes, and partial European ancestry cannot be her cultural capital to achieve upward social mobility. The impossibility of belonging in their country of birth, coupled with their own ethnocentrism, forced many Anglo-Indians, including Esther Lyons, to migrate to Australia and then to the United States. After independence, several Europeans and Anglo-Indians migrated to England, Canada, or a Commonwealth country in the hopes of finding better opportunities in white, Christian nations. Rev. John Sigmore, the kindly English parson who had baptized Catherine in 1946, was one such individual who had migrated to Australia and expressed his concern for Catherine to Miss Richmond, "I am worried about the dear child. What is her future in India? Would you like her to become a fashion model or marry a heathen? Bring her over to Australia before it's too late..." Miss Richmond seconded that concern about her "exquisite Eurasian girl" and her possibility to "join the ranks of telephone operators, office secretaries, or God forbid, cabaret dancers?" (77). The lack of opportunities for Eurasians or racial hybrids like her is a telling commentary on race, class, and gender. Despite

her pale skin and ability to pass as white, her racial hybridization and her mother's lower caste status make her a peripheral citizen who cannot belong in India.

A similar narrative of dislocation is seen in Esther Lyons's memoir. Her mother, a lower caste converted Christian who had illegitimate children with a Jesuit American priest in India, was also advised to create an invented identity as a widow to be socially acceptable. Father Evans, who was a friend of her father, tells Lyons's mother that "it's best that you tell the children and everyone else that you are a widow. Give them the surname of "Anthony;" they will pass off as Anglo-Indians. You should call yourself "Mrs. Anthony." It is no use giving them the surname of "Shah." "Shah" is an Indian surname, and your children don't look Indian" (Lyons 75). Who is an Indian, then? As postcolonial readers, we are left to wonder about the viability of citizenship for Anglo-Indian women whose mixed-race ancestry and their affiliation with Christianity, the "foreign" religion of the former colonizers, do not make them metonymies of the nation like their Hindu counterparts. They can never fulfill the symbolic connotation of Mother India, nor can they be trusted to become good housewives. Not only the majoritarian Hindu community but even the Catholic Church also played a key role in minoritizing a Christian figure. Lyons's mother was a converted Christian, and her father was a Jesuit priest, yet she faced ostracization from the Church because of her illegitimate status (her parents could not marry because the Church did not give dispensation to her father to marry and threatened to ex-communicate both), her mother's caste identity, their working-class status, and her hyphenated identity as an Anglo-Indian. She, too, like Catherine, decides to migrate to Australia, a settler colony because she feels that a white, Christian country would be more hospitable and welcoming to her, and she would eventually find more opportunities to climb up the social ladder and provide support and security for her family.

Esther Lyons's marginality is similar to that of the poor white characters in chapter three that deal with the Raj novels. Both the realist novels are cynical explorations of the postcolonial state and the liminality of the domiciled Europeans who were left behind after India's independence in 1947. Paul Scott's Booker prize-winning novel, *Staying On*, spans a period of thirty years after India's independence. The Smalleys witnessed the changing landscape of a country that was undergoing growth and development under Indian leadership after two hundred years of colonial domination. In this changing landscape, the Smalleys are a misfit because they do not have the ticket to be successful. Unlike the *nouveau riche* Indian entrepreneurs who are able to take advantage of foreign business enterprises, the Smalleys can only feel their obsolescence in a country that can now exist only in their nostalgia. She loves going to the cinema and watching old Hollywood movies that provide her with comfort. Cinema thus becomes an important trope to explore nostalgia and Lucy's displacement. Lucy can truly exist in the chimeral world of cinema. The reel, not the real world, becomes the central location of her isolated existence. The novel plays with narrative voice and chronological time to show the gradual marginalization of the Smalleys. Time is not linear but circular in this novel. Lucy and Tusker exist in the past and carry-on imaginary dialogues with themselves because they do not have anybody to share their thoughts with. Lucy's elaborate but imaginary monologue with her once lover is an important literary trope to explore her own obsolescence and alienation in post-independent India. But at a symbolic level, the monologue opens up the past world, the world of the Raj that marginalized her and her husband and never gave them an opportunity to take center stage in imperial activity. The novel, through its dialogic point of view, clearly constructs the main characters as occupying liminal space through a systemic and structural method of oppression by the policies of the Raj. The colonial past, however, was no better than their

present. The novel shows the entrenched class division and discrimination that existed in the colonies following the strong class structure in England. Like Miss Celia Richmond, they, too, cannot enter the genteel circle of the empire because of their working-class background, even though they are Christians and belong to the ruling class. Lucy's race and whiteness become signifiers of otherness in an independent nation where religious institutions were now headed by an Indian ministry. The narrator mentions that Lucy's "pale face seemed to put her at a disadvantage" in a Church where Indian priests took over, and the entire congregation was mostly Indian Christian (93).

Lucy cannot see the Indian Christians as her equal even though they share the same faith. Her internalized racism and prejudice come out when she meets the new bishop of her Church, Father Sebastian Ambedkar, who is "black as a hat" (104) in her eyes. Her reservation and silent hostility against the rich and upper-class Hindus are reciprocated by the Indian characters. The novel mentions that Lucy feels that Mrs. Desai (wife of a businessman) sees them as representing the "defeated enemy," and the mutual suspicion never leaves the mind of both the groups, It was different, she supposed, for the new generation of English and Indians who met and made friends with one another, but however friendly you were with Indians of your own generation, the generation that had experienced all the passions and prejudices, there was somehow in that relationship a distant and diminishing and not yet dead echo of the sound of the tocsin (146).

The novel points out the complexity of the relationship between the ex-colonizer and the former colonized people. The reversal of the power structure and the downward mobility of the Smalleys play a significant role in the politics of minoritization for the poor whites in post-independent India. Apart from the class structure, *Staying On* and *Chinnery's Hotel* brings out the ambiguous relationship between masters and their servants in the domestic space. The

complex articulation of servitude and agency is one of the important themes of postcolonial study. Labor within the "structure of feeling of domestic servitude" is explored by Raka Ray and Seemin Qayum in their comparative study of Kolkata (India) and New York. They argue that Kolkata has a "culture of servitude" that encompasses different forms of domestic labor, moving from live in to live-out work. The nature of labor and power hierarchies get conflated in the web of "intimate ties" and other kinds of "extra-economic" bonds (102). The employer-employee relationship shifts from the economic to the affective domain as it is believed that "servants" are essential and integral for the smooth running of a domestic household, and they are bound to their service by ties of affection, loyalty, and dependence.

In *Staying On*, the relationship between Ibrahim, who is a native Muslim, and his European Christian masters, the Smalleys, brings out the affective model of subordination in the case of domestic servants. The narrator mentions that "[Y]ears younger than both he and Lucy, Ibrahim felt for them [the Smalley's] what an indulgent, often exasperated but affectionate parent might feel for demanding and unreasonable children whom it was more sensible to appease than cross" (14). The first few chapters of the novel talk about the rigmarole of fire and rehire that Ibrahim goes through almost every day. He is a shrewd, calm, worldly wise, and astute person who can read his masters very well. He knows when to appease when to keep quiet, and when to offer advice. He has a genuine concern for the elderly couple and takes care of them like their son. However, he is also shrewd enough to look out for his profit and has the ambition to climb up the economic ladder. His attitude towards Lucy dangerously verges on desire and transgression of boundaries; however, it never crosses the line of acceptability. The dependence of the Smalleys on Ibrahim and the intimate moments of confession of their economic hardships

with him, who is a paid servant, is a telling narrative that shows how the power structure becomes ambivalent in the intimate space of the home.

Unlike Ibrahim and the ambiguous relationship with his masters, the relationship between Miss Celia Richmond and Martha in chapter one is a unilateral relationship of power. The forceful appropriation of Martha's child and the rejection of the mother by the daughter is a painful narrative of subordination for lower caste converts who are often forced to negotiate between the duality of their caste and religious identities. Home, too, becomes a contested site for domesticity. In Lyons's memoir, home as a physical space becomes subverted because her mother never owned a place that they could call their own. Catherine Bolton, in Hyder's short story, also utters similar lamentation in her multiple cycles of migration and wonders which one is her world. Catherine's life went downhill after the passing away of Miss Richmond. Her "exquisite" origin attracted crooks and hangers-on in Australia. Her futile attempt to become an actress landed her as a cabaret dancer at a hotel, just as her aunt had feared. She became a stripper and "eventually landed in the Hong Kong-Singapore-Kuala Lumpur nightclub circuit." The narrator insinuates that despite cautionary advice from her "aunt," Catherine entered the dark but thriving sex industry that flourished in Southeast Asia. Her alienation and displacement are witnessed when she says, "which was her won world? She wondered, flitting from hotel to hotel, dealing with lecherous men of all nationalities" (79). The metaphor of "plastic cups in a holiday inn" (80) reveals her marginality at various levels. Like discarded plastic cups, her body is rejected by men every night after fulfillment of their lust and desire, and like plastic cups, she is a necessary but inconsequential character in the various countries she traveled to in the hope of bettering her life. In the emptiness and desperation of her life lies the narrator's skepticism of religion, not Christianity in particular, but any form of organized religion that has the capacity to

divide nations along religious lines. The thinness of religion as a binding force in an already existing religiously stratified and disunited world is metaphorically represented by the figure of Kabir, who historically stood for Hindu-Muslim unity. In the story, we see Fazal Masih, a "dimwitted," poor, converted Christian janitor, posing like Kabir and futilely praying for "friends and foes alike" (86) at the beginning and end of the plot structure. The circular ending of the story shows that people like Catherine, Martha, and Arthur will always continue to be marginalized because of their race, class, and gender identity.

In Bama's work, we see a detailed analysis of minoritization based on caste, religion, and patriarchy. Her autobiography, *Karukku*, shows the generational suffering of the converted Christian *Paraya* community in Tamil Nadu. Despite their conversion, the *Parayas* can never escape their caste of birth and, therefore, have to live through a cycle of generational poverty. The lower caste converts have to endure multiple levels of ostracization from upper caste Hindus, upper caste Christian converts, lower caste converts with money, and ultimately, by the Church and its various institutions. Her autobiography, which is often referred to as a *testimonial* of her community, is not a study of victimhood. She uses the power of the narrative space to create a polemic against the hegemonies of caste ideology, heteropatriarchy, and the Catholic Church, to expose the hypocrisy and corruption of religious institutions that has no bearing on faith or the teachings of the Bible, and to show the artificial construction of caste as a patriarchal tool of control and oppress the poor. It is interesting to note that, unlike the invented identities of the Anglo-Indian characters in chapters 1 and 2, Bama's identity is essentialized and fixed. She will always remain a *Paraya* woman despite her conversion to Catholicism, her access to education, and her economic independence. Bama's polemic is against both the Church and the oppressive caste structures among Dalit communities. Because of their position at the bottom

of the caste structure, the Parayas experienced multiple levels of oppression at the hands of upper castes, upper caste converts, and even lower caste converts who saw themselves above the Parayas because of their better economic position.

If caste and the corruption of the Church are the main themes of *Karukku*, Bama's fictional work, *Sangati*, offers a detailed study of patriarchal domination within the lower caste, converted Christian communities. She shows how lower caste men face humiliation and violence from the upper castes and then become perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse in the domestic space. The internationalization of patriarchal expectation by both men and women helps perpetuate the cycle of abuse that women have to endure on a daily basis. But they are not silent victims. The novel offers several moments of resistance where women have enacted agency to take control of their lives. The novel, which is like a bildungsroman, shows a child narrator who grows up into a rational and courageous individual and starts questioning the metanarratives of power and subordination.

Bama's *Karukku* is not like Esther Lyons's memoir. Unlike Lyons's "narrative of filiation" (G. Thomas Couser), where the search for the father is seen as the ultimate goal, *Karukku* is a journey of resistance. It is more social and communal in nature. But both the texts expose the inherent hierarchies of the Catholic Church: in Lyons's case, it is the internalized class division, and in Bama's case, it is the perpetuation of caste hierarchy. Despite the anti-caste practice of Christianity, it is repeatedly shown that the Church mirrors the hierarchy of caste-like Hinduism. Lower caste converts who are poor have to sit at the back or on the floor, have to pay more to receive basic services of the Church or special favors during religious events, their children are repeatedly beaten and abused, and they are taught to be submissive and have unquestioning loyalty to the teachings of the nuns.

It is interesting to note that the diversity of Christian religiosity or the analysis of different sects of Christianity is not mentioned in any of the texts that rely so heavily on critiquing religious institutions. Lyons and Bama categorically blame the Catholic Church in perpetuating caste and class hierarchies, but none of the authors talk about if this discriminatory attitude is unique only to the Catholic Church or do other denominations like the Baptist, Protestants, or the Anglican Church also practice similar methods of otherization. Hyder and Paul Scott simply mention that their characters are born into Christianity, but there is no mention of any denomination. Smalley's relationship to Christianity is also ambiguous. Lucy's habit of attending Sunday Church has taken a moratorium because of her discomfort with situating herself among native congregants. She stands out as the only European among Indian converts. It is also evident that her internalized racism and contempt for native Christians also discourage her from receiving benedictions from them. Tusker's loyalty to Christian faith and practice also becomes a suspect. He never mentions his religious or spiritual inclinations and his sudden interest in following his wife to Church service could be just a whim out of boredom or his genuine interest in the personality of a new Bishop, Father Sebastian Ambedkar.

Another interesting aspect of the literary texts discussed here is the author's choice of literary genre in exploring the stories of minoritization of colonial Christian characters. Hyder interestingly chooses the short story and not the novel to tell the impossible belonging of Catherine Bolton. Despite her huge success with novels, the fact that Hyder deliberately chooses a "minor" literary genre becomes a telling exploration of her interest in creating counternarratives to established discourse on religion, colonialism, and the nation. Mary Louise Pratt, in her essay, "The Short Story: The Long and Short of it," points out that the short story is often seen as lacking in artistic merit, a fact she attributes to the genre's reputation as a 'training

genre' for those lacking in appropriate experience or skill, particularly for aspiring fiction writers whose ultimate aspiration is to publish a full-length novel (80). In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari analyze "What is a Minor Literature?" and argue that minor literature doesn't come from a minor language. Instead, it is that which the minority constructs within a major language. But the first characteristic of minor literature is that its language has a "high coefficient of deterritorialization" and the impossibility to write. The second characteristic is the connection of minor literature to politics. Unlike majority literature, where the main concern is the individual and his journey, in minor literature, the "family triangle connects to other triangles—commercial, economic, bureaucratic, judicial—that determines its values" (17).

Aamir Mufti, in his analysis of the use of Urdu in Saadat Hasan Manto's short stories, also explores the minoritized politics of language. He argues that the generic choice itself is conditioned by one's relationship to the nation-state. Mufti's article, "Saadat Hasan Manto: A Greater Story Writer than God," argues that the pro-independence era saw Urdu becoming the principal language of Pakistan but having a marginal status in India, and this minoritization determines Manto's politics of language in choosing Urdu as his medium for narrating his stories. Mufti claims that Urdu literature is exceptional because it reversed the genre hierarchy of placing the novel at the top and explored the other "minor" form of the short story (183). Shital Pravinchandra, in her article, "Not Just Prose: The Calcutta Chromosome, the South Asian Short Story and the Limitations of Postcolonial Studies," however, disputes this claim arguing that there are major Urdu novels that have been published since 1947 and the short story played an important nationalistic role in many non-Anglophone South Asian literature, for example,

Tagore and his Bengali stories. However, Mufti's claim remains that the short story remains a "minor" genre in the scheme of nation building.

The discussion of the "minor" literary genre can also be extended to the memoir. As argued by Partha Chatterjee in his analysis of the nineteenth century memoirs of middle class Bengali women that the memoir or self-writing as a genre was not taken seriously by literary practitioners of the age because it was believed that it did not require artistic skills or flair to write one's story from memory, and as a result, anybody could do it. Lyons's decision to use the memoir as a medium to narrate her fascinating tale of betrayal and acceptance shows her challenge to the paternalistic belief that the novel is the highest form of literary expression. Shital Pravinchandra too supports this claim that the postcolonial Anglophone novel has received undue critical attention in postcolonial studies. In their attempt to rewrite subaltern histories, postcolonial scholars have paid no attention to other genres like the short story or the poem, particularly vernacular or non-Anglophone writings from the colony. Even though the realist novels of the Raj cannot be seen as a minor literary genre, the choice of characters who are marginalized by religion, the colonial hierarchy of class, and discourse of whiteness, and the dialogic narrative voice in both the novels create a counternarrative space to explore the politics of minoritization of the two colonial Christian groups. In contrast, Bama's self-writing, which is often read as a *testimonial*, is itself a counternarrative to the hegemonic discourse of caste that attempts to silence and delegitimize subaltern voices. *Testimonio* is a narrative that exists at the margins of literature, representing those subjects excluded from authorized representation. In most cases, testimonial narratives are documents of atrocities and suffering, bringing one into contact with the victim. The *testimonio* is the voice of one who witnesses, for the sake of another, who remains voiceless. That is, the subaltern subject of the narrative gives voice to the

lived experiences of oneself and of those who are victims of social and economic marginalization. Testimonio is a collective document, and *Karukku* moves from individual to community through a narrative of trauma (Nayar 84). Bama, in one of her interviews, describes *Karukku* in the following words:

The story told in *Karukku* was not my story alone. It was the depiction of a collective trauma- of my community- whose length cannot be measured in time. I just tried to freeze it forever in one book so that there will be something physical to remind people of the atrocities committed on a section of the society for ages. (Qtd in Nayar 84).

Bama's work is, therefore, more polemical than all the other literary genres I analyze in my dissertation. She is critical of the mass conversion that the Paraya community did to escape from their generational poverty. She is critical of the conversion because she sees the ineffectuality of conversion in eradicating caste identity. No matter what she does and the kind of accomplishment she achieves, there will always be a tension between being a Dalit and a Christian at the same time. Despite Bama's sharp criticism against mass conversion, S. M. Michael and John Webster, in their articles in the collection *Margins of Faith: Dalit and Tribal Christianity in India*, show that many communities converted to internally reform their social practices and to get access to education, particularly education for girls to abolish child marriage. It is, therefore, important to consider conversion as a separate category of minoritization in the lives of Dalit converted Christians. The politics of conversion bring out both the internal and external axes of minoritization for converted Christians, who, as Bama points out, have a complicated entry into the realm of citizenship in a postcolonial nation.

Politics of Conversion and Its Axes of Minoritization

The issues of religious conversion and caste were at the center of Indian nationalist discourse. Some Indian nationalists, predominantly higher caste Hindus, felt that caste discrimination could only be eradicated if the lower castes or untouchables were brought within the folds of Hinduism and stopped from being converted by the Christian missionaries. Several nationalists, including Gandhi, were suspicious of the workings of the missionaries and the role of converted Christians in Indian nationalism. Gandhi believed that converts shared a false ideological connection with the colonizers and were threats to anti-colonial struggles and demand for self-rule. To limit the number of Christians he argued that all conversions were unnatural as they were "conversion of convenience" (Coward 93) and urged that the removal of untouchability and caste stigmas were a Hindu affair and wanted to include the untouchables within the Hindu category rather than giving them minority status. Gandhi's attempt to include untouchables or whom he called Harijans or "children of God" within the fold of "Hindus" is an extension of the symbolic connection between Hindus and nation building. I see this ideology in the continuum of the 19th Century colonial census that stated that "every native who was unable to define his creed or who described it by any other name than that of some recognized religion or of a sect of some such religion, was held to be and classed as a Hindu" (Jones 92).

Gandhi's position on caste was discarded and criticized by two important spokespersons for untouchables. E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, popularly called Periyar or "the great man" in Tamilnadu, broke away from Gandhian principles and started a separate "Self-Respect Movement" in 1926 to attack the ideology of caste hierarchy. At various points and in different ways, the movement attacked Brahmin or higher caste priests and the whole Brahmanic ideology of privilege by birth, scriptural authority in general, and religion either as a general ethos or

theological doctrine (Dirks 261). B. R. Ambedkar, who later came to be known as the "father" of the Indian constitution, had a different attitude from Periyar in relation to politics. He believed that untouchables could only thrive through constitutional negotiations around their status as an oppressed and disenfranchised minority. He fought for separate electorates and constitutional representation for untouchables in 1932 (Dirks 265). However, in his 100-page speech, "Annihilation of Caste" (1936), he was in agreement with Periyar's rejection of Hinduism to eradicate the root cause of casteism.

I locate the contentious politics of caste within this historical framework and argue that the production of colonial knowledge about indigenous peoples played a part in the perpetuation of caste discrimination. My analysis of the texts will point out that the missionaries, often sharing the "civilizing" mission of the empire, relied on existing exclusionary and discriminatory practices and customs to understand complex phenomena like caste and, in turn, participated in the ongoing social oppression. The anthropological study of Nicholas Dirks, Walter Fernandes' work on caste and conversion movements in India, Eliza F. Kent's research on women and conversion, and Andrew Wingate's book, *The Church and Conversion* will be crucial to examine the intersectionality of caste, religion, and gender and to deconstruct the homogenization of caste categories in constructing minority identities. My analysis of literary texts, however, shows that conversion narratives have to be studied in the light of parallel and intersecting histories of imperialism, nationalism, decolonization, and the construction of the Hindu-majority nation-state.

Though there is rich scholarship on each of the three Christian groups, I believe the interconnectedness as well as the tensions and contradictions among the groups with regard to the politics of minoritization in colonial and postcolonial representations have not received

enough attention. In my research, I focus on the literary texts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries because existing scholarship, mostly historical and anthropological works, have dealt exhaustively with the Victorian period or nineteenth century romance literature, paying little attention to the contemporary portrayal of "colonial Christians" in postcolonial fiction. My work adds to the scholarly conversation by looking at the intersection of history and literary analysis to understand the various axes of minoritization for the three groups of colonial Christians discussed in this dissertation.

Chapter One

Locating Counternarratives in Qurratulain Hyder's "The Story of Catherine Bolton": Politics of Minoritization and Construction of 'Indian Christians'

Critics who have written about Qurratulain Hyder's *Āg kā Daryā or The River of Fire* have always commented on the inclusive nature of the novel celebrating a composite culture where civilizations collide and unify, rather than separate. The longitudinal inclusivity that marked Hyder's magnum opus is surprisingly lacking in her short stories that are published after India's independence. Skepticism of belonging, gross arbitrariness of nation building, and the rampant violence that followed the hallowed declaration of independence in the Indian subcontinent made the writer unsure of her position as a supporter of Nehruvian secularism and a champion of a unified history. Unlike the canvas of the novel where the characters are part of a historical continuum, the characters in her short story are placed in uncertain destinies based on their specific location of time, ethnicity, race, gender, and other affiliations of identity. For example, *The Story of Catherine Bolton* published in the collection, *The Street Singers of Lucknow and Other Stories* is about an Anglo-Indian woman who reconstructs a self-serving racial and religious identity in order to survive the chain of inter-continental migration.

The way Hyder deviates from her previous position of inclusivity and secularism through the character of Fazal Masih, based on the real life social reformer, Kabir³, is an indication of her

³ Indian poet-saint revered by Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. The birth of Kabir remains shrouded in mystery and legend. Authorities disagree on both when he was born and who his parents were. According to one legend, his mother was a Brahman who became pregnant after a visit to a Hindu shrine. Because she was unwed, she abandoned Kabir, who was found and adopted by a Muslim weaver. That his early life began as a Muslim there is little doubt, but he was later strongly influenced by a Hindu ascetic, Ramananda. Although Kabir is often depicted in modern times as a harmonizer of Hindu and Muslim belief and practice, it would be more accurate to say that he was equally critical of both, often conceiving them as parallel to one another in their misguided ways. In his view, the mindless, repetitious, prideful habit of declaiming scripture could

purpose in using the short story, (often considered as a “minor” literary form in relation to the novel), to create an exorcising stance with respect to the narrative of Indian selfhood. The last scene of the story where Fazal stands with outstretched arms as the drama of Catherine’s life unfolds and the sheer ineffectuality of his existence mark a serious departure from a “woolly headed” explorer of civilization to a disillusioned observer who questions the foundation of religion and the role it played in national belonging. Hyder’s purpose in showing the thinness of religion is captured by her reference to Kabir, a historical figure who stood for religious unity, at the beginning and ending of the story. But there is no unity among the characters here. Kabir’s *dohas* (lyrical verses with a moral) cannot influence people’s minds in the story. As a result, he remains a futile character with arms outstretched, praying for “friends and foes alike” (69) with no assurance of healing the pain, anguish, and loss of trust the characters in the story have gone through. Through the image of a failing figure like Kabir to unite religious groups, the narrator (and by extension, Hyder) is raising questions against dividing the country along religious lines. Hyder’s unsettlement with partition is reflected in her interview with Laura Steele where she

be visited alike on the sacred Hindu texts, the Vedas, or the Islamic holy book, the Qur’ān. What really counted, for Kabir, was utter fidelity to the Truth of life, which he associated equally with Allah and Ram—the latter understood as a general Hindu name for the divine, not the hero of the Ramayana. Kabir’s principal media of communication were songs called padas and rhymed couplets (*dohas*) sometimes called “words” (*shabdās*) or “witnesses” (*sakhis*). A number of those couplets, and others attributed to Kabir since his death, have come to be commonly used by speakers of north Indian languages.

Kabir’s poetic personality has been variously defined by the religious traditions that revere him, and the same can be said for his hagiography. For Sikhs he is a precursor and interlocutor of Nanak, the founding Sikh Guru. Muslims place him in Sufi (mystical) lineages, and for Hindus he becomes a Vaishnavite (devotee of the god Vishnu) with Universalist leanings. But when one goes back to the poetry that can most reliably be attributed to Kabir, only two aspects of his life emerge as truly certain: he lived most of his life in Banaras (now Varanasi), and he was a weaver (*julaha*), one of a low-ranked caste that had become largely Muslim in Kabir’s time. His humble social station and his own combative reaction to any who would regard it as such have contributed to his celebrity among various other religious movements and helped shape the Kabir Panth, a sect found across northern and central India that draws its members especially, but not exclusively, from the Dalits (formerly known as untouchables). The Kabir Panth regards Kabir as its principal guru or even as a divinity—truth incarnate. The broad range of traditions on which Kabir has had an impact is testimony to his massive authority, even for those whose beliefs and practices he criticized so unsparingly. For a detailed analysis of Kabir’s inter-religious faith, see Muhammad Hedayetullah’s book, *Kabir: The Apostle of Hindi-Muslim Unity*, 1977.

says that she and her family were returning from London to Karachi where they had moved in 1947 after partition, but “instead of getting off in Karachi, we just stayed on the ship to Bombay” (183). It is not clear why she returned to India in 1960, but her decision to stay on that India-bound ship is perhaps her protest to buy into the artificial division of a long and historic civilization simply based on religious markers. In her short stories she has constantly played with names to complicate easy demarcation of identities. The protagonist of “Beyond the Speed of Light” is Padma Mary Abraham Kurian. It is a curious name that encapsulates Hindu, Christian, and Muslim identities, and “Kurian” is perhaps a pun on Marie Curie, the scientist who could have inspired the protagonist in her pursuit of space science. She is described at the beginning of the story as a woman with “olive complexion,” her “mother tongue [is] Malayalam,” her religion is “Syrian Church of Malabar,” but her “personal faith [is] agnostic.” The simultaneous affiliations to multiple identities, and the reminder that religion is often a matter of individual choice and cannot be imposed upon by family or state is also a theme explored in “The Story of Catherine Bolton.” Catherine’s biological mother is named Martha Masih, a mix of Christian and Muslim names. However, she was nicknamed “katto Gilehri” or the squirrel because of her “playful agility” (57). Like Padma Mary, Martha too cannot belong to a single religious group because identities cannot be compartmentalized into single categories as was suggested by the newly found nation-states (Muslims belong in Pakistan, and Hindus in India). Hyder, therefore, uses the genre of the short story to express her polemics against an essentialist construction of religion.

In this chapter, I argue that “The Story of Catherine Bolton,” can be read as multiple counternarratives to the politics of minoritization by making “available to readers forms of consciousness and possibilities of selfhood disavowed by the nation-state...” (Mufti 244). On

one hand, her story can be read as a counternarrative to the different debates about religious conversion that aim to crystallize religious identities in terms of birth and indigenism, and on the other hand, the very idea of religion is subverted as an exploitable commodity artificially imposed on minority bodies. Hyder's polemic against communalism and religion is the main theme of the story, and the thinning of religious identities is explored by a skeptical narrator who is bitter and disillusioned in post-independent India. The story, through its skepticism of the applicability of religious pluralism as promised in the Constitution, creates a heuristic scope to provide counternarratives to the discourse of racial superiority, the emancipatory narrative of missionary conversion, Anglo-Indian dilemma and the problem of passing, the primordality of caste and its consequent generational poverty, and finally, the problem of belonging of religious minorities in a postcolonial, secular nation.

Hyder's rhetorical choices in the story create multiple counternarratives by doing two things. First, by bringing together three colonial Christian groups (Anglo-Indians, poor Europeans, and Dalit converts) and highlighting the inherent racial, class, gender, and caste tensions among the groups, Hyder insinuates that the idea of constructing religious communities along the lines of homogeneity and common interest is futile and arbitrary⁴. Second, Hyder

⁴ Subaltern historians of nation and modernity such as Partha Chatterjee, Sudipta Kaviraj, and Dipesh Chakraborty maintain that "the Indian nation" is not "an object of discovery but of invention" (Kaviraj 1). Kaviraj argues that the modern concept of nation is an unprecedented institution which attempted to replace premodern communities marked by "fuzzy" boundaries and intense emotional ties with an "enumerated" and modern national community. The latter has fixed territorial cartography and includes citizens, resources, capital, majorities, minorities, institutions, activities, exports, incomes, births, deaths, diseases, etc (Kaviraj 30-31). Kaviraj argues that unlike premodern communities, the nation is conceived as a contract between individuals based on the "purely rational calculation of advantages," but it must also deal with the paradoxical imperative to speak the language of community (31). It must hide its newness and rationality by presenting itself as "an immemorially ancient community" based on a "mystic unity of sentiments" rather than interests (31). In order to do this, it makes use of "narrative contracts" where stories about nation define who belongs to it and how. Kaviraj's presupposition on premodern and precapitalist communities is dismissed by Spivak as generic "irreducible methodological presupposition" that privileges desire over interest without providing historically nuanced case for the existence of such communities. Chatterjee also offers a somewhat constrained choice between "grandnarrative of capital as the history of freedom, modernity and progress" and "the narrative of community... persistent in its invocation of

constructs counternarratives of conversion debates by orchestrating the hierarchical relationship among the three groups of colonial Christians despite their common religious identities. Her skepticism of religion and the validity of faith and conviction in religious conversion is constantly mentioned in the story by a sarcastic narrator. Catherine's appropriation from her mother and her artificially constructed identity as an upper-class European is nothing but a desperate survival strategy of a character who is always already marginalized because of her racial hybridity. The same practical approach to survive is seen in her impulsive, sometimes desperate conversions to multiple religions. When she becomes "Rajyalakshmi Shailaja Devijee" in a Hindu temple in Sydney, faith or belief in Hindu ideology had nothing to do in her decision. It was her best option to escape from poverty and prostitution, and she played her cards well. Throughout the story, the theme of deception and constructed identities are exposed through verbal and situational irony. Her fleeting moment to embrace the truth and to confront reality in the end was checked by her awareness of a constructed social status that she had carefully crafted. For a moment, "she had the urge to go out and embrace her cranky old father, her long-suffering mother, her potty uncle. She must say goodbye to this super-fine aristocratic Brahmin family and go away with these humble, crazy, loving, poor people. She belonged to them..." (68). Right after this noble realization her "glance fell upon her diamond bracelet" and her shining Mercedes in the portico, and her upcoming social commitment at the local golf club. Again, the survival mode kicks in and she dives back into her role-playing mode and tries to convince her dumbfounded husband that the people gathered in the garden (who were actually her family) were sent by a political opponent to taint her father-in-law's election campaign. The

the rhetoric of love and kinship against the homogenizing sway of the individual" (238-9). He claims that the narratives of nation have a contractual character and are authored by the nation-state, while the narrative of community have no apparent author, and therefore, by a sleight of hand, not authoritarian (239).

constructed identity of Catherine Bolton, her cycles of expatriation and repatriation, and her multiple conversions from Christianity to Islam, and finally to Hindu Brahminism expose the narrator's (and by proxy, Hyder's) condescension towards weaponizing organized religions to create unbridgeable silos of religious communities. Through her use of sarcasm and bitter humor, Hyder seems to suggest that a figure like Bolton who suffers multiple axes of minoritization because of her mixed racial birth, her mother's lower caste identity, her father's lack of generational wealth, and patriarchal misogyny can only rely on her exploitative cunningness to survive in a nation where racial hybrids were a suspect in the project of nationalism. Therefore, her multiple conversions of convenience become a counternarrative to the debate on conversion that was at the center stage in post-independent India.

The whole debate about conversion in the Indian context is a continuum of colonial hierarchization and legitimation of supposed religious difference. Colonial census data created Hindu as the default religious category that maintained power and legitimacy through the sheer force of numbers. Therefore, converting to Christianity was seen as an affront to one's identity as an Indian. M.V. Nadkarni, an Indian economist, has argued that Christian conversion received much criticism and resistance than any other conversion activity due to two combined factors. The first is the rise of a "Hindu consciousness" in the nineteenth century through the works of social reformers and spiritual leaders like Swami Vivekananda, Ram Mohun Roy, Aurobindo Ghosh, and political figures like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and M. K Gandhi, and the second is the emergence of the idea that conversion to Christianity is an option, a matter of "choice" for personal and community emancipation rather than a matter of compulsion (1562). However, Christian missionaries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have argued that conversion is more of an ideological choice, a matter of faith in the gospel, and not motivated by

socioeconomic upward mobility as was argued by Hindu nationalists like Savarkar, and later, by leaders of the Sangh Parivar, and Bharatiya Janta Party.

For Hindu nationalists, fundamentalists, and even political leaders of other minority religions like Islam and Sikhism, conversion (read Christian missionary conversion) is treated as religious apostasy and viewed on the grounds of an exit principle. It is seen as the ultimate betrayal of one's community, religion, and by extension, disloyalty to the nation. Conversion and suspicion of foreign missionaries are frequently conflated, resulting in vociferous attacks on Dalits (untouchables or lower castes) and women, both of higher and lower castes, thereby robbing of their agency and right to freedom of religion as propagated by the Indian Constitution. Christian conversion was viewed as a suspect because native converts or native Christians (as was the official title) were looked upon as accomplices to the colonial masters, and hence deemed by the nationalists as enemies of the nation.

Geoffrey Oddie argues in his article, "Indian Christians and National Identity, 1870–1947," that there are three basic phases in Christian relations with the nationalist political movement: (a) an early period of hope and enthusiasm including the active involvement of Christians especially in the Indian National Congress; (b) "a phase of disillusionment, increasing suspicion, and withdrawal, largely in response to the rise of militant and anti-Christian "Hindu" nationalism; (c) the period of partial recovery encouraged by a growing disillusionment with the British" (346). As it became clear that after independence, the Congress party would be in power and a Hindu-dominated regime was inevitable, the Christians demanded more political representation. The converted Christians were not a homogenous group and there were internal differences based on social status, profession, and educational level. Upper caste converts consciously maintained a distance from lower caste or Dalit converts, and Anglo-Indians and

domiciled Europeans never identified with the group because of internalized racial superiority. Because of this internal differentiation and lack of solidarity, Oddie has argued that the native Christians were more concerned with individual, and family needs rather than carving out a pan-Indian identity (362). This individualistic sentiment solidified the claim of Hindu nationalists that the Christians were foreigners and practiced a foreign religion and adopted a European style of living. This othering further makes Christian conversion a suspect. Using the conversion debate as a subtext of her story, Hyder, thus, attempts to expose the arbitrariness of conversion and religious affiliation to provide a contrapuntal reading⁵ of her satiric narrative.

In this story, an Anglo-Indian girl, born of a converted Dalit Christian woman and a poor British soldier, goes through multiple cycles of migration, religious conversion, and reconversion to adopt multiple identities of convenience. It is very different from Hyder's idealism in creating a cultural unity in the "idea" of India that is witnessed in her magnum opus, *Ag Ka Darya* that created sensations when it was first published in 1959. It received a Sahitya Akademi Award and was translated into fourteen Indian languages within a decade. The novel was very well received both in Pakistan and India, and Hyder's literary style was compared to that of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Later, she self-translated the novel in English and the "transcreated" version was published in 1998. The Urdu version covers four historical periods starting from "fourth century BC and the inception of the Mauryan empire by Chandragupta," the culmination of the Lodi dynasty, the beginning of the Mughal rule in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the

⁵ In the chapter titled, "Narrative and Social Space" in *Culture and Imperialism* Edward Said defined "contrapuntal reading" as "reading a text with an understand of what is involved when an author shows, for instance, that a colonial sugar plantation is seen as important to the process of maintaining a particular style in England" (66). He elaborates his position stating that contrapuntal reading records both imperialism and resistance towards it that might be forcibly or unconsciously excluded. References to Australia in *David Copperfield* or India in *Jane Eyre* are made because they insinuate the pervasiveness of the British empire and imperialism, and also the reality of decolonization that eventually took place in these colonies (67).

genesis of the “East India Company rule [up to] its consolidation in the 1870s, and the two decades ending in the 1950s that encompassed nationalist struggle, partition, and independence” (Sangari 21). The concurrence of space in different historical temporalities in *Āg k̄ā Daryā* is not limited to create a simple cultural continuity. It involves “continuities of transmission as well as retrievals of the past, and more broadly, an idea of history that is itself infused with forms of concurrence” (Sangari 26).

In Hyder’s novels, civilization becomes a category extending beyond national, religious, and state boundaries. Ancient and medieval cultures, whether Arab, European, or Indian becomes a “cross-regional traffic” always riddled with conflict, yet “always familiar with, affected or influenced by, and aware of ‘other’ cultures, and at times almost cosmopolitan” (Sangari 35). The Indic civilization becomes, for her, a unique space where different traditions and cultures are adapted, synthesized, changed, and invented to create a complex pattern of “linkages and differences that defines the entire subcontinent, and in its unity that encompasses but does not regiment diversity” (Sangari 35). Elaborating on the composite culture of Indian civilization witnessed in the novel, Kumkum Sangari contends,

Contemporary Indians are products of this Indic civilization rather than of its nations. As in Nehru’s text, in *Āg k̄ā Daryā* the syncretic is just not secular and multi-religious, it is also the dynamic of constant change, always poised on the new that surrenders neither to an insider’s hegemonic assimilation nor to an outsider’s imperious hegemony. (35)

The novels show a concurrent past, the evolving modern that is not limited by national borders, and the “idea” of India that never existed in isolation and rigid definitions, “but has ‘lived’ always in the form of encounters, surprises, conversations, transitions, translocations, and reimagings” (Sangari 36). The pluralistic idea of India that Hyder creates in the novel is a

holistic one that embraces characters from different religious backgrounds who are important and integral to the ebb and tide of an ancient civilization.

In her novels, novellas, and short stories, Hyder captures lost times and current cultural realities. Her migrant experiences in England, Pakistan, and India gave her a unique experiential insight into the process of migration and what it entails. It also gave her a distinct perspective of processing duality and pluralism, and she hated being compartmentalized into any single identity; either being labeled as an Urdu writer or a Pakistani or Indian writer. She rejected binary divisions that were unacceptable to both Indian and Pakistani Marxist writers associated with Progressive Writers' Association, to Pakistani officialdom, and to religious dogmatists. Binaries like Urdu versus English (she claimed both), Muslim versus Hindu (she wrote of a syncretic culture where relationships were complex and symbiotic), India versus Pakistan (she lived in and wrote about both) were simplistic and artificial to her (Steele 187). Her attempt to self-translate her work was also part of the project to reject monoliths and reach out to a wider, English speaking, western audience. ⁶Her tendency to break away from norms was also seen in her choice of literary genres. She chose short stories and not her familiar space of the novel to represent marginal, hyphenated, and slightly eccentric characters who complicate our understanding of minoritization by claiming multiple axes of identity. The short story as a genre gave her a heuristic space that novels could not, therefore, an analysis of the genre is warranted before exploring the counternarratives Hyder create in this story.

⁶ See Khalid Hasan's essay, "Qurratulain Hyder: The First Lady of Urdu Literature," and M. Asaduddin's article, "Lost/Found in Translation: Qurratulain Hyder as Self-Translator" in *Qurratulain Hyder and the River of Fire: Meaning, Scope, and Significance of her Legacy*. Ed. Rakhshanda Jalil. Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford UP, 2011.

Genre of the Short Story: A Space for Counternarratives

The short story as a literary genre has been illusive in its definition. It is an impossible task to point out the ingredients of this genre. When one talks about short stories, the pre-fix “short” becomes problematic if that indicates the length of a text. If the focus is on the shortness of a story, then it can yield problematic results because not all short stories are brief. Instead, we should focus on what a short story does that is different from other genres like a novel or a poem. Tania Meheta in her article, “The Changing Configurations of the Indian Short Story: Sites, Space and Semantics” defines the experience of a short story as a metonymy of human experiences. She says,

short story probably captures the shimmerness of any experience—a slice, something partial but where the slice and the partial becomes something of a ‘whole’ in itself. When one talks of experience, one is talking of an experience which is intense, which defies categorization and evaluation, as small or big, important or trivial. (151)

Short stories, therefore, aim to focus on a “slice” of life, significant or insignificant moments with their fragmentation and ambiguity. The stories create a perception of lived experience that is articulated by the characters in the story. The tone of the short story, as defined by Meheta, is one of “shared confidence, even occasional confession, as if the moments we recall from certain short stories arise from our own experience” (151). The intimate relationship of the readers with the plot and the characters creates an honesty of purpose in the story. It is perhaps because of this raw honest characteristic of the genre that inspired Qurratulain Hyder to choose this genre to tell the stories of characters who have often remained marginal in the grand narrative of a novel or an epic.

There have been many attempts to define the short story by distinguishing it from other forms of fiction, by explaining why it is not a sketch, a fairy tale, or a myth. Somerset Maugham claimed that many of Chekhov's great stories were anecdotes and not proper stories at all. Writers like Henry James felt that a short story "must be an idea" —it cannot be a simple work of fiction (Meheta 152). Similar to the contestations of these authors, there are also different notions about the structural format of a short story. A. L. Bader distinguishes between “older” and newer forms of short stories in terms of their adherence to a traditional plot structure and unity of action. In his essay, “The Structure of the Modern Short Story” Bader elaborates on the ingredients of a traditional plot structure whose action is based on a conflict, and the progression of the story happens through “a series of complications, thus evoking suspense, and whose action finally resolves the conflict, thus giving the story "point'” (86). The structure of traditional plot-based stories is dramatic; somewhere near the beginning of the story the reader is given a line of progression to follow a clear statement of the conflict, or a hint of it, or sometimes merely a sense of mystery, of tension, or a perception that a conflict exists, although its nature is not known. Then the plot revolves around finding a solution to resolve the crisis and give a neat meaning to the story (86). Therefore, the plot becomes a dominant mode in the story to describe the relationship among characters and to define the nature of the conflict, both external and internal, and the neat progression from crisis to resolution gives the story an unity of action that Aristotle considered so important for Greek tragedy. In contrast to this unity, modern short stories, argues Bader, frequently lack a unified narrative structure, and are often dismissed as “plotless, fragmentary, and amorphous” (87). He suggests that modern writers have attempted to break away from the plot structure because they consider it unreal and artificial, an outside imposition in their attempt to tell the everyday and mundane experiences of postmodern lives.

Hyder's short stories which were predominantly published after 1947 also show an antipathy towards a chronological plot structure. In her short stories published in the collection, *The Street Singers of Lucknow and Other Stories* the notion of a chronological understanding of a beginning, middle, and end of a plot is challenged when different time periods of human history are fused together to create a narrative of dystopia. In her fictional world, skeletons of a reluctant nun and a cigarette-smoking Bishop from the Byzantium era can reside in modern day Vienna, Paris, and London ("Confessions of St. Flora of Georgian"), and characters can time travel between Egyptian empire and 1975 South India in a science fiction that defies genre expectation by becoming a futile love story where lovers of different eras are accidentally stuck in the past with no hope of return ("Beyond the Speed of Light"). In "The Story of Catherine Bolton" even though we have a semblance of a chronological narration of Catherine's life, yet the indirect references to colonial history, the contestations and suspicion of missionary conversions, and problematic positioning of caste ideology act as a palimpsestic narrative in the story.

So, is Hyder's experimentation with form an exception or is it part of a larger experimentation that can be associated with the Indian short stories? More importantly, can there be a homogenous category of Indian, or even South Asian short story? There are no straight answers to these questions. Critics often associate South Asian oral traditions and the *Puranas*, to be the precursors of the short story form. However, as K.S. Duggal has argued in his essay, "Contemporary Indian Short Story" the modern form of the genre was probably influenced by the West, and the anti-colonial sentiment and freedom movement created an impetus for the proliferation of short stories in the 1930s and 40s. Nation and nationalism, patriotism, partition and its horrors all provided rich materials for the South Asian short stories. These were not the only themes that were expressed in the stories. Several authors like Rabindranath Tagore wrote

about the hardships and politics of village life, the conditions of women in nineteenth century rural Bengal, social evils like dowry and child marriage, and different machinations of human relationships. Despite these varied subjects, Dipesh Chakrabarty uses the nation and nationalism as his analytical tool to look at Tagore's short stories in his book chapter "Nation and Imagination" which is part of his book, *Provincializing Europe*. Examining Tagore's work, Chakrabarty concludes that between 1890 and 1910 the writer created 'a division of labor between prose and poetry' (151). Thus, Chakrabarty tells us that on the one hand we find in Tagore's prose pieces, "in particular the short stories about Bengali rural life in the collection *Galpaguchha*, ... a trenchant critique of society and a clear political will for reform ..." (151). Noting that these 'prosaic writings' offered incisive criticisms on the practice of dowry and the oppression of women, Chakrabarty compares these stories to Tagore's poetry (152). There, he argues, that Tagore has a much more romantic approach to nature and represents rural Bengal as 'a land of arcadian and pastoral beauty' (153). Chakrabarty's one-sided approach does not do justice to the wide canvas of Tagore's work and the contrast between his prose and poetry seems simplistic. However, this is symptomatic of a recurrent tendency among postcolonial scholars to focus on history and use rewritings of history as a dominant analytical lens to read literature. To focus on how the dominant narrative of history is challenged in postcolonial texts, scholars have disproportionately looked at the Anglophone novels published in ex-colonial nations. In the process, they have ignored vernacular writings and other genres like the short story which is often considered as a "minor" form of literature.

Aamir Mufti in his book chapter, "Saadat Hasan Manto: A Greater Story Writer than God" also focuses on this issue. The short story was considered a minor genre in Urdu *Afsana*. Mufti argues that the problem of Urdu literature was its unacceptability in popular imagination

because Urdu was seen as an exclusively Muslim register that did not have a pan-Indian appeal (182).

The use of Urdu as the language of short stories written by majority of Progressive⁷ Writers like Ismat Chughtai, Saadat Hasan Manto, Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, Ali Sardar Jafri, Sibte Hassan and others itself is a sign of resistance to politicize language as majority and minority. In Urdu literature we saw a reversal of genre hierarchy. The Progressive writers rejected the novel and used a “minor” form of literature, the short story, as their main vehicle of communication. Aamir Mufti argues that this foregrounding of the short story at the cost of the novel may be understood in terms of the ambivalent relationship of Urdu literary culture to the discourse of Indian nationhood. He asserts, “The absence of the canonical novel form in Urdu may be understood as an inscription, at the level of literary form and institution, of the dialectic of selfhood in Indian modernity” (183). The nationalist narrative of the late colonial period had a distinct secular nationalist consciousness. To the progressives of 1930s who were influenced by Marxist readings of literature, the realistic portrayal of society in literature was the prime responsibility of an artist. Thus, with this “realism” we see some distinct themes emerging—the onslaught of modernization on the “eternal” villages, urbanization, displacement of rural population, the psycho-sexual tensions and the crises of middle class home, the multilayered problems of the modern city and crises of the individual in a state (181). What the language of the realist aesthetics tried to define is a relationship between writing and the nation so that it is more accurate to speak of national realism in this context. Mufti quotes Lukács who saw the

⁷ The Progressive Writers’ Association (PWA) was formed in 1935-36. Inspired by the anti-fascist realistic writings of Europe, a group of Indian students in London formed the group with the Urdu writer Sajjid Zaheer as their leader. Within a year, the group held their first All-India meeting in Lucknow, gathering together an astonishing number of country’s most distinguished writers including Munshi Premchand, the doyen of Hindi-Urdu literature, who became the group’s first president (Mufti 182).

short story as a recorder of moments or fragments of individual's experience rather than the totality of individual life. He states, "It [the short story] sees absurdity in all its undistinguished and unadorned nakedness, and the exorcising power of this view, without fear or hope, gives it the consecration of form" (qtd. In Mufti 184). The Urdu short story takes such an exorcising stance with respect to the narrative of Indian selfhood. The science of motherhood and domesticity appear uncannily within the world of the brothel. Saadat Hasan Manto was one of the main Progressive writers who experimented with the image of a prostitute as a metonymic representation of a fragmented nation. For Manto, the body of the prostitute and the nation becomes one unit. *Dharti* or motherland points to the territorial body of the nation which is played out in the body of the prostitute. By juxtaposing the sexualized and commodified body of the prostitute to the desexualized and idealized body after mother-nation, Manto deviates from the abstract and universal portrayal of the nation in nationalistic literature (197). The politicization of the body of the prostitute in the nationalistic project of nation building is also seen in Hyder's short story. Catherine Bolton, a racially hybrid and hyphenated character is not given any other option but to become a prostitute because her biracial body cannot become a metonymy of the nation. Her exotic looks, blue eyes, and fair skin can serve patriarchal desire and lust, but cannot be accommodated into the nation-state.

Manto's resistance to the politics of language by choosing Urdu over Hindi and using the short story as his vehicle of expression instead of the novel is also seen in Hyder. She, however, wrote in both Urdu and English, and most of the short stories published after 1947 were written and published in English.

“The Story of Catherine Bolton” was also written in English, just like her several short stories and novellas⁸. The original publication date is unclear. But it is anthologized in two collections, *Contemporary Urdu Short Stories* published in 1991 and *The Street Singers of Lucknow and Other Stories* published in 2008 along with her other short fictions like “Confessions of Saint Flora of Georgia,” “Tea Gardens of Sylhet,” “Honour,” and “A Night on Pali Hill.” This collection contains short stories, novellas, and a pseudo-memoir, and showcases her deftness in multivocal composition, circular narrative style, sarcasm, and pastiche. Playing with temporal fluidity in her narrative space, Hyder challenges the argument nourished by the Progressive Writer’s Association (PWA) that the supreme responsibility of creative writers was to bring out the inextricable link between literature and politics. Inspired by the anti-establishment writings of Trotsky and Gramsci in Europe and the publication of a controversial book of Urdu fiction called *Angare* in 1932, The PWA was established with the view to create grassroots narratives of silenced and marginal voices of South Asian societies. There was an internal dynamic influencing the Indian intellectual throughout the 1930s. The freedom struggle was emerging as a mass movement at the forefront of Indian politics, with ideas of socialism and liberation from colonial rule gaining an increasing currency amongst activists. Strong nationalist feelings began to emerge in literature, particularly Urdu literature which reflected sympathy for the poor, a questioning of existing customs as well as desire for liberation from foreign rule and indigenous elites. However, the PWA project was more radical and uncompromising in its ethos. They wanted to break away from the traditions of Mir and Ghalib and create a new language that could record the transformation and social change of the period. Similar approach was adopted

⁸ In the Introduction of *Street Singers* Aamer Hussein writes, “It is possible that some of her short stories may originally have been written in English, but that she would never have written her novels originally in that language is made clear by the long lapse of time between the genesis of each work and its rebirth” (xiii).

by Indian Progressives as Premchand⁹ called on to “adopt the point of view of the man in the street in their writing” and to:

Fulfill their creative aspirations by a radical realization of the causes that hamper our social life and by portrayal, through a heightened sensibility, of all those tragedies in the obscure lanes and alleys of our towns and villages which have only just begun to find utterance in the literature of India. (Ahmed 13)

Hyder (1927-2007), though a contemporary of most PWA writers, maintained a distance from their Marxist political approach. Repeatedly, she has been the subject of derision of Progressive writers like Ismat Chughtai for creating upper-class protagonists who appear to be ensconced in their own, small, sophisticated world, rapidly being devoured by that of the teeming masses. Nevertheless, though she does not adhere to the Marxist socialist manifesto, her works are tinged with eclecticism, humanism, modernity, and reveal a deep-rooted philosophical perception of the meanderings of the river of life (Rizvi 67-68). In her novels, particularly in *Āg kā Daryā* and *Gardish-e-Rang-e-Chaman*, she explores an impressive range of subcultures, time lapse, and figures in the margin like Anglo-Indians, Sufi khanqahs, street performers, prostitutes, and the *nouveau riche* classes of the post 1947 subcontinent (Rizvi 51). She uses modernist techniques like “flashback or the photograph as a visual mnemonic device” (Sangari 28). Her lyrical prose style juxtaposes with the “modalities of layering, silting, and other cumulative processes that compose a cultural geography” (Sangari 28). She combines a tragicomic idiom with elements of the fabular or fantastical that is distinctly her own and weaves social satire and

⁹ Premchand is considered the first Hindi author whose writings prominently featured realism. His novels describe the problems of the poor and the urban middle-class. His works depict a rationalistic outlook devoid of romantic sentimentalism. He used literature for the purpose of arousing public awareness about national and social issues and often wrote about topics related to casteism, corruption, child widowhood, prostitution, feudal system, poverty, colonialism and on India's freedom movement. He was the president of the first PWA meeting in India.

melodrama into the orchestration of her multivocal composition (Hussein xiv). Her creative choices are guided by a pluralistic sense of nationalism, civilization, religious syncretism, and the concurrence of historical and actual temporality. Her narrative depicts simultaneity with their “double access to fictional time and contemporary time, its episodic structure, its syncretizing encounters with pīrs, jogīs, Sufis, and mystics, its irrepressible desire to find stories, and the women, hidden behind the mysterious wonders that filled the world” (Sangari 32).

To articulate her discomfort with the new nationalistic ideal of creating a new India, Hyder uses humor in its acerbic form in her short stories. The narrators of her stories are bitter, self-deprecating, self-centered, slightly eccentric, and mostly social pariahs. They tell stories of Catherine Bolton who is of mixed-race and forever resides in an interstitial space, the first person narration of St. Flora of Georgia shows an absolute irreverence for nunnery and all its bearings, Padma Mary Abraham Kurian’s story in “Beyond the Speed of Light” combines elements of science fiction and romance to knit an anti-climactic tale of disillusionment where the rise and fall of hallowed imperial civilizations are questioned of their authenticity, Rodaba and Homai in “A Night on Pali Hill” are two old, isolated, and eccentric sisters who find meaning in creating a wax figure of their lover who was burnt to death years ago, and the narrator in “Hyena’s Laughter” recounts the story of a young girl who chooses prostitution for easy money and in the end suffers a violent death in the jaws of an alligator while trying to escape with her paramour. The prostitute’s fluid identity and her convenient construction of selfhood resonate with that of Catherine Bolton. There is a certain emptiness surrounding all the stories in the collection that haunts the readers. The stories are dark and pessimistic, and in the end, there is a refrain left as is told by the narrator of “The Guest House” – “life, it had devoured the humans. Only cockroaches shall survive” (103).

To convey the dystopic human journey, Hyder chooses a circular narrative style in her short stories. In her stories, she creates a palimpsest of time and space, a confluence of diverse characters from different classes, religious background, social position, age, and ethnicity in the short story. Catherine's tacit construction of self-identity through continuous process of conversion and reconversion, her expatriation and repatriation, and her impossibility to collaborate and resist at the same time are all woven together with simultaneous stories of her father's migration from and return to India, Katto's inability to claim motherhood, Celia Richmond's tragic outcome, Catherine's multiple marriages, and chance encounters with a fake spiritual guru who is later revealed as Catherine's lecherous Hindi teacher who was rebuffed in his attempt to kiss her, a Dutch Sufi who believed that life was ultimately nothing more than "holiday inns and plastic cups" (80), a not "frightfully bright" Prince Shailendra, and finally, a stoic Fazal Masih who in the end "stands motionless, with hands outstretched like Saint Kabir, praying for friends and foes alike" (86). The poignant climax at the end of the story combines realism with irony. The garden scene, reeking with wry humor and sarcasm, brings together all characters like actors in a farce (85). It is like a stage where Catherine's nemesis is enacted dramatically. There is the "ashen-faced" Catherine trying to follow the rule of struggle for survival, a shocked Prince Shailendra along with other minor characters who add to the sarcasm of the scene. We encounter:

The bogus swami; the French disciples who were trying to escape *Mahathagini Maya*—the swindling world of illusion—and had been trapped by a crooked "godman," the scowling, haughty Raja, the timid, sad faced ayah, [and] the incredible old Cockney from London...(85)

The simultaneous performativity of characters in moments of crisis and the exploitation of incongruities expose the authorial intent to satirize arbitrary legitimization of ascriptive primordiality. The fluidity of Catherine's multiple religious identities—born as an Anglo-Indian of a converted Christian Indian mother and a working-class British father, but forcefully incorporated into an invented identity as a white, upper-class European; married and converted into Islam; remarried and reconverted as a Hindu upper caste/class princess—all point out the arbitrariness of identity formation. Her fluidity and invented identities are antithetical to the notion of “constructing” religious communities that was justified by the colonial census, and later, by the Hindu right-wing nationalists.

Narratives and Counternarratives of Religious Communities and Conversion

The tendentious history of conceptualizing religious communities as inert, reductive, homogenous, and primordial constructions is predicated on conflating faith with community, and privileging religion over other ascriptions of community building.

In the above-mentioned context, religion is then understood as a static definition that is primordial and “isolated with social processes and from other religion” (Sangari 3289). As Kumkum Sangari argues in “Politics of Diversity: Religious Communities and Multiple Patriarchies” that “religious ties are privileged over other birth and chosen affiliations like language, caste, class, custom, education, and occupation” (3289). She further elaborates that “maintenance of religious communities appears to be the favored social project primarily for non-European countries that were formerly subject to some form of colonialism” (3289) to justify the colonial practice of consolidating discrete religious identities through the legitimization of census data. Arguing about personal law, civil law, and the privilege of male desire in the context of religious communities, Sangari further contends that:

The concept of religious community needs to be rethought for a number of reasons. First ... it underpins the defense of personal law in numerous ways and at the same time plays into some liberal and majoritarian projects for a uniform civil code. Second, community claims are not confined to minorities but a central feature of an aggressive pan-Indian Hindu majoritarianism dramatized in postures of victimage and retaliation. Third, the prevalent definition of community is so reductive, static, and essentialist that a defense of community in the name of social pluralism is self-defeating....(20)

What becomes problematic in the construction of religious community is that of an assumed community cohesiveness that is simultaneously imaginary (to use Benedict Anderson's phrase), ideological, and political (as is seen in the *Hindutva* project in the Indian context). Community particularism and discreteness create deep fissures between majority and minority religious groups that result in homogenizing them further. The act of classifying religious groups as majority and minority communities recall colonial classification of religious identity in India. Susan Bayly argues that religion became an important marker of "civilization and savagery" for early orientalists like W. W. Hunter who became a well-known authority of the castes and tribes of the Indian subcontinent and played a huge role in mythologizing the supposed superiority of the Aryan race and their religion, Hinduism. In his best-known work, *Annals of Rural Bengal*, Hunter regards the Bengal region "as a living battle ground shaped by titanic warfare between noble, spiritually advanced Aryans and rude aboriginal races whose religious life was supposedly dark, savage, and 'animistic'" (qtd. in Bayly 77). Hunter's speculation was shared by a wide range of Indian nationalists who used race, eugenics, bloodline, and religious faith to legitimize their claim for independent nation-state because they claimed that nationhood was the highest achievement of human history and to achieve national fulfillment, "people of *common blood*

must find the means to realize their spiritual potential, as well as purifying themselves of the physiological and moral inadequacies defined by both God and science as harmful to the nation's health" (qtd. in Bayly 92, emphasis mine).

In the process of identifying religion with nation building, 'Hindus' became an undifferentiated, uncomplicated group identifiable with the imaginary framework of the Indian nation-state. As Gyanendra Pandey has said, "...the Hindus are not a constituent. They are the nation... Like the land and the trees, the rivers and the mountains, these invisible Hindus are the nation's natural condition, its essence and spirit. Their culture is the nation's culture, their history its history. This needs no stating" (624). The symbolic interrelatedness between nation and the Hindu religion is a continuum of the 19th Century colonial census that stated that "every native who was unable to define his creed or who described it by any other name than that of some recognized religion or of a sect of some such religion, was held to be and classed as a Hindu" (Jones 92). Therefore, Hindu became a metonymy for the nation, and Hinduism, a default religious category of national belonging.

This consolidation of religious communities and tightening of community boundaries in terms of majority and minority was aided and facilitated by colonial judiciary and census operations. As Sumit Sarakar has pointed out, in matters of "personal" or "family" law, the British had decided in the 1770s that they would administer according to Hindu or Islamic sacred texts and in consultation with Brahmin pundits and Muslim ulema, differentially, for the two major religious traditions. So, in everyday existence, one had to declare oneself a Hindu or a Muslim or a member of any other religious communities that had come to develop "personal" legal systems of their own. This was different from the earlier Mughal practice. The Mughal courts had never tried to penetrate deep into lower levels through the kind of systemic hierarchy

of appellate jurisdiction that the British rule developed over time. Disputes in the Mughal court were often decided at the local or village levels according to diverse customary standards that would have had little to do with scriptural or religious principles (85).

Religion, in the colonial jurisprudence, thus, became a pervasive category where identities of different ethnic communities were framed in relation to the majoritarian religious group, i.e., the Hindus. However, the classification became ambiguous as there was no definitive description of the 'Hindu' category. The census did not know whether to put the untouchables, the tribals, and the Sikhs under the same umbrella category or to list them separately. Hence 'Hindu' became a default category where class, caste, gender, and religion conflated with each other to create an indiscriminate group identity. This categorization created a binary between 'Hindus' and all others: Muslims, Indian Christians, Parsis, Jains, etc. and helped to create two uncomplicated group identities that could be labeled as 'majority' and 'minority' (Pandey 610).

The reductive logic of defining, sedimenting, and privileging religious majoritarianism percolates legal representations of minority communities in postcolonial Indian judiciary. The debate over uniform civil code or UCC in 1949 was primarily on the grounds of guaranteeing the state to regulate civil life and family relationships of its citizens and to protect the right of minorities to their cultural identity. Minorities, particularly Muslim communities, had to be reassured of their rights to religious and cultural freedom within the new democracy, which was to be governed by the dictates of Hindu majority. What emerged then was a set of conflicting concerns for the newly evolving Indian state. At one level, it was deemed necessary that the various sects, castes, and tribes from the erstwhile Princely States, from territories under the control of various tribes, and from the British Raj be integrated as one community by enacting a

uniform set of family laws, which under the garb of legal protection, would actually benefit the majoritarian religion and establish a Hindu hegemony (Agnes 295).

The deliberate politics of minoritization through usurping the legal system had a long-standing claim of legitimacy. The fear of extinction (caused by rampant conversion to Christianity and Islam) became a semantic ploy used by Hindu right-wing political parties to resist conversion. It is normalized in the popular imaginaire that Hinduism is a near-unique among religious traditions in being non-proselytizing. In other words, one is born a Hindu but cannot become one. This fits well with the common sense view because caste, whether in the *varna* (skin color or class) or the *jati* (race or community) sense¹⁰, is crucial to Hinduism and that it is hereditary (Sarkar 80). Therefore, conversion to other faiths is a loss that cannot be recuperated, hence unfair and dangerous to the survival of the majority. The competitive “logic of numbers” made possible by the census enumeration acquired greater saliency through the gradual spread of representative institutions. In regions where the major religious communities had been revealed by census operations to have roughly equal numbers like in Bengal and Punjab, even insignificant changes through conversions came to be perceived as ominous. The

¹⁰ Partha Chatterjee in “Communities and Nation” has argued about the irrational and arbitrary definitions of *jati* and *varna*. He provides a list of definitions from standard Bengali dictionaries. One of them compiled by Jnanendramohan Das lists *jati* and *varna* as:

1. As origin, such as Musalman by birth, Vaisnav by birth, a beggar by birth [*jatite* musalman, *jāt bhikāri*]
2. Classes of living species, such as human *jati*, animal *jati*, bird *jati* etc.
3. *Varna* following from classifications according to *gūṇa* (attributes) and *karma*, such as Brahman etc.
4. *Varna, gotra, kula* [lineage, clan] such as Arya *jati*, Semitic *jati*
5. Human collectivities bound by loyalty to a state or organized around the natural and cultural characteristics of a country or province [here Das adds in English “nation;race”], such as English, French, Bengali, Punjabi, Japanese, Gujrati, etc. (Chatterjee 221)

Another compiler, Haricharan Bandyopadhyay lists most of the above uses but adds the category of caste as it is used in Indian sociology, as a derivation of Persian *Zat*. Chatterjee adds that a Sanskrit-Bengali-English trilingual dictionary gives as the English equivalents of *jati* the following: “species, caste, birth, family, universals” (qtd. in Chatterjee 221). Chatterjee summarizes that the above definitions point out that one could belong to several *jatīs* “contextually but not simultaneously, invoking in each context, a collectivity in which membership is not a matter of self-interested individual choice or contractual agreement but an immediate inclusion, originary, as it is by birth” (222).

resultant compound of resentment and anxiety was best articulated by U.N. Mukherji's very influential book, *Hindus: A Dying Race* published in Calcutta in 1909, which skillfully used census data and predictions to develop a horrific vision of Hindu decline as contrasted to Muslim growth and strength (Sarkar 91). PK Datta's essay "Dying Hindus" begins with the premise of U.N Mukherjee's book that was based on Othering Muslims on account of their marriage excesses: they can marry four times and as a result, proliferate so much that Hindus will be a minority. This fear of "dying out" of numbers helped to create a Hindu constituency that thrived on fear and self-victimization in opposition to its minority religious groups, particularly Muslims and Christians. The simple census table containing the numbers of Hindus and Muslims since 1872 in Bengal, with a two-line marginal statement that stated the relative numerical extent of Hindu decrease was often used as visual tool to remind about the imminent death of Hindus and the alarming rise of the Muslims. This informational cherry picking further anchored the idea that the extermination of Hindus was a matter of common sense at this point, it was indisputable, and hence, it was only a matter of time when the Muslims will take over Bengal. The apprehension caused by Mukherjee's logic turned him into an expert on casteism and the book became a panegyric of caste reform and the need to stop conversion at all costs.

Another ideological means of criminalizing and censoring conversion was to link religious conversion with national security and sovereignty of the land. Painting Islam and Christianity as "foreign" religions, alien to the indigenous practices and beliefs of *pitribhumi* (fatherland) and branding converts as traitors and unpatriotic in times of crisis and conquest—a charge strategically used against Christian converts in the colonial era due to their religious affinity with the colonial rulers, the early votaries of Hindu nationalism expressed hostility towards proselytization and religious propagation. The greater the fear of extinction became

institutionalized in 1920s, the need to carve out a common essence or “Indianness” became more entrenched that led to further ostracization of minorities who didn’t identify with what Vinayak Damodar Savarkar had claimed as “Hindutva or Hinduness.” As he articulated it, Hindutva was not merely a religious identification, but an inclusive collective identity under “one God, one goal, one language, one country, one Nation” (130). His followers took a step further in conflating Hindutva with Hinduism and what it means to be “Indian.” Golwalkar, the influential head of the RSS, suggested in his book, *We or Our Nation Defined*, that minorities should be asked to pledge their allegiance to certain symbolic elements of Hindu identity (Bauman and Young 189). The attempt of the Hindu right-wing to define and essentialize a homogenous identity is rationalized through a relational logic where Hindus are defined as *not* Muslims, Christians, or Parsis. The consequent effect of this relational logic is a desperate attempt to define who is a Hindu and how can they be yoked under the insignia of Hindutva.

The imaginary construction of static communities where solidarity is forged through a shared understanding of a common religion (read Hinduism) is debunked by Hyder’s skeptical narrator. Catherine’s multiple conversion and cycles of expatriation and repatriation make the idea of a shared and imaginary religious community a suspect. After being duped and abandoned by the fake sufi in Jakarta, Catherine, now Catherine Koot, a converted Muslim Anglo-Indian, returns to Australia as a bus conductor and desperately tries to survive in an intensely hostile world riddled with racism and gender inequalities. She chanced upon a rich Hindu prince from India who was immediately smitten by her beauty and “impeccable” European background that her aunt invented for her. The young widower thought about the age-old tradition of concubinage practiced by his family, and the prestige of keeping at least “one European woman (often a Cockney barmaid) in their harems” and was convinced that Catherine, with her “pure” European

blood would be a good choice for a wife. He proposed to Catherine and the following week, Catherine Koot was renamed Shailaja Devi after being converted to Hinduism at a Hindu ashram in Sydney. She was never asked to produce her birth certificate or provide any proof of her previous religion. The ease and convenience of her multiple conversions make us question the fidelity of conversion in defining religious community.

The anti-conversion rhetoric based on the self-serving idea that Hinduism is an absolute religion based on “pure” faith, therefore, proselytization is not necessary because of its apparent superiority over other religions is rudely countered by the narrator of “The Story of Catherine Bolton.” The narrator shows utter irreverence towards religion as a *modus operandi* for national belonging. The purpose is not to belittle religion as an ideology but to point out its exploitable quality in cosmopolitan modernity. The fake guru who happened to be Catherine’s lecherous Hindi teacher who was rebuffed for attempting to kiss her, was now a “suave godman,” who was a “new arrival on the international guru circuit” (82). The fake guru and Catherine Bolton, now Rajyalakshmi Shailaja Devi, instantly recognized one another. Both were worldly wise and opportunists who used their talents skillfully. The former Hindi teacher whispered to Catherine, “Listen carefully, Chhoti Katto. It’s a highly competitive market for us swamis. Today, I have flourishing ashrams and thousands of disciples—all White, Wealthy, and Gullible. You don’t tell a soul about my past and I won’t inform this Brahmin royal family that you are a sweeper’s daughter” (84). The mutual understanding of these contested characters in maintaining silence about their true identity shows the bitterness of a narrator who is skeptical of the function of religion and questions the formulation of religious identity and the consolidation of religious communities that are often predicated upon a biased understanding of primordiality. The exchange of dialogue also questions the beleaguered narratives of conversion that questions the

intention and reason for exit from one's birth religion. Here Catherine's easy adoption of multiple religious identities (Christianity, Islam, and finally, high caste Hindu) point out her desperation to survive through deceit rather than true faith or material benefit. In contrast to her desperation, the fake guru's exploitation of people's suffering and the need for religious anchor is far more nefarious and condemnable. By equating profit with religion, and the rise of Hindu proselytization with apparent western gullibility, the narrator weaves in his/her skepticism of not only the function of religion, but also the need of formulating religious communities that often becomes the breeding ground of religious intolerance and communal riots. The discomfort with religion, not as pure faith or ideology, but as an organizational and exploitable category of formulating national and personal identity, is a major theme in Hyder's short stories written after 1947.

In Catherine Bolton's story, the fake guru is a fictional representation of a growing global phenomenon of exporting Hinduism in the western hemisphere that started with Vivekananda in the mid-nineteenth century. The epiphenomenon of self-Orientalizing gurus to export neo-Hinduism, techno Hinduism, and well packaged, self-help type of Hinduism was popularized by self-professed gurus like Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, Bhagwan Rajneesh (alias Osho), Deepak Chopra, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, and the recent sensation, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev. The use of pseudo-scientific terms (inner engineering of the body, chemical imbalance of the brain, etc.) and a rendition of the Vedas and other Hindu scriptures in plain English (interpreted and delivered specifically for a western audience) reinforce their attempt to calibrate on globalization and cosmopolitanism to export neo-Hinduism and neo-Buddhism as modern packages that will solve depression, alienation, and postmodern angst in the western world (Aravamudan 223). Charlatans camouflaged as gurus export a durable and flexible "form of institutionality in neo-

Hindu diasporic contexts such as guru-chela or guru-disciple relationship, yoga techniques, communal living in ashrams and monasteries in lieu of family, and received philosophical attitudes” (Aravamudan 224).

In *Guru English* Srinivas Aravamudan has argued that ashrams, missions, and religious retreats are in a way Foucauldian “heterotopia(s)” just like schools, prisons, psychiatric wards, and hospitals where power structure is subversive. They “provide this combination of a materially lived and real situation, and yet at the same time, psychologically, designate a highly unreal and virtual space, within which normality and perversion, power and resistance are recognized and negotiated” (230). Institutions of organized religion become heterotopias in mirroring the power structure and social hierarchy based on caste, ethnicity, gender, and community belonging. The Protestant and Catholic Churches in India controlled by Europeans mirrored the same racial attitudes and discrimination that were apparent in British bureaucracy. The Church became a symbolic extension of control and discipline of native bodies to further uphold the theory of racial superiority of the colonizers. The Church also legitimized the primordality of caste in the lives of the converts. In Hyder’s story, Martha was an attractive, illiterate, and spirited sister of Fazal and was lovingly called “Katto Gilehri” or squirrel. She was born into a converted Christian family. The name of her brother, Fazal, suggests that the family converted to Christianity from Islam. However, conversion had not saved them from working as a janitor in Miss Celia’s home following the dictates of *varnashram* that mandates pursuance of family profession by members of each caste. In the climactic garden scene, Arthur Bolton, the abandoned lover of Martha, calls her a Bhangi, referring to her previous low caste birth, and completely ignoring her conversion to Christianity where apparently these hierarchies did not exist. Katto is never seen as an equal of Mrs. Richmond despite their common religious faith, nor

is Catherine ever mentioned as a Bhangi herself. Bhangi remains a problematic epithet that allows the narrator to interrogate popular narratives of conversion either as a matter of choice and genuine faith, or as a convenient strategy to escape from poverty and oppression.

Counternarrative of Caste: The Figure of the Bhangi and Christian Converts

In Hyder's story the figure of the Bhangi becomes a trope to construct counternarratives to two different strains of conversion theory; one upheld by the Church and the other by Gandhi. In the story we see a conflation of class, caste, and religious conversion in the relationship between Martha Masih (Katto) and Miss Celia Richmond. Katto's Christianity could not wash away her lower caste ethnicity in a Christian Church and community at large where equity and solidarity could not be forged through religious commonness. The promise of humaneness, equality, and social prosperity that was the motivation for her family's conversion never materialized for Martha and her brother, Fazil. The same class and caste ostracization converts felt prior to conversion continued even after they adopted Christianity. It is never explored why Katto's family converted. The narrator's casual reference to the family being baptized by Celia Richmond's missionary father ensconce a proselytizing phenomenon that guided many missionaries to convert their servant class displaying a distressing need to "save" the souls of heathens who would then become servile agents of colonial bureaucracy and help legitimize the civilizing mission of the British imperial power.

The short story provides an insight into the unwritten laws of domestic space where relationships are claimed and disowned. Katto should know her place as a domestic servant, as a recipient of the "benevolence" that Richmond's family has showed in bringing them under their wings. However, the two Christian families are never equal following the dictates of the scriptures. The social and racial hierarchy between the Christian master and the converted

Christian servant echoes colonial hierarchization between the colonizer and the colonized. The Church was also guilty of perpetuating this rigid hierarchy thereby ignoring the teachings of the Bible that preaches equality of all humanity in the eyes of God. Questioning the emancipatory narrative of the Christian ideology, the narrator of the story sarcastically interjects, “in every hotel she [Catherine] found the same massive Bible on the bedside table and she asked how much the Bible had helped the world” (80). Once again, we see the narrator’s skepticism for organized religion and the inherent contradictions between faith and practice that are often witnessed in religious institutions. The story also debunks the idea of conversion as a purely exit principle from one religion to another. As Gauri Viswanathan has argued in her book, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* that conversion to Christianity did not erase the caste identity of the converts. However, in the matter of remarriage, women’s agency, and right of women to inherit property, certain arbitrary principles were used as justification to deny property rights of the Hindu converts. On one hand, they were considered civically dead because of giving up their caste identity, but on the other hand, Hindu personal law of patriliney and parcenary were used in the nineteenth century to deny the claims of converted women to the property of their husbands on the grounds that people’s lives were governed by the customs and practices of their religion, not simply by pure faith. To protect the property rights of converts the Lex Loci Act of 1850 was introduced that declared that “converts to Christianity could still remain Hindu for purposes of law especially if their habits and manners remained essentially undifferentiated from so-called Hindu customs” (80). But the Act created further problems for converted Christians who were left floating in a limbo. They were neither fully Christians nor Hindus or Muslims in their social existence. Martha’s marginal position in the story is a testimony to this arbitrary and ambiguous ascription of minority. She is born into a Christian

family yet has to remain as a sweeper or a Bhangi following the family tradition. The caste identity of her family cannot be erased by conversion, as a result, she and the family cannot come out of the cycle of economic exploitation and intergenerational poverty. She also does not earn social mobility because the Church and her employers (Miss Richmond's family) see her as racially and morally inferior, and not as a fellow Christian with equal footing.

The slippage of caste into the converted status of Martha and Fazal also serves as a counternarrative of the claim of the missionaries that conversion was necessary to come out of the oppressive practices of *varnashram* or caste hierarchy in Hinduism. Christianity was often touted as a fair and just religion that was based on equity principles. The inherent hierarchization based on class, social status, and ancestry practiced by the Catholic and Protestant Churches remained unsaid during conversion. However, Celia Richmond, the ill-tempered employer of Martha and Fazal understood the class dynamics of colonial bureaucracy. Despite her European ancestry, white skin, and a missionary father, Celia did not have entry into the inner circle of colonial bureaucracy perhaps because of her humble birth and unmarried status. She was born and raised in India, and when most domiciled European women were busy finding suitable suitors to climb up in society, she opened up a "second grade," "European only" guest house in the cool hill station of Mussoorie. The guest house, called Richmond's Inn, was frequented only by poor, working-class Europeans and fair skinned Anglo-Indians, not high statured Europeans with official ranking in the British administration. Skin color also played a significant role in granting entry to her lodge. No dark-skinned Eurasian or Anglo-Indian was allowed to be the recipient of her hospitality (56). Miss Richmond understood the pervasiveness of class division. The inherent hierarchization of social class that was prevalent in England became the bulwark for managing the vast imperial administration. In this highly constructed society, when Martha

gave birth to a white skinned, cherubic baby girl, Miss Richmond rightfully guessed the illicit liaison between Martha and Arthur Bolton¹¹, who was one of the boarders of the Lodge. Unlike other Europeans who maintained a distance from the native population, Arthur used to spend most of his time with Fazal and the other servants, playing drums and listening to Martha's songs. The birth of the illegitimate child brought joy and a sense of purpose in Celia's life who decided to invent a "pucca (pure blood) background" for the Anglo-Indian child who could easily pass as white. She claimed that Catherine was the child of her first cousin, Arthur, who was a high-ranking Colonel and was married to an "Irish peer's daughter in England." She further added that when this invented cousin of hers went "missing on the western front," and the mother, "poor Catherine Bridget" died at childbirth, "the Red Cross" sent the orphan to her in India because she was first of kin. To make the story official, Celia, while getting the child baptized, quite recklessly gave the parents' names as "the late Col. Arthur Bolton and Cathleen Bolton," and discreetly whispered "so help me, God," as she crossed her heart. The wry humor and caustic sarcasm evidenced in the narrator's tone is reflective of the overall tone of dismissal of religious identities we see in the story.

The invented identity that Miss Richmond constructed for Catherine is problematic because it shows on one level, the fluidity and arbitrariness of identity construction, and on the other, it exposes the violence of appropriation in the case of the birth mother. Martha's identity is completely wiped off because of her marginal position as a native woman and lower caste, converted Christian servant. Martha ends up being the ayah or the nanny of her own child even though the child's parentage was an open secret among the servants of the household. The

¹¹ Illicit relationships, concubinage, and cohabitation was common between European men and native women during the beginning of the colonial empire. Initially it was encouraged by the administration to maintain order and control of male desire. However, after the rebellion of 1857, such alliances were forbidden, and the illegitimate children were put into orphanages even though they had both or one parent living.

working-class father was also denied any relevance in the child's life and his absence made it easy for Celia to perpetuate her invented story. What is poignant here is how the internal and inarticulate power dynamics of home and society are inherited by Catherine almost by osmosis. She rejects her mother and chooses to affiliate herself with her "aunt" with whom she has no blood ties following the "rules of survival," a judicious lesson that both Celia and Catherine learn well and apply in their lives. She knows to choose whiteness over birth identity, she knows her lower caste, converted Christian mother has no leverage in social mobility because of her double marginalization as a woman of lower caste. It is interesting to note that Martha was born into a Christian family because her parents were converted. Yet, the lower caste or Dalit identity takes precedence over her Christian identity because she is born into generational servility predicated by caste. As Gauri Viswanathan has argued that conversion is not a linear process, and personal belief and conviction in the philosophy of the religion had little to do with civil, legal, and social practices of the converts. In the court cases analyzed by Viswanathan in her third chapter titled, "Rights of Passage: Converts' Testimonies," it becomes clear that personal law, patriarchal and Hindu in its connotation, and caste affiliation played a major role in doling out legal (in)justice to converted Christians, particularly women.

The case of Helen Gertrude's (aka Huchi) case mentioned in Viswanathan's chapter reveals the startling contradictions in the legal reforms introduced by the British in colonial India. Huchi was educated in a convent, read the Bible, and believed herself to be a Christian and wanted to give up the Hindu faith into which she was born. She was removed from the convent by her family, forcibly married to a Hindu man, and threatened to be beaten to death if she ran away to the nuns which she eventually did. At the convent she was baptized and married to Lutchmiah, another Christian convert from Madras. When the case was brought to court, Huchi

made clear that she wanted to be a Christian and practice Christianity and asked not for divorce but dissolution of marriage on the grounds that as a Christian she was married to a non-Christian against her will and that her parents' authoritative action exposed her to the ignominy of excommunication by her Hindu husband and the rest of her caste society. Her husband said that he will treat her as his prostitute because she was civilly dead as an outcaste, but he still will not consider the marriage to be dissolved. British reform legislation had effectively excluded change of religion as in itself a ground for dissolution of marriage, presumably to thwart abuse of that provision (for example people converting to get out of a bad marriage), yet evidence shows that such laws consolidated the power of Hindu patriarchies where the right to continue or discontinue a marriage rested exclusively with the unconverted husband (102).

In Huchi's case, the Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1850 was quite irrelevant because this act was intended to mitigate the severance of community and restore the converts the civil rights they had before conversion. In short, the act aimed to ensure continuity with community rather than disruption and Huchi wanted total severance from her Hindu community. Indeed, this act was framed in such a way as to ensure the inheritance rights of converts as if they had not converted at all and still remained Hindu in terms of the law. Similarly, the Native Converts' Marriage Dissolution Act of 1866 allowed a marriage to be dissolved if the unconverted spouse refused to cohabit with his or her partner following conversion. The act was not intended to help converts seek release from a marriage on the grounds of religious incompatibility if their unconverted spouse refused to assent to their termination. Therefore, Huchi was not protected by the law and was ordered to return to her husband within one month of the sentence (103). Free to be neither Hindu nor Christian, Huchi was thus caught in the double bind, the religion she had

adopted did not allow her to remarry as long as her Hindu husband still claimed her and the religion she has renounced refused to accept her as a member of that community.

Huchi's case is an interesting study that shows the slippage between caste and conversion. Recasting converts as Hindu invalidated their self-declaration as Christians. Hyder's story too opens up the discussion on Indian Christians through the clash of different Christian characters. Her story interrogates who is an Indian Christian? Can one really become a Christian and Indian at the same time within the paradigm of secular nationalism? In the story, all the three characters are marginalized by their respective gender, class, and caste identity. Katto's marginality is most telling. Her feeble protest at the moment when Celia announces her decision to migrate to Australia with Catherine, "Miss Saheb, Katy is my own flesh and blood, I shan't let her go. How can you...how...?" is met with a fierce rebuff from Miss Richmond, "Shut up.... You are forgetting your place, Katto. Kindly remember who you are. Besides, what proof do you have that Catherine Baba is your daughter?" (78). As a Dalit Christian mother she cannot claim motherhood of her biological daughter who passes as white. Her place as a servant, a Dalit convert, and an unwed mother provide no protection under Constitutional citizenship that placed undue weightage on patriliney or the Hindu Code Bill (1941-56) laws that aimed to protect married mothers of high castes. Martha's liminality raises question on the promise of secularism outlined in the Constitution that promises "prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth" (Article 15) and "abolition of untouchability" where "enforcement of any disability arising out of Untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with the law" (Article 17).

The problem of caste and the dispute between the relevance of caste in Hinduism is well documented in Gandhi-Ambedkar debates. In a two-part response¹² to Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* which is a hundred-page undelivered speech for the annual conference of the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal of Lahore that was supposed to take place on May, 1936, Gandhi criticized Ambedkar's rejection of Hinduism and *70arnashrama* arguing that,

Caste has nothing to do with religion...[and] Varna and ashrama are institutions which have nothing to do with castes.... It would be wrong and improper to judge the law of varna by its caricature in the lives of men who profess to belong to a varna,.... Arrogation of a superior status by and of a varna over another is a denial of the law. And there is nothing in the law of varna to warrant a belief in untouchability" (Harijan, 18 July 1936).

For Gandhi, untouchability was a perverse practice that was imposed upon by society. It had nothing to do with Hinduism and had no sanction from the Hindu texts. Varna or caste division was seen as a division of work for smooth functioning of society. In 1920 he voiced a moderate opposition to social intermixing between castes which some reformers advocated: "interdrinking, interdining, intermarrying...are not essential for the promotion of the spirit of democracy" (*Young India*, 8 December, 1920). Twenty-six years later, he said, "If I had my way I would persuade all caste Hindu girls coming under my influence to select Harijan husband" (*Harijan* 7 July, 1946). Underlying Gandhi's change in attitude towards social practices was a simplistic understanding of *varnashramadharma*, or the "divinely" ordained division of society into four distinct groups. In his critique to *Annihilation of Caste*, he wrote in 1936 that "the callings of a Brahmin—spiritual teacher—and a scavenger are equal, and their due performance

¹² The original title of the two-part response to *Annihilation of Caste* was "Dr. Ambedkar's Indictment" and was first published in *Harijan*, the official newspaper of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, an organization founded by Gandhi in 1932 to ameliorate the conditions of the Dalits or the "depressed classes" of India.

carries equal merit before God, and at one time seems to have carried identical reward before man. Both are entitled to their livelihood and no more.” (Harijan, 18 July 1936). By 1946, he had rejected varnashram and argued that all should belong to a single caste. In the 1946 issue of the *Harijan* he wrote, “If the caste Hindus would become bhangis of their own free will, the distinction between Harijans and caste Hindus would automatically disappear. There are various divisions amongst the Harijans too. They should all go. All should be of one caste, that is, the Bhangi” (Harijan, June 23 1946).

Gandhi’s changing position on *varna* or caste division is an indication of his personal growth and a human response to a complex problem that has been institutionalized by religious scriptures, practices, and patriarchal dictates. He created the image of the “ideal” Bhangi, a scavenger caste of North India, to represent the issue of untouchability. Scavenging and the Bhangi figure prominently in many of Gandhi’s pronouncements and actions. He himself cleaned toilets at the Calcutta Congress in 1901. He often used the metaphor of mother’s cleansing work for her child as a counterpart to the Bhangi’s work for society. Sanitation work at Gandhi’s ashrams was done by all members as a means for demonstrating the honorable nature of these essential duties. Gandhi’s image of an “ideal” Bhangi who would continue to do sanitation work even though his status would equal that of a Brahmin is problematic. It creates an idealized picture of an untouchable who would happily and unquestioningly accept and continue his/her oppression thereby camouflaging caste oppression on one hand, and on the other, it hides Gandhi’s paternalistic opinion that untouchables did not have the capacity to rise up from their birth-ordained status. In 1936, he made a controversial statement about missionaries converting the Depressed Classes by saying “the poor Harijans have no mind, no intelligence, no sense of difference between God and no-God,” (*Harijan*, 28 November 1936)

followed by a highly condescending remark in which he compared evangelizing Harijans to preaching the gospel to a cow (*Harijan*, 19 and 26 December 1936).

In Hyder's story, Arthur Bolton, Catherine's father, references Gandhi's notion of the ideal Bhangi and parallels it with representations of poor and destitute in the Bible. The incongruity of the setting and the subtle sarcasm underlying Arthur's naïve declaration bring out Hyder's intent to criticize the false rhetoric of hope professed by missionaries and Indian nationalists. To the disparate group in the garden scene, Arthur introduces Katto in the following words:

This is Martha Barkat Masih, alias Katto, Catherine's mother...Martha is a brave woman. Still works as an ayah. She is a good woman. A true Christian. Her parents were true Christians too. They were very poor. Humble sweepers, you know. Jesus said the poor shall inherit the Kingdom of God. Your Mr. Gandhi said the same thing. He lived in the Bhangi Colony in Delhi. Our Martha is a Bhangi too. She too will go straight to heaven... (84).

The inherent sarcasm of the above quote points out the attempt to erase the hardship and generational poverty of Dalits and lower castes despite their conversion to Christianity. Katto is born into a cycle of poverty and continues with the occupation ordained by her caste identity. For Martha and likes of her, conversion doesn't guarantee upward social mobility or change in the material condition. It also does not change the colonial narrative of constructing natives as both "savage, [yet] obedient and dignified servants" that defined the relationship between memsahibs and their domestic helps. Scholars like Alison Blunt have argued that servants occupied an ambivalent position of being valued and feared within colonial domesticity. The domestic space in colonial imagination "reproduced imperial power relations on a household scale and the

political significance of imperial domesticity [that] extended beyond the boundaries of home” (422). In her discussion on colonial domesticity, Rosemary Marangoly George points out that the management of the empire was perceived as essentially home management on a larger scale (108). The objective of the English woman was to “replicate the empire on a domestic scale—a benevolent, much supervised terrain where discipline and punishment is meted out with an unwavering hand” (George 108). Indian servants can be seen as domesticated outsiders of a British imperial imagination helping to reaffirm imperial domesticity, the imperial power of the family they served, and in particular, the British women to whom they were expected to be loyal and obedient.

The hiring of Christian converts did not revoke this negative perception. Nupur Chaudhuri has argued that nineteenth century women’s writings reveal a clear hostility towards native Christian servants. Often it was complained that Christian servants were the most unprincipled set of people, for they were seen as hypocrites who professed any religion to serve a purpose (552). In 1864, one former memsahib who had lived in India for seven years advised India-bound memsahibs to “as much as possible, secure for your servants a set of unmitigated heathens. Converts are usually arrant humbugs” (qtd. in Chaudhuri 553). Chaudhuri has argued that such hostility for Christian convert servants and ayahs could be attributed to colonial insecurity about losing racial and moral authority on the grounds of common religious denomination (552). It was feared that servants would aspire equal social footing as their European employers based on common religious affiliations. Therefore, memsahibs were constantly reminded to be on guard in front of their servants and to treat them as children. Flora Annie Steel and Grace Gardiner’s influential housekeeping manual *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (1909) voices the “mai-baap” paternalism of British colonial

administration and infantilized the natives by pointing out that the “Indian servant is a child in everything save age, and should be treated as a child that is to say, kindly, but with the greatest firmness” (qtd. in Sen 301). In keeping with the disciplinarian and surveillance of colonial domesticity, withdrawal of food and corporal punishments were often meted out to the servants as parents would discipline their children in Victorian England.

Disciplining the servants, particularly the converts, was deemed necessary to control their sexual promiscuity. The easy morality and sexual perversion of native servants were posed as threat to the security of colonial domesticity and the maintenance of racial purity of the colonizers. It is interesting to see the paradox of conversion ideology in the case of convert-servants. Missionaries claimed that the power of the gospel would not only “save” the natives from their uncivilized state but also enlighten them with superior moral and rational behaviors. Conversion was believed to bring about inner transformation for the converts. Mentioning the argument of E. Stanley Jones regarding conversion, Sebastian Kim argues that “vertical” conversion was encouraged over “horizontal” conversion that implied a mere change of religious affiliation. However, “vertical” conversion was deemed as spiritual transformation “wrought by Christ that lifts [converts] from sin to goodness, from discord to harmony, from selfishness to sacrifice, from ourselves to God, and gives [converts] a new sphere of living in the Kingdom of God” (Kim 27). Stereotyping convert-servants as sexually perverse betrays the very essence of their conversion. Just like the colonial judiciary, imperial domesticity strategically recasts Christian converts into the mold of their birth affiliation as is seen in Hyder’s story.

The above discussions on religious communities, primordiality, colonial law and its ambivalence, slippage between collaboration and resistance in colonial discourse, and the threat to survival, power, and authority reveal the impossibility of constructing any kind of fixity in

identity construction. The indeterminacy of representation of different kinds of identities: self, legal, social, class, caste, racial, religious, and communal dramatizes the impossible desire for a pure, undifferentiated origin. The slippage of Self/ center and the ambivalence of colonial mimicry that Bhabha theorizes help to situate the more ambivalent text of “projection and introjection, metaphoric and metonymic strategies, displacement, over-determination, guilt, aggressivity; the masking and splitting of “official” and phantasmatic knowledges to construct the positionalities and oppositionalities” (Bhabha 117) of hegemonic discourses framing colonial bureaucracy, caste hierarchy, and religious majoritarianism in the Indian context. Exposing the “repetitious slippage of difference and desire” (Bhabha 129), Hyder’s story is able to expose the artificiality and arbitrariness of metanarratives that are usually weaved in to legitimize surveillance and control of docile bodies. ¹³

Counternarratives of Class, Gender, and Religious Pluralism

In “The Story of Catherine Bolton” we see counternarratives of homogenous identities. Pointing out the inherent tensions among Anglo-Indians, poor and working-class Europeans, and lower caste Christian converts, Hyder disaggregates whiteness as a stable, totalizing category. A pluralistic narrative of whiteness is further destabilized when the groups are yoked together through the matrix of Christianity. The story shows that a common religious denominator is not

¹³ The docility of women’s bodies and the layers of Foucauldian disciplines that produce this docility are based on the duality of desire and aversion that Bhabha argues in *The Location of Culture*:

There is another scene of colonial discourse in which the native meets the demand of colonial discourse, where the subverting split is recuperable within a strategy of social and political control. It is recognizably true that the chain of stereotypical signification is curiously mixed and split, polymorphous and perverse, an articulation of multiple belief. The Black is both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified of servants (the bearer of food); he is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child; he is mystical, primitive, simple-minded and yet the most worldly and accomplished liar, and manipulator of social forces. In each case what is being dramatized is a separation-*between* races, cultures, histories, *within* histories—a separation between *before* and *after* that repeats obsessively the mythical moment or disjunction” (Bhabha 118, emphasis in original).

enough to erase entrenched racism, casteism, and sexism in the midst of forging out identities of affiliation and birth.

Erasure of irritant whites (poor, prostitutes, orphans, loiters, and homeless) from the colonial space is visible in the narratives of Arthur Bolton, Celia Richmond, and Catherine Bolton. They are the unaccommodated whites who puncture the carefully constructed image of white aristocracy in India. Arthur Bolton worked as a drummer in a regimental band of the East India Company. His father was a cobbler and mother was a charwoman. He had futile ambition of becoming a successful businessman in India, but lack of opportunities and his social background landed him as a drummer. He stayed in Miss Richmond's inn with other poor whites and "fair skinned Anglo-Indians." He is "odd" because "instead of king and country, he liked to hold forth on Truth and Conscience and Mr. Gandhi" (76). He befriended Fazal Masih and spoke to him in the "native lingo" unlike other "tommies" who were taught "Roman Urdu." He liked to hear North Indian folk songs that Katto sang. His affair with Katto has no explicit mention in the narrative, but it is assumed that this was a common occurrence among the displaced whites in India who had no access to higher class European women. The fact that his abandonment of his daughter is not questioned or criticized by Katto or Celia points out the pervasive perpetuation of colonial patriarchy, protection of male desire and privilege, and a complete disavowal of female agency. However, his whiteness is not a moniker of power. As a domiciled European with a working-class background, Arthur enjoys no real privilege bestowed upon by colonial bureaucracy. His social and economic class make him an outsider to colonial aristocracy and the center of authority. He cannot afford to stay at a country club with other high-ranking officers nor can he desire to date a white woman of rank. His "poor white" status cannot guarantee a business ownership and he had entry only to Miss Richmond's inn with other poor whites and

“fair skinned Anglo-Indians” (76). The slippage between class, social standing, and race is perplexing in colonial bureaucracy. Poor whites and domiciled Europeans were often grouped together with Anglo-Indians or other mixed-race population because they were an uncomfortable reminder of a falsely constructed and widely circulated theory of white racial superiority.

Miss Celia Richmond is the middle-aged daughter of a Baptist missionary who converted the parents of Fazal and Martha. She is a working-class domiciled European who ran a “second grade Europeans only” guest house called Richmond’s Inn, frequented by poor whites and fair skinned Anglo-Indians. No dark Eurasian was allowed to be Miss Richmond’s guest (76). The guest house brings out the rigid hierarchization of race and class perpetuated by colonial bureaucracy. Whiteness becomes a passport to enter into the class-conscious inn of Miss Richmond, but no “proper European” or high-class Europeans went there because of her working-class status. The ambivalence of whiteness raises question of the very essence of the collective category: what creates whiteness? Is it skin color or class or racial purity or does it indicate just overdetermined bodies unable to orchestrate through biological essentialism? Celia Richmond’s domiciled status, her working-class background, and unmarried status create a socioeconomic marginality despite her racial affiliation with the colonizers. She is thrilled to land in Australia, a “white country,” after she sells her inn to a local Indian businessman after India’s independence. But in Australia her whiteness has no superior value and she finds herself being engulfed by the crowd “pushing the luggage cart, and feeling that “the end has come”” (79). Her unsettling experience mirrors many of the memoirs of migration written by domiciled Europeans who stayed in India for generations and got used to the lavishness of colonial setting, dak bungalows, and domestic servants. In Australia, she became a proprietor of a grocery shop. From a hotel owner to managing a grocery store, her life is a continuation of the working-class

dilemma—the desire to climb up, but the impossibility to do so. Her migration, like many, is not as promising as she thought it would be. Herein Hyder constructs the counternarrative of racial uniformity and whiteness as an unmarked category. We see the poignancy of the situation when the narrator mentions, “an uprooted, middle class English spinster and a rootless Anglo-Indian teenager made a sad and lonely pair indeed” (79) referring to the impossible situation in the case of both Celia and Catherine and to the layers of minoritization faced by two categories of colonial Christians who summoned no social privilege based on their whiteness or religion.

Whiteness becomes a marker of colonial mimicry in the case of Catherine Bolton, a fair skin Anglo-Indian illegitimate child of a Dalit Christian mother and a poor European father who finds it impossible to enter into any kind of metanarrative about race, caste, gender, or religion. Hyder’s story brings out the layers of colonial mimicry that Bhabha defines as “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*” (122, emphasis in original). The discourse of mimicry, according to Bhabha, is constructed around ambivalence that is produced by repetition and slippage, excess and difference (122). In India Catherine’s fair skin and “exquisite” looks create her as an object of unwarranted desire but cannot give access to possibilities of upward mobility. The concern of Rev. John Sigmore, the kind English parson who had baptized Catherine, over the girl’s future that she might end up marrying a heathen or become a fashion model seconds Miss Richmond’s fear that Catherine might be forced to “join the ranks of telephone operators, office secretaries, or God forbid, cabaret dancers?” (77). Even her forged identity as the daughter of elite Irish parents is a necessary strategy of survival because the alternative would be to become an orphan like Kipling’s Kim even though her servant-mother was alive. A white-skinned daughter of a lower caste woman can never gain access to a tightly hierarchized society that is often marked by race,

class, and religion. The ease with which Celia is able to appropriate Catherine from Katto speaks volume of the politics of conversion and entrenched racism that became a veritable part of colonial domesticity. It is Celia who decides to migrate to Australia and take Catherine with her for better opportunities. She tries to reason with Katto for taking away her daughter from her,

Think coolly, Katto. What would happen to Catherine Baba after I die? Suppose more people get to know that she is your child? Who would marry an untouchable woman's daughter even if she looks like a European? Tell me, eh? Besides, the natives have scant respect for cross-breeds. What will she do for a living? Would you like to take off her clothes, one by one, and dance naked in a hotel? God forbid," she added shuddering, "Or would you marry her off to the head jamadar of the municipality? (78)

The confined situation for Catherine: her partial European ancestry and her white skin are not enough to wipe out the untouchable label from her identity. She is situated in such an impossible binary where she cannot claim any prescriptive identity based on race, caste, or religion. She is a Dalit and a mixed-race Anglo-Indian woman who faces multiple layers of caste, racial, and ethnic oppression. Her claim to birth right citizenship guaranteed by Articles 5-11 in the Constitution is weakened by her illegitimate status. Citizenship that is granted through patriliney and territorial claim cannot protect a child who is born out of wedlock as a result of male desire, desperation, and lack of female agency. Her impossibility to belong is expressed by her own ruminations; "which was her own world? She wondered, flitting from hotel to hotel, dealing with lecherous men of all nationalities" (79).

The narrative space thus allows the white, unaccommodated bodies of Celia, Catherine, and Arthur to be read as what Foucault calls "Docile bodies." Foucault defines it as a body that may be "subjected, used, transformed, and improved" (136). Docility becomes a critical register

that connects the “analyzable body to the manipulable body” (136). Identifying the body as a site of power and control, Foucault argues that in the Classical age the body was seen as an operative medium that could be “manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skillful and increases its forces” (136) Therefore, bodies became agents that were acted upon, not something that acted on their own. However, the modes of control and surveillance that made a body docile were not simply based on power and subordination, but were based on the practical needs of utility, maximum productivity, efficiency, disease control, profit maximization, and established a hierarchized method of control and surveillance. Foucault calls the methods of regularization and control as “disciplines” that “made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility...” (137). The colonial operations of power and control, the ambivalence of colonial race relations, conflation of class with the cultural capital of whiteness, and the mimicry of caste and indigeneity frame the impossibility of locating white unaccommodated bodies within normative understandings of power and authority.

The main purpose of the Hyder’s story was to create multiple counternarratives of conversion as it relates to caste primordiality, racial supremacy and colonization, internalized prejudice of the Church and other organized religions, and the reconstruction of religious communities based on an assumption of shared identity. Hyder uses sarcasm, exaggeration, and incongruities of characters and settings to highlight the ambivalence and arbitrariness of religious communities predicated on birth and indigeneity. In her mid-career short fictions, she polished the craft of tragicomedy to affront social and moral institutions, particularly religion. Combining the humor with satire, Hyder is able to express her rejection of essentialized identities and a growing skepticism for a narrow, fundamentalist conception of religion that germinated from the

inception of the Hindutva ideology. In her delightfully dark short story, “Confessions of Saint Flora of Georgia” Hyder exploits the fabular by making two skeletons rise from their graves as the protagonists. The skeletons of Saint Flora Sabina of Georgia and Father Gregory Orbiliani narrate their own stories of love, lust, promiscuity, and eventual religious recluse that is devoid of any spiritual conviction. Saint Flora, like Catherine, assumes multiple identities by falling in love with young men from different religious and ethnic backgrounds. At first, she falls for an idealistic Greek Orthodox Byzantian, then a Roman Catholic, then a handsome Persian called Minochehr Faridoon, the son of the high priest of Iran. As we get introduced to the incongruous characters of Father Gregory, a Catholic celibate priest who loves to party and smoke cigarettes, and Saint Flora, an apparent recluse nun, whose affectations and love of high fashion verge on the caricature, we also get a panorama of history where civilizational claims are inverted, and England and western civilization are painted as semi-barbaric compared to the emancipated high culture of Byzantium.

In “The story of Catherine Bolton” we see Hyder’s caustic humor laced with censoriousness. It is evident in Catherine’s self-reflexive bewilderment about her loss of identity. As she lives her life floating from one hotel to another and changing and reconstructing multiple identities, she questions the effectiveness of religion and her own position as the default outsider in both India and Australia. Her white skin, youthful beauty, and a carefully constructed invented identity do not offer her any protection from both the nation-states that had a particularistic and sectarian understanding of citizenship. She ended up as a stripper and “eventually landed in the Hong Kong-Singapore-Kuala Lumpur nightclub circuit” (79) and became a part of a thriving sex industry that flourished in Southeast Asia.

After her entry into prostitution, the story recounts her continuous migration, repatriation, and changing identities. In Jakarta, she met a Dutch Sufi and ended up marrying him. “An Indonesian ‘Sheikh’ converted her to Islam and married her to Mohammad Mueen Koot of Amsterdam. She saw her new name on the marriage register and felt good: Haimawati binte Col. Arthur Bolton” (80). She found herself abandoned by her husband and returned to her adopted country Australia to become a bus conductor because she was aging, and opportunities were shrinking for her. She becomes desperate to follow the rules for the struggle for survival and seeks to find out her real prince from fake ones. Prince Shailendranathji, “now plain Mr. S.N. Bajpai” (note Hyder’s humor in representing the stripping of social status and pomp for the former native princes after independence) becomes her best catch who is impressed with Catherine and her fake birth identity. The narrator humorously interjects: “Our Rajahs and Nawabs used to keep at least one European woman (often a Cockney barmaid) in their harems. Catherine Bolton had an impeccable background: British Colonel; Irish Lord.” (81) Her fake constructed identity won her the social position as the wife of a Hindu prince and she becomes “Shailaja Devi, daughter of Col and Mrs. Arthur Bolton” (81). The unassuming ease with which she switches her religious affiliation is a telling counternarrative of any normative assumptions about race, ethnicity, and religion. The ambiguous ending of the story furthers the intent of the author to tease out introspective questions about homogeneous communities that are framed as primordial and unchanging in the popular imaginaire. Catherine had a fleeting realization that she is no Shailaja Devi, a high-class princess but “plain old Catherine Bolton—former cabaret dancer and bus conductor. Today, finally, the tug of war between Col. and Corporal Bolton is also over” (85) when she sees her biological parents at her in-laws’ garden. Her momentary desire to embrace her real birth parents is soon over by her glance at her diamond bracelet, her

Mercedes, and a reminder that she has had to go to the golf club at eleven. The rules of “struggle for survival” kicked in and she remembered her “aunt’s teaching that certain truths should never be disclosed” (85). The story ends with Shailendra rushing towards his father to call a doctor and Catherine locking herself in the bathroom and Fazal Masih standing motionless, “hands outstretched like Saint Kabir, praying for friends and foes alike.” (86).

The reference to Kabir at the beginning and end of the story is also an interventional narrative strategy to question religious pluralism as Kabir is popularly seen as a unifying figure for Hindus and Muslims. However, the ineffectuality of Kabir’s prayers for both friends and foe at the end hints at on one level, the impossibility of reconciliation among religious communities, and on the other, the slippage of meaning and power of religion whose authority rests on the fantasy of a pure, undifferentiated origin. The beginning of the story comes to a full circle at the end with Fazal Masih standing motionless under a lamppost and reminding us of the Hindi couplet, “Khara Kabira der se mange, sab ki khair”: “Kabir has long been praying for everybody all in the marketplace of the world” (75). Here, Kabir, which could have been seen as a figure of genuine faith and religious pluralism becomes an ineffectual symbol of the secularist principle. Fazal Masih is introduced as a “poor, khaki-clad sweeper with a beatific smile” (56). He is not mystic but a simpleton who is not afraid to say that Catherine Bolton was his niece. But his agency ends there. Like his sister, he too cannot climb up the social ladder or claim guardianship of Catherine. He becomes a silent witness of the rigmarole of Catherine’s life, and in the end, all he can do is pray for “friends and foes alike” (69).

The counternarratives that Hyder’s story can be interpreted as the various modalities of the politics of minoritization of the four distinct Christian groups that I will discuss in my dissertation. The continuous cycle of migration and rootlessness of Catherine, and her

opportunistic conversions are a reminder that religious conversion is a fluid phenomenon that is ensconced in the intersections of caste, class, gender, and racial categories. The idea of religion as pure faith is also questioned in the story. Creating religious groups based on biological essentialism and primordiality is futile and dangerous and is often hinted at by the skeptical narrator. By exposing the inherent hierarchization between the four colonial Christian groups: Domiciled European, poor white, Anglo-Indian, and native converts, Hyder counters the metanarrative of the missionaries and Church that Christianity breeds equality among all unlike the caste differentiation in Hinduism. The four different groups are controlled by their social class, racial difference, and caste affiliation that are impossible to erase. In the case of Martha, we see an accommodated body that is confined within the dictates of her caste, and conversion to Christianity becomes a passing reference without any real implication in her life. Catherine's religious identity is a farce that she rejects and adopts at will to survive. Celia and Arthur are both controlled by class hierarchy inherent in colonial bureaucracy. The counternarratives also question the essentialism that is so often placed on birth identities. What the story effectively brings out is the impossibility of commonness among colonial Christians based on faith. In the following chapters I will show how class, race, caste, and gender demarcate identity construction of these three disparate groups that are struggling to belong in an increasingly hegemonic nation.

Chapter Two

Fractured Citizenship and the Anglo-Indian Community: Interrogating Memoir as a Counter Narrative Space in Esther Mary Lyons's *Unwanted: Memoirs of an Anglo-Indian Daughter of*

Rev. Michael De Lisle Lyons of Detroit, Michigan (2005)

In chapter one, I argue that Hyder's skeptical attitude towards the role of religion and essentialized identities is portrayed by her use of the short story in contrast to her novels. In this chapter, I continue with the politics of minoritization as it pertains to another minority community, the Anglo-Indians, a tortuous hyphenated group that was categorically marginalized both from the colonial debates of self-rule and postcolonial arbitrations of nation building. The universalist epistemology of "secular nationalism" as Aditya Nigam puts it, and consistent threat of Indianization (for example, adoption of Hindi as the official language, introduction of vernacular medium schools, and a rising Hindutva¹⁴ rhetoric) created fear and anger among Anglo-Indians who felt excluded from the nation building process that started after Indian independence. The hyphenated identity of this minority population, their European ancestry, and practice of Christianity created questions of loyalty and belonging in a nation that was trying to create a new ontological path of becoming a nation-state.

This inchoate historical moment becomes a heuristic device for Esther Mary Lyons, an Anglo-Indian woman, to explore her positionality as an Indian citizen. She was born on 27th November 1940 in DumDum, a suburb of Calcutta (now Kolkata) in the midst of World War II. She mentions in her memoir the rise of anti-colonial nationalist sentiments, the popularity of

¹⁴ Hindutva as a movement aims to create a Hindu consciousness or a Hindu awakening to transform the country and control Muslim, Christians, and other minorities.

Gandhi and the Congress party, and the rising angst of the Anglo-Indians regarding what would happen to them once the British left. She writes in the Prologue, “Although they [Anglo-Indians] were born and brought up in India, they followed western culture, Christian religion and lifestyle” (9). This *double consciousness*¹⁵ is recorded in detail by ethnographers like Lionel Caplan, historians, sociologists, and literary scholars. The rich scholarship offers ground to explore the complexity and messiness of self-identification in relation to legal jurisprudence, social codes, and cultural practices. However, in their exploration of hybridity, the figure of the racial hybrid in the project of Indian nationalism remains squeamishly unclear. As debates of incorporation of secularist principles in the Constitution gained momentum, the Anglo-Indians who historically self-identified with the British in terms of commonality of religion, language, customs, and culture found themselves further removed from the project of post-independent nation building. Lyons’s memoir sheds light on the changing landscape of a nation transitioning from colony to statehood and focuses on the importance of historical and sociological contexts that form the material conditions for informing and circulating the ideological moorings embedded in a text. In the introduction to his work *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1984) Said tries to validate his argument of the “wordliness” of texts by interrogating the historical situatedness of events by exploring what he calls the “realities of power and authority as well as the resistances offered by men, women, and social movements to institutions, authorities, and orthodoxies” which are the “realities that make texts possible, that deliver them to the readers, that solicit the attention of the critics” (5). In the production of the text, we cannot, therefore, do

¹⁵ I loosely borrow this term from W.E.B. Dubois’ coinage in his seminal book, *The Souls of Black Folks*. Building off from Hegelian dialectics, Du Bois argues about the conflicting construction of *self* for minorities particularly African American when negotiating between their hyphenated identities of being black and American. They develop, Du Bois argues, a double consciousness where they have a sense “of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others” (370).

away with a sense of historical awareness or the context of the text. He elaborates his argument in “Narrative and Social Space” that empire and imperialism became crucial settings for nineteenth century realistic novels in England and remained as “a reference, as a point of definition, as an easily assumed place of travel, wealth, and service...as a codified,... marginally visible presence in fiction, very much like the servants in grand households and in novels”, whose work is taken for granted but “scarcely even more than named, rarely studied...or given density” (63). Therefore, it is an important exercise of literary analysis to read the marginal, to draw out, extend, or give emphasis to what frames the ideological rationale of a literary text. It is in this conceptual framing that I find the genre of the memoir as a trope of counter narration that overlaps, separates, and sometimes isolates itself in its attempt to tell an individual’s story. In Lyons’s memoir we see a narratorial agency in choosing, rejecting, and questioning the historicity of an impossible, hybridized identity that is constantly trying to negotiate between the different axes of minoritization: oppression and double standard of the Catholic Church, the problem of an assumed identity to pass as an Anglo-Indian, an internalized ethnocentrism born out of racial constructedness of colonial bureaucracy, intersections of class, gender, and caste marginalization, and finally, questions of parentage and legitimacy that guides her journey in her 480 page memoir. In this chapter, I’m interested in reading the counter-narrations as interventional moments of an individual who affiliates and disaffiliates herself from easy narration of hybridity to critique the epistemological violence of colonial discourse of race, class, gender, and religion.

The memoir, *Unwanted: Memoirs of an Anglo-Indian Daughter of Rev. Michael De Lisle Lyons of Detroit, Michigan*, published in 2005, is a three-decade long journey of an Anglo-Indian woman to find her father and be recognized as his legitimate child. The story traces her

birth in a pre-independent India in 1943, the oppression of the Catholic Church in India that did not recognize the marriage between Esther's converted Christian mother, Agnes, and her American Jesuit priest father, Michael. Her memoir portrays her struggle with poverty and the stigma of illegitimacy, appropriation of her and her sibling from her mother and being labeled as orphans and put in a military orphanage in Northern India, to her continuous migrations to the United States, England, and finally to Australia. The memoir blurs the boundary between retrieved memory and archived history by its simultaneous use of personal narration, oral and family history, ancestry charts, photographs, letters, along with historical documents, government papers, and bureaucratic statues. The memoir also creates a counternarrative space that affirms and challenges debates on secularism, tensions within the hyphenated identities of Anglo-Indians, double standards of the Catholic Church in their treatment of this hybrid community, and the internal triangulation of the community with their subject-position in post-independent India. The memoir, as a genre, is successful in diluting scholarly criticisms on Anglo-Indians that often harps on *hybridity* as a factor in inhibiting the people to "recognize itself as a political force, nor make claims as a distinct cultural group" (Kapila 30-31). Such claims fail to recognize the power of the community to exert its autonomy by assimilating both Indian and European cultural identities. The genre of the memoir gives space to explore an individual's journey in negotiating her social, cultural, political, and religious identities in relation to larger claims of national identity and citizenship that are often ignored in scholarly discourses.

Lyons's memoir is intriguing because it not only deals with struggles and losses of an individual but also questions repeatedly the role of the Catholic Church in participating in western imperialism. She mentions that in 1939 when the U.S. came to know about Nazi

Germany's attempt to purify Uranium-235 to build an atomic bomb, the United States government began seriously undertaking known only then as the Manhattan Project that was committed to expedite the production of a viable atomic bomb. Uranium-235 was hard to extract and interestingly, the Catholic Church (at the behest of the government) gave dispensation to Esther's father, Rev. Michael D. Lyons to procure Beryllium from the sands of Travancore in Bihar (a state in the east of India) and South of India. He was one of the only two Jesuit priests who, as a geologist, at that time knew the chemistry of Beryllium and its role in producing atomic power. Lyons mentions that even though he was a missionary, he took up the project to show loyalty to his government and Church (10). What is not mentioned or slightly hinted in the memoir is the chilling fact that a Christian missionary was sent to India under a covert mission to collect raw materials to produce weapons of mass destruction! Lyons is more critical of the Church in disowning her family as the rightful heir of her father, yet she remains silent about her father's complicity in U.S.' nuclear proliferation that resulted in the 1945 Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings.

In the *Prologue* of the memoir, she mentions that after the death of her father, Rev. Michael D. Lyons was declared by the Cleveland District office to be a "covered Beryllium employee" as defined in 42 U.S.C 73841(7); (Lyons 8). This statute defines "Since World War II, Federal nuclear activities have been explicitly recognized under Federal law as activities that are ultra-hazardous. Nuclear weapons production and testing have involved unique dangers, including potential catastrophic nuclear accidents that private insurance carriers have not covered and recurring exposures to radioactive substances and Beryllium that, even in small amounts, can cause medical harm" (<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/7384>). Esther Lyons mentions in the Prologue that her father died of lung cancer due to long time exposure to Beryllium. She

discovers in 1965 when she visits him in the United States, that her father owned Beryl Ores Company in Denver, Colorado and supplied Beryllium ore to the Rocky Flats Plant in Colorado. Lyons mentions that her father was the “only one who knew how to smell the Beryllium ore from the mine at the backyard of his house” (286). She found out that her father was trained in chemistry and covertly worked with the government in building infrastructures for nuclear weapons during the cold war. Decades later when such programs were declassified by the Department of Energy, the state of Colorado recognized the health hazards of radiation and Beryllium and issued compensation for surviving members and their families.

Lyons mentions that she and her sister, Violet, were recognized as the surviving children of Rev. Michael D. Lyons and were entitled to the compensation money from the U.S. government. The Cleveland declaration recognized her and her sister as legitimate children of an American Catholic priest who had taken a vow of celibacy at the age of twenty-two. As readers, we are intrigued by Lyons’s ability to document her memory from her childhood. She is able to recall her emotions as a child when her father abandoned his family and her mother struggled as a single woman to raise two Anglo-Indian daughters who suffered social ostracization due to their presumed illegitimacy and biracial parentage. There is an attempt to take the readers in confidence from the beginning of the story so that we empathize with her in her struggle for justice. Her memoir falls under the category of what G. Thomas Couser has called “narratives of filiation” where the memoirist is the son or the daughter of a parent, usually the father, who has been remote, unavailable, abusive, or absent. Sometimes the “narrative of filiation” is a story of detection in which the son or a daughter conducts a journey to discover the story of the lost or abandoning parent as in Lyons’s case. “Filiation” is an interesting coinage because it refers to two aspects of relationality with the parent, not necessarily only the father. First, the term refers

to “the condition or fact of being the child, not necessarily the son, even though the root is the Latin *filius* or son;” and second, in the legal domain, the word refers to the “judicial determination of paternity” (qtd. in Couser 135).

With its obvious roots in patriarchy and patriliney, “narratives of filiation” aim to place paternal displacement at the center of the narrative and the union with the father is seen to be the panacea of all problems. This is evident in Lyons’s memoir where the prologue and the epilogue solely focus on the path of recognition as legal heirs of Reverend Michael D. Lyons. Her desire to claim her father warps further into a strong desire to claim American citizenship and it becomes her ultimate goal to gain justice for everything she has lost in her life. She says, “I wanted my identity, and the country where my father was born and died, accept me as the natural daughter of an American” (429). Her father becomes a metonymy of the nation and claiming him becomes a natural corollary to claim citizenship that is forged through blood ties and paternal lineage. Constructing her father through a subjective, first person account, Lyons reduces the Reverend to a static character who is only understood by his love and disavowal of his family, and the narrator, thereby, blurs the lines between seeing the genre of the memoir as something fictive or inventive versus an “authentic” representation of self.

Memoir as a *Genre*¹⁶ and Creation of Counternarrative Spaces

Etymologically, memoir predates the more common usage of the word autobiography and is related to what contemporary ethnographers call *life writing*. In Greek, *autos* means “self,” *bios* refers to “life” and *graphe* can be translated as “writing.” Taken together, autobiography may mean self-life writing. British poet and critic Stephen Spender cites the dictionary definition of autobiography as “the story of one’s life written by himself” but he notes its inadequacy to the “world that each is to himself” (Qtd in Smith and Watson 1).

S.D. Sargar, in his essay “Autobiography as a Literary Genre,” suggests that in an autobiography, the author is free to record only such events of his life which he considers important. He is free to resort to a method of deliberate selection and omission. The author chooses to write an autobiography for he or she wants to narrate the ‘truth’ of his or her life. But while narrating the truthful events, the narrator has the freedom to choose certain incidents and omit the others. Therefore, the self becomes a site of exploration and not the outside world (2).

As a form of literature, autobiography has its own distinctive characteristics. Primarily, autobiography is an eye-witness record of one’s life written by the author. Although autobiography shares some features with other types of writing like memoir, confession, diary, journal, travelogue, letters, and biography, its main focus is the person who writes it to portray the growth and development of his or her personality.

¹⁶ G. Thomas Couser has argued in the article, “Genre Matters: Form, Force, and Filiation” that the notion of a genre as a separate entity, entirely distinct from one another, and the fact that each has its own prescriptive rules and criteria for evaluation, or there is a rigid hierarchy of genre is no longer accepted in literary studies. Couser argues that contemporary critics see “function over form” that is, they are more interested in reading “genre as social action” than genre as a pure, literary form with specific rhetorical forces. However, the term is still relevant to explore the difference between fiction and non-fiction, particularly as it relates to our understanding of *life writing*.

The autobiographer sticks past events in the autobiography to show how they shaped the sensibilities of the author. The subject-matter of autobiography is the history or the life-story of the author. Yet an autobiography is not like history in its presentation of the past. The historian has no choice but to narrate factual events of the past in a chronological order. On the contrary, the autobiographer selects only those events which help them to establish the growth of personality. Thus, autobiography becomes a creative blending of facts and fiction, which needs to be analyzed and interpreted carefully to avoid misunderstanding of the main concern (3).

Talking about the popularity of autobiography as a genre, Robert Folkenflik argues that due to the influence of the Enlightenment principles of individualism and liberty, autobiographies became popular as a literary form in the West. By the eighteenth century, notions of self-interest, self-consciousness, and self-knowledge informed the figure of the “Enlightened individual,” as a result, autobiography became a generic term for all types of self-referential writing (of men) in the West. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson further complicates Folkenflik’s claim in questioning the inscriptions of power that is associated with the individual. They postulate that the term privileges the autonomous individual, usually a male, whose life-story should be universal and impactful to its readers. However, the theme of a universal story is challenged in the wake of postmodern and postcolonial theories that are interested to address the gaps within hegemonic voices of the Enlightenment subject. Therefore, non-canonical writings like slave narratives, narratives of women’s domestic lives, coming of age stories, and travel narratives among others gained prominence (Smith and Watson 3). A similar interrogation about the *self* is also attached to the genre of *bildungsroman* that is defined as a story of individual struggle to become a social subject who becomes aware of his purpose in the world. But modernists like Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Thomas Mann, and Robert Musil

invoke its trope of individuation to show the fragmentation of selfhood and the constructed nature of the social (11). Interrogation of power also recognizes those whose identities, experiences, and histories remain marginal, invalidated, invisible, and partial, and who are now brought under the fold of the literary canon with the same enthusiasm as the genre of the novel had in the nineteenth century. Smith and Watson in their book, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* argues that *life writing* was seen as creatively inferior to the novel because the notion was “writers” or professionals write or can write a novel, because it’s a craft that requires skill and training to grasp, whereas “anyone” (read amateur) can write a memoir because it was merely seen as an exploration of ones’ own journey. Such paternalistic approach was particularly noted in the case of women’s memoir or *life writing* (129).

To claim *self-writing* as a neat and mechanical deterministic genre would defeat its intricate overlapping and contradictory subjectivities formed by a matrix of cultural associations. As Sandra Pouchet Paquet has opined in the introduction of her book, *Caribbean Autobiography* that “the connection between gendered self-figuration and national and regional identities is continually being reinvented” (4). Conflicts between the self/ individual with the community or the public and private representations of self, “between self and native space, between lyrical evocation and factual connotation are the elastic substance of an autobiographical culture formed in the intersection of differing interculturative processes” (4). Paquet’s understanding of the self within the politics of community and sociocultural constructions is an important device for reading Lyons’s memoir where even though self-exploratory journey becomes a tour de force over the constant tug and pull of the community¹⁷, yet she also displays a mediation of agency

¹⁷ The Capital “C” is commonly used to denote Anglo-Indian communal identity and this practice goes back to the early and mid-nineteenth centuries when Anglo-Indians were organizing themselves as self-represented groups in India. Anglo-Indians are not a homogenized community. There were several attempts made by Anglo-Indian leaders to mobilize all Anglo-Indian groups together to form a significant political strength, but the complex and

and choice in her attempts to break away from community prescriptions to protect and justify her family. She briefly mentions that she knew her mother was Indian “since she wore saree like all other Indian women and spoke *Hindi*, a language spoken widely in Northern India” (8). They had “curry and dal” for lunch and European meals for dinner. She also mentions that she did not learn English until she was twelve years and that was odd because English was the default language of Anglo-Indian homes. Hindi or Indian vernacular languages were looked down upon echoing the colonial sentiments of racial and linguistic superiority. She talks about the intersections of racial and social hierarchies followed in personal and professional spaces. When her uncle procured a job at a sugar cane factory that was still owned by a British man after India’s independence, his (Lyons’s aunt) Indian wife who wore a saree was not allowed to stay with him in his cottage that was only given to Europeans and Anglo-Indians. In her deliberate choice of recording moments that are significant to her story, Lyons shows an awareness of the internalized complicity of the community in distancing themselves from the native born Indians. In chapter four she describes, “The Anglo-Indians were generally fair complexioned,” many with blond or brown hair, some even had blue eyes. They spoke only English and “broken Hindustani (a mixture of Hindi and Urdu used by the Muslim rulers) or Hindi, since they had always considered it below their dignity to speak Hindi fluently, taking pride, as they did, in their British blood” (53). Lyons’s story once more points out that self-identification is messy and erroneous. If English speaking and religion are two points of identification with the British, then Lyons is already separated from the group because her mother, a native converted Christians did not know the language. She grew up in a convent where converted Christians were not taught English so

varied ideologies about ancestry, race, and religion of Anglo-Indians residing in different parts of South Asia have thwarted unification.

that they can proselytize in the vernacular of the land and be more accessible to the local people. Her mother, therefore, spoke in Hindi with her children and family. Food also becomes an agential mode of breaking away from the community expectations of consuming a Europeanized diet of soup and sausages. There is a constant reference to dal (lentils), curry, the smell of Indian spices at home, her yearning for home cooked meals when she was forced to live in a convent boarding, and the bonding of mother and the daughter over learning to cook in the kitchen. In the private space of the kitchen, Lyons is able to deviate from the expectations of an assumed Europeanness of the Community and craft her own sense of being an Indian. Entertainment also is a moment of departure. She mentions,

“Mum was very fond of movies...[she] took us to see the Indian movies. She received passes to the movies from her patients at the hospital. I loved to watch the movies starring Nargis and Raj Kapoor.... Only two theatres, Palace and Plaza showed English movies, and only at 6’o clock in the evenings on weekdays, or at 10’o clock on Sunday mornings” (107).

Her identification with the romantic Hindi movies that allowed her to escape from harsh realities, her mother’s resourcefulness in procuring the tickets, and the fact that movie going was a regular mother-daughter ritual point out the importance of exercising free will by members of a community who are often criticized for their *mimicry* of the colonizers. It is also interesting to note that there is not enough audience for English movies, as a result, there are only two theatres, and the show times are also limited. The fact that theatre halls have a timing that clashes with Sunday Mass is also a marker that local businesses could ignore the needs and demands of a religious and cultural minority group. Despite such moments of departure, there are easy generalizations and essentialisms evident in the memoir. For example, in the Prologue, she

postulates, “Although they [Anglo-Indians] were born and brought up in India, they followed western culture, Christian religion and lifestyle” (9), thereby reducing the community to an undifferentiated monolith. Throughout the memoir, we see such paradoxes of belonging that help create counternarrative spaces that ethnographical and historical studies of the group have failed to achieve. The memoir also succeeds in pointing out the sociological determinism in the projects of nationalism and secularism as it played out in the postcolonial context of South Asia. The attempt to construct “imagined communities” by creating homogenization around religious, cultural, and linguistic identities has long been the project of nationalism as argued by Hans Kohn, Etienne Balibar, Tom Nairn, Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and others¹⁸. A shared and common past with a common ancestry, culture, religion, and language can be a strong political force to create a sense of oneness among diverse people who start mobilizing around their assumed past by internalizing the same logic of exclusion (we are not them), assimilation, circulation (of ideas), and a mimicry of performance. The success of the project depended on the liberatory rhetoric that it generated which, in turn, enabled the imagination of a larger political community within which the idea of citizenship and democracy, of rights and equality was to be realized (Nigam 43). The homogenizing mission created abstraction around differences of class, caste, gender, and colonial reification of racial and class hierarchies. Therefore, the claim of Dr. Wallace, the founder of The Imperial Anglo-Indian Association, that “Britishers we are and Britishers we ever must be” (qtd. in Anthony 2) creates a sense of false immutability where it is never questioned why a differential treatment of Anglo-Indians existed between their social

¹⁸ See works of Kohn (1944/67), Kedourie (1960, 1970), Seton-Watson (1977), Gellner (1983, 1994), Anderson (1983, 1991), Hobsbawm (1990). Partha Chatterjee (1993) reads third-world nationalism against the grain of European nationalism along with Dipesh Chakrabarty (2007) and the subaltern explorations in Ranajit Guha (1998, 1999). Aditya Nigam’s 2006 project uses “secular nationalism” as a concept to show the internal contradictions of the contours of secularism as they played out in India.

identity and economic opportunity. The doors of coveted workplaces like the railways, educational institutions, and the secretariat were open to them (if they could pass as white) while they were simultaneously excluded from elite British clubs and social gatherings. Lyons's memoir, even though reinforces many traits of "imagined communities," yet by recounting her experiences of discrimination within her own family, the Church, the orphanage, and various social institutions like marriage, she is able to point out the internal fractures and contradictions within the Anglo-Indian community that shows possibilities of counternarrative strategies.

Despite counternarrative possibilities, the memoir becomes a suspect when it comes to an "authentic" representation of self. Here the narrator is the only voice we are allowed to hear and stories are filtered through subjective and selective memory. Neuroscientists, cognitive psychologists, and philosophers have argued that memory and the act of remembering involves a reinterpretation of the past in the present. The process is not a passive retrieval from the memory bank, rather the subject constantly creates a new meaning of the past through the act of remembering that is often fragmented and incomplete, and *self-writing* becomes a process of unifying and organizing those fragmented pieces of the past that will shape the present and future (Sidonie and Watson 22). Biographers often use evidence including historical documents, interviews, and family archives which they evaluate for validity. In contrast, life narrators use personal memories as the primary archival source. They may have recourse to other kinds of sources, for example, letters, diaries, photographs, journals, taped conversations, heirlooms, recipe books, etc. But the usefulness of such evidence lies in the way they employ that evidence to support, supplement or offer commentary on their idiosyncratic acts of remembering. In autobiographical narratives, imaginative acts of remembering always intersect with rhetorical acts of assertion, persuasion, justification, judgement, conviction, and interrogation. That is, life

narrators want to persuade readers of their version of the experience, but the problem lies in the fact that memory is a subjective form of evidence that cannot be fully verified externally; rather, it is asserted on the subject's authority. What is important in *self-writing* is the relationship between the reader and the narrator. Philippe Lejeune, in his seminal essay "The Autobiographical Pact," has defined this relationship as a contract where the reader willingly goes through a "suspension of disbelief" when he or she recognizes that the author and the narrator's "vital statistics" like date and place of birth, education, parental information, and other biographical details are the same, as a result the narrator becomes the sole authority of the story which is always deemed as true. Furthering the autobiographical pact, Smith and Watson argues that the commitment of *self-writing* is just not to record specific moment of one's life, "but [it is] an epistemological act of thinking through what one as a subject knows to be or not to be, remains a basis of both writerly tact and readerly trust" (18).

The importance of audience in a memoir's reception also brings to question its fictive constructedness in narrating a story. Smith and Watson insist that there is a distinction between fiction and *self-writing* that is often labeled as non-fiction, and the difference is in principle, if not always in practice:

A life narrative is not a novel, although calling life narrative "non-fiction" which is often done, confuses rather than resolves the issue. Both the life narrative and the novel share features we ascribe to fictional writing: plot, dialogue, setting, characterization, and so on. Further complicating matters, many contemporary writers are interested in blurring the boundary between life narrative and narration in the first person novel. Yet differences have historically arisen between them are crucial to understanding how autobiographical writing is a self-referential mode (Smith and Watson 3).

The artificiality of storytelling and construction of a narrative framework are both in contradiction with the assumed purpose of the genre of the memoir, i.e., to tell the true story of an individual as it folded out in real life. In the struggle of form, the authority of voice and what it represents becomes important. Here Lyons, a member of the Anglo-Indian community, is narrating a tale of her own life as she has experienced it. It is not a biography or a historical novel that records the fictive life of an individual. Here her membership to a complex, hyphenated group by virtue of birth, her lived experiences as a mixed-race woman facing discrimination and fighting stereotypes, her religious self and the conflict with the injunction of the Catholic Church, and the extrapolation of colonial discourse, racialized hierarchies, anti-colonial struggle, fear and suspicion after independence, and the various articulations of selfhood displayed in continuous cycles of migration create a sense of irrefutability, trust, and a sense of dominance of voice that again complicates the notion of authenticity, agency, and free will. Added to this phenomenon of assumed authority is the gender representation that further problematizes representation.

The reception of women writing their life stories or in Partha Chatterjee's words, *smritikatha* or more accurately translated "stories from memory" have long challenged the bulwarks of multiple patriarchies that operated in India, particularly Bengal in the nineteenth century. In his exploration of the "women's question" in his seminal book *The Nation and its Fragments*, Chatterjee mentions that when autobiographies became popular as a genre in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was men who had achieved some prominence in public life who usually documented their lives in the form as *ātmacarit* or self-exploration and this genre was seen as a close cousin of the English translation of the word autobiography. Women's autobiographies documented the "inner" parts of the house inhabited by women, of ritual,

childbirth, deaths, marriages, sudden interruptions in the normal flow of domestic lives caused by calamitous events (139). Sometimes, these memories were self-written by women who had the privilege of education, often times these were amanuensis undertaken by members of the family or close friends. There are hardly any biographies of Bengali women during this time because they were not considered important enough to be documented. Chatterjee, however, postulates that these *smritikathas* were not only recordings of the personal and the affective domain but they documented the social and cultural changes of the time. Often a strategy of contrast was used to denote the change between old and new times because the memoirists usually had younger women as their perceived audience who would be told how they should adjust and behave in changing times. The genre was often dismissed as a “feminine” literary genre by the male guardians of literary conventions who inculcated that imagination, an understanding of the craft of writing, and literary flair were not needed to write one’s memory or lived experience, therefore, “anyone could do it” (139). The paternalistic dismissal is related to the newly constructed space of the domestic as a pedagogic site of the nationalist project. Describing colonial domesticity during the late nineteenth century, Partha Chatterjee contends that one of the main anti-colonial strategies was to maintain a strict separation between home and the world—the inner and the outer ‘shrines’ of daily existence and to recreate a new brand of femininity by resurrecting the supposed golden age of India’s past. Chatterjee maintains that as the home and the family were threatened by western “modernity,” a “new patriarchy” was reconstituted to protect the inner ‘shrine’ from colonial influences. He writes,

The inner domain of sovereignty in Colonial India, the sphere that shielded itself from the colonial gaze and provided a certain kind of space for autonomy under and away from the

weight of cultural domination, was constructed around conceptions concerning religion, spirituality, tradition, femininity, and the home. (238-39)

The synchronous relations between home, tradition, spiritual, and the feminine corresponded with the construction of godlike qualities of women in the domestic sphere of the colonized that separated them from the colonizers. Chatterjee quotes from an 1882 Bengali essay which states "... in the Aryan system there is a preponderance of spiritualism, in the European system a preponderance of material pleasure. In the Aryan system, the wife is a goddess. In the European system, she is a partner and companion" (qtd. in Chatterjee 243). This period therefore saw the revival of exemplary wife model typified by Sita and Savitri, the myth of Mother India, heroic "virangana" women figures like Lakshmibai, Ahalyabai Holkar, and often women were compared with Goddesses Durga and Kali.

The domestic thus became a site of colonial resistance for the 'new patriarchy.' It became a space where national cultures could be conserved and passed on from generation to generation by constructing women as biological reproducers and 'natural' symbols of national culture, identity, and honor (93). The separation of home and the world also suggests a paradox of nationalism. While the demand for independent statehood in the late nineteenth century initiated the colonized territory to 'modernity' and exposed it to the western Enlightenment principle of progress based on technology and industrialization, it kept women out of the development process by limiting her within the private sphere. By reemphasizing the importance of modesty, chastity, fidelity, and the assumed invisibility of women (women should try to make their presence, and thereby their work, invisible) in the domestic sphere, the reconstituted patriarchal structure made sure that the established hegemony is maintained and native women should be the "angel of the house" and not ape the 'modern' [read: sexually free and promiscuous] European

women who were painted as threats to the 'Indian' culture. Thus, the nationalist politics of the nineteenth century were able to create an exemplary brand of idealized Indian femininity by excluding women from the public sphere, denying their access to education, perpetuating the notions of "pativrata" or absolute submission to their husband's will and self-abnegating motherhood.

Chatterjee's exploration of the women's memoirs of nineteenth century Bengal do not, however, encapsulate the materiality of poor and low caste working women as is evident from Lyons's self-writing and Bama's polemical texts that I will talk about in the last chapter. Lyons and her sister were devoid of a safe, domestic space when their father abandoned the family and went back to the United States, and the Catholic Church invalidated their marriage. Therefore, the two children were unfairly labeled as illegitimate, and were put in an orphanage because their Dalit Christian mother did not have the means to raise them. Throughout her memoir the definition of home is subverted, and the entire journey becomes a quest to find a "home." Therefore, unlike Chatterjee's observation of nineteenth century women's memoir that showed a clear concept between *ghar* (inner, domestic sphere) and *bahir* (public sphere), Lyons's memoir shows that such easy demarcation is not possible for racially hybrid minority bodies facing multiple levels of minoritization. In Lyons's memoir she never had a home of her own. The family was forced to stay with Natalia and her family and had to undergo perennial emotional abuse due to their poverty, low caste, and Anglo-Indian parentage. Even after marriage, she was not welcomed by her in-laws or her husband, and she felt that she was an outsider and an outcaste in her own home.

Anglo-Indian Community and Paradoxes of Identity

The “women question” (borrowing from Partha Chatterjee) becomes more complicated when it comes to the métis population of Anglo-Indians¹⁹. Blurring racial and class categories, this group became a perpetual irritant of the colonial bureaucracy who, in turn, through their differential social, economic, and cultural policies created a “paradox of belonging” (Caplan 91) in colonial and postcolonial imaginaire. Professor Lionel Caplan in his detailed ethnographical research on the Anglo-Indians of South India calls them “children of colonialism” as “they [were] the descendants of the initial offspring of unions, formal and casual, involving British and other European men on the one side and on the other local 'Indian,' as well as other women who, especially in the context of South India, came under the inclusive if vague category of 'Portuguese’” (51). In 1510, the Portuguese Governor of India, Alfonso d'Albuquerque, encouraged his officers to intermarry, thus creating a Luso-Indian population. Since the early East India Company did not allow its officers to travel with families or wives, often it was men who propagated such relationships. In very rare instances in the later years, mixed-race children were born of "white" women. During British colonialism in the eighteenth century, numerous British officers, soldiers, and civilians who worked in the East India Company, as well as many other men who came to India to trade, seek employment, study, or to do missionary work, established domestic relationships with native Indian women. Understandably, the Anglo-Indian population have credited the East Indian Company’s “deliberate policy of avowedly encouraging

¹⁹ Naming the hyphenated group is problematic as pointed out by Lionel Caplan. He acknowledges in his book, *Children of Colonialism: Anglo-Indians in a Postcolonial World* that “terms like hybrid, métis, mulatto, mètizo, mixed-race etc. not only have the potential to offend but can also be theoretically contentious” (18) However, he argues that mètis or mètissage seem somewhat appropriate because it means “crossing of two races” (18) and therefore, he uses this term in his book. I will use hybrid, hyphenated, and mètis interchangeably to suggest the impossibility of a homogenous composition of this group as was attempted by Henry Gidney and Frank Anthony, two political representatives of the group, to claim strength in number and gain a seat in the political debates around India’s independence.

inter-marriages” between their employees with local women that gave rise to this hybrid population (qtd. in Caplan 1). Others have suggested that Christian missionaries were instrumental in promoting matrimonial links. Caplan quotes from Bower, an Anglo-Indian descendant of a missionary who confesses that “well over a century ago a paternal European ancestor of mine married a mission girl, who was a daughter of this land, and so, of almost all my community in the past, and of me it cannot be said that we are “sprung unwarranted by priest or book or marriage line”” (Qtd in Caplan 2). While some did marry, many were engaged in informal liaison with local women including prostitution and concubinage. This was more frequent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when high-class European women were not allowed to travel to the colonies and married men were often excluded from recruitment in colonial administration and business.

There was always a fear of miscegenation and hatred towards this mixed-race group and following the “science” of eugenics, it was assumed that something was inherently wrong with the children of interracial marriage. Pathologizing the mixed-race can be seen as an elaboration of the race theory pioneered by Dr. Robert Knox in the nineteenth century Europe. He argued that “human hybrids” were not viable, so “separation [between the races] and purity [of race] were the sole alternative to extinction” (qtd. in Caplan 4). However, during the colonial era when it became evident that the “miscegenated” offspring of interracial marriage were not only viable but also “fecund,” the theory assumed a new angle by focusing on the character defects of the hybrid population and those who dared to violate the racial categories produced “offspring who were seen as flawed, tainted, and degenerate” (Caplan 4). The fear of miscegenation stems from the fear of the Self, the insecurity of not being able to preserve the racial purity and superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race. The missions of race theory to practice racial segregation and to

denaturalize the métis population originate from an essentialized belief that there is actually a pure, unsullied Anglo-Saxon race that can be maintained simply by resisting interracial interactions.

The fear also comes from an anxiety of permanent alternation of race by intermixing. Anxiety over a “healthy and vigorous European stock” emerged due to obvious interracial mixing and the fear of “going native.” Satoshi Mizutani has argued that because racial superiority became the bulwark of the colonial project, the idea of miscegenation and acculturation could not be entertained in imperial discourse because the white subject had to be always “extra-environmental and extra-racial.” (Qtd in Mizutani 5). This “ontological or epistemological fixity” (Mizutani 6) was impossible to maintain, and colonial anxiety happened over what Mizutani calls “acclimatization” (6). The confidence on the unaffectedness of the white colonizers in India waned in late 19th century and it was then believed that the white race would degenerate and extinct after three generation.

Another reason for hostility was a *mimicry* (to borrow from Bhabha) of performance by the hybrid group itself. Following the colonial logic of racial hierarchy, there was a tendency of the Anglo-Indian community to show affinity and allegiance towards their European ancestry and deliberately erase their Indian lineage, particularly if they were light skinned and came from high- or middle class background. Lionel Caplan has argued in a different article, “Iconographies of Anglo-Indian Women: Gender Constructs and Contrasts in a Changing Society” that the fear of miscegenation and hostility towards mixed-race population was as menacing as the hostility of the Anglo-Indians towards converted Christians from high caste or western educated Indians because these were the other groups that tried to claim kinship with the white colonizers.

Interestingly, Caplan notes that the attempt to mimic a European way of life and use English as the default language by Anglo-Indians were treated with contempt, as something of a caricature which was seen by the colonizers as to “diminish British standing in Indian eyes” and European women tried hard to distinguish themselves from their Anglo-Indian counterparts in terms of fashion and lifestyle (871). Therefore, it was not contempt for mixed-race but their audacity to claim similar ancestry that angered the colonizers, and their consternation is reflected not only in differential colonial policies used to contain, discipline, and sometimes privilege Anglo-Indians, but also in the naming of the community.

Frank Anthony, a prominent leader of the Anglo-Indian community and member of the Constituent Assembly of India from 1946-50, refers to the polysemous nature of naming the community in his book, *Britain's Betrayal in India: The Story of the Anglo-Indian Community*. He points out that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the label, Anglo-Indians referred to the British who were domiciled in India. But since the Indian Census of 1911, the term has referred to a domiciled community of mixed descent. Until about 1922, Europeans derogatorily referred to children of such unions as Eurasians, country born or sometimes pejoratively called half breeds or half caste. The group also was conceived in negative light by native Indians, particularly caste-centered Hindus, who referred to them as "Chee-Chee" (dirty, or, literally, "untouchables") because of the stereotypical belief that only lower caste women would cohabit with European men. They were also considered untrustworthy and unreliable. This viewpoint was exacerbated in the case of children of European women, mostly because it was presumed that these women were either raped or loose, and therefore their children were doubly "untouchable." The community responded to these negative connotations by a petition for name change that was presented to the British Parliament in 1830 by John Ricketts, an influential

representative of the community (Anthony 2). However, the designation “Eurasians” remained prevalent until the mid-nineteenth century. As the term began to acquire a derogatory connotation, the community moved to be recognized by the term “Anglo-Indian” to uphold the “Anglo-Saxon heritage” (Anthony 2). The definition was further complicated in the 1935 Government of India Act when Anglo-Indians were defined in relation to the Europeans in terms of their paternal ancestry and domicile:

An Anglo-Indian is a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is a native of India. A European is a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent and who is *not* a native of India. (qtd. in *Domicile and Diaspora* 3)

The legal definition reveals how patrilineal laws defined and limited Anglo-Indian identity, how native and European women were excluded from the definition, and how the arbitrariness of the definition relegated the Anglo-Indian body into ahistorical discussion on hybridity. Deepika Bahri has argued in her article, “What Difference Does Difference Make?: Hybridity Reconsidered” that the 1935 definition of Anglo-Indian as “native of India” and not clearly defined in relation to “British Subjects” raises the question as to who is really a native of India? (Bahri 17). The definition also essentializes communities as immutable, homogenous, and ahistorical. It erases the problematics of genealogy that exists in public discourse and official records because the female line is erased from documentation. The quest for origin is never a simple matter. Suppression of information about the distaff line, differential and ambiguous definition of Anglo-Indian in the constitution and colonial bureaucracy, and lack of records of marriage, civil union, and conversion practices in subcontinental history can create an insurmountable problem in tracing one’s roots just as in the case of Esther Lyons.

There is very little information about her mother. The little that we know of her is revealed through the mother-daughter conversations. She dedicates only one chapter to her mother's family compared to the detailed documentation of her paternal lineage. Interestingly, she finds out much later in the memoir that she is the "direct descendant of Francois Bienvenu dit Del Lislie, a Frenchmen who traveled with Cadillac from Canada to establish the city of Detroit in Michigan, USA" (8). She provides family charts of Bienvenu dit Del Lislie and of the house of Lyons to establish her European ancestry while remaining silent about her mother's side. Her mother, Agnes Julius Didacus-Shah, was born in Latonah, a small village in Bihar, which housed almost 700 Catholics. She mentions it was an "old Capuchin settlement of converted Catholics and orphans who had been brought from different parts of Bihar" (176). The people who were re-settled in Latonah were "mostly the converted low caste Hindus, Muslims, abandoned Anglo-Indian offspring of the British and Santhal tribals" (176). In 1921, Latonah was entrusted to the Jesuits of Patna Diocese, who originally came from states of Illinois and Michigan in the United States. She writes, "In the late 19th Century, the British established indigo factories around the area and there were many abandoned Anglo-Indians children born of the British officers and native women. The missionaries brought up many such Anglo-Indian children in the orphanages" (176). The erasure of rape and sexual assault that might have happened between the native workers and the indigo plantation owners is telling in the memoir because in her memorialization she does show a nuanced understanding of the politics of conversion and the double standard of the Catholic Church. Not going into depth behind the Michigan connection between her mother's and father's side, Lyons further writes, "The missionaries found the poverty-stricken people in the state of Bihar to be quite simple. They

were willing to convert in the Catholic religion in order to get some food and a few rupees. They needed to survive and keep their children alive²⁰” (177).

The ethics of conversion are further complicated by her grandmother’s story. Lyon’s grandmother was found by the missionaries after a flood. “The foreign nuns” brought her to the orphanage and converted her to Catholicism. “Six months later her parents, a Muslim couple belonging to the family of rich merchant of jewelry with the surname of Shah came looking for her. When they discovered that she was converted, they abandoned her at the age of three” (178). The culpability of the Muslim parents to reject a three-year-old child on grounds of her involuntary conversion is a telling comment on how religious minorities exhibited similar type of prejudice against conversion as majoritarian groups. To the parents, their child’s conversion was akin to death because she could no longer be the future biological producer of Muslim citizens, and as a result, she was not relevant to the family, and by extension, the community²¹. Lyons, however, does not dwell on this inter-community discrimination. She only mentions the abandonment by the family in passing. She is also notably silent on the unethical conversion of a child who had no say in the matter. The Church could have helped the flood-affected community

²⁰ She mentions in passing the great Bengal famine of 1770 that affected the lower Gangetic plain of British India from Bihar to the Bengal region. The famine is estimated to have caused the deaths of about 10 million people, and Warren Hastings’s 1772 report estimated that a third of the population in the affected region starved to death. The reference to the famine is relevant to the conversion of her aunt’s family from upper caste Brahmins to Catholicism. Lyons mentions that the American Jesuit missionaries helped the famine-stricken people of Bettiah in Bihar and since agriculture was deeply hampered due to severe draught in the regions, the Brahmins had no option but to take help from the missionaries. She mentions a miracle story that was circulated by the Church that a Catholic priest, Bishop Harman, “brought the rain” through his prayers, and that also added to the “conversion of practically half of the city of Bettiah to Catholicism” (173).

²¹ Feminist critiques of nationalism have argued about how women’s bodies are seen as symbolic tropes of nation and community building. Deniz Kandiyoti, in her essay, “Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation,” has mentioned that “women bear the burden of being mothers of the nation... as well as being those who reproduce the boundaries of ethnic/national groups, who transmit the culture and who are privileged signifiers of national difference” (376-77). Therefore, the insistence of the nation that women remain loyal to their “lineage, tribe, or kin” is sanctioned by the state and approved by members of the community.

and provided relief without converting them. Unfortunately, the calamity was seen as an opportunity to increase the number of converts, and Lyons's grandmother became another number in that mass proselytization. She grew up as a converted Christian orphan and was married to a "fair skinned man with blue eyes called Keilu Julius Didacus" (178). They were given a small piece of agricultural land by the Church to live on in the village of Latonah. Here such an interesting detail of her grandfather is omitted. Was he an Anglo-Indian or a poor domiciled European? Where did he come from and how did he end up in Bihar? She never attempts to find out and we are never given an answer. Instead, she mentions in passing that "the Capuchin priest gave Italian names to the converted Catholics" (178). She mentions a fascinating tale of indentured labor when her grandfather was tricked and sold to a tea estate in Assam as a slave and it took three years for the parish priest to bring him back to the village as a free man (178-79).

She doesn't provide much historical context to this important event as is her style with other historical details in the story, for example, the great Bengal famine of 1770 and the partition and India's independence are all mentioned only in passing. Her maternal grandfather's story deserved more attention because it is related to the history of indentured laborers in the tea plantation in Assam. Justin Rowlatt, a South Asia correspondent of BBC wrote a story in 2016 titled "The Dark History Behind India and the UK's Favourite Drink" where he outlines the trajectory of the tea industry in India that was labor intensive like the sugarcane plantation in the Caribbean. But in 1833, through an act of Parliament, Britain abolished slavery in most British colonies, freeing more than 800,000 enslaved Africans in the Caribbean and South Africa as well as a small number in Canada. So, the East India Company needed to find an alternative for labor supply, and they did. Instead of slaves, "tea estates used indentured laborers, free men and

women who signed contracts binding them to work for a certain period. But the truth is conditions for these workers weren't much better than for slaves” (Rowlatt np). These men and women probably came from the lower caste, poverty-stricken, converted Christian population. Such a fascinating historical fact is not explored in the memoir and Lyons never feels the need to check official documents on her maternal grandfather as she did with her father’s side of the family. Such authorial choice of omission and silence gives the readers an opportunity to become active participants in questioning the rhetorical choice of the memoirist and her complicity in colonial discourse.

However, despite her socialization in Anglophilia, the memoir provides several counternarratives to show the inherent hierarchization within the Anglo-Indian community. A shared Christian faith was never a binding factor among the members because there was always a sense of difference based on class, education, occupation, skin color, and proficiency of English and accents. Christopher Hawes in his book, *The Making of a Eurasian Community in British India 1773-1833* has contended that there were no common ties in the “reluctant” Anglo-Indian community to forge a shared past. Therefore, to call them a “community” would be an oversimplification. There was neither an accepted ethnic identity among the members nor there was a consensus to adopt English as the default language. Anglo-Indians were compelled to adopt English as their first language even though Portuguese was the *lingua franca* among the population in the early Madras settlement. English was the only language taught in the orphanages and public schools to establish a standardized language policy to aid the proper functioning of colonial bureaucracy. However, in matters of racial and ethnic affiliation, the British were much more discriminatory. Official policy and social distancing tended to promote a British concept of a discrete Eurasian (the term that was widely used before the officialization of

Anglo-Indian designation) racial identity from the end of eighteenth century onwards. Hawes argues that there was a reverse of a desire to forge an ethnic identity but there was an interest to reduce the social and occupational gap that gradually widened between them and the mainstream British society in India (74). As Lionel Caplan, Alison Blunt, and Frank Anthony have pointed out that the Anglo-Indian population suffered from two kinds of paradox in colonial India. In certain policies, the group was deliberately excluded from the privilege position enjoyed by the Europeans while in some other policies, it was ensured that they were included under favored statutes unavailable to Indian natives (Caplan 91). To give a concrete example of this dual status, Frank Anthony quotes a reply from Earl Winterton, the Under-Secretary of State for India in the House of Commons in December 1925:

For purposes of employment under government and inclusion in schemes of Indianisation, the members of the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Community are statutory Natives of India; for purposes of education and internal security, their status, so far as it admits of definition, approximates to that of European British subjects. (qtd. in Anthony 3)

The differential policy, privileging, and censoring at the same time, further widened the existing fissures within the community. For the educated Eurasians it was profitable to completely integrate with its paternal society because Eurasians were hierarchized according to race and class. The educated, upper echelons of the society desired to mingle with the upper sections of British society and gain access to the judicial system and get admission to the covenanted service because of their birth lineage and education. Hawes raises a key point as to the sense of separating from the community was much stronger in educated elites compared to lower-class Eurasians.

A few Elite Calcutta Eurasians wanted to establish a gentleman's club exclusively for themselves in 1825 to address the grievance that they were excluded from the upper sections of the British society. They wanted to replicate that structure among their own group and wanted to invite members of the British community on equal terms. This innocuous attempt, however, fueled fear in British circles that these clubs might become "a radical institution fraught with danger in a political point of view, to the interest of the Honourable Company" (Qtd in Hawes 75). So, attempts to crossover the racial lines were always suspect.

A repudiation of Indian maternal identity was profitable for the elites because of lack of access for Indians. For poor, working-class Eurasians, they integrated with the growing poor Christian Indian society. Poorest Eurasians spoke little English. Peripheral issues like dress, style, and accents were integral elements of class recognition within the British code of "gentlemanly" behavior. Many educated Eurasians failed the "gentlemanly" test on the virtue of their occupation and class and once they were excluded from covenanted service, they lost the right of admission into the inner core of British life. Eurasian women, irrespective of the rank of their fathers or husbands were excluded from this circle as well. The real reason was to stop marriage between Eurasians and domiciled Europeans and if such alliance did happen with the "half caste children of the soil" then those "forfeited their claims to mix among their equals" (Hawes 80). The practice of racial and social segregation and the unjustified exclusion from the British gentry was actually the main reason for the consolidation of the Anglo-Indian community. It was not religion or a conception of a shared past but a shared grievance against opportunity and inclusion within the British elite that became the driving force in uniting a disaggregated and diverse group of people. However, a subterranean loyalty to the British, affinity towards a European way of living, and a strong desire to separate themselves from the

indigenous population were some common characteristics of the community. There was also an apathy among the members of the community to call themselves Anglo-Indian, that is to draw attention to their Indian ancestry. It was only closer to independence that some representatives of the community like Frank Anthony embraced their indigenous heritage and wanted to identify more with the native population (Caplan 11).

Lyons, being an outsider of the group, is able to record different layers of discrimination faced not only by the Anglo-Indians, but also by the converted native Christians. Throughout the first half of the memoir, she talks about her aunt Natalia who is her mother's friend, not a blood relation. Natalia's family was one of many upper caste Brahmin family in Bettiah who took help from the missionaries during the famine, and "in return for their help they were converted as did many in the city of Bettiah" (Lyons 173). Though a converted Catholic for two generations, she constantly refers to her "high caste Brahmin" background and a good "breeding" of her own children. Conversion could not rid her of caste and class hierarchy that she had internalized from her family. She considered herself better than Esther's mother because of her former caste identity. She also considered jobs such as cleaners, sweepers, drivers, cooks, welders, and laborers beneath herself, only teaching jobs and certain white collared jobs were considered at par to her dignity. She did not want her brother to marry a sweeper's daughter because of their upper caste Brahmin ancestry. Her constant criticism of Esther's character was due to her prejudice against Anglo-Indians and children married out of wedlock. Her criticisms had a profound impact on how Esther internalized the codes of respectability by way of dressing and conducting herself in social circle. Natalia's indoctrination in the hegemonization of caste and class can also be seen in the way she treated the servants at home. She often gave away stale food to them justifying, "food is hard to get and should not be wasted...the poor servants can

make use of them even though they are stale” (138). Natalia often chastised Esther for having “bad blood” and her mother for having children outside wedlock. Lyons recalls, “although she was a strict Catholic, like many other converts, she still followed the traditions and mores of the Hindu ways” (173). Natalia’s prejudice against mixed-race children and her complete disregard of human dignity are in line with the general sentiments of the mainstream Indian society. In her aunt’s household, the politics of minoritization among the three groups of colonial Christians took shape. Natalia’s condescension towards Esther, her sister, and her mother stems from her internalized casteism. Esther and her sister face ostracization due to their interracial status, their mother’s low caste status, and the deceptive label of being the illegitimate children of a Jesuit priest, and Esther’s mother is marginalized by her caste, gender, and lack of generational wealth. Despite being born into converted families, their respective castes determined their social position and access to economic opportunities.

Her uncle was an epitome of the mimic men who considered themselves superior to the native Indians, craved to be included into the inner circle of British society, and benefitted from the paternalistic benevolence of colonial bureaucracy. Uncle David, a poor Anglo-Indian who was once given employment and a shelter by Esther’s father, and ultimately married off to Natalia, was not happy, like many people in the community, after India’s independence. We see the disdain in his own words: “there is nothing left for us in India. Who would want to work under the bloody wogs, Indian babu’s or Indian officers?” (87). Lyons summarizes the reason for this anxiety and hopelessness, “They were not happy with India’s independence and the British leaving. The British had given them good employment opportunity despite their low level of education till seventh grade. The ability to speak English and practice Christianity was enough to procure a coveted railway job” (87). Even though the quote echoes what Hawes and other have

documented in their research, yet it also disavows the inherent hierarchical nature of both colonial bureaucracy and the Catholic Church where religious affiliation was never enough to forge solidarity. The label of orphans that stamped Lyons and her sister despite their mother's presence, the exclusion of her mother from higher pay that was commensurate with her experience and expertise as a nurse, her own inability to follow her dreams to become a doctor due to misrecognition of her parent's marriage by the Church, and the invented identities they had to assume to survive—all provide counternarratives to a monolithic concept of a community. Not everybody benefitted under colonial policy, especially the poor, abandoned Anglo-Indian children who were a constant irritant of the Raj and the Church, and thus had to be “disciplined,” contained, and put in their place so that they did not pose a threat to the façade of racial supremacy.

Orphanage and the Catholic Church: Sites of Disciplining Anglo-Indian Body

In her memoir Lyons mentions Dr. Graham's Home (orphanage) in Kalimpong, where “the neglected, orphaned, and abandoned Anglo-Indian children of the Tea Gardens of Darjeeling district were placed” (35). Founded by Dr. John Anderson Graham in 1900, the extraordinary educational institution had its own “farm, bakery, dairy, poultry, hospital, and clothing department” (35). This home was meant to bring in abandoned children where the British father left his family, and the native mother, who was seen as an outcaste, could not bear the financial burden of raising children. These children were treated as orphans and racial and class prejudice guided the orphanage's policies in educating and bringing up these children. Harsh discipline, corporal punishments, hard labor, meagre food, and other dehumanizing techniques were a common policy among all the orphanages that were opened in various locations in India. Lyons had similar grueling experiences in St. Philomena's Orphanage in

Jhansi that was made exclusively for Catholic orphan girls of all ages. People who could pay slept on beds and had good meals, but those that lived off charity slept on the floor, ate leftovers, and were ripped off their human dignity. Lyons recounts how they had to walk barefoot to Church on the rugged grounds of Jhansi and in unbearable heat of 52 degrees Celsius. She writes, “To make it worse, the Church was six kilometers away; we were to walk barefoot to the Church on Sundays, once in the morning and again in the afternoon at four” (64). Food was unpalatable, unhygienic, and highly rationed. Meat was a luxury and only served on special occasions. The same utensils were used to prepare different kinds of food. Lyons recounts that the evening tea was boiled in the same pan where spinach and lentils were made in the afternoon and the tea smelled of spinach. There was no refrigeration, hence food went bad quickly, “I often found streaks of slime on the *chappatis* [flat bread]; the rot would set in early with the blistering heat. However, we had to eat what was given to us or go hungry” (64). The policies governing these institutions were nothing close to the love and care ideologies of Catholicism but were based on colonial bureaucratic discourse of pathologizing poverty and painting the poor as sub-humans. Lyons encountered class discrimination practiced by the Church from her childhood when she moved from institutions to institutions with her mother and sister with no money and little English. Narrating one of her early memories, she regretfully describes:

I noticed that the English speaking Anglo-Indians wore good clothes to Church on Sundays. Their seats were reserved in the front benches close to the altar. Their family names were written on brass plates and nailed to the pew. I often wished that we could dress like them and speak English. They were called *Sahibs* and *Memsahibs* and their children were called *missy babas*. I wanted so much to be friends with them, but I dared not; I did not think that they would like to befriend me. (80)

Her desire to become a *memsahib*, a reverential address of white women by the native population, and her inability to do so despite her pale complexion is paradoxical. Skin color or religion were not the sole determinant of genteelness or social acceptability. However, knowledge of English, fluency, sartorial affluence, family wealth, and parentage determined if someone could pass as white or be accepted as white. Her experience also highlights the hegemonization of the colonial discourse of race and class in the meta structures of postcolonial nations. The differential treatment she experiences in the Church and the orphanage is derived from the metanarrative of controlling “vagrant” bodies and disciplining the poor to uphold racial supremacy of the colonizers and to produce what Sara Suleri has called “Macaulayan interpreters” or loyal task bearers who will be useful for the smooth running of the Raj (qtd. in Hubel 144). Contextualizing the discussion of social class in relation to postcolonial criticism, Teresa Hubel has argued that the presence of poor white children, orphans, and loiters in the *bazaars* of India were a source of constant embarrassment and humiliation. The Raj saw them as a threat to the carefully constructed racial superiority and white aristocracy that were essential to legitimize the colonial rule. Another reason for their embarrassment was that the poor orphans were often the products of the white working-class, and the highly class-conscious white elites saw this class as a degraded and offensive version of their own. It was feared that the white working-class exhibiting the same vulnerabilities as that of the native poor would make the white race lose their racial superiority in the eyes of their Indian subjects, and hence “undermined British imperial authority, which was founded, they insisted, on the respect and fear that Indians felt for their conquerors” (241). As David Arnold has argued, “Europeans were meant to be visible only as a super-race...never aged and infirm, and never [seen as] scantily clad, uneducated orphans playing in Indian gutter” (“Orphans and Vagrants” 114). For the white

rulers, the existence of poor whites in India constituted “more than a nuisance or a disgrace or an added responsibility: in their everyday lives and persons, they were dangerous” (Hubel 241). The answer to this danger was random institutionalization and deportation. Adult white male vagrants were sent to workhouses and occasionally deported, while their female counterparts were either sterilized or deported because the administration feared that unaccommodated, homeless women would automatically take to prostitution, and the orphaned children of both the Eurasian (later called Anglo-Indian) and poor whites were placed in orphanages. The state sponsored intervention was meant to render them invisible and convert them into docile bodies serving the Raj. If they could not be eradicated completely from society, they somehow had to be transformed into useful appendages to white elites who could use them to staff their armies and navies, and employ them as servants to clean their houses, take care of their children, and run their errands. Orphanages accomplished this by offering their charges only the kind of education that would enable them to re-enter society at precisely the same social level from which they were removed. Hubel quotes from a European Female Orphan Asylum in Calcutta that expresses the same sentiments: “their (the orphan girls) education... is to be plain and suitable to their situation and prospects in life: such as shall tend to make them good and useful members of society, whether they become housekeepers or servants” (qtd. in Hubel 242). Hubel further mentions that girls and boys were taught basic reading, writing, Arithmetic, and Anglican catechism, but while girls learned to knit, do needle work, and to keep house, the boys often received some form of military training (242). Adding to the conversation on orphanage, Christopher Hawes states that not all orphans were treated equally. Class and profession of the British father influenced their standard of education and upbringing in India. Daughters of European officers, like their brothers, received a better scholastic training, and also learned

needlework and embroidery like daughters of British soldiers. However, social accomplishments were considered important for girls of the officers, since they were expected to marry “gentlemen,” and dwell in the elite circle, they were taught ballroom dance and other aspects of polite behavior. For boys, hard labor, gymnastic, and sports were introduced to for a moral purpose: “in a climate, like that of India, where the mind and body so naturally yield to indolence and sloth, any device which has a contrary tendency is important” (Qtd in Hawes 29). Hawes argues that the primary aim of these orphanages was to separate the children from their Indian mothers and undertake their moral and character development in Christian values and turn these irritants of the Raj into useful members of the society where they could serve as a “linking role between British employer and Indian labourer” (Hawes 28).

The discussion on orphanage and Lyons’s own lived experience points out the inherited poverty of the Anglo-Indian orphans. They were born into poverty and the colonial institutions made sure that they could never climb out of their indigence. The discussion also suggests that Christianity was never a binding factor for its practitioners. The double standard and hypocrisy of the Catholic Church and the poignant role it played in Lyons’s struggles bear witness to the different axes of discrimination based on race, class, caste, and gender. After their father left them, her mother took the children to seek help from a Jesuit priest who was a friend of their father. She was advised strongly not to mention his name in relation to the children to hide the “scandal” of a celibate priest. Father Evans also advised her mother to invent an identity of a widow to be socially acceptable. “It’s best that you tell the children and everyone else that you are a widow. Give them the surname of “Anthony;” they will pass off as Anglo-Indians. You should call yourself as “Mrs. Anthony.” It is no use giving them the surname of “Shah.” “Shah” is an Indian surname, and your children don’t look Indian” (Lyons 75). The discomfort of not

“looking” Indian haunted Lyons throughout her stay in India. She ruminates, “they [Indians] hated me for my white skin and then being an illegitimate, born out of marriage. The Church hated me for being born of a celibate priest bringing shame to their religious values” (10). Yet the same Church gave dispensation to her father to marry a Lithuanian American woman called Petronilla when the Reverend permanently moved to the United States, but no such provision was given in India where he fathered two children. In her memoir she mentions that her father said that when he and Agnes decided to cohabit, the Church excommunicated them and he could not find employment in both Jesuit and Catholic places, but when they were separated, both were welcomed to receive the Holy Communion again! She is scathing in her criticism of the Church and questions their motive behind conversion. She asks,

Why did they [the Church] follow a different standard for my mother? She had more right to be my father’s wife and he did try to stay with us by resigning from the priesthood. His every effort to be with us was rejected. Was it because the Jesuits did not want to allow a scandal in India to tarnish the image of a pure and sacred foreign missionary?...Was it because they wanted to prove that my mother was at fault...? Or was it because the Church wanted to discourage more converted Christian women from falling in love with priests? Or did they want more conversions? Did they realize or were they even concerned about what my dear mother would have to face because of their hypocrisy? Did they realize or were concerned about what we, the innocent products of love, would have to face in a country that was not Christian, and believed in strict moral standards for women, so much so, that they practiced *sati* and *child marriage* to prevent their women from producing illegitimate children from relationship outside marriage! (291).

In her long diatribe against the Catholic Church, several contrapuntal ideas wrestle with one another. She makes it clear that the institutions of religion, their injunctions and laws, and their rituals and practices are not always commensurate with religious faith and ideologies. Institutions like the Church are microcosms of society and are riddled with the same epistemological problems of power, prejudice, class hierarchies, and several discriminatory norming practices that govern modern societies. She, as a victim of these practices, is able to question the very foundation of the Church and their various double standards, for example, their differential treatment of converted Christians and their children, their contradictory benevolence in different countries, and their normalization of violence in the name of “doing good” to people. There are other numerous instances of where she is able to show her objectivity in questioning Church practices. Because the marriage of her parents was deemed illegitimate by the Catholic Church, she was not allowed to join the convent to become a nun (193). Similarly, the principal of her school advised her to become a secretary instead of pursuing her dream to become a doctor despite securing a distinction mark in Mathematics at the Senior Cambridge examination. A series of unfair rejections made her more critical of the Church. She pointedly comments that “The Canon Law of the Catholic Church did not accept the innocent child born of a priest, but accepted the priest who broke the vow” (194). She criticizes the celibacy law of the Church as monetarily motivated, “the law of celibacy helped in keeping the money earned by the priests within the Church. Married priests and those with children would only make it harder for the Church to inherit what their priests earned.” Therefore, the Church kept the “law on celibacy very rigorous” (194). As readers, we are fascinated by the critical opprobrium against the avaricious nature of the Church and its silent, but overt participation in perpetuating corruption. She further calls out the institution’s double standard by saying, “I could not understand why the

Church preached forgiveness and acceptance, when it didn't follow the very dictate it preached" (194). It is this unfair and unjust system that forces her to write, "it shook my faith in the very Church that was once so dear to me" (291).

As we parse her polemical statements, we are, however, confused by her lack of criticality when it comes to her analysis of native Indian women and the country of her birth in general. She laments that the Church was not concerned about the hardships she had to face in a country that was "not Christian," a country that, in her mind, practiced some barbaric rituals to control their women, and a country whose alien and backward custom does not align with her "progressive" Christian faith and practices that have, surprisingly, disgusted her so much that she lost faith in the very institution! There is no acknowledgement of the various social and religious reformations that took place in nineteenth century India that abolished regressive practices like *sati* or widow immolation and child marriage and introduced widow remarriage and education for girls to stop women from being handmaidens to hegemonic Brahmanical Hindu practices.

Anglo-Indian Women and the Problem of Belonging

There are consistent and casual differences made between Anglo-Indian and Indian (Hindu) women throughout the memoir. She writes, "The Anglo-Indians ... followed the western religion and behaved differently culture wise, the young Anglo-Indians and the Christians had lot more freedom in the choice of marriage and living standards like those in the Hollywood movies" (137). Due to their "western upbringing and religious beliefs," she casually mentions, the Anglo-Indians identified more with their European ancestry and were loyal to the Raj. The binary between "conservative" Indian society and "liberated" western society she creates in her rhetoric shows her own ethnocentrism. She subscribes to the same prejudicial ideologies that

legitimized colonial domination as a “white man’s burden” to civilize and save the world. Creating eastern and western cultures as irreconcilable binaries she writes in her memoir, Most Indian considered the Anglo-Indian and European women cheap just because they went to the club, drank with men, and did the ballroom dances in public with different men. While the Indian women were very conservative and [were] kept indoors, had arranged marriages, the Anglo-Indian women lived a more liberated western lifestyle and had the same freedom and equality in the community as did the British women (90).

The easy stereotype she creates does not match with her own experience. She, indeed, is a victim of the pervasive negative stereotypes that haunted Anglo-Indian women, and her memoir is a constant reminder that the much hallowed “freedom and equality” of Anglo-Indian women were never doled out to her because of her parentage, biracial identity, socioeconomic position of her family, and the deeply entrenched misogyny of a patriarchal society. It is also clear from her narrated experience that no solidarity, and sometimes even cordiality, existed between European women and their Anglo-Indian counterparts simply based on a commonality in religious faith. It is also evident from her memoir that attempts to forge an alliance based on assumed commonality of racial lineage and culture between the two groups were seen as transgression and were often treated with irritation and hatred.

She mentions that when she started teaching in Delhi in 1969, she worked in an English medium school called Frank Anthony Public School named after the popular leader of the community. The school is under the management of the All-India Anglo-Indian Education Trust. The school was “co-educational” (boys and girls integrated in the classroom) where only male teachers taught upper-level classes and the main condition of employment was a sartorial enforcement on Anglo-Indian women to wear dresses, not sarees, to the school. The managing

body of the school demanded that the male teachers had to wear suits with ties because “we had to act like Anglo-Indians, who still lived according to the British ways.” (345). Even after twenty-four years of independence, such superficial loyalties were demanded from the members of the community. The policies practiced by the school reveal the aporia of postcolonialism that renders conditional citizenship to members of a society that is “suspended forever in the space between the “former colony” and the “not yet nation.”” (Nigam 86).

As a representative of this community, Lyons, therefore, becomes an impossible citizen who has to negotiate between several axes of identity politics. On one hand, she is a victim of patriarchal bias and is presumed incompetent to teach higher classes in her school despite her educational qualifications, and on the other, she has to negotiate between the demands of a gendered nationalism and constantly discipline her body through sartorial selections in order to be included within the nation building project. The performative loyalty to her Anglo-Indian self within the school premise is immediately disavowed the moment she steps out in mainstream culture. She writes, “After school hours, when I went shopping, I usually wore a *saree*, as that way I was treated with respect by the Indian shopkeepers” (345). The association of respectability to *sarees* and traditional Indian attires (fully clad with no skin showing) is not just a performative act of national belonging but it has references to the etiological myth of racial purity. The negative stereotypes of promiscuity, alcoholism, indolence, immorality, and other character flaws that are produced, reproduced, and normalized by cultural references, literature, cinema, and media representation must be examined through the epistemological conditioning behind the genesis of the stereotypes, like the colonial discourse on eugenics and race, control and surveillance of sexuality, colonial hegemonic idea of superiority of race, etc. Fear of miscegenation and legitimation of heterosexual marriage led to colonial anxiety surrounding the

hybrid figure of the Anglo-Indians who were often stereotyped as degenerative, sexually promiscuous, and a threatening “contamination” to the white race. Anglo-Indian women were the harsh recipients of the ontology of fear, desire, and hate. As Dolores Chew points out: “Anglo-Indian women possessed a viable commodity—their sexuality. There was always the possibility, however remote, that a legitimate union with a European might result” in producing mixed-race children (21). The sexualized representation of Anglo-Indian women can be traced back to their transgressive visibility in the public sphere since the late nineteenth century. Compared to the educated upper-class/caste Hindu or Muslim women, Anglo-Indian women were much more active in the job market. They were employed mostly as teachers, nurses, clerks, and salesgirls. Such professions enabled them to mix with men outside their family and this gender co-mingling created a threat of social degeneration by constructing the Anglo-Indian women as hypersexualized, amoral beings always ready to prey upon gullible men. Further, as Chew mentions, there was a greater tolerance for premarital, non-monogamous sex, “especially among the subaltern sections of the community” (23). This creates a problem in societies that “practices varying degrees of sexual segregation in social and religious contexts” and the minority that deviates from this ritual is bound to face stigmatization, and if an unmarried woman is seen with multiple sexual partners, she is inevitably identified as a whore and becomes a metonymy of the community further solidifying the stereotype. The transgression of occupying public space, providing competition in the workforce, and pursuing careers in areas like nursing that was often linked to prostitution and considered undesirable by the caste and class-conscious population further exacerbated the sexualized communal identity (Chew 23).

Orchestrating between a siren and an opportunistic whore, Lyons’s memoir mirrors similar pathology in her own life when she is seen as a threat to both European and Indian men

who fell in love with her beauty but refused to marry her. Fear of rejection, social pressure to get married, and a desire to legitimize her marriage forced Lyons to take the path of arranged marriage despite her claims of agency and freedom exhibited by Anglo-Indian women in choosing their partners. She writes, “Hindus from good and respectable families found their match through the newspapers; I decided to do the same. I began answering advertisements in the matrimonial columns of the leading newspapers” (349). Through that correspondence, she met her husband Major Narinder Chaudhary, a Hindu army officer who wanted a “fair, convent educated girl” as his wife (349). The decision of marriage was a difficult one because both parties had reservations about one another. Chaudhary’s family exhibited anxiety and sweepingly generalized “all Christian women to be of loose character and out to lure respectable Hindu men for their money” and when Lyons exerted her agency to go to Australia to escape from the emotionally abusive marriage, her sister-in-law reminded the family that Christian women can never make a “responsible and respectable wife or daughter-in-law” (396). The suspicion is reciprocated by members of the Anglo-Indian community as well. When she started working and meeting people outside her known circle, her extended family warned her to be “careful of those Indian men at the office” because they might take advantage of Anglo-Indian girls, “take them out for dinners, have fun with them, and then make them pregnant...they think our girls are cheap and easy to get only for their entertainment” (219). Even her father advised against the marriage and suggested that she should marry a poor Anglo-Indian teacher rather than a Hindu because “mixed religion marriage[s] never worked” (359). The suspicion and prejudice of the Anglo-Indian and Hindu communities against one another is poignant because it points out that despite the Constitutional principle of religious tolerance and mutual harmony, there existed a wide divide between the practice and implementation of the principle. Lyons’s own

internalization of this othering is seen in her careful choice of dressing when she went out for a date or to meet the parents of potential suitors. She is careful to downplay her Anglo-Indian self to make herself more acceptable in the traditional setting of marriage. She would always wear a saree, minimal make up, and converse in Hindi to prove her Indianness. However, she had difficulty accepting a Hindu man as her husband because of religious difference. It is only when Narinder promises to convert that she agrees to marry him because she took upon herself to “save his soul” since it was “in line with what I had grown up to believe. I had been brought up believing that the Christian religion was the only true religion, and that to convert a non-Christian into the Christian faith was saving a soul... for Jesus, our leader and founder, ...” (352). Lyons’s deep faith in Christianity becomes the main axis in which she wants to identify herself. She was raised by Catholic principles and even though she is highly critical of the internal politics of the Church, she adheres to the Christian tenets and teaching. It is telling that when her marriage failed, she decided to leave India and migrate to Australia for the desire of a better life. She was the mother of a special needs child and had the responsibility of taking care of her mother, and she felt that a foreign country would better serve her purpose than her country of birth where she had immediate and extended families, friends, in-laws, and a natural support system that usually grows out of living in a place for a long time.

Her decision to migrate to Australia and her consequent repatriation and final expatriation is the culmination of her agony to belong to a particular place. She had visited the United States as part of an exchange program in 1965, met her father, and was appalled to see that he had married an American woman. Despite his love and promise to sponsor her visa, he did not arrange for her migration. In India, she was becoming increasingly alarmed to see the changing

social and economic landscape, and the growing competition for employment from educated Indian women. She wrote,

Indian women joined the work force and took the position as senior Accounts Officers and other executive jobs in the railways. They went for higher and university educations and the selective tests with the men. The high qualifications and the careers gave them a better prospect for a good match for matrimony in the Indian community. (163)

Her economic concern after almost twenty years of independence echoes with those of her uncle and his generation after the partition. The previous generation of Anglo-Indians blamed the British for leaving them behind and not taking them “home” in England or providing special provision for them in India. It is surprising that Lyons who was born and raised in India and had good employment opportunities would feel the same angst. She also mentions “in the sixties Hindi was introduced as a compulsory subject in the English medium Anglo-Indian schools and English was only a subject in public schools and colleges” (162). She mentioned that many Anglo-Indian women adopted Indian clothes like sarees and salwar Kameez in the workplace to avoid being teased and picked upon by the Indian co-workers (162). The adaptation to mainstream Hindu culture was seen as a threat not only to Lyons but to several members of the community who felt that they would be better off in England, Australia, or any other Commonwealth countries. Lyons mentions in her memoir that a European, Christian nation was more desirable to her because of her strong faith in the teachings of the Bible. Her regret makes us question as to what constitutes in being labeled as a Hindu or a Christian or an Anglo-Indian? Is it only religion and faith? Is it the sartorial choices of the members? Or is it an affinity with the English language and European practices that ultimately determines one’s community?

The memoir records her growing dissatisfaction with her position in India. After her return from the United States, she took the train from New Delhi to Allahabad to meet her mother. She had suitcases with plane tags that showed her return from her foreign country. Her pale complexion, the international flight tags, and her English accent landed her in a great danger. She was mistaken to be a spy working for a foreign government and a great threat to India's sovereignty. She faced an angry mob that shouted, "kill the bitch, she wants to destroy our country" (306) and was apprehended by two police officers and a railway guard who rummaged through her belongings for proof. Her transistor was mistaken to be either a transmission device or a pocket bomb. She knew that the only way to escape the mob lynching was to prove her Indian identity. Surprisingly, she proved her innocence by speaking fluently in Hindi and explaining her journey from the United States. The officers did not ask for any documentation or proof of residency. Her saree and fluency in Hindi were enough to prove her innocence and citizenship. The unfortunate incident raises significant questions on home and belonging. Lyons's body becomes a contested site for the nation. On one level, her passing as white makes her a national security threat, and at the same time, her mere knowledge of a regional language turns her into a desirable citizen. This arbitrary connotation of belonging makes her an impossible citizen in a nation that was becoming increasingly hostile to its minorities²².

Her first expatriation to Australia might be motivated by a series of betrayal from her loved ones. Her father refused to maintain much correspondence with her. Her love life was in

²² Here the report on the Christian Missionary Activities compiled by the Niyogi Committee in 1954 and submitted in 1956 is referenced to. The report pointed out the increasing activities of foreign missionaries to convert Indian citizens, particularly the under-privileged population. The report led to ostracization of the Christian community and several incidents of mass violence was reported, including the heinous murder of Graham Stewart Staines in 1999.

distress. After being proposed by her fiancé, Narinder, she came to know that he was married to an upper caste, Hindu woman and the couple had a daughter together. The shock of this discovery, the ugliness of his divorce, the hostility of his family towards Lyons, the unexpected cancelation of the wedding due to a superstitious belief that she, being an outsider, was the cause of Narinder's father's death, and her loss of hope in getting married finally led to her first migration to Australia in 1970 as a "disappointed immigrant" (312).

Australia had a white only immigration policy in the early and mid-twentieth century. In 1901 the Immigration Restriction Bill was passed to limit the migration of only Anglo-Saxons to the country. Restrictions against people of color and people of mixed descent were a central part of Australian immigration, and the main reason behind this was a fear of miscegenation. The revised migration act of 1958 stated that people who appear to be less than 75% European should be rejected as migrants. The self-imposed racialization resulted in the exclusion of the indigenous Australians people and other nonwhite population. However, after World War II, the economic demand of the country forced them to open up their borders to other immigrants from the global south like the Anglo-Indians, the Burghers of Sri Lanka, the Anglo-Burmese, and those of Dutch origin from Indonesia. Along with immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, the "less desirable" immigrants from the Middle East, Latin America, and South-east Asia were also allowed to enter (Lewin 634). However, systemic racism and segregation marked the Australian society and labor force. To bring equity and fairness, a multicultural policy was adopted in 1970 and the Australian Citizenship Act of 1973 annulled the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901. Despite the attempted inclusion, the preference for white, (or passing as white), English speaking, and Christian immigrants was evident in the admission process. Lyons mentions that even though she migrated in 1970, almost seventy years after the "White

Australian Policy” (318), she had to prove a “European background to be able to migrate to Australia from India” (318). Fortunately for her, Fr. Cyril George, the president of the Anglo-Indian Association in Allahabad, was able to provide a letter of proof that she was a member of the Anglo-Indian Association and had an American father. The same ancestry that provided an entry to Australia, proved to be a hindrance to procure her Indian passport. Even though Article 5 (b) of the Constitution mentions that “either of whose parents was born in the territory of India” shall be a citizen, (Constitution of India 26), yet Indian citizenship is dependent on patriliney and the citizenship of the father. Lyons’s application for an Indian passport was rejected because it was assumed that she had an American citizenship following that of her father. The hegemony of patriarchy and the epistemology of exclusion for female subjects call into question the assumption that ancestry and familial ties are static and autochthonous.

Her final expatriation to Australia in 1981 is again motivated by a broken marriage and economic hardship. After her return from Australia, Narinder marries her as a compensation for robbing her virginity. Lyons vaguely mentions the incident and it is not clear if she was raped. Their marriage was doomed from the beginning. Narendra was diagnosed with “abnormal genes” (400). After several miscarriages and stillbirths, and two adoptions, Lyons gave birth to her son, Mario, who was diagnosed with intellectual and physical disability at birth. Narinder’s response was to leave the baby in the hospital, “[an] abnormal child will be of no use to us, give him to the hospital. I shall pay the institution some money for his upkeep” (401). His inhumanity and coldness increased further as the children grew up. He did not want to spend money on his adopted and disabled children. As a result, Lyons had to resume working as a teacher at Frank Anthony Public School where she worked before. In addition to her children, she took care of her aging mother much to the chagrin of her husband. The last straw of patience broke when her

husband accused her of infidelity after she gave birth to a healthy baby named Ashwini Fabian because he doubted his ability for normal impregnation. After surviving almost eleven years in an estranged and abusive marriage, Lyons, finally, decided to move to Australia with her mother and children with a hope to lead a life of independence and dignity (405).

However, Australia did not prove to be welcoming despite being a white, Christian nation. She had repeatedly mentioned in her memoir that “the Christian western world, which is supposed to be Christ-like, charitable, and compassionate” (410) would value her better than her country of birth, yet she suffered a downward social mobility due to the discriminatory attitudes of her employers. From a respectable teacher in India, she ended up working at a KFC chain as a daily labor. Her teaching applications were rejected either because of her “sing song accent” or her quiet demeanor or her supposed unapproachable attitude towards her students. She was advised to “upgrade” her qualifications to suit the “friendly” teaching environment of the western world (413). Her rejections made her outraged rather than disillusioned. Lyons consciously embraced the American part of her ancestry. In her mind, she was a European who looked and acted the part; therefore, she was confused when she was not accepted by the mainstream Australian society. She also received a lukewarm welcome from her father’s family whose explicit racism is reflected in the following words, “You are just like us. You resemble us although you seem to have gone brown due to sunburn!” (438). Despite such prejudiced behavior, she feels proud when she and her sister are recognized as the surviving heirs of her father’s compensation money and when she discovers a connection with a French American ancestry. In the end, this memoir of filiation marks the journey of self-discovery of an Anglo-Indian woman who, like Catherine Bolton, has to undergo numerous cycles of migration in order to forge affiliations of belonging that culminates her search for a legitimate identity.

In Lyons's case, we see multiple axes of minoritization: the ambivalent and vague colonial policy for Anglo-Indians, the internal class and racial stratification of British bureaucracy, the inter-community prejudice against poor and illegitimate children, the rampant corruption and discrimination of the Catholic Church, the estranged behavior of family, and the implicit bias of the Australian society and their discriminatory attitudes towards immigrants from global south—all contribute towards creating impossible citizens who live in a perennial limbo within a nation-state. In addition, her own internalized ethnocentrism to claim loyalty to her European ancestry, her desire to reside in a white, Christian nation, her insistence to remain loyal to her Christian faith despite her scathing criticism of the Catholic Church in India, and her prejudicial attitude towards her Hindu counterparts—all created a double standard in her understanding of national belonging. Her decision to omit important historical moments, her lack of interest to pursue her maternal ancestry, her silence on her grandmother's Muslim ancestry and her unethical conversion, her dogged devotion to her father despite her abandonment, and her pride in affiliating with the American and French lineages of her paternal ancestry create suspicion in the readers mind about the authenticity of purpose of the memoir. At one level the memoir offers a discursive space to analyze multiple levels of minoritization of colonial Christians and offer counternarratives to the emancipatory rhetoric of missionary conversion, and on one level, it calls into question the objectivity of the memoirist to record the incidents of her life. The complex underpinnings of memory and erasure make this postcolonial text an interesting space to explore the politics of minoritization of the two groups of colonial Christians (Anglo-Indians and native converted Christians) who take the center stage in this memoir.

Chapter Three

“From Somebodies to Nobodies”²³: Class Tensions, Problems of Secularism, and the Dilemma of Home for Poor Whites in Paul Scott’s *Staying On* and Jaysinh Birjépatil’s *Chinnery’s Hotel*

I feel that India brought out all my very worst qualities. I don’t mean *this* India, though Heaven help me I sometimes don’t see a great deal of difference between theirs and the one in which *I* was a memsahib, but our India, British India, which kept me in my place, bottled up and bottled in, and brain-washed me into believing that nothing was more important than to do everything my place required me to do to be a perfectly complementary image of Tusker and *his* position.[emphasis in original] (*Staying On* 142)

Someone was always pontificating on the television about the so-called “culture shock” immigrants had to cope with. None has the slightest notion of the difficulties British people in England for the first time faced trying to cope with the incessant rain, the paucity of funds, the patronizing attitude of fellow teachers at school who considered those who had lived in the colonies to be culturally deprived, the sniggering creditors who thought her upper-crust accent an unwarranted affectation in a woman who toiled in a fish and chip shop with a foreign-sounding husband. (*Chinnery’s Hotel* 12)

The above quotes from Paul Scott’s Booker prize won novel, *Staying On*, and Jaysinh Birjépatil’s realist novel, *Chinnery’s Hotel* show the multiple layers of marginalization for the domiciled Europeans who became unwanted appendages after the fall of the British empire and

²³ Borrowed from Elizabeth Buettner’s book, *Empire Families*.

India's independence in 1947. Pathos and nostalgia for an era that has no value in the post-war psyche are the common themes of both the novels. The predicament of the Smalleys, largely created by colonial bureaucracy by denying Tusker his due in the army, and the harsh reality of expatriation faced by the Chinnery family point out the slippage of the power of whiteness on one hand, and on the other, they ironically show the chimera of class and social status that was so fastidiously crafted by the consuls of the empire. The fall in fortune for both the families shows how easily former employees of the once indomitable empire can transform into mere epithets of "poor whites" who in the words of Tusker Smalley are merely "hanging on" to survive their last days. Both the novels deal with three colonial Christian groups: domiciled Europeans, Anglo-Indians, and native converts, and point out how the groups self-minoritize each other and how social structures and colonial policies act as external factors of minoritization.

As seen in Paul Scott's and Jaysinh Birjépatil's Raj novels, the only way the domiciled Europeans could survive in a post-independent India and post-war England was to hold on to the past and the identities that shaped their relationship to the country of their birth and the surrogate country of their work (where people like the Smalleys lived for almost forty years!). English customs, a renewed faith in Church services, and an obstinate tendency to stay aloof from the common Indians seem to be a surviving tactics of a dying community who are seen as appendages by the young and entrepreneurial Indians, and useless by the British trying desperately to put India and the empire behind post-war national consciousness.

The liminal position of the domiciled European characters in the novel was due to their fallen economic status. But the novels reveal that even during colonization, these European characters, with no connection to family wealth or title, were always peripheral to the empire.

Striving to “document objective fact”²⁴ about the lives of British-Indians²⁵ both writers show how class hierarchies defined social status for domiciled Europeans both in India and England at the end of the Raj. Focusing on subaltern characters of the Raj, both novels hint at the colonial continuum to maintain and negotiate discourses of race and class, a theme much explored by historians, sociologists, and anthropologists to understand how conceptions of class in the metropole provided a model to frame racial hierarchies in the colonies. However, as Ann Stoler and Susan Thorne argue, imperial policies were never direct translations of European social picture nor were the transference of ideas simple and unmediated. Yet to understand class tensions in colonies, it is important to keep in mind that European social structures were far from being homogeneous and unproblematic. They had their own social hierarchies and were riddled with internal factions. Therefore, to analyze colonial configurations of class and race, it is important to look at “seemingly shared vocabularies... [that] may sometimes remain the same, at other times diverse and transpose into distinct and oppositional political meaning” (Stoler 13). The class and gender hierarchies in England found assurance and commonness in the caste divided patriarchal society of India.

The “seemingly shared vocabularies” of the empire is traced by the novels in their exploration of class politics, nostalgia and complicity, and post-independent national belonging of the former agents of the Raj. Paul Scott’s 1977 novel, *Staying On* is set 25 years after India’s

²⁴ Conventions of realist novels of documenting history as objective and infallible fact to give the novel, as termed by Alison Lee, “an illusion of reality” (3).

²⁵ I borrow the term British-Indians from Elizabeth Buettner. She uses it as a descriptive category for British families that stayed and raised family in India without formally emigrating. They became defined by their prolonged stay in India for work and ongoing cycles of migration between the metropole and colony. Their constant movement and fluid habitation made them fall into a special category different from the Indians and other European-descended communities that did not participate in continuous migratory patterns.

independence and highlights the ambiguous position of domiciled Europeans, who stayed back in India after independence and eventually occupied a marginal position. The novel, often seen as a sequel to Scott's epic saga of *The Raj Quartet*, portrays Tusker Smalley and his wife Lucy, an army couple, who after retirement find themselves oddly positioned in a new India where they face multiple layers of marginalization due to an entrenched hierarchy marked by class, gender, and skin color. In *The Raj Quartet*, Scott's epic-scale narrative of the empire, the Smalleys are just what they sound—small figures who disappear in the vast canvas. In *The Towers of Silence*, the third novel of the *Quartet*, Scott introduces them with the ubiquitous Smith's Hotels as slightly boring but useful characters (Jacqueline Banerjee 74). Indeed, the nondescript and childless army couple, Major, and later Colonel, Tusker Smalley and his not so *pukka memsahib* wife, Lucy, lived in the Smith's hotel in Pankot, a once-Princely-state in Northern India, during the whole period covered in the *Quartet*. When Scott focuses on them in his sequel, nothing has changed much for the Smalleys in terms of stature, but they have become a relic of the past and figures in the shadow who are merely trying to survive the last counting days of their lives with as much dignity as possible. They are still at the Smith's, but they now have a yearly tenancy of the hotel's annex, otherwise known as *The Lodge*, and the whole place is overshadowed by the new and majestic *Shiraz* right opposite to it and is shabbier and more run down than ever. The last of Pankot's retired ex-colonels, they are seen as "people in shadow" (40) by the Indian *nouveau riche* like the Bhoolahboys, Manektaras, and the Mitras who have replaced the Laytons²⁶ and their ilk i.e., the upper-class Europeans in Pankot, a hill station in North India. In this social scene, the Smalleys are even more peripheral and silenced than they used to be to the inner cycle of the Raj society strictly marked by class, family lineage, and generational wealth,

²⁶ Colonel and Mabel Layton are key characters in *The Raj Quartet*.

and position in the British colonial bureaucracy. The Smalleys become almost ineffectual appendage of the bygone era through their peripheral social and economic standings, futile nostalgia for the days of the Raj, ironic attempts to hold on to their previous lifestyle and self-created “Englishness,” and their ambiguous perception of home and belonging.

Jaysinh Birjépatil’s *Chinnery’s Hotel* on the other hand focuses on the intersectionality of race, religion, and class involved in the voluntary migration of a family of British hotel owners who felt that their business was unnecessary and incongruous in independent India. The transition of clientele from Europeans to Indians triggers the migration but their lives soon become a telling narrative of shattered dreams in the midst of economic hardships in post-war England. Their repatriation to India and the difficulties that unfold thereafter bear testimony to the growing hostility towards minorities in a nation guided by a sectarian notion of Hinduism. The main narrative focus on Roger Chinnery, a British army officer who is domiciled in India and opens up a hotel for British civilians, army officers, and “tommies” or poor soldiers of the empire, and his children who witness the end of colonialism. The novel is an interesting narrative of three generations of domiciled Europeans who participate in cycles of expatriation and repatriation in order to fit in with the mainstream narrative. “Home” becomes a contentious idea for Roger’s daughter Grace and her sister’s illegitimate child, Camilla, who are born in India but cannot see themselves aligned with the Indians after independence. The hotel and the quiet cantonment town of Mhow, near Indore, appear like a “lost civilization;” an unwanted blob in the “seething metropolis” (96). Mhow does for the novel what Pankot does to the Smalleys. It provides a perfect, incongruous background to tell the stories of residual characters left behind by colonization. Following the conventions of realism, these two Raj novels²⁷ claim to be, what

²⁷ Raj novels fall under the prolific genre of writing that depicts British-India relationship. David Rubin's assertion that "no land has ever equaled India for the fascination it has exerted over the British imagination" is borne out by

Linda Hutcheon calls, “historiographic metafiction” of the colonial and postcolonial periods. Focusing on class differentiation, racial ideologies of the empire, nostalgia, alienation, and downward social mobility of poor and middle class whites in India and England, these two novels provide a good analytical framework for this chapter to explore how the imperial project constructed Europe’s self-image and how far colonial encounters were shaped by conflicts within Europe itself. This exploration, within the discourse of fictional historiography, is important to locate questions of national identity and belonging for peripheral agents of the empire. I argue that exclusions based on class already existed in Victorian and nineteenth century Britain, and similar differential policies continued in independent India to reproduce rigid class boundary. These further marginalized unprivileged whites whose position became even more contentious with India’s entry into a secularist democracy. Before I analyze the intersections of race and class in the politics of minoritization of the three groups of colonial Christians, it is important to look at the genre of the realist novels that looked at the colonial period and analyzed the relationship between Britain and India.

Realist Novels of the Raj: An Analysis of Mutual Prejudice

Literary fascination with India and the colonial era did not end with India’s freedom. There is abundance of novels that present a postmodern view of the Raj; its successes and failures, and others, like the novels of J.G. Farrell use India as a backdrop to critically examine the workings of the British society in the last century. There are others like K. M. Kaye and Fitzgerald whose historical romance provide a nostalgic image of India that was far removed

the profusion of British fiction that explores the three phases of colonization as outlined by Allen J. Greenberger: The Era of Confidence (1880-1910), The Era of Doubt (1910-1935), and the Era of Melancholy (1935-1960) (“Introduction” 1). A genre that was started by travel writings remains unabated even after decades of India’s independence. Birjépatil’s work bears witness to this popularity. An Indian diasporic writer, Birjépatil, like Kipling, Maud Diver, M.M. Kaye, Godden Rumer, Ruth Jhabvala, Paul Scott, and the likes, chooses the bygone era of British-India for his novel.

from reality. Despite the sustained interest in the ex-colony, the uncritical or one-sided representation of India and Indian characters have troubled postcolonial scholars like Benita Parry and Allen Greenberger. Talking about the negative mythologies that have been reproduced in the Raj novels post 1947, David Rubin mentions in his book, *After the Raj: British Novels of India since 1947* that,

Anglo-Saxon mythologies about the subcontinent—its mystery, its spirituality, its powers to liberate and to destroy, its dangers, its subtly seductive and threatening sexuality—continue to furnish the material for a number of novels that either take as a given or finally accept the difficulty (and often the impossibility) of genuine understanding between [the] Westerner and Indian. (14)

Rubin argues that in many of the post 1947 novels the same racist and prejudicial attitude towards Indian characters is seen in the realist novels of the Raj. For example, in Geraldine Hall's novel, *The Cats of Benares* (published in 1967) only the Europeans of royal and noble birth are treated with a seriousness while the Indian characters, especially the servants, merchants, policemen, and bureaucrats are allowed only brief comic appearances as fantastic objects for the authors' vision or disgust. Ruth Jhabvala, despite her earlier perceptive portrayal of India, relies increasingly on the caricature in her latter works. Writers like Jhabvala, Hall, John Masters, Kaye, Rumer Godden, and even the most perceptive of the lot, Paul Scott, appear to be glaringly ignorant of the variety and heterogeneity of India's social, religious, and linguistic landscape. Where each of their major and minor British or European characters are described in great detail with references to their difference in class, ethnicity, school, accent, and income, the Indian counterparts remain frozen, amorphous, and invisible. Their monolithic representations do not reflect the lived reality of Indian society. For example, E.M. Forster will have a Bhattacharya

marry a Das, a very unlikely match in 1924 where intercaste marriages were not socially sanctioned. Even a careful observer like Paul Scott will invent a name like Gupta Sen when it should invariably be Sengupta, and he seems completely unaware that this name denotes a member of a particular Bengali *kayastha* community. In his representation, the Gupta Sens are almost exclusively Hindi speaking with no connection to their Bengali roots. In his novels, the Bengali Chatterjees (from Eastern India) are described as Rajputs (the warrior community from western India) with no references to how such an unlikely mix might have happened. These lapses might seem trivial to consider, but they are, on the contrary, of considerable importance. One would never, for example, trust a novelist who would say that Jones or Smith is an Italian name. If one had an Italian Jones in the story, the circumstances would have to be explained to the readers. But such verisimilitude is not required in writing about Indian society (22). Even in the matter of language, we see a similar cavalier attitude. Those British novelists who possessed a knowledge of military or “kitchen Hindustani” had never acquired a mastery of grammar or even of the Indian alphabet. In most of these cases, the carelessness about such matters reveals not only the British writer's contempt, but also a deeply rooted, often unconscious, racism (22). Another narratorial erasure which is often noted in these novels of the Raj is a misrecognition of India's changing socio-political scenario. The novels published prior to independence hardly talked about the rising power of the Indian Congress Party and the important role it played on the demands of self-rule. In *Staying On* published in 1977, we also see a similar erasure of politics when the narrator remains silent about the emergency period in 1970 and its threat to Indian democracy.

The prejudicial representation has a long history in the genre of the realist novels of the Raj. David Rubin has divided the novels into four categories. He argues that the first set of

novels looked at the uprising of 1857, which was once dismissed as a *sepoy mutiny* by colonial historians, but later, rewritten and recognized as the First War of Independence by postcolonial interpreters of history. The uprising of 1857 has remained a popular subject for the Raj novels written both before and after independence. Earlier mutiny novels, such as those by Steele and Wentworth were intended to glorify the Raj and the British virtues that sustained it, and of course, to vindicate the actions of the British Army during and after the struggle. However, some works like Prichard's satirical novel, *How to Manage It* published in 1864 provide a strong criticism of British bureaucratic incompetence, the blind faith of the military in the loyalty of its native troops, and the general British lack of understanding and disrespect for Indian religious beliefs. In the novel, *Oakfield* (1854), William Delafield Arnold is highly critical of the frivolous Anglo-Indian lifestyle in the years preceding the mutiny. All these themes, along with a sustained nostalgia for the empire, remained a common characteristic of the post-independent Raj novels.

The second group of novels were fascinated with the anglicized Indian and the Indianized Englishman. In many of the romantic novels of the mutiny, the Englishman passes for Indian only as a means of disguise and self-protection. On the other hand, the Indian who had an English education and acquired British manners and way of life, usually turned out to be either a misfit or a villain.

The third group of novels sees "India as a source of light" according to David Rubin. From the time of the late Victorian era, novelists have often seen India as a destructive power, but a few, particularly in recent years, have been attracted by Indian philosophy and religion finding in them a source of enlightenment. Though problematic in its representation of Eastern spirituality, Maggi Lidchi's *Man of Earth*, published in 1968, shows the spiritual journey of a

forty-year-old alcoholic Englishman, Christopher, in the villages of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and India, and his rise from alcoholism to self-control.

The last set of novels that sees “India as destroyer” represents the country and the people in a limited and racist light as pointed out at the beginning of this section. The trajectory of the Raj novels helps to situate the two realist novels of the Raj that this chapter will discuss. Both these novels are published at least two decades after independence, *Staying On* in 1977 and *Chinnery’s Hotel* in 2005, and represent some of the characteristics of the realist novels on British India relationship. The novels talk about the poor, European characters who have suffered downward social and economic mobility after the end of the Raj. They have also lost their advantage of racial superiority, and their whiteness does not have the same privilege they used to enjoy during the height of colonialism. Therefore, like all peripheral characters of the Raj, they suffer from cynical nostalgia for the past. The aim of this chapter is to analyze the tensions and contradictions of the domiciled community, their internalized racism and condescension for the native population and Anglo-Indians, the reverse racism they received from the Indian characters, their lack of solidarity over a common religious background, and the colonial hierarchy of class and its continuation after independence. Extrapolating these thematic considerations, I will interrogate the politics of minoritization of domiciled Europeans and poor whites within the discursive space of the realist novels.

Overlapping Ideologies of Race, Class, and Gender in the Metropole and the Colonies

The construction of colonial categories of race and class has much more contemporary salience than simply enhancing our understanding of colonialism. If we have to understand contemporary situations of postcolonial nations, then we need a richer understanding of what is termed as “colonial legacy.” Legacy indicates that oppressive power structures institutionalized

by the empire continued after decolonization, but it occludes the fact that the nature of oppression and hierarchization differed. “Meanings of institutions, bureaucratic habits, and cultural styles set up in the colonial encounters” were continually reshaped or extended in the colony (Stoler and Cooper 33). Such a continuation is highlighted in a quote by Lucy Smalley mentioned at the beginning: “...our India, British India, ... kept me in my place, bottled up and bottled in, and brain-washed me into believing that nothing was more important than to do everything my place required me to do to be a perfectly complementary image of Tusker and *his* position” [emphasis in original] (*Staying On* 142). The quote highlights the rigid class stratification within which colonial bureaucracy functioned, the conditioning of white women to act as agents of colonial patriarchy, and the self-imposed behavior of colonial agents to accept and perpetuate the established hierarchy.

The omniscient narrator of Paul Scott’s novel has ambiguous intentions. Providing the voices of both Tusker and Lucy through their internal monologues, letters, and diaries, the narrator, on one hand, critiques the fractured realities of a new India and on the other, mirrors the concern of the writer himself which is to expose the “relative insensitivity of Britain (and of Britain’s new rulers in 1945) to their own responsibility for the human tragedies on a major scale that were the product of Britain’s precipitate departure and of the abandonment of their implied pledges to the rulers of the Indian states and their peoples” (Beloff 69). The burden to “save” India which was the heart of the colonial project is seen in the narrator’s analysis of the past and present conditions. The narrator aptly identifies the internal prejudice and discrimination regularly practiced by the consuls of colonial bureaucracy that made the Smalleys acutely aware of their insignificant position in the Raj but betrays the internationalized racism and sexism of the agents of colonial bureaucracy. Therefore, the Bhoolahboys are characters of questionable

morality, efficient but devoid of the “honorable” behavior that Lucy’s clergyman father exhibited through his word of honor. Lamenting the loss of integrity among the likes of Bhoolahboys, Lucy tells Ibrahim, “An Englishman’s word is as good as his bond because he is known throughout the world to be an honest man” (44). The Bhoolahboys, Dr. Mitra, and the Manektaras can never match up to this lofty honesty even though they are far more economically successful than the domiciled European and Anglo-Indian characters in the novel and never earns respect from Tusker, Lucy, or even Ibrahim. Mr. Bhoolahboy is always “Billy Boy” to Tusker even though, as the proprietor of the hotel, he has the ability to evict the Smalley family, and Tusker’s rich and successful friends will always be considered “black” by Lucy, who, she thinks, do not deeply care about her, and whom, she, in turn, also doesn’t like (84). The deeply entrenched racism of Lucy is further elaborated through her nostalgia for the days of the Raj where she was not the only white person attending Church service and the ministers and priests were not dark-skinned, converted Christians like Father Sebastian Ambedkar.

In her nostalgic mind it is much more important to reconnect to her past acquaintances, the same people who had “kept her in her position,” but somehow become close to her after they migrated back to England and shared the same sentiment of “putting India behind” them (65). In her futile and misplaced attempt to build a forced camaraderie among the few white characters in town, Lucy reluctantly tries to forge a friendship with Susy, one of the Anglo-Indian characters who ends up following her mother’s footsteps as a hairdresser and by the nature of her “degenerative” birth as a racial hybrid, a prostitute on the side. Susy, who has always sat at the back of the Church and was consciously avoided by the *pukka memsahibs* of Pankot, suddenly feels an urge to bond over necessity and security, and therefore, earnestly says to Lucy, “people like us must stick together” (213).

Ironically, she is the one of the many mixed-race people whom Lucy was taught to stay away from when she first came to India as the wife of a Major. She learnt the “need to steer clear, socially, of people of mixed blood and she had quickly been taught how to detect the taint, the touch of tar-brush in those white enough to be emboldened to pass themselves off as pukka-born” (172). In her behavior we see the same racial anxiety to maintain the “purity” of race, and by extension, moral character, and therefore, she had never felt the need to call Susy to dinner along with Tusker’s Indian friends, even though she saw her regularly during her hairdressing sessions. However, Lucy Smalley describes her Anglo-Indian acquaintance in less harsh tone than she does her native neighbors. The narrator mentions that even though the Anglo-Indians suffered from European mimicry, yet they “formed an effective and in-depth defense against the strange native tendency to bribery and corruption which, coupled with that other native tendency to indolence could have made the Indian empire even more difficult to run than it already was” had not the Anglo-Indians been loyal and indebted to the colonial masters (172). It is, therefore, no surprise that the Indian characters in the novel all display a healthy amount of “bribery, corruption, and indolence” and they are all portrayed as money minded, conniving, and corrupt, trying to take advantage of innocent people, if one is not careful. It is not clear for which India the narrator has more condescension, the one that put the Smalleys in their place or the one that victimized them? The condescending hilarity with which Mrs. Bhoolahoy is described throughout the novel is both shocking and poignant. She is a voluptuous woman who likes to show off her newly acquired wealth by wearing expensive sarees that highlight her “salmon-like” pink skin. She regularly gambles and is greedy to expand her hotel business almost to the point of being a mercenary. Her marriage to Mr. Bhoolahoy, who is a converted Christian, is of convenience and necessity—she needs a steady sexual partnership, and he needs money,

stability, and position. She has an iron fisted control over her husband who is so hopelessly scared of her temper that he cannot voice his concern over how she runs her business. Her husband is her employee and must follow the same rules of servitude and loyalty as other servants. She is portrayed as the villain who is indirectly responsible for Tusker's death. Her passive aggressive treatment of the Smalleys, her gradual withdrawal of payment for miscellaneous services like the maintenance of the Lodge's adjacent garden, her refusal to show any regard to their former colonial position, and her ultimate notice of eviction are all seen as schematic manipulations of a corrupt mind determined to erase the only surviving members of a vanishing community in Pankot. The eviction letter, thus, becomes symbolic of the politics of minoritization of one of the most important agents of colonial machinery; the domiciled Europeans who incrementally felt "foreign" in "this India" where they were stationed for more than half of their lives and decided to make it as their surrogate home after the fall of the British empire. But the narrator is quick to point out that there are no victims here. The main characters, who are members of different religious groups, are all hostile and condescending to one another. Mrs. Bhoolahoy, who is a Hindu, sees the Smalleys as complicit members of colonization. They are the former oppressors who must face the consequence of their actions. Mr. Bhoolahoy, being a converted Christian, has sympathy for this elderly couple, partly because of his humanity, and partly because he has been the recipient of colonial benevolence after his conversion. He has done well as a converted Christian. He was a preacher and a "churchwarden of Pankot's old English C of E Church" (45) and was able to commercialize the services of the Church into a profitable mission by attracting influencing people of the area. However, his Christianity and his role as a pastor was not enough to earn the respect of the Smalleys or the Anglo-Indian characters in the novel because there was always a difference between "real"

Christians born into the religion and the converted ones. Colonial prejudice over race, ancestry, and ethnicity also played a role in separating the two groups. Even among native born Christians of full or partial European ancestry, there was no solidarity because of an assumed supremacy of race and nationality.

Not only race and religion, class division and class prejudice also played a huge role in perpetuating social hierarchy in pre- and post-independent India. Therefore, to understand “this India,” we have to first understand the British India that kept Lucy in her place because without the other, we would fall into the trap of what Fredrick Cooper calls “leapfrogging legacies” of national histories (495). However, the need to read history as overlapping and not linear is a new academic practice. Susan Thorne mentions in her essay, “Missionary Imperialism and the Language of Class,” that British historians like Linda Colley ignored the significance of the empire in describing Europe’s historical developments. This is particularly true of nineteenth century historians working on class and industrialization. Rather than looking at the intersection of industrial revolution and colonization, they were more interested in tracing imperialism’s role in shaping national identity rather than class identity. The accepted discourse was that “imperial preoccupations displaced rather than informed class consciousness” (253). The tendency to study imperial history as binaries of colonizer and colonized, or the center and periphery was shaken up by Edward Said’s 1978 book, *Orientalism* where he argues against western “hegemonic” discourse that facilitates and authenticates power hierarchy within the “Self/Other” model. Said’s argument is, because the West/Occident is normalized as a referent of modernity, progress, and technological advancement, that the East/Orient exists as the regressive *Other* that is atavistic and incapable of bringing about its own progress (*Orientalism* 7). To de-essentialize the binary, Dipesh Chakraborty calls for “provincialization” of Europe where western history should be seen

as a particular rather than a universal model. These important works made critical intervention in South Asian and Subaltern studies, opening up new discourse for postcolonialism. However, the relevance of overlapping binaries started gaining prominence only from mid-twentieth century particularly among literary scholars, anthropologists, and historians. Fredrick Cooper and Ann Stoler in their 1997 edited work shifted the unit of analysis of metropole and the colony and accounted for the changing socio-political coordinates on which the very categories of colonized and colonizer have been shaped and legitimized at different times. In the introduction they argued that the rationale of the book is to explore:

...how colonies and metropolises shared in the dialectics of inclusion and exclusion, and in what ways the colonial domain was distinct from the metropolitan one... [and] to explore within the shared but differentiated space of the empire the hierarchies of production, power, and knowledge that emerged in tension with the extension of the domain of universal reason, of market economies, and of citizenship. (3)

Exploration of the dialectical and shared narrative of the metropole and colony is also taken up by exploring the “domestic anxieties over racial fitness” (qtd. in Mitzutani 79) and addressing the heated debate concerning the poor quality of recruits for the British troops in the Boer War (1899-1902), imperial historians acknowledged the existence of the urban poor and their marginalization. Henry Mayhew addressed this problem decades earlier in his influential book, *London Labour and London Poor* (1861-62). He not only identified poverty as a moral problem, but also linked it to Britain’s “civilizing mission” overseas. He wrote:

Indeed, the moral and religious state of these men is a foul disgrace to us, laughing to scorn our zeal for the “propagation of the gospel in foreign parts,” and making our many societies for the civilization of *savages* on the other side of the globe appear like a

“delusion, a mockery, and a snare,” when we have so many people sunk in the lowest depth of *barbarism round about our very homes*. [emphasis mine] (qtd. in Mitzutani 80).

Such a passage betrays the relevance of colonial civilizing mission and expresses the discontent of the British middle class in their inability to erase “barbarism” and uplift the lives of many in the metropole. It also points out the implicit connection made between London poor and colonized natives, a point explored by Susan Thorne while talking about evangelical conversion in home and abroad. She investigates what connected the “heathen” laboring poor of England to the “heathen races” of the empire and brought about the urgency of Christian conversion. She develops a counter-discourse that “evangelical religious practice became a principal site at which conceptions of race emanating from the colonies entered metropolitan social discourse” (241). But that is not to say that both conceptions mirrored one another. She argues that conversion ideologies undertaken by home missionary and their conception of the poor “reverberated” and “refracted” in the foreign mission field but took different forms in the very different socio-political contexts of Britain and the colonies (241). She points out that in the eighteenth century, home missionaries were concerned with secular philanthropic works like controlling venereal diseases, educating the poor and laboring class, and decreasing mortality among the people. However, after the American Revolution, the imperial imperative for relieving poverty at “home” lost much of its urgency and force. Commercialization of agriculture and growing industrialization devalued the labor of the poor. Poverty lost its socioeconomic context and was viewed as a moral degeneration that could be eradicated only by bringing the poor “heathens” closer to the Church. The sustained metaphor of heathenism connecting metropolitan poor and colonial natives marks the shifting vocabularies of race and class in the colonial imaginary. Based on the principle of *progress*, the colonies, particularly India, in the eighteenth century

became subject to the “knowledgeable” gaze of Britain. New modalities of control and surveillance were constructed to define and enumerate empirical understanding of *progress* and *modernity* and often the metropolitan poor and colonial people were perceived to be malignant presence that would undermine the very project of imperialism. Therefore, there were “distinct homologies between the discursive appropriation of the poor and of colonial subjects during the nineteenth century, suggesting that the London poor were an object of imperial and not merely domestic concern” (Marriott 7). These homologies were found and reinforced by quantifiable knowledge like the census data, reports, minutes, and inquiries on one hand and writings of travelers and evangelicals on the other hand. In the literature of this period, we see the popularity of realism and the urgency of the writers to capture the social panorama by participating in the internalized hierarchy and revealing the “dialogic and interactive” relationship between colony and metropole (qtd. in Ramusack and Burton 476). Such a project was however based on the creation of an “imagined community of Anglo-Saxonism” as John Marriott observes, but such communities consolidated social hierarchization because they “defined themselves by exclusions as much as by inclusion, and since exclusion operated against others beyond and within the territorial boundaries of the imagined community,” internal class division was conflated with race, gender, and sexuality and became categories of otherness against which Anglo-Saxonism was legitimized (113). Controlling the poor and other irritants of the empire was carried forth zealously in the colonies. Working in the imperial army, both Tusker and Lucy were made acutely aware of their peripheral positions and Tusker was denied the promotion, salary, and the pension that he deserved simply because he came from a humble background without much talent, family connections, or ambition. His wife, a Vicar’s daughter who was trained in shorthand, had a passion for the theatre, and was thought to have chosen well when she got

betrothed to Tusker because he was in the rank of the Major and posted in a colony that was much romanticized as the land of the exotic and excess. Reality, however, proved otherwise. Quickly Lucy realized that her position within the inner circle of colonial consul was determined by her husband's insignificance in the army. She was not allowed to call the Colonel's wife by her first name or perform any act of transgression that would jeopardize the iron curtain of colonial hierarchy. However, her knowledge of shorthand and other secretarial work was deemed useful for the numerous "ladies committees" functioning as loyal agents of the empire. She was reluctantly included within the circle of higher-class bureaucrats and excluded immediately when her job was no longer required. Ironically, such self-imposed hypocrisy saw its continuation in the different forms of colonial legacies that the Smalleys witnessed after independence. The *nouveau riche*, upper caste Hindus like the Manektaras and Mitras, and the shrewd and corrupt businesspeople like the Bhoolabhoys are just as pretentious and ostentatious as their former masters. They pity the Smalleys and yet maintain an artificial friendship to boost up their own social position that automatically gains momentum by association with full-blooded, blue-eyed Europeans. In their carefully crafted social structure, they stay away from native servants like Ibrahim and Minnie who have worked for former agents of the Raj, learnt English to communicate effectively with their masters, and were conditioned to feel superior to other lower-class natives who did not have the privilege to serve a *pukka burrasahib*. The new "smart and modern" Indians, following the footsteps of poor domiciled Europeans, also stayed away from the working-class and dark-complexioned Anglo-Indians like Susy who desperately tried to make a living by serving the extant European and upper-class native population. Racial prejudice against mixed blood is a colonial legacy that haunts the consciousness of both the former colonized and the colonizer. However, class and racial prejudice was not a learnt behavior, it was

already in the social fabric of both the metropole and the colony. If the history of class consciousness in England is parsed through, it will reveal the generational trend of othering that eventually created a rationale for colonization.

Class Tensions, Poverty, and the Dilemma of Poor Whites

Exploring the comparativeness of Indo-British history in the nineteenth century, British historian David Cannadine shows in his book, *Class in Britain* that a powerful conception of class hierarchization and the order of rank were prevalent in Britain. It became more entrenched in late eighteenth century when established order was shaken up by the French Revolution. To preserve the “national social fabric” of Europe, class hierarchies and subordination became vital modes of governance. In the nineteenth century, the number of laboring class or working-class increased in England due to industrial revolution and commercialization of agriculture. The growing social tensions between “upper” and “lower” classes of Britain led Prime Minister Disraeli to conclude that Britain was divided into two nations, the rich and the poor (Fischer-Tiné 77). The “condition of England” was a concerning question for the population. David Cannadine in his exhaustive historical work on class structure of Britain has argued that Marxist ideas of class and means of production, and the political divide between the labor and Conservative parties further entrenched the class structure. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the polarized representation of social class by political parties was toned down. Before the First World War, Liberals fought for the hopes and aspirations of the middle and working-class while Conservatives defended the rich and the aristocracy. The Fourth Reform Act of 1918 enfranchised most adults, so when labor party battled the Tories after the First World War, it was an equally clear-cut contest between workers on one side and employers on the other—a contest that made the demise of the Liberal party inevitable because they could not amass the support of

the influential upper-class. Because social identities were determined by political representation, class conflict and class struggle became common. Competing class conflict marked British society, but such a binary vision made classes monolithic and antagonistic and did not represent the internal tensions within and among the classes. In the early 1870s only four percent of the labor force belonged to trade unions and in 1911 it represented only less than one quarter. The majority of workers were socially and politically conservatives and preferred to vote for the Conservative party because they wanted to vote like their employers, and only a minority voted for the labor party (115).

By 1900, more than three quarters of the population lived in towns and were manual laborers making Britain the most urban and industrial nation of the world. With the rise of the Labour Party in 1900s the idea of class allegiance gave rise to new class consciousness and class identity. The party encouraged all workers whom they represented to see themselves as belonging to one single class with common interests and only through political representation in the House of Commons would the workers be empowered. Marxist ideas started to circulate in this time through translation of his work in English that further created a strong sense of working-class and labor rights. It was also during this time that poverty was linked to moral degeneration, which was not the case in the earlier decade.

British society was also divided between those who sunk in poverty and those who were not. In the 1880s “the condition of England” was a concerning question for the population. Investigative literature brought to light the social pariahs, the outcasts of London, “a terra incognita beyond the abyss,” and showed a disturbing picture that almost 30 percent of the population lived in poverty. A century after the Industrial Revolution, England remained divided between two worlds: poor and wealthy (112). The primordial element of class is expressed when

class is compared to caste. Dispensing with the language of class, Allen Clarke, who worked in the Lancashire cotton textile industry, divided the society between Bolton and Oldham in the 1890s as- the first *caste* consisted of “employers, clergymen, solicitors, physicians, tradesmen on a larger scale, the “second caste was composed of the best paid clerks, bookkeepers, managers, and the better sort of working folks,” and the “third caste was made up of labourers and poorer workmen”(qtd. In Cannadine 117). Of the three, the middle class had the most divided definition. On one hand they were described as the backbone of British society, and on the other they were described as “feeble, complacent, and defeated, and that the vigor, energy and inventiveness” which they needed for entrepreneurial success, had left them. (120).

However, in the interwar years this traditional tripartite class structure did not constitute British society. A decade later in *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley thought society was evolving into a “meritocratic, materialistic, Ford-worshipping order,” which he fancifully classified into clever, professional “alphas,” obedient executive “betas,” and hard-working “gammas.” (128). This points to the changing social times when interwar Britain was a quintessentially middle class society, and one sign of this was that politics was dominated by the middle class as never before. There was a sharp tendency to distinguish the middle class from the working or labor class who mostly did hard, menial, or odd jobs of society. The working-class was stigmatized in society as “stupid, coarse, crude, violent,” and smelly. During the interwar years, it was widely believed that they drank and gambled which pauperized families, reduced working hours, and corrupted a whole class of workers. It was also believed that they were incompetent in the management of their own interest, and that they were easily demoralized by unemployment. As in the 1880s, this working-class constituted a separate, alien world, which was believed to be inhospitable and physically dangerous.

It is interesting to note that the poor and working classes were not homogenous in their lack of wealth. Those who belonged to the working-class were viewed sympathetically for their hard-working capabilities despite the negative stereotypes mentioned above. But members of England's itinerant population like the vagabonds, vagrants, loafers, casual workers, and beggars were treated as outcasts and threats to the society. Harold-Fischer Tine' in his book, *Low and Licentious Europeans: Race, Class and "White Subalternity" in Colonial India* has argued that the general consensus among the British was that the poor itinerant groups were destitute not because of illness or misfortune but because of their "incurable disinclination to work" (80). Vagrancy was seen as a sort of "inherited weakness" of character which was highly "contagious" (80). Therefore, the "deserving" hard-working poor and the rest of the population had to be protected and kept separated from the "vicious mendicant." This residual group was perceived as a "savage" group, causing serious problems of governance within British society (80). What is evident from the above discussion is an overreliance on individualism. The existence of systemic oppression inherent in capitalism was not considered as a viable reason. Individual responsibility was closely associated with labor and accumulation of wealth. The fear and contempt for the poor is also manifested in the symbolic repertoires of dirt and degeneration. As John Marriott observes, dirt features prominently in the "imaginative universe constructed around the nineteenth century metropolitan and colonial poor" (162). The physical filth of the poor and the colonized became a "metonym for moral defilement and impurity" (162). Thus "contagion" and "contamination" were the tropes through which metropole and the colonies were constructed by imperial bureaucracy.

Anne McClintock in her book, *Imperial Leather* has argued that dirt was used symbolically in Victorian culture to define and transgress social boundaries. The middle class,

for example, was obsessed with dirt that was evident from their use and deification of soap, which further defined and reified their racial supremacy as Anglo-Saxons. Since dirt was visible evidence of manual labor, it had to be removed from the middle class body to maintain and rigidify the class boundary (208-09). Similar arguments were extended in the sphere of sexuality. The “iconography of dirt,” observes John Marriott, “became a poetics of surveillance” in policing the boundaries not only between “normal” and “dirty” work, but also between “normal” and “dirty” sexuality (Marriott 163). Dirt had its nuanced means of dividing labor. The dirt of manual labor was not the same as the dirt of metropolitan poor, “honest and manufactured” dirt of the workers in the form of grease, sweat, oil, dust, and grime was different from the “grotesque, faecal dirt” of the poor. “Dirt was also color coded, it was neither brown nor grey, but unanimously black,” (Marriott 163) therefore giving it a visible code of othering. In *Chinnery’s Hotel* Grace’s fallen status is determined by her unclean exterior. When she encounters Marjorie Sanderson, her neighbor in Mhow, in the streets of London, she becomes conscious of her downward status by looking at her “drab duffle coat and muddy shoes” (11). The novel also talks about a new class of people in England after the second World War—the residents of ex-colonies who returned to England after the fall of the empire. England had already shrugged off responsibility of the very people they produced, new histories were being written and taught in schools about the role of Britain in India and the average Englishmen toiling under harsh living condition had no interest or sympathy for “well dressed arrival from the colonies, with her scrubbed look and superior manner.” They had no use for someone with whom they could not share painful wartime memories of loved ones who “never made it to the crowded underground shelters and tube stations before being blown to smithereens” (9). The comfort of familiarity that breeds a certain camaraderie among strangers was absent for Grace.

She grew up in a country where she enjoyed and took for granted certain privileges: financial privilege due to her father's high rank in the army, racial privilege due to her European lineage, skin color, and the artificial construction of racial categories that defined the core of colonization. But in England, she is a different breed, poor and disadvantaged because of post-war economic hardships and lack of opportunities but is too sophisticated and well mannered (like a proper *memsahib*) to mingle with the average working-class people. She is a European Christian but separated from the rest by her previous domiciled position.

In *Staying On* the Smalleys are in a different boat. They are Europeans who did not have the means to go back to England because the pension was too little, and the living conditions were not conducive for repatriation. But the reason for staying on was more complicated in Tusker's case. As he poignantly writes in his diary,

...I still think we were right to stay on, though I don't think of it any longer as staying on, but just hanging on, which people of our age and upbringing and limited talents, people who have never been really poor but never had any real money, never inherited real money, never made real money, have to do, whatever they happen to be, when they can't work anymore. I'm happier hanging on in India, not for India as India but because I can't just merely think of it as a place where I drew my pay for the first 25 years of my working life, which is a hell of a long time anyway, though by rights it should have been longer... I thought about this a lot at the time and it seemed to me I'd invested in India, not money which I've never had, not talent..., nothing India needed or needs or has been one jot the better for, but was all I had to invest in anything. *Me*. (195-96)

Tusker's introspection about investing in himself in India for twenty-five long years clearly indicate the affective domain of work. Tusker has remained in India longer than he had

lived in his birth country, England. His domiciled status and his job as a colonial agent gave him the opportunity to mingle with all walks of native life. He has served the estate of Indian kings and lived with the salaried employees of the empire. He has mixed with members of his race and that of the colonized and has discovered the utter futility, ethnocentrism, and the ravenous hunger for power and control of the apparent hallowed foundation of the empire. Through his interactions and friendship with the native population, he has probably been stripped off his disillusionment about the widely believed “benevolence” of the Raj, and perhaps that is the reason he thought he would rather “hang on” to the place that he has known for so many years rather than move to a relatively unknown and changed territory in the twilight years of his life. For Tusker, who has been a victim of rigid class hierarchy in colonial bureaucracy, work, belonging, and comfort in everyday interactions were much more important than his employment status. Therefore, the tripartite class structure in the metropole that was extrapolated in the colonies did not play a long-lasting role in Tusker’s emotional life, even though it did, indeed, determined his social status during and after his colonial employment.

As argued above, the metropolitan tendency to maintain and rigidify class cleavages continued in the colonies. The revived and elaborated honorific hierarchies were extended more broadly to the British empire which in the late Victorian and Edwardian heyday of the “new imperialism” was a major component in this renewed “instinct for hierarchy” (Cannadine 122). The creation of the order of the Indian Empire, the imperial durbars, and the increasing esteem accorded to the native Indian princes, meant that by the time Lord Curzon became viceroy, “hierarchy was the axis around which everything turned” in the Indian empire. At Calcutta and Shimla, the choreographed vice-regal rituals of rank and status were more elaborate than at

Windsor or Buckingham Palace. Throughout the Raj, protocol was strictly governed by the “warrant of precedence” which determined seating arrangements at formal dinner parties, etc. The nature of the hierarchy, however, differed in the colony. Class cleavages were perpetuated to create hierarchies of whiteness and to create modes of othering for the colonized natives. In the two articles published in 1979 and 1983, historian David Arnold suggests that the Raj chose to see itself as consisting of civil servants, army officers, planters, and businessmen to create the illusion that the empire consisted of elite Europeans who can vouch for racial superiority of whites. Even the “elites” of the Raj occupied differential positions within the complex colonial hierarchy. Beneath the Viceroys and provincial Governors were Indian Civil servants (the so-called heaven-born), senior officials in other state employment sector, high-ranking army officers, along with Anglican bishops and archdeacons. The upper middle class included junior officials, planters, chaplains, and most army officers, and the lower middle class encompassed Protestant missionaries and many in trade and commerce (known pejoratively as “boxwallahs,” a term that also referred to Indian itinerant peddlers who carried their wares in boxes) (106). It seems apparent that this hierarchy is based on profession and wealth acquisition, but as Lucy Smalley mentions in *Staying On*, the hierarchy was much more complex and nuanced. Seniority, ancestry, habitation in the metropole, and family prestige played a deciding role in categorizing different agents of the Raj. The class stratification was so rigidly sanctioned by the empire that some colonial observers like the journalist Ian Stephen have compared it with the entrenched caste system of Indian society as the British historians like Harald Fischer-Tiné had done when talking about the primordial class structure of England. It is also observed by Fischer-Tiné that class distinction was rigidly followed by the middle-class whites in India, who, with their makeshift petit-aristocratic lifestyles, were not only aloof from the natives but also remained

distanced from the lower classes of their own society. Class segregation was practiced and encouraged by the Raj to preserve the self-imposed racial superiority and prove to the natives that “true” whites cannot be poor (54). Poverty was projected as an extension of moral degeneration of a race and strict measures were undertaken to find, contain, and discipline poor whites who became symbolic irritants of the empire by the beginning of twentieth century. Satoshi Mitzutani has argued that visible pauperization of a population of European descent, Christian and English speaking, was conceived as politically dangerous because it was feared that they will create a negative impression on the minds of the Indian who would be “amazed to find an imperial race can sink so low” (55). At the heart of this quote lies the fear of exposing the very logic of legitimizing the colonial rule.

In the case of female vagrants and prostitutes, control was exercised more strictly than their male counterparts. The poor female vagrants were mostly soldier’s wives whose husband had either died in the war or left them destitute in the colony. Single, itinerant, white women roaming in the streets of the colonies were seen as dangerous threats to the empire. Fear of contamination, spread of venereal disease, encouragement of rampant sexual activity, and miscegenation made the female vagrants greater irritants of the Raj and were often deported for their double transgression of gender and sexuality. On one hand, they defied the model of the sophisticated and enlightened *memsahibs* who were seen as main bulwarks of continuing British domesticity in the empire and prevented men from “going native” [by marrying or cohabitation] and on the other hand, the vagrants transgressed the Victorian ideal of being the “angel of the house” by refusing to confine themselves to the private domain of home (Stoler 323).

Construction of the “white varna-system”²⁸ depended not only on class but also on domiciliary status. Historians and anthropologists have pointed out that by the early 1910s there were an estimated 14,500 Europeans in India, of whom about 4000, had become permanent residents of India, marrying and raising children there instead of going back to England. This growing population was termed “domiciled Europeans” and legally designated as “Natives of India” compared to the non-domiciled Europeans who were treated as “European British Subjects” (Mitzutani 57). However, in the electoral system they were classified as “Europeans” unlike the mixed-race Eurasians who were grouped together with the natives. This contradictory and ambiguous representation by colonial bureaucracy was done for two reasons. First, as domiciled Europeans were not treated as European subjects, they were excluded from the coveted civil service positions thus creating more opportunities for the non-domiciled. Because of this limited occupational opportunity, the domiciled in India could not rise beyond their working- or lower-class status. Most were employed as soldiers, seamen, miners, or artisans in the colony. Second, it created a safe distance from the domiciled population who transgressed the imperial social hierarchy by “daring” to stay back and “go native” like the nabobs of the Victorian era. Their exposure to the tropical climate was believed to breed immorality and degeneration, their close proximity and intermingling with the Indians, and their poor economic status made them “dangerous liaisons” of the Raj (to borrow from Ann McClintock).

In order to contain them, defining the membership of the community was the first task that the special commission of the empire undertook in India. They set up the Pauperism Committee (PC) and the Calcutta Domiciled Committee Enquiry Committee (CDCEC) to conduct an effective scheme of surveillance and control. The categorical difficulty of defining

²⁸ I borrow the term from Harald Fischer-Tiné who used the Brahmanical varna or caste system to compare the meticulously maintained code of hierarchy in the white society of the Raj.

them was because they were not within the Hindu or Muslim groups, excluded from Christian converts, were not Jewish or Armenians, and sometimes conflated with the Luso-Indians or more derogatorily, “Feringis,” i.e., the people of Portuguese and Indian origin (Mitzutani 69). However, despite their Christian identity, domiciled Europeans and Eurasians irrespective of their class and status, considered themselves superior to the “Feringis” because of their ethnocentric notion of the Anglo-Saxon race.

It is interesting to see that the PC and other agents of colonial bureaucracy took meticulous care in naming and quantifying their presence, thus displaying a differential politics of minoritization that shaped their national identity. The census data and other government reports record that undoubtedly the rank and file of the European regiment stationed in India constituted the largest group of working-class domiciled Europeans. The number of British troops increased after 1857 and the number of European soldiers increased from 65,000 to 80,000 in the decade before the First World War. These soldiers were derogatorily called “tommies” and belonged to the lower rung of the scale of social esteem. Other professions like seaman, skilled craftsmen, coalminers, domestic servants, nurses, petty shopkeepers, artisans, musicians, and barmaids constituted the socially acceptable white subaltern class, while on the other side, European paupers, vagrants, criminals, prostitutes, orphans, and lunatics were excluded from the scale of white respectability (Fischer-Tiné 59-60). This exclusionary categorization coincides with metropolitan practices and ideologies of white middle class that identified honest labor with racial superiority.

Mabel Figgis, a working-class European waitress in *Chinnery's Hotel* thus becomes a fascinating figure who evokes simultaneous feelings of desire and hate and fear and contempt from high-ranking “respectable” European officers. To accommodate the “tommies” so that they

have a cheap but hygienic eating place and not visit restaurants frequented by men from the Indian regiment, retired Major, Roger Chinnery opened an annex to the main hotel called “Hungry Charley’s.” Sharing the same public space with high-ranking European army officers was socially unacceptable for the “tommies,” or Eurasian and Indian officers. In this world of segregated identities, Christian groups were internally stratified and displaced by a limited construction of whiteness. Goan Catholic characters served as ayahs to the Chinnery children while Indian converts remained outside the purview of the main household. Internalized caste consciousness is seen in Mrs. Menezes, a Brahmin married to a Goan Catholic Bank Manager, who prefers Eurasian officers as potential bridegroom for her daughter because they are the “next best thing to being British” (60). Anglo-Indian or Eurasian officers are treated with distrust and contempt because of their hybrid ancestry. Colonel Ross Harrison does not escape from the ostracization even with his high-profile professional status. He is regarded as an “oddy,” “a foreigner in his own land” and attached indelibly to the word “Anglo” that is uttered with “that mixture of acceptance and rejection,” he is one of the few characters who represent the grotesqueness of racial hybridity and this ambiguousness sets him apart from the other characters in the novel (81).

Amidst this panorama of characters, Mabel stands out because of her sexualized representation and “cockney” accent. Her first impression is of a woman with “bottle-green eyes set in a face tanned to almost chocolate brown, and straggly yellow hair with more than a suggestion of peroxide” (132). Her European ancestry is evident only when she starts speaking and it becomes “obvious that though her skin had been dyed in some far-flung corner of the Empire, she was born within the sound of Bow Bells” (132). A widow of probably a seaman who worked on a ferryboat that traveled from “Rangoon to Chittagong,” Mabel is a struggling single

European who learns to manipulate the desires of men to survive. Charming the Major by her physical attractiveness and her command over the diners of Hungry Charley's, Mabel becomes an anomalous *memsahib* in the cantonment town of Mhow that is not used to see white women as servants. She becomes an object of desire for the "tommies" who are forced to remain single by discouraging interracial marriage and quickly becomes reputed as the "smashing waitress" of the "jolly little café" (134). Her hypersexualized body creates what Foucault calls an "education of desire" that is well framed within the hierarchies of race and class (29).

Internalized social hierarchies are mentioned in detail in *Staying On*. Lucy Smalley's confession that a "hierarchy was a hierarchy and a society without a clear stratification of duties and responsibilities and privileges was no society at all, which the Indians knew as well" (79) again points out overlapping ideologies of race and class refracted in the colonies. Lucy's working-class background, her knowledge of shorthand and typing, and her marriage to the unambitious Tusker never elevates her social position in the empire even after she becomes the wife of a retired Colonel. She never gets an opportunity to leave the Smith's hotel and live on her own terms. She experienced dual discrimination based on gender and class, and her experience narrates how imperial notion of inherent hierarchies were internalized by the wives of army officers and strict measures were taken to maintain the protocol:

And there were these rigid levels of the hierarchy...If you were a Captain's wife there were always other captain's wives whose husbands were senior. Even a day or two's seniority mattered. You were supposed to know, you were supposed to find out, and if you didn't know they made it plain you'd made a gaffe. And above them were the Major's wives. And when Tusker became a Major then there

were senior Mrs Majors not to mention Mrs Colonels and Mrs Brigadiers and Mrs Generals all living in that heady atmosphere of the upper air (142-43).

Paul Scott creates an illusion of reality by recreating the fissiparous world of Pankot. Like other realist novels of the Raj, the historical events are “referred to for the purpose of giving consistency and probability to the plot” (Lee 30). Scott’s last book offers a post-Raj look at the Smalleys. In the section entitled, “An Evening at the Club” in *The Jewel in the Crown*, the first novel of *The Raj Quartet*, Scott had already given a somewhat satirical glance at the English in India after 1947, their snobberies and the way they are overtaken by the new rising upper-class of India who view themselves as the “new sahibs and memsahibs.” Colonel Menektara and his wife have impeccable English manners and follow a European lifestyle. Mrs. Menektara represents the new, successful upper-class entrepreneurs who are viewed by Lucy Smalley as:

wheelers and dealers [who] with their chicanery, their corrupt practices, their black money, their utter indifference to the state of the nation, their use of political power for personal gain were ruining the country or if not ruining it, making it safe chiefly for themselves: a hierarchy within a hierarchy, with the Mrs. Bhoolabhoys at its base and at its peak people like the Desais, who had been nothing, were now as rich as Croessus and marrying their daughter into the family of a minister who himself had become rich by putting a price on his department’s favours. (80)

Old hierarchy determined by race and class has been replaced by a new one where access to money and political power are the motivating factors. Mrs. Bhoolabhoy, the owner of Smith hotel, has a limited status even though she is a profiteering entrepreneur. She has access to the Pankot’s ladies club but cannot sit at the same table with the Desais and the Menektaras as she

has no access to political influence or European connection. This prejudicial behavior motivates her to sell her hotel business to a multinational corporation that was investing in Pankot and its neighboring areas to capture the tourism business of India. “Amid this alien corn” (126) Tusker and Lucy Smalley remain as ghosts of the past. They are looked after only by their servant Ibrahim who adheres a nostalgia for the days of the Raj and feels for the Smalleys “what an indulgent, often exasperated but affectionate parent might feel for demanding and unreasonable children whom it was more sensible to appease than cross” (14).

Ibrahim is a crossover between a parent, servant, and caretaker. He knows how to manipulate his masters and how to humor and nurture them when they are distressed or in need of help. He is concerned about them, has a silent reverence towards them, but is also shrewd enough to take advantage of situations to make his position indispensable in the household. The novel gives a considerable narratorial space in describing the comic interactions between Ibrahim and his employers over his firing. Accustomed to Tusker’s mercurial temper, Ibrahim takes the firing with ease and confidently waits for Lucy to reinstate him. We know this rigmarole is part of their daily existence and Ibrahim has mastered the process to perfection as is evident when he advises Joseph about his working conditions at the Smalley household. He narrates the significance and difference between how the *saheb* and the *memsahib* “gives him the push” and which one is more concerning than the other. If Lucy fires him, Ibrahim takes it seriously because as a woman, she is equipped to do certain household chores and is less likely to bring him back. But with Tusker, he is more frivolous and makes his discomfiture more obvious in front of him. He has been fired and rehired several times. He knows not to take these moments seriously, and how to play his employers against one another. To him his employers are interesting specimen of people who were completely self-absorbed that befitted “old people such

as them.” “Both lived, really, in worlds of their own” (16). He witnessed their silence, communication breakdown, and growing alienation without really understanding the reason. Hence, like a true voyeur he would spy on their daily movements, trying to gauge their true feelings. His obsession with psychologizing his masters, particularly Lucy, borders on the romantic when he is alone with her, and she confides in him her concern with Tusker’s health or their lack of fund and inability to maintain the former glory of their residence. One of his weekly rituals was to escort Lucy to the movies and on the tonga ride home he would sit in front and she at the back and discuss the movie. “He liked doing that because it gave him an insight into the things that moved her and the things that made her laugh or of which she disapproved or got bored by....” (59).

Ibrahim’s transgressive behavior and conduct highlight the complex relationship between colonial masters with their loyal servants who often had generational servitude towards families. Ibrahim was taught by his father Hussein how to serve the white masters with finesse and class. He knew that education and knowledge of English would guarantee a secured position for his son in a European household, so we hear Ibrahim speaking in broken English not only with his masters but also Joseph whose native tongue is probably Hindi or Urdu. Interestingly, a man who has the depth of knowledge to be well versed in Einstein’s “time and relativity” (53) cannot speak in conventional English like his masters! His speech is laden with indigenous phrases, heavy use of gerunds, and is riddled with common mistakes of usage, even though he has a sound grasp of English idioms and their connotative applications.

Ibrahim’s stature among the servants is further elevated by his “England returned” status. He had accompanied his sister and brother-in-law when they were trying to open a small business in England with the help of their former Anglophile employer. Ibrahim is fascinated by

every inch and corner of the country and wishes to permanently settle there if the Smalleys ever decided to return. Ibrahim creates an impression of superiority in front of Joseph by mentioning his journey to England and that he has a Swiss watch that is “shock proof, waterproof, jewelled movement, purchased in Oxford Street, London, Yookay.”

It is telling that both of them are locals and yet they converse in broken English, occasionally substituting words in Hindi and Urdu. In one of his paternalistic suggestions to Joseph to work hard at The Lodge he says, “If you work hard in *this* garden, if you give satisfaction, who knows what will come of it, Joseph?” (51). Then he tells the story of his brother-in-law who worked for a Bengali officer and was able to eventually go to England by “making many tips, saving, saving” and if Joseph has the same economic acumen, he can do the same. The desire to go to England and the idea of England as a savior nation is strong among the servants who made a lifelong career working for European employers. The division of class based on the level of physical labor involved in one’s line of work is seen in the Lodge’s garden. Ibrahim with his pedigree and European training is not expected to do gardening work. However, he becomes a trainer, guide, and supervisor to the converted Christian boy, Joseph, who was a poor destitute looking for work in Mr. Bhoolabhoy’s Church. Joseph, even though is a Christian and shares a religious commonality with his masters, receives no concession in work compared to Ibrahim, who is a Muslim. He has no access to the private space of the Smalley household, no guarantee of permanence of work unless he is able to satisfy Ibrahim and win his trust, and no control over his pay or working hours. It is clear to the readers that he is Ibrahim’s minion and has to prove his worth through sheer physical work, through his sweat and proximity to mud, dirt, and land, and has to keep his distance from his employers. The Smalleys do not communicate with him directly, except on one occasion when Lucy was surprised to see him

working in the garden because they did not have money to pay for a gardener. Proximity to the native population was highly discouraged in the days of the Raj for the fear of miscegenation and moral contamination. Ann Laura Stoler, in her article, “Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule,” pointed out the “danger” of free mixing between poor whites and the native population that caused racial anxiety in colonial legislation. In South Africa, the number of poor whites were estimated to be three million in the 1920s and their presence threatened the social hierarchy that the colonial masters tried to maintain desperately. In a comprehensive investigation carried out during 1929-30, the Carnegie Commission paid attention specifically to the effects of increasing number of European paupers on the internal labor market, and on white prestige and rule. The commission concluded that wider class distinctions among Europeans were giving rise to more mixing between poor whites and the native population, and much to the concern of colonial officers, “blacks were no longer calling poor white farmers “boss” but by their familiar, Christian names and both races were drinking and eating together and displaying “no consciousness of the need for a segregation policy”” (336). This subversion of racial and class hierarchy is not encouraged by the narrators of the either novel and we see the white masters, despite their poor status, are elevated in the eyes of their servants who all suffer from a romantic nostalgia for the days of the Raj without questioning what good the empire has done for them, except to produce a class of generational servants devoid of self-worth and independence.

Ibrahim’s transgression and compliance as the servant of the Smalley household are reflected in his reminiscence of the Raj where “the servants were treated as members of the family, entitled to their good humours and bad humours, their sulks, their outburst of temper, their right to show who was really boss, and their right to their discreetly appropriated perks...”

(22). The violence of colonial oppression, the exploitation of the colonial masters, and their ambivalent benevolence in producing and perpetuating generational servitude are completely lost in Ibrahim's nostalgic yearning. He never questions why he has never been able to rise above the stature he was born into. He sees how religion becomes a saleable commodity and how some converted Christians like Mr, Bhoobhoy and Father Sebastian Ambedkar were able to make a profit out of the Church, but those opportunities are not available to him or his white masters. In his display of power and subordination, Ibrahim highlights a different domestic hierarchy between master and servant that is fluid and ambivalent in its connotation. His nostalgia for and allegiance to British domesticity are extensions of several characters portrayed in both the novels. Nostalgia becomes a recurrent theme in these realist novels to show that long years of colonial oppression were able to produce generational servitude among decolonized subjects who were more interested in the past than participating in India's entry into modernity where science, technology, and corporate capitalism took precedence. For both the novels, we see nostalgia as a literary trope to highlight the cynicism of independence and the possible success of a postcolonial nation. As we delve into the theme of nostalgia, more specifically, colonial nostalgia, we will see how India's entry into postcolonial modernity with a desire to create smart and modern citizens alienated certain sections of society who, because of their class and religious identity were unable to participate in the moment of change and progress, and therefore viewed the colonial past with a sense of loss and decline. Their nostalgia and fondness for the empire highlight an undeniable fact that the British rule in India would never cease to be an obsession for literary artists who are interested to revisit colonial history.

The Raj Novels: Home, Nostalgia, and the Idea of National Belonging

“Why do you, as a modern English novelist of serious pretensions, bother to write about the time-expired subject of the British Raj?” is the question Paul Scott himself posed for his audience in a lecture he gave in Bombay in 1972. Answering, he said, “because the last days of the British Raj are the metaphor I have presently chosen to illustrate my view of life. If I write about Anglo-India in 1942, I do so only because I find that period lively and dramatic and because it helps me to express the fulness of what I’m thinking and feeling about the world I live in” (qtd. in Moore 154). Following the tradition of Kipling and John Masters, Paul Scott uses the empire to understand the intentions and behaviors of his characters. History becomes a true context to understand the present. Empirical data enters the historical novel not to validate the author’s honesty but to reinforce the text’s claim to “offer a persuasive interpretation of its referent” (145). Paul Scott has repeatedly said that his novels cannot be classified as historical novels, they are what Barbara Foley has described as creative imaginations that located the characters in a “historically specified fictional realm” (143). In *Staying On* historical references are in the passing and unlike his *Raj Quartet*, this novel is more interested to fuse history with personal destinies of his characters. However, the authenticity of the narrator becomes a suspect when partition violence, the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 and 1971, and Indira Gandhi’s declaration of emergency status are all relegated to the background and a nostalgic representation of the empire, and its inglorious end become the focal point of the novel. The narrator is curiously silent about the socio-political scenario of the small hill station and the country in general, but is glad that during independence, the transfer of power went to men who were complicit to the empire. Lucy, in one of her imaginary conversations with British reporter David Turner mentions, “... the British who had had the whole burden to bear and without whom India

would just have fallen apart if Dickie Mountbatten hadn't been backed up by men like Nehru who was an aristocrat, an old Harrovian and a thorough gentleman and by an army whose senior officers were mostly Sandhurst men and awfully reliable" (79). The assurance that India can only prosper under the continuation of colonial legacy and by following the same traditions of a fractured past further explains Lucy's growing alienation and insecurity in a country that was writing its own script of modernity and progress. In this new India she feels appalled to see people eating with their fingers, and native, dark-skinned, converted Christians replacing European priesthood at the diocesan level. She is willing to put her faith in moratorium in deciding not to attend Sunday Church not because she minded "being preached to or blessed by a dark-skinned brother-in-Christ" or "kneeling in the presence of other such brethren," but she hated being the "black sheep in reverse exposure" (93). In this role reversal, there is a paradigm shift of power that unsettles Lucy. Unlike her husband she cannot see herself as living and belonging in India and assimilating with the changing terrain.

Like Scott's preoccupation, almost obsession with the Raj in India, his fictional characters reflect nostalgia and sense of loss at the end of the empire. Lucy and Tusker Smalley live as "perennial extras" who become poignant actors in the "family story of the empire" (Buettner 13). But Tusker's nostalgia is not as bitter as Lucy's. She is an alienated figure as a *memsahib* in independent India who has lost the cultural capital of her whiteness. She values the past, the ghost of which she conjures up by playing her assortment of records. Lucy's escape takes the form of old memories, of going to old Hollywood classics and of fantasizing about Toole, her teenage lover from England. She misses the privileges and ceremonies of the "good, old days" even though she never gained admittance to the inner circle of social elites because of her working-class background. Lucy alone manages to voice the melancholy longing of a

generation of unimportant British colonials, committed hopelessly to India where she fears hostility and alienation after the passing away of her husband. Her alienation is revealed through long internal monologues she has with herself:

She would be alone...in Pankot...alone in a foreign country. There would be no one of her own kind, her own color, no close friend by whom to be comforted or whom she could rely for help and guidance. The question whether she would be virtually destitute was one that frightened her so much that even her sub-conscious mind had been keeping that fear buried deep (78).

Lucy's alienation stems both from her insecure financial position and her inability to belong in a country that has no use of her. India becomes a foreign, alien country, not the country of promise and dreams that she had when she married Tusker. Punctuated dreams and residual status make Tusker not only an incongruous man amidst the new social circle, but also a stoic survivor whose motto is to survive by "deliberate forgetfulness and willful obfuscation" (83). Tusker and Lucy do not communicate; his silence and her loquaciousness fail to communicate on a meaningful level. Tusker's mind is unreliable. He reads the history of Pankot and cannot remember events of the past that involved him. Like Saleem Sinai, the unreliable narrator of Rushdie, he represents the past that the future fails to remember. His unreliability subverts the claim of realist novel that the novel should be accurate representation of historic times. Hayden White reminds us in *Tropics of Discourse* that *describing* an object and actually *constructing* it amount to the same thing. So-called "objectivity" or relying on "facts" instead of "opinions" is simply the means by which a writer of history conceals his/her own subjectivity and the constitutive nature of his/her narrative. White observes that in the scholarly disciplines of history and literary criticism, scholars have been reluctant to consider historical narratives as "verbal

fictions, the contents of which are as much *invented* as *found* and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences” (qtd. in Hubel 82).

This subjective representation of imperialism was seen in 1980s when interest in British India revived in England and memoirs and travel narratives of the Raj was once again resuscitated. Nostalgia became a trope through which colonial guilt could be expunged and colonial agents could become “innocent bystanders” of the empire. Scott’s novel, situated a decade before the age of revival, uses nostalgia to define national identity of domiciled Europeans who were trying to negotiate the paradigm shift that came with decolonization. Lucy Smalley, in the fictional space of Scott’s realism, remains a doubly marginalized character. In her inability and resistance to assimilate, she becomes an object of desire and pity in the changing social scene. “Home” to her remain unambiguously London and she could not accept Tusker’s decision to stay back when all her friends and acquaintances in Pankot had left. She knew her husband did not make much money in his army service and that was why, she thought, he bore a grudge against his own country that did not give him his dues. He was forced to retire at forty-five with a meager pension and rudely removed from living at the Rose Cottage, a prestigious bungalow for the Colonels. Tusker, however, seemed oblivious to this thought. He confesses in his only love letter to his wife that staying back was the most difficult and practical decision that he undertook.

Tusker’s relationship to India and England is worth examining. England automatically does not become his “home” as it does for Lucy and several other domiciled and Eurasian people. He is challenging the easy assumption that nationality, descent, and birth ties are automatic agents of national belonging. He is at home in India, a place where he worked for

twenty-five years, formed associations and friends, married and lived with his wife, and invested almost his whole adulthood. His sense of “being at home” therefore resonates with Minnie Bruce Pratt’s definition that:

“Being home” refers to the place where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries, “not being home” is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even within oneself. (qtd. in George 26).

The quote exemplifies that “politics of location” come to play in charting the politics of home through the resistance to places that are patently not home. Rosemary Marangoly George mentions that homes are not neutral places. Imagining of home is as much a political act as is imagining a nation and establishing either is a display of power. Pratt’s definition of home brings attention to the binaries of freedom and oppression associated with individual experience. Tusker, like several poor, domiciled European, had an ambiguous relationship with home. Suffering from discriminatory colonial policies and entrenched classism of the imperial bureaucracy, the domiciled population had a contentious association with the empire and often questioned their role in the workings of the Raj. As Tusker says earlier, “he did nothing [that] India needed or needs or has been one jot the better for [because of him]” (196). He knows that he was a peripheral player in the days of the Raj and will be one of the many “nobodies” in England if he went back. Unlike Lucy, he has no illusion about home in England. He knows that life in post-war England will be difficult economically and emotionally. His “homecoming” would be no different than several domiciled Europeans who became insignificant and “lost in the crowd” as they lost their racial privilege enjoyed in the colonies because of their whiteness. Their ordinary lifestyle opposed to colonial lavishness, their discomfort to physical labor and

lack of access to domestic servants in England, and the economic hardships in post-war English society all contributed to a pervasive alienation of the repatriates.

Disillusionment of “home” becomes a recurrent theme in In *Chinnery’s Hotel*. Roger and Amanda die almost immediately after their expatriation. Grace felt “like a refugee abandoned in a strange city” (8). Grace found herself in the midst of a very harsh winter unlike the tropical warmth she used to enjoy in Mhow. Household heating was strictly rationed, and meat and food items were scarce in the market. Grace’s widow pension and her teaching stints were not adequate to raise a family and carry-on with her daughter, Camilla’s education. British-Indians and ex-colonials were seen as outsiders in post-war England. The disconnect Grace and other ex-colonials had with Londoners regarding a shared or collective sense of loss decided who belongs and unbelongs in England. The common Englishman had no interest in the narrative of the empire in a war-ridden society and felt that those who participated in the empire did not fulfill the role of good citizens by not laying down their lives for their mother country.

Because of this dissociation, anti-colonial ideologies favored by the labor party found common parlance in the 50s and 60s discourse of the empire. Even television and school history books framed British colonization in unfavorable light. For example, in Camilla’s school they filled “young minds with lies about the British in India.” They blamed General Dyer’s “misbegotten sense of duty” that resulted in the Jallianwala Bag massacre. This twist in loyalty makes Grace feel a “stab of betrayal” and she says, “England was not British enough anymore” (16). Elizabeth Buettner in her book chapter, “Plain Tales and Family Romances: Remembering the Raj in Postcolonial Britain” writes about similar sentiment. She uses Charles Allen’s 1997 memoir to show the changing perspective of the conception of the Raj in the metropole. Allen

has argued that the Raj was vilified in popular media of twentieth century, and he found it imperative to resuscitate the Raj by narrating his version of the story:

It is hard to believe now in the mid-1990s how hostile the British media and British academia were to all notions of Empire a quarter of a century ago. This hostility wasn't limited to the concept of imperialism but extended to all those who in one way or another has been involved in running the empire... Yet my own father was one of these oppressors. All those first years of my childhood in India when I'd so often seen him receiving deputations of the local tribespeople on the front verandah, listening and talking to them in their own dialectics, or when he'd gone away for months long tours in the hills—was that what he'd been doing? Oppressing them? Somehow it didn't quite seem to fit the bill. (qtd. in Buettner 252)

Allen's desire to defend "good decent people...[who] were being vilified simply for being part of an historical process over which they had no control" applies to many men and women who made personal and family stories of British India public after decolonization. His narrative is "inflected with nostalgia." His childhood memories and assessment of his father's career appeared at odds with metropolitan social perceptions, driving him further to record and share his version of the narrative (Buettner 255).

Nostalgia among British writers might be expected because a great deal of international prestige went along with the possession of the British empire, a point that William Golant makes in his own nostalgic reconstruction of the Raj entitled, *The Long Afternoon: British India 1601-1947*. He writes:

India contributed to Britain's image of herself as a great power and world leader.

The Indian Empire enlarged the scale and purpose of affairs of state, providing

with style, a colorful addition to any pageant, and a mission worthy of effort.

Even Britain's enemies believed India gave Britain a world view and therefore a reason for respect (qtd in Hubel 180).

It contributed to so much of the British self-image that loss of the empire meant loss of identity and a sense of purposelessness after decolonization. The rootlessness that Tusker and Lucy feels in new India can be attributed to the sudden disavowal of the "white man's burden" and finding themselves useless in the age of industrialization and postcolonial modernity. The premonition that things will not be the same comes from the poignant moment of transference of power to the new independent government. Tusker and Lucy bear witness to this change:

...and all through that *terrible, lovely* moment when the Jack was hauled down inch by inch, in utter silence...there was no sound otherwise until on the stroke of midnight the Indian flag began to go up, again very slowly, and then the band began to play the new Indian national anthem and all the crowd out there in the dark began to sing the words and when the flag was up there flying and the anthem was finished you never heard such cheering and clapping.... (144)

The silence, the impossibility of the act legitimizes imperial nostalgia that implicitly expresses a certain disapproval of the present. The nostalgia comes from a sense of moral loss in the face of inevitable change. Teresa Hubel explores this tendency in writings about the Raj in twentieth century. In writing about the "benevolent" British rule, expatriates "both justify their position of domination through an unexamined ideal of enlightened objectivity, reliance on which allows them to disguise their personal stake and participation in the power they wield." (185). Speaking of imperialist nostalgia, Anthropologist Renato Rosaldo writes, "In any of its versions, imperialist nostalgia uses a pose of "innocent yearning" both to capture people's

imagination and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination.” He adds, “the relatively benign character of most nostalgia facilitates imperialist nostalgia’s capacity to transform the responsible colonial agent into an innocent bystander” (qtd in Hubel 194). Rosaldo has provided an apt analysis of the manner in which sentimental notions of childhood’s past can act as a justification for imperial domination. “Much of imperialist nostalgia’s force resides in its association with (indeed, disguise as) more genuinely innocent tender recollection of what is at once an earlier epoch and a previous stage of life.” (Rosaldo 7).

Familial understandings of British India took many forms: references to Britain as the “mother country;” to colonies as well as individual natives as children whom benevolent, assiduous colonizers would “train” to become self-dependent “when the time was right;” to the concept of “Mai-Baap” that many memoirs highlighted in the case of servants and plantation workers. Love, trust, worship, reverence, gratitude—all were recurring terms for depicting the relationship between colonizer and the colonized that was at once harmonious and hierarchical. As Piya Chatterjee notes, “the mai-baap was more than the personhood of the planter” and came to signify power relations and legitimated the aura of benevolent governance and this aura contained the “threads of both consent and coercion, acts of paternal benevolence and absolute power” (262). Proclamation of Indian “respect” and “gratitude” usually were imagined from servants and subordinates, mostly in the domestic sphere. M.M. Kaye mentions in her memoir in 1990 that the subalterns who worked under her father’s supervision, “worshipped, and loved, and revered him” and would be forever grateful for the encouragement he had given them” (qtd in Buettner 261). Here the affective model of subordination becomes the center to understand political and collective imagination of imperialism thus occluding the operation of power and domination that came with colonization.

The image of the benevolent *memsahib* is used as a recurrent trope to infantilize Indian servants who worked for domiciled Europeans. In *Chinnery's Hotel* when Grace and Camilla return to India to unearth family secrets, Camilla is surprised to find that the women working in the relics of their hotel instantly took to her mother after all those years: "Calling her "memsahib," the women had surged forward and fitted themselves around her like colorful shards of a shattered vase, recomposing in an instant replay" (127). The "mai-baap" ideology put forth by nostalgic writers thus fails to capture the nuanced orchestration of power in imperial domesticity. Focusing only on domestic and imperial domination of Indian servants and not acknowledging the affective epistemology of power would not only render servants and labor invisible but also will fail to define how British gender identities were produced and performed within the space of "home."

Subverting the notion that home denotes a domestic spatial connotation in the narrative space of fiction, Rosemary George defines it as "a desire that is fulfilled or denied in varying measure to the subjects (both the fictional characters and the readers) constructed by the narrative. As such "home" moves along several axes and yet it is usually represented as fixed, rooted, stable—the very antithesis of travel" (George 2). The politics of location come to play in charting the politics of home through the resistance to places that are patently not home. Therefore, home is understood in terms of its lack--something that is not home. The contentious relationship the characters of the novels have with both Britain and India reflects the impossibility to define "home" based simply on birth, ancestry, or shared national identity. In *Chinnery's Hotel* a similar dilemma over "home" is reflected. The narrator mentions that in India "the word "home" had been an icebreaker, a tentative beginning to a personal narrative. But after the war all but a handful of British had packed up and left as though "their collective story had

come to an end” (7). The narrator mentions that in the summer of 1946 the Chinnerys sailed “home on a sea of sorrow.” England here is made to be a default home for Grace even though she was born and raised in India. Ancestry becomes the sole marker of belonging. However, her understanding of home is not ethnocentric like her father. When Bobby, her brother, is sent to a boarding school in England, she cries inconsolably. Her father assures her that one day they will all go back “home.” To this she utters a surprised “go back where?”

“To England, of course. After all, there’s no place like home, as they say.”

“But why?”

“Because,” he said, slowly going to her, “we are all guests here. Mhow is only a temporary home as Chinnery’s is to guests like Freddy Thompson, Kat Kesarpore, and Giles Tiplow.”

“But don’t you see, Chinnery’s is our home,” Grace said stamping her foot. (8)

Grace’s difference in understanding of where “home” is or what it stands for is important in shaping her national identity and belonging. She never feels at home in England and goes through feelings of betrayal and nostalgia. England never kept the promise of a better future that her parents wanted her to believe. Disillusionment regarding England arose from the incessant rain and harsh cold weather, paucity of funds, high income tax, and the condescension of local people who felt that those who lived in the colonies were culturally inferior. Disillusionment and downward social mobility of repatriates again raises the question-what is home and not home in a contested zone. As Rosemary George says, “Home is a place that is flexible, that manifests itself in various forms and yet whose very reinvention seems to follow the basic pattern of inclusions/exclusions. Home is a place to escape to and escape from. Its importance lies in the fact that it is not equally available to all” (9).

The nebulous flexibility with belonging and not belonging in the “home” is further elaborated by Edward Said in his *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. He distinguishes between two kinds of affinity that individuals might have for their idea of home. He calls them “filiation” and “affiliation” to equate the concept of the home with national belonging. Theorizing primarily in the context of late nineteenth and early twentieth century writers, Said calls “filiation” the ties that an individual has with places and people that are based on his/her natal culture; in other words, ties of biology and geography, while “affiliations” are ideas that are forged with institutions, associations, communities and other social agencies. The movement, according to Said, is always from filiations to affiliations. Said’s distinction can be read metaphorically so that it cites the usual locations of what could loosely be called “home” as a filiation within discourses of affiliation that define “ties” in terms of larger arenas like nations (13).

Said’s definition has larger significance if we study the different connotations of citizenships and how the Indian Constitution defined citizens of India after 1947. The date of the enforcement of the Constitution-26th January 1950-marked a crucial change in the status of the people in India. They were no longer British subjects, but citizens of the Republic of India and derived their status from the Constitution, which they, in their collective capacity as the *people of India* enacted, adopted, and gave to themselves. In marking citizens, the Constitution granted automatic citizenship to those who were born and resided in India and also those of non-Indian descent who were domiciled in India at the time of independence. The unmistakable privilege given to birth, natal ties, and domiciliary status again brings to light identities of filiation and affiliation. Some, on the basis of ancestry, “naturally” became citizens, others, based on their loyal relationship to the Indian nation-state, forged citizenship of affiliation. However, in the

case of domiciled Europeans and Anglo-Indians, citizenship of affiliation becomes impossible because of their European ancestry and alliance with the religion of the colonizers.

Lucy Smalley's poignant cry at the end of the novel, asking her dead husband to take her home with him, thus becomes a reflection of this burning desire to belong and to find peace in an imaginary "home" that she never had in England or India. Her cry, "Tusker, [I] beg, beg you to take me with you. How can you not Tusker? Oh, Tusker, Tusker, Tusker, how can you make me stay here by myself while you yourself go home? (216) is a cry for a home where she can reunite with her exasperating but indispensable husband and perhaps create a home where they both can fit right in, a home that will not leave her stranded between two worlds, a home where her dreams will not be punctuated without fulfillment, and a home where she can be the perfect *memsahib* that she craved to be. It is with this nostalgia of her imaginary home that Lucy Smalley stays on in a new, unfamiliar, and increasingly hostile country.

To sum, it can be said that the subaltern domiciled Europeans of *Staying On* and *Chinnery's Hotel* are marginalized characters because of several axes of oppression. As argued in the chapter, the primordially of class hierarchization, its perpetuation in the colonies coupled with racial and ethnic prejudice, and a systemic criminalization of poverty—all resulted in reducing the figure of the poor domiciled Europeans as peripheral subjects both in England and India after decolonization. Like the Anglo-Indian characters in Hyder's and Lyons's works, the colonial Christian group in these two realist novels of the Raj suffered downward social and financial status after India's independence. The rigid class structure and internalized racism of the Raj created a systemic structure of oppression that did not allow the characters to come out of their economic constraints. Similar social and structural hierarchy in post-independent India made it impossible for the domiciled Europeans and the Anglo-Indian characters to belong to the

newly found nation-state. The Smalleys and the Chinnerys fail to participate in India's entry into modernity and in the end, remain perpetually peripheral figures waiting to be evicted from home, and by extension, the country of their residence.

Chapter Four

“Untouchables” as Citizens: Christianity, Secularism, and Dalit Identity

“All the children there came from wealthy families. The convent too was a well-endowed one. And the Jesus they worshipped there was a wealthy Jesus. There seemed to be no connection between God and the suffering poor...I found I had to search hard to find God” (*Karukku* 106).

“They say if a man marries outside his caste, it is nothing. But if a girl marries outside her caste, the honour and pride of the whole community is lost. I really can’t understand how honour can be lost in such a way” (*Sangati* 109).

The above quotes from Bama’s autobiography *Karukku* written in Tamil in 1992 and later translated to English by Lakshmi Holström in 2000, and her novel *Sangati* published in Tamil in 1993 and translated in 2005 show the narrator’s use of reason and rationality in questioning the hegemonic institutions of organized religion and patriarchy. Faustina Mary Fatima Rani, a Dalit²⁹ converted Christian from Tamil Nadu, India, writes under the pseudonym of Bama. Her autobiography, which critics have categorized as a *testimonio* of the people of her *Paraya*³⁰ community in Tamil Nadu, is considered to be the first Dalit autobiography written by a converted Christian woman. When the book came out, it was heavily criticized for its use of colloquial language and harsh criticism of the Catholic Church in perpetuating caste hierarchy

²⁹ The term “Dalit” comes from Marathi and means “oppressed” and “rooted in the soil.” The term “Dalit” was popularized by the Dalit uprising, a socio-political and literary movement in South Asia in the twentieth century. Dalit ideology implies an anticasteist, antifeudal, and anticapitalist position, a challenge to traditional aesthetics and a critique of “hierarchies of language and privilege” (qtd. in Gajarawala 2).

³⁰ *Karukku* uses the spelling *Paraya*, but *Sangati* uses *Paraiya* to denote the same community. For the sake of consistency, I will use *Paraya* unless I’m directly quoting from *Sangati*.

and oppression of Brahmanical Hinduism. The controversial content of the book spiked readership, and in the year 2000, Macmillan publishers in India decided to translate the book in English. The following year, the book won the Crossword Award³¹ for translation, created a wide range of national and international readership, and catapulted Bama as a rising author of Dalit autobiography who expounded the intersections of caste, gender, and religion by subverting the very genre of autobiography or self-writing that was originally derived from German *Bildungsroman*.

Bama's *Karukku* incorporates many aspects of *Bildungsroman*, from social conditioning of a child narrator to accept religious injunctions imposed by Catholic priests and nuns, to her development as a rational adult who fights the religious order to gain respect and dignity of her people. However, unlike traditional *Bildungsroman* that records the journey of an individual from "innocence to experience," Bama's autobiography follows the genre of the testimonio where the community becomes an essential element of recording an individual's journey. The personal narrative voice becomes a collective polemic demanding a paradigmatic shift in social institutions for a full inclusion of lower caste converts in Church and society at large. The polemic is much stronger in her novel *Sangati*. Even though it is categorized as a fiction, there are strong personal references to Bama's life. Incidents in *Sangati* match those in *Karukku* and the child narrator at the beginning of the novel sound all too familiar to the readers who have read Bama's autobiography. The strong-willed and independent grandmother (referred to as *Patti*), the hard-working members of the *Paraya* community, the public enactments of domestic dispute and violence, and above all, the constant, rational questioning and explanation of human

³¹ The Crossword Book Award (formerly known as the Crossword Book Award is an Indian book award hosted by Crossword Bookstore and their sponsors. The Award was instituted in 1998 by Indian book retailer, Crossword, with the intention of competing with The Booker Prize, The Pulitzer Prize, and the Commonwealth Writer's Prize.

behavior of the narrator seem like familiar tropes in both her works. *Sangati*'s purpose is different from *Karukku*. While *Karukku* exposes the systemic casteism of the Catholic Church, *Sangati* depicts the different types of discrimination faced by Dalit converted Christian women, for example, marginalization within the Church, inter and intra caste discrimination, gender discrimination at work, patriarchal abuse and violence through the institution of marriage, and the poignant exploitation of child labor (particularly girl child) to fight poverty.

Though the focus is different in the two works, the themes of emancipation, liberation, and eradication of caste hierarchy remain as binding threads of both the genres. Through her criticism of hegemonic institutions of religion and patriarchy, Bama, above everything else, highlights the reality that the Indian version of Secularism that guided the fundamental principles of religious tolerance and promised to safeguard the religious rights of minorities, resoundingly failed in its execution. The supporters of Secularism in Constituent Assembly argued that Secularism was a natural corollary of modernity and progress, and as the country becomes modern, progressive, and economically independent, social evils like casteism would wither away. The discomfort of caste in the face of modernity silenced and erased Dalit historiography in both left radical and secular nationalist discourses because to acknowledge caste hierarchy, discrimination, and violence would establish the fact that Brahmanical ideas of pollution, purity, and social hierarchy systematically penetrated in the apparent-secular institutions like education and employment. The disgruntlement and resistance to the recommendation of the Mandal Commission³² to grant 49 percent reservation to Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe³³, and Other

³² The Mandal Commission was established by the Janata Dal in India in 1979 to identify the socially and educationally backward classes in India. It considered the question of reservation for the backward castes to redress caste discrimination and used seven social, economic, and educational indicators to determine backwardness.

³³ Scheduled Caste and Schedule Tribes were called "Depressed classes" by colonial bureaucracy. Gandhi called them Harijans or son of God. Ambedkar for the first time used the term "Dalit" to self-identify lower caste people.

Backward Castes for jobs under Central government and public sector undertakings to redress caste discrimination, point out the deep rootedness of upper caste privilege and the impossibility to shift the paradigm of caste hierarchy (*Government of India, Report of the Backward Classes Commission*). Bama's texts take this conundrum further by showing how conversion to Christianity, a religion that does not practice caste division, also cannot eradicate caste identity of Dalit converts. Showing the duality of "Dalitness" and a Christian identity, Bama brings to light the continuation of upper caste legacy in the Catholic Church where the bishops, priests, and nuns are all upper caste converts who have internalized the sacrosanctity of caste division. But her work does not stop at simply exposing the corruption of the Church and the lack of correlation between faith and ideology with the actual practice of religion. She seeks justice for her people by demanding change. Utilizing Ambedkarite³⁴ discourse of Dalit liberation and the ideology of E.V. Ramasamy Naicker aka Periyar's³⁵ Self-Respect Movement, Bama is able to create a counternarrative space where she is able to achieve three narrative functions: a) by universalizing the personal with the collective (which is her self-professed purpose in her memoir), she is able to create a discursive space where conversation around caste and its systemic problems takes center stage, b) by embracing theological understanding of Christianity and rejecting the corruptive interpretation of the priests and nuns, Bama is able to show the importance of education and rationality in creating self-pride for her people, and c) by creating a

³⁴ B.R. Ambedkar hailed from a poor, lower caste family. He headed the committee that drafted the Constitution of India after independence. He led his community of people, the Mahars of Maharashtra, to a mass conversion to Buddhism to escape from the Brahmanical oppression of caste.

³⁵ "Periyar" in Tamil means elder or the respected one. E.V Ramasamy started the Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu to protest against Brahmanical caste system and to develop a sense of pride and respect in the minds of the non-Brahmin Dravidian people of South India. His movement is popularly called the Self-Respect Movement because of its emancipatory ideology.

collective Dalit consciousness, she is able to use her life-story as a means to resist and protest against caste oppression.

This chapter will look at Bama's texts as a discursive and heuristic space to critique the institution of caste hierarchy and its oppression by interrogating the relationship between hegemonic institutions of caste, patriarchy, marriage, religion, and the Church. By analyzing the oppressive structure of the Catholic Church in South India, the ambiguousness of Christian conversion, and perpetuation of caste hierarchy among the converts, the intersections of caste and gender in a patriarchal structure, and the importance of education, self-pride, and respect in the lives of the *Paraya* or lower caste converts, the chapter will seek to continue with the politics of minoritization as it pertains to Dalit converts of South India. Apart from the internal hierarchies of the Catholic Church and the inter and intra-caste hierarchies within the different Dalit Christian groups, Bama's literary works also show the role of the state in minoritizing the Dalit converts of South India.

Karukku's first edition was published in 1992, almost twelve years after the report of the Mandal Commission and the violent agitation against its recommendation for affirmative action in 1990. The Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Commission (SEBC), was established in 1979 by the government of India. It was headed by K. Kalelkar and B.P. Mandal to develop social and economic criteria for defining the Backward Classes. In the report, caste was identified as one of the markers of social and economic backwardness (*Government of India, Report of the Backward Classes Commission*). The Mandal Commission report that came out in 1980 became the basis for national level affirmative action in government employment and educational institutions in the 1990s for Scheduled Caste (hereafter SC), Scheduled Tribes (hereafter ST), and Other Backward Classes among non-Hindu communities. Christians,

Muslims, and converts were not included in this category because caste was not seen as a central component of these two religions. However, a 2007 “shadow report” to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination by international and New York based human rights organizations goes into depth about the discrimination and violence Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims face within their religious communities. The Committee reported:

Dalits have responded to ill treatment by upper caste Hindus by converting en-masse to Buddhism, Christianity, and historically to Islam. The loss of constitutional privileges upon conversion, however, serves as a serious impediment to their freedom to choose their religion. Additionally, most Dalits are ultimately unable to escape their treatment as “untouchables” regardless of the religion they profess. (*Center for Human Rights and Global Justice and Human rights Watch* 75).

Unlike the Mandal Commission that did not consider Dalits converts as victims of caste, this watch report provided numerous incidents where Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims face discrimination and segregation within their own communities based on their caste and religion. Sometimes Dalit converts have to pay a price for their conversion. In the article, “Scheduled Castes, Christians, and Muslims: The Politics of Macro-Majorities and Micro-Minorities.” Laura Dudley Jenkins mentions a court case in 2006 about a postal assistant who secured a government job by showing his caste certificate. He was born into a Mala community (lower caste) and based on the affirmative action recommendation of the Mandal Commission; he was employed under SC quota. However, there was an unknown informant who reported that the employee belonged to the Christian community. Based on the accusation, a disciplinary proceeding against him was initiated, and after verifying the veracity of the conversion, his caste certificate was canceled, and he was immediately expelled from work (111). His birth identity as a Mala or a member of

low caste was not considered, and no investigation was done on when he actually converted or was the caste certificate valid during his appointment period. It was simply declared that he had committed a fraud by procuring a “false caste certificate” and was dismissed from his government job. This incident points out the real problem converts have to pay for their conversion and also the contentious label of a minority. Does a convert cease to have a caste identity because of conversion? If so, then why he/she experiences caste violence within his/her converted religious community? And if caste discrimination and violence are regular occurrence in their daily lives as pointed out by the watch report, then why aren't they protected under the Prevention of Atrocities Act of 1989?

Due to their vulnerable and marginal status, Dalit converts face the dual oppression of caste and religion as we see in Bama's text. Bama shows how Dalit Christians face violence and discrimination on multiple levels: from upper caste Hindus, upper caste converts, lower caste converts with more economic power, and finally, from the Catholic Church and its associated organizations. Her *testimonio* also refers to the resistance and outright misconduct committed by the upper castes when state governments enacted affirmative actions in employment and admission to educational institutions. Debates around compromise of merit, prestige of institutions, and the ethics of reservation were raised by upper castes as a reaction to the equity measures undertaken by the government. Several students in 1990 staged violent agitation against the SC/ST quota arguing that caste discrimination is an event of the past and the present generation has no obligation to pay for the wrongdoings of their grandfathers. A. Ramaiah in an article in *Economic and Political Weekly* titled, “Identifying Other Backward Classes” mentions the self-immolation of several upper caste students as a mark of protest against the 27 percent reservation for SCs and STs in government jobs. The media and political leaders portrayed these

events as “patriotic” protests against communalism and casteism, and instead of condemning violence, further encouraged these misdirected youngsters to continue with their vitriol (Ramaiah 1205). The recommendation of the Mandal Commission still remains controversial, and the sustained backlash against caste reservation shows that despite Constitutional provisions for minority protection, the actual implementation of secularist principles is often met with violence and resistance from the Hindu majority.

This socio-historic context informs our reading of Bama’s texts. Through her sustained polemic and critique against hegemonic institutions of religion and caste, Bama raises questions on what the markers of identity for subaltern groups are, and like the peripheral characters mentioned in the previous chapters, Bama’s narrators interrogate the possibility of belonging in a caste divided, Hindu nation. Inspired by Ambedkar’s economic analysis of caste and Periyar’s adoption of rationalism and political atheism (see section on Periyar) as a means to reject religion altogether, Bama’s texts use the power of her narrative to call her readers into action to shift the paradigm of caste and religion to create a more equitable society.

Before analyzing Bama’s texts, it is important to contextualize the rise of Dalit literature as a direct response to Ambedkar’s liberation theology. Bama’s texts written in Tamil and later translated in English is a direct corollary of the long tradition of Dalit literature written in Marathi in the mid-twentieth century. Exploring the relationship between caste and nation building, Partha Chatterjee, in his essay, “The Nation and its Outcasts” argues that the discussion of caste and caste hierarchy has been uncomfortable for Indian nationalists who have aimed to normalize the differentiation as a regular feature of any social institution. The nationalists as well as the Marxists argue that caste is a feature of the superstructure on Indian society whose existence and efficacy happened in a precapitalist and premodern social structure, and with the

introduction of capitalism, modernity, and progress, caste will be eradicated. Caste, the nationalists argue, is inherently contradictory to and incompatible with a modern and just society. These arguments obfuscate the primordial and discriminatory nature of the caste system that was sanctioned by Hindu/Brahmanical religious scriptures. In a more general sense, caste is seen as the foundation and core of Indian civilization; it is responsible for the transmission and reproduction of society in India. And caste, argues Nicholas Dirks in his article, “Castes of Mind,” has been seen as based on religious rather than political principles. With the publication of *Homo Hierarchicus* in 1966, Dumont gave canonic formulation to this view of the caste system, setting many of the terms of discourse and debate about Indian society that continue to the present day. Dumont holds that the political and economic domains of social life in India are encompassed by the religious domain, which is articulated in terms of an opposition between purity and pollution. For Dumont, the Brahman represents the religious principle, since the Brahman represents the highest form of purity attainable by Hindus. The king, while important and powerful, represents the political domain, and is accordingly inferior to, and encompassed by, the Brahman. The overarching value accorded to the religious domain is the central feature of the ideology of caste as argued by several critics including Dirks and Dumont³⁶ (Dirks 57).

According to ancient *dharmashashtra* or religious texts of the Hindus, there are only four *varnas* or classes. The Brahmins were priests, the Kshatriyas were warriors, the Vaishyas, traders and merchants, and the Shudras were skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled laborers employed in menial work. This classification has been argued to be a social necessity for proper functioning of the state. Partha Chatterjee has argued that caste, in its ideal form, seeks to “harmonize within

³⁶ For detailed discussion on caste as a product of religion or caste as division of labor, see John Wilson. *Indian Caste*. New Delhi, 1976), Louis Dumont. *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*, trans. Mark Sainsbury et al. Chicago, 1980, and B.R. Ambedkar. *Annihilation of Caste*, 1937.

the whole of a social system the mutual distinctness of its parts” (173). This is a requirement of any stable social order, and it is achieved in India through the caste system.

Chatterjee begins his critique of caste by defining the individual distinctness of *jātis* that sets one from the other apart. For example, if the chamar is defined as a caste that disposes dead cattle, then that work is unique to them. This argument to see caste as a derivative of social class structure is a false equivalency because it hides the discriminatory angle of caste division that is predicated upon biological determinism that places one group as superior and pure, and constructs the lowest group as inferior, unclean, and impure. The primordality is later supported and sanctioned by religious texts to create a divine ordinance of caste that should never be challenged. The Brahmins, who were responsible for knowledge production and distribution, created a false narrative that they were created from the mouth of the creator (Brahma), the Kshatriyas were born from Brahma’s shoulders, the Vaishyas from his thighs, and the Shudras from his feet. The theory gave a God-ordained superiority to the Brahmins and gave them the right and privilege to make arbitrary laws in the scriptures that would create social, religious, and economic restrictions that were then implemented by the Kshatriya kings. In other words, the political nexus between religion and the state created a strong premise for separation of caste and bound the lowest class namely the Sudras into mental, cultural, and social slavery, and later into untouchability. The living conditions of these untouchables were shameful. They had no agricultural land nor could they follow any profession because they were denied access to education. They did manual work ordered by the high caste. Treated like animals, they lived apart from the village and had to accept leftovers from the high caste people in return for their endless toil. Their physical contact was set to pollute the upper caste, even their shadow was set to have the same effect. Hindu religious text forbade them to wear good clothes or ornaments or

even footwear and prescribed severe and humiliating punishment for violating these orders. Even for a basic necessity like water they were helplessly dependent on the sheer goodwill of the upper castes. Internalization of these hegemonic practices created a mental and physical slavery for the untouchables who followed them unquestioningly, believing that they were divinely ordained.

Ambedkar, through his study of Hindu religious texts, challenged this divine rights theory and strived to cure the “slavery of the mind” for the Shudras. His belief was untouchability is a social construction and is subjected to change only through education and political representation of the lower castes. For Ambedkar, the problem of access to employment and agricultural land seemed to be the core of Dalit problem. It was this economic disparity that concerned him more than anything else (Michael 60). In his famous essay, “Annihilation of Caste” Ambedkar argues that the caste system is not merely a division of labor. “It is also a division of labourers. Civilized society undoubtedly needs division of labour,” but the watertight compartment of this unnatural division of laborers “creates a hierarchy in which the division of labourers are graded one above the other. In no other country is the division of labor accompanied by this graduation of labourers” (42). He mentions that the division of labor and work is not based on one’s aptitude or interest but on family profession and “heredity” (43). He also criticized the notion of primordiality of caste. He argued that the caste system is not scientific, nor does it embody the “eugenics of modern science. It is a social system which embodies the arrogance and selfishness of a perverse section of the Hindus who were superior enough in social status to set it in fashion, and who had the authority to force it on their inferiors” (47). Because of his rational and economic approach to caste and his understanding of its artificial construction, he favored the

idea of its complete annihilation by rejecting the Hindu religion and the scriptures altogether (70-101).

He wanted to privilege caste difference and discrimination and bring them to the forefront of any discussion on nation, progress, and modernity. He rejected the abstract construction of a nation where caste was not a separate category. His mass burning of *Manusmriti*³⁷, his coinage of the term “Dalit” to represent the backward castes, and his mass conversion of the Mahar community to Buddhism are seen as the genesis of Dalit liberatory consciousness that eventually led to the influx of Dalit literature after his death.

Dalit Epistemology of Caste: Ambedkar, Dalit Panthers, and Revisionist Literature

Ambedkar’s teachings to challenge the Hindu religious scriptures to eradicate caste altogether inspired Dalit writers, particularly those from Maharashtra, India, to record the material and psychological conditions of Dalit existence. The first wave of Dalit literature recorded the everyday occurrences of Dalits living in urban slums, rural interiors, and those who have risen to the middle class through education and affirmative action. The heroes of these stories are shown struggling for survival at various levels. They are shown confronting social limitations, abject poverty, caste violence, police brutality, and undeniable misery in their everyday lives. Dalit literature in Tamil is a later phenomenon than Marathi. It has gone hand in hand with political activism, and with critical and ideological debate, spurred on by such events as the Ambedkar centenary of 1994 and the furor following the Mandal Commission report. The

³⁷ The *Manusmriti* also known as the *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra* or Laws of Manu, is one of the many legal texts of Hinduism. In ancient India, sages often wrote their ideas on codes of conduct and how society should run in the religious manuscripts. It is believed that the original form of *Manusmriti* was changed as many things written in the manuscript contradict each other. Many Indologists believe that *Manusmriti* codified patriarchy and sanctioned caste hierarchy in ancient India. It was one of the first Sanskrit texts to be translated into English in 1776, by British philologist Sir William Jones and was used to construct the Hindu law code that was used by Colonial bureaucracy (Bilimoria 103).

Tamil equivalent of the term “Dalit” is *taazhapattor*. It was first used by supporters of Periyar’s Self-Respect Movement that was based on his anti-religious, anti-casteist ideology. The term “Dalit” had a political and activist connotation, it implies a certain militancy to fight injustice, and to create alliance and solidarity with other repressed groups. In the 1972 manifesto of the Dalit Panthers, the identity of Dalits was raised by the founders, “Who are Dalits? All those who are oppressed: all hill people, neo-Buddhists, labourers, destitute, farmers, women, and all those who have been exploited politically, economically, or in the name of religion are Dalits” (qtd. in “Introduction” *Karukku* xviii). The broad definition of Dalit that goes beyond the connotation of caste is an important parameter to establish a universal recognition of the term. Postulating on the distinct functions of Tamil Dalit writing, Raj Gautaman, a well-known Dalit writer and Tamil intellectual, mentions that the function of the Tamil Dalit writing is to awaken in every reader a consciousness of the oppressed Dalit and to empathize with the Dalit experience as if it were their own. At the same time, according to Gautaman, the new Dalit writing must be a Tamil and an Indian version of the worldwide literature of the oppressed; its politics must be an active one that fights for human rights, social justice, and equality. Even though much of the new Tamil Dalit writing does indeed function as Gautaman claims, contemporary writers like Bama are also exploring a changing Dalit identity and consciousness. In her writing, which is often referred to as a *testimonio*, there is a powerful sense of self and the community. Her work refuses to “sanskritize” or follow any conventions of mainstream Hindu culture, including linguistic and genre expectations of published writings. There is also at the same time a powerful sense of engagement with history, of change, of changing notions of identity and belonging. Bama captures a moment that contains a paradox; she seeks an identity, but also seeks a change which means an end to that identity (xix). Therefore, Bama and other Tamil Dalit writers’ works are a

subaltern “texts of the oppressed” that subvert dominant societal norms and conventional form of the genre and establishes the text as a site of contestation and protest. Thereby, it has become a strategy of both representation and resistance.

Dalit writings aimed to create the discipline of Dalit historiography for the first time and challenged the argument of subaltern historians that Dalit history is difficult to write because of its association with religiosity and the supernatural world. As Dipesh Chakraborty has argued in his chapter, “Translating Life-Worlds into Labor and History” that the “disenchanted” and secular discipline of history, particularly Marxist interpretation of history, has no room for the “enchanted” world of subaltern laborers. Explaining the concept of historical time, Chakraborty elaborates that “history’s own time is godless, continuous, and to follow Benjamin, empty and homogenous” (73).

His argument is that modern historical consciousness in academic and non-academic writing is already disenchanted. Gods, spirits, and other supernatural forces cannot claim a place in the secular discipline. Further, he elaborates, that historical time is empty and homogenous; empty because it “acts as a bottomless sack, any number of events can be put inside it” (73) and homogenous because it is not affected by any particular events, its existence is independent and apriori to the events. This means “events happen in time, but time is not affected by them” (73). The time of human history “merges with the time of prehistory, of evolutionary and geological changes that go back to the beginning of the universe” (73). Therefore, time is omnipresent and can be either linear or circular, fast or slow, but it encapsulates the fact that everything in human history can be historicized, and people have always existed in historical time. Therefore, Chakraborty’s argument is history as a discipline invokes a “natural, homogenous, secular, and calendrical time” (74) without which human evolution and history cannot be told, and because

this time is assumed to be secular, historical, and humanist recording is secular bereft of gods and spirits. The story gets complicated when it aims to write the history of subaltern societies where religiosity is the basic fabric of human existence, for example, in India, labor is always associated with the “enchanted” world of gods and spirits. Chakraborty gives the example of *Hathiyar puja* or the worship of tools that is a common practice in Northern India. In Bengal, the worship of machinery during *Viswakarma* puja in factories is also a popular ritual among factory workers. These events show how subaltern labor history is inextricably linked to religion and religious practices, and therefore, becomes an impossible subject to record for historians. This dilemma of subaltern historians is discarded with ease when Dalits write their own story and create a different methodology of documentation.

In Bama’s fictional and non-fictional work, we see a counternarrative to this Eurocentric understanding of history. Chakraborty’s dilemma of recording the enchanted labor of workers is challenged by a rationalist Bama who is able to separate Dalit labor and exploitation from religion and the supernatural. In her text a new Dalit historiography is created where religion is disaggregated from its ideological connotation of faith to its role as an exploiter of Dalit labor. In her description of the Chinnamalai festival or the celebration of Virgin Mary, Bama describes how the Paraya community had to do all the menial work of cooking and cleaning, along with paying for the festival without receiving special alms that their upper caste counterparts received from the Church authorities. She talks about extortion carried on in the name of religion that started early in her life at the convent school. She belonged to the *Baalal Sabai* or the Holy Childhood movement and received badges for monetary contributions to the movement. Prestige was associated in displaying these badges at the Church service every Sunday, and the children, without understanding the nature of this monetary exploitation, readily contributed their share

(*Karukku* 86). In her rational world, *peys* or spirits possess Dalit women and cohabits in the same world where Dalit people enact their daily existence of labor. By challenging the European understanding of history as secular and homogenous, Bama creates a counternarrative of not only what is considered to be historiography, but she also proves that Dalit subaltern history cannot be written without an extensive analysis of the institution of religion that created the existence of caste in the first place. The existence of enchanted and the supernatural also exists in the writings of the upper castes, but in Bama's work it becomes a literary trope to bring out the intersections of patriarchy, caste, and institutions of Christianity. In both her works, religion and the supernatural are constantly scrutinized by applying logic and reason to interrogate the hierarchies of caste and gender.

The use of rationalism becomes an important trope in understanding the politics of minoritization for Dalit converts. The context of reading Bama's memoir as a *testimonio* and protest literature has a long history where caste discrimination was compared to racial injustices in the United States. Much before Ambedkar's comparative study between race and caste in his dissertation written at Columbia University, in 1873 Jyotirao Phule, a Marathi Dalit (then known as an Untouchable), published his book *Gulamgiri* (Slavery) and dedicated the treatise to the then "Negroes" in America as a "token of admiration for their sublime disinterestedness and self-sacrificing devotion in the cause of Negro Slavery," as noted by S.D. Kapoor in *Dalits and African Americans: A Study in Comparison* (13). Phule studied the slave narratives to understand the different axes of African American oppression and those texts functioned as effective models for Phule to resist the oppressive caste structure in India that creates a cycle of generational poverty that became impossible to overcome by the Dalits. Phule's comparative analysis was hailed by Ambedkar, and he acknowledged Phule's work by dedicating his own

book, *Who Were the Shudras?* to Phule. Ambedkar also highlighted the comparison between African Americans and the Dalits. As a graduate student at Columbia University from 1913 to 1916, Ambedkar witnessed the growing consciousness among Blacks and their struggle to claim their identity and humanity against the white supremacist oppression. Such first-hand experience helped him develop a “framework” for the “issue of caste segregation back home” (Kapoor 15). When Lala Lajpat Rai, an Indian nationalist and a founding member of the Hindu reformist movement, *Arya Samaj*” compared the lynchings of Negroes in America with the attitudes of the Brahmins toward the Dalits, and found the former more atrocious and more inhuman, Ambedkar retorted that the Brahmin torture of Untouchables was never known, unlike the lynchings, because all “Hindus” conspired to keep their shameful and inhuman acts a secret (Kapoor 16). Ambedkar believed that the existence of an American conscience allowed the ex-slaves to publish their suffering in the form of narratives to expose the horrors of slavery. But in India, he argued, the “Hindus” have no conscience that prohibits them from recognizing the injustice in the caste system that they adhere to (Kapoor 14).

The comparison and awareness of similar axes of discrimination, their artificial construction (social construction of race and caste), and the dangers of their imposed primordiality inspired the foundation of the Dalit Panthar movement in 1972 by a group of Marathi activist poets who named themselves self-consciously after the Black Panther Party in America. Manan Desai in his comparative study of caste and race has argued that the Dalit Panthar’s co-founder, Manohar Namdeo Wankhade, was inspired by the Civil Rights movement as a Ph.D. student in English literature in Florida during the 1960s and came home to produce a series of articles and translations on African American literature for an expressly Dalit readership that electrified the movement. Desai shows how the articulations of a politicized self that appear

in so much Dalit literature were inspired by Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*, a novel that Wankhade read as autobiographical, and James Baldwin's essay collection *The Fire Next Time* (Christi 53). To give momentum to Dalit literature, Dalit youth activists and leaders like Namdeo Dhasal, Namdeo Wankhade, Arjun Dangle, and V. Pawar took the initiative and established the Dalit Panthers in Bombay on July 9th, 1972. The Panthers observed Independence Day that year, and black-flag demonstrations were held at various places in Bombay to protest against the Indian tricolor. The Panthers gained recognition and support from various Dalit activists and a new political consciousness started to dominate the Dalit literary scene because majority of the Panther members were also budding writers who started to publish politically provocative and polemical literary works.

The significance of such politically active and polemical work to record Dalit experience lies in its creation of a counternarrative space to theorize a new understanding of history and historicity of Dalit literature that is markedly different from the Indian and western literary canon. There is no place for nostalgia or the glorification of the idyllic past in Dalit writing (Gajarawala 169). Dalit writing is in opposition to the progressive teleology seen in the writings of upper caste history. Rather, it aims to create its own historical realism that is quite different from the Indian social realists' writers like Premchand and Yashpal who predicated their work on a narrative objectivity dominated by political and contemporary history. Dalit literature, on the other hand, claims to represent its protagonist as a collective whose own individual radicalism is a product of a collective understanding of Dalit historicity. Unlike the radical realism of Marxist Progressive writers, Dalit writers defy the Marxist model of dialectics arguing that "it is unnatural for a section of human beings to acquire the role of antithesis and continue to play that role always" (Qtd in Gajarawala 1722). This forcible unlearning or "unreading" of history is a

unique feature of Dalit writing, particularly Dalit autobiographies that are often predicated upon trauma and “transgenerational haunting” (174).

By challenging the chronological notion of historicity, Dalit autobiographies construct a new Dalit positionality that places the lower caste subalterns outside the teleology of the secular and homogenous historical time. In Bama’s narrative we see oppression is generational, but historical time plays a crucial role because her story is rooted in Christian conversion and the corruption of the Church on one hand, and a rising anti-reservation sentiment in the country, on the other hand. The *Paraya* community and the larger collective entity of the village in Bama’s *Karukku* is not outside the narratorial subjectivity of her autobiography. From the beginning, the “I” and “We” conflates with one another creating a unique intersection of the individual with the community, and creating a complex articulation of “Dalit Personhood,” thus creating a new genre that combines Latin American *testimonio*, political and social polemics, and a demand for human rights.

Dalit Autobiography as *Testimonio*: Constructing Counternarratives in *Karukku*

In the introduction of *Karukku*, the translator, Lakshmi Holström, writes that this book is not a comfortable read for its readers because “Bama is writing in order to change hearts and minds. And as readers of her work, we are asking for nothing less than an imaginative entry into that different world of experience and its political struggle” (*Karukku* xx). At the outset we know that the purpose of the author is not to simply tell her life-story and to generate sympathetic response. On the contrary, the readers are turned into secondary witnesses who go through an unsettling “crisis of witnessing” the trauma, pain, and generational suffering of the author and her community in which the readers cannot incorporate themselves, not stay out of it. The reader is called upon to witness the atrocities inflicted upon an entire population in the name of caste.

Karukku disturbs our poise with its revelations, producing what Dominick LaCapra has termed for writings of Holocaust testimonio, an “empathetic unsettlement” out of a moral dilemma to empathize with the narrator but not to identify with the victims (699). The crisis of witnessing for the readers can be articulated as a question: how can one respond to or witness Dalit suffering without standing in for the victim? Standing in for the victim would mean erasing the crucial difference that is the very structure of their suffering—their experience that is unique to them. The solution is for the reader to “reactivate and transmit not the trauma, but the unsettlement... that manifests empathy but not full identification with the victim” (LaCapra 699). It is a contract of listening because *Karukku* is a testimony addressed to somebody who is expected to respond. *Testimonio* bridges the gap between the suffering individual and the communities of listeners who are expected to provide empathetic responses. It is admittedly a difficult aporia—to both empathize and respond to the other, but to not stand in for the victim (Nayar 94). The aporia is heightened when we see that the personal trauma rises out of a collective trauma, both the individual and the community are victims of hegemonic institutions of caste oppression. In chapter four of her *testimonio*, Bama poignantly talks about the harsh physical labor and rampant exploitations her family and her community have to go through on a regular basis. Even small children are not spared from back-breaking work. Collecting firewood from long distances is one work that her whole family was involved in. On one of the journeys, her mother returned home and started vomiting blood out of sheer exertion and hunger. Without pondering about the incident Bama writes,

But it was only toiling like this, without taking any account of their bodies as human flesh and blood, that people in my community could even survive. As soon as children grew up to be ten or twelve years of age, they’d go and find some way of making money. Until that time,

they'd go about carrying their younger sibling on their hips. They'd even gather a few twigs and sticks, and learn to boil a little gruel. It was always the girl children who had to look after all the chores at home. (52)

Bama's mother's suffering becomes a universal saga of pain and anguish in her *testimonio*. The poignant recording of child labor and loss of childhood in her community acts as a polemic against the systemic inequities in society and a glaring portrayal of abject poverty. The hand to mouth survival strategies of "her people," the description of hard, menial labor, the constant abuse and exploitation at the hands of upper caste employers and land-owners, the fear of sexual abuse and assault of *Paraya* women, and the constant reminder of lack of food and hunger of the entire community can be seen as a manifesto of protest against the laws and policies of the government that have done nothing for this poor, converted Christian community. The book is written in 1992, two years after the recommendations of the Mandal Commission. Therefore, as readers, we are left to wonder what Constitutional protections have done for the Dalits. Bama provides the answer in the second chapter of her life-story. After describing the internalized caste prejudice of her teachers and Headmaster (principal) and the constant humiliating taunts and comments children in her school received for being born as a *Paraya*, Bama narrates another type of humiliation resulting out of affirmative action undertaken by the government to create equity in the educational institutions in India. She mentions that every year, her teachers would randomly ask all the "Harijan" children to stand up at the morning assembly or during class. The children from her community were the only ones who would stand and feel the burning shame of being singled out as Dalits. Her comment that "we'd stand in front of nearly two thousand children, hanging our heads in shame, as if we had done something wrong. Yes, it was humiliating" (21) points out that the intention and implementation of the

recommendations of the Mandal Commission to redress the caste problem had contradictory emotional and psychological response from the very people it promised to serve.

Another incident at her college sums up the humiliation of the recipients of the affirmative action and the hostility of upper castes who were unable to benefit from it. She narrates an incident where the lecturer at her college asked the “Harijan” students to stand because the “government has arranged that Scheduled Caste students should get special tuition in the evenings.” Just two students stood up, including Bama, and as they stood up there was a “a sudden rustling, a titter of contempt” from the other students in the class (22). It was so humiliating and painful that she refused the special privilege to prove to the authorities that she was no different than the rest of the students. However, the incident reminded her sternly that “I would not be rid of this caste business easily, whatever I studied, wherever I went” (22).

The incidents are important anecdotes to her autobiography because we bear witness to the hypocrisy of the educational institutions that were tasked to level the playing field and create better access to education for the Dalits. It is to be noted that only two Scheduled Caste students were admitted in her class and the manner in which remediation in the form of special tutoring session was provided, only created a greater rift between “Harijan” students and their upper caste counterparts. The hostility of her peers is a bitter reminder that social changes are hard to come, especially when there has been a generational “colonization of minds”³⁸ regarding caste hierarchy and discrimination. It is also interesting to see that Bama use the soft, politically correct, and socially insensitive term, “Harijan” (children of God) here to describe the Dalit students. In a recent article titled, “Stop calling Dalits ‘Harijan,’” Kancha Illiah Shepherd, a well-known Dalit activist and political theorist, argues that the term “Harijan” has always been

³⁸ I borrow from Nicholas Dirks’s terminology of “castes of mind” here.

contested in the Scheduled Caste (SC) communities. Ambedkar refused to use the term and preferred to call the SCs “Depressed Class” as was identified by colonial bureaucracy. His reaction was against Gandhi who popularized the term, Harijan, by defining the lower castes as children or people of God. Ambedkar’s opposition to the term was in its lack of representation of the discrimination lower castes faced at the hands of upper caste Hindus. There have been court cases regarding the use of the term and many Dalit members find it offensive. In 1982, the government of India banned the use of the word ‘Harijans’ in caste certificates and official communication, yet it is still widely used (the *News Minute*). Given the epistemological crisis of the term, it is surprising that Bama, who is clearly writing a manifesto against the caste system, would use it over the politically charged terminology of “Dalit.”

However, the use of the term does not take away the pungency of her protest against preferential treatment of students based on their caste identity and wealth. She mentions an incident when she had asked permission from the principal of her boarding school to go home during school term to attend the First Communion of her siblings. She was refused because the principal believed that her community was too poor to arrange any big celebration, and to make the matter worse, gave permission to wealthy children to go home. Young Bama refused to accept the reason and mentions that “I managed to get my way at last by insisting that there cannot be different rules for different castes, only the same rules for everyone” (22). For a young child coming from a poor, oppressed family and facing discrimination and humiliation every day, it is not an easy task to stand up to higher authorities and demand equality and respect! But Bama was an indomitable spirit. She herself says, “I had a lot of spirit and guts at that time...[and] I enjoyed standing up to the authorities...” (23). The same fighting spirit and a strong desire to bring social change probably compelled her to write the first Tamil

autobiography and break the long spell of silence in the discipline of oral history and Dalit testimonies.

Throughout her autobiography, Bama tells her readers why she decided to write her life-story and speak up against the perennial suffering of the *Paraya* people. Her story could have been one of exception—a *Paraya* girl raised in poverty, gets educated, becomes a teacher, and then joins the convent to serve higher cause. But Bama's story is not a linear narrative of oppression and redemption. Her decision to leave a comfortable teaching position to join the convent was not based on evangelical awakening, but an act of social activism. She wanted to bring about paradigm change in the Church order that was deeply casteist. The Church victimized poor, Dalit children for their poverty and discriminated against the lower castes completely ignoring their act of conversion to Christianity. She wanted to bring the theological teachings of Christ and the Bible back to the cause of serving the poor and the oppressed. However, after spending five years in the convent and witnessing the hypocrisy, corruption, and entrenched casteism of the Catholic Church, she took a bold decision to quit and join her community in their fight for justice and equality. The last chapter and the Postscript narrate a chilling tale of her escape from the convent where her superiors became dangerously hostile when she became a renegade nun who refused to be complicit in their corrupt practices. The long train journey from a convent in Jammu to a friend's house in Madurai with just a travel ticket and few clothes in the suitcase, with no assurance of employment and financial security, no support from her family who warned her against joining the convent, and no expectation of seeking security and comfort through marriage, becomes a metaphor of her life-story. It is a tough, arduous, and an uncompromising journey that is always laced with hope and a burning desire to serve her community, to stand up and protest with them, and bring about social and

economic change. Despite the dark, unknown future in a country that seemed “unknown” and “unseen” (135), she always had the conviction that she should lead a life that is meaningful to others and to achieve this, it was much better to “lead a life weeping real tears” rather than carry on with a life of “fraudulent” happiness (122). Her decision to write a life-story that is both personal and collective was the first step towards fulfilling that altruistic goal.

Karukku, which means the double-edged serrated palmyra leaves in Tamil, is a collective testimony of the trauma, pain, and suffering of the *Paraya* community of converted Christians. Bama’s writing proceeds from a lived experience of poverty, violence, rejection, and suffering and becomes a collective document of “historical witnessing” (Nayar 85) of a hegemonic structure of oppression and control. *Karukku*, therefore, becomes a *testimonio* of the Paraya people; their everyday struggle, inter-community violence, police brutality, corruption of the Catholic Church, caste-patriarchy, and gender violence along with their celebrations, communal harmony, small moments of happiness, and songs of joy that humanize the community and create a new Dalit historicity based on caste and religion.

The term testimonial gained currency in biographical studies in the 1990s to describe first person accounts of horrible abuses suffered by minority groups around the globe. Its roots lie in the word “testimony” which means testifying or bearing witness in the court of law. In 1992 the Latin American historian John Beverly facilitated its translation into the lexicon of literary genres by defining testimonial as:

[A] novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet... form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts and whose unit of narration is usually a life or a significant life experience” (qtd. in Ganguly 432).

Therefore, *testimonio* not only talks about calamity but also works towards redress and recognition. *Testimonio* is a narrative that exists at the margins of literature, representing those subjects excluded from authorized representation (Ganguly 432). In most cases *testimonio* narratives are documents of atrocities and suffering, bringing one into contact with the victimized. The *testimonio* is the voice of one who witnesses for the sake of another, who remains voiceless. That is, the speaking subaltern subject of the narrative gives voice to the lived experiences of oneself and of those who are victims of social and economic marginalization. *Testimonio* is a collective document, and *Karukku* can be classified as one because it moves from individual to community through a narrative of trauma. Bama, in one of her interviews, describes *Karukku* in the following words:

The story told in *Karukku* was not my story alone. It was the depiction of a collective trauma—of my community—whose length cannot be measured in time. I just tried to freeze it forever in one book so that there will be something physical to remind people of the atrocities committed on a section of the society for ages. (Qtd in Nayar 84)

The need to create a collective archive of suffering and trauma is evident in the quote. Bama makes it clear from the outset that her autobiography is not just her life-story, but a collective biography of a whole community. It is significant that the narrator is not named anywhere in the narrative. “Bama” is a pseudonym, not a real name, and the choice to remain nameless when writing an autobiography also shows the need for self-effacement of the narrator to tell a larger story. The use of a pseudonym is common to atrocity narratives. However, there are more important pseudonymous elements that have to do with the elision of the individual from community in Bama’s *Karukku*. First, the series Editor, the translator, and the author herself authenticate the narrative. The translator states *Karukku* grows out of a particular

moment: “a personal crisis and watershed in the author's life which drives her to make sense of her life as a [Tamil, Dalit] woman” (Preface, vii). The series Editor, Mini Krishnan, writes that the book is “part autobiography, part analysis, and part manifesto” written with so much power that no one can ignore her experience (n.p). The popularization of the pseudonym with absolutely no reference to her “real” name suggests that the “real” name is less important than her social identity as a Dalit woman. Rather than seek to know anything more about her as a person, we are asked to pay attention to the structures within which a Bama functions and lives. Pseudonymity becomes a mode of distancing from Bama, the individual, to creating an intimacy with Bama, the Dalit representative and speaker of Dalit experience (Nayar 87).

It is significant that the first noun in Bama’s narrative is not a unified subject “I” but a collective “our.” *Karukku* begins with the phrase, “our village is very beautiful” (1). When she describes her community, she never uses “my people.” Instead, she writes “most of *our* (emphasis mine) people are agricultural laborers” (1). Bama has clearly stated the genre here—it is not a personal autobiography alone but a collective archive of suffering. In the Preface to the first edition of the book, Bama mentions the universality of her life with other Dalits, “There are other Dalit hearts like mine, with a passionate desire to create a new society made up of justice, equality, and love.” They, who have been oppressed, are now themselves like the double-edged *Karukku*, challenging their oppressors (xxiii). The symbolism of the serrated leaves of *Karukku* becomes a binding thread of the narrator with her community. In the same Preface, she declares her own decision to write this book:

The driving forces that shaped this book are many: events that occurred during many stages of my life, cutting me like *Karukku* and making me bleed; unjust social structures that plunged me into ignorance and left me trapped and suffocating; my own desperate

urge to break, throw away, and destroy these bonds; and when the chains were shattered into fragments, the blood that was split—all these taken together. (xxiii)

Therefore, *testimonio* not only speaks and archives calamity but also works towards redress and change. Through her *testimonio* Bama shows the power of her community to break away from a generational cycle of trauma to create an authentic Dalit historiography based on lived experience. Utilizing Lauren Berlant's trauma theory, the life- narratives articulate an aspiration to personhood through the realization of full citizenship for Dalits. The generational trauma that is both personal and collective, moral, and psychological, lead to an existential crisis for the Dalits. As trauma studies have demonstrated that the consequence of perennial trauma is a self-imposed silence. The continuing and systemic caste oppression of the *Paraya* people creates a sense of denial or an "unconscious repression of memories of events that are too painful or challenging to confront" (qtd. in de Heering 47) and this denial creates a resistance against speaking out or documenting the personal and collective trauma of the community. Therefore, the self-imposed silence of Dalit communities is socially and psychologically determined. Hence, writing about and documenting their lives are not easy tasks. Explaining the difficulties of recoding Dalit oral history and testimonies of the Dalit (Cakkiliyar) communities in Tamil Nadu, Alexandra de Heering mentions that it is difficult for Dalits to speak out because of their long-standing suffering and trauma, fear of retaliation, and lack of education and self-respect. This argument is supported by M.S.S. Pandian who has argued that Dalits being labeled as untouchables were treated as less than human, and their historical dehumanization rendered them silent due to their lack of agentive autonomy. Also, Dalits underwent a lifelong and collective trauma of oppression. They were also fearful to speak out against their oppressors because of systemic discrimination and the control of state machinery in the hands of upper castes. Also,

because they were denied education for a long time, the access to language and archival power was also limited. Additionally, the legacy of casteism has resulted in a lack of self-respect. All these factors acted as a barrier against speaking out freely (de Heering 47).

In *Karukku* Bama not only had the courage to speak out and break the language, but she was also successful in breaking all forms of narrative conventions by not following a linear plot structure or the conventional language of autobiography. *Karukku* eschews the confessional mode of a memoir and avoids a linear narrative, while presenting a painful, open-ended journey at the end of which many questions are left unanswered. It is in many ways a revelation of the bitter reality of the social ills that a Dalit woman is obliged, by virtue of her caste and gender, to confront in society. The events of Bama's life are not arranged according to a simple linear or chronological order as with most autobiographies, but rather, reflected upon in different ways, repeated from different perspectives, grouped under different themes such as work, games and recreation, education, religious belief and rituals, family, and so on. It is her driving quest for integrity as a Dalit woman and a Christian that shapes the book and gives it its polemic ("Introduction" xxi).

To highlight the collective experience of Dalit Christians, Bama uses the spoken Tamil of her community instead of the traditional standard conventions of a written language. She breaks away from the grammatical rules of the dominant language, and in a larger context, from the rules governing all hegemonic discourses. Critics like M.S.S. Pandian have argued that *Karukku* brings into focus the lives of ordinary people who has no extraordinary story to tell. Her translator, Lakshmi Holmström, elaborates that Bama uses the colloquial speech as her medium of narration. She uses a Dalit style of language which overturns the decorum and aesthetics of upper caste Tamil. Her narrative is interspersed with Tamil vocabulary like *pusai* (prayer), *pey*

(spirit), *kanji* (thin gruel rice or other grains), and other everyday words without their English translation. The readers have to check the glossary to understand the meaning of the vernacular words in the life-story. She breaks the rules of written grammar and spelling throughout, elides words and joins them differently, demanding a new way of reading. *Karukku* also, by using an informal speech style which addresses the reader intimately and creates the need for “rhetorical listening” of the readers to become an authentic “secondary witness” to the collective *testimonio* that rises above the collective trauma and suffering of Dalits (Nayar 86).

Karukku has an unassuming beginning. The first chapter opens with a poetic description of the village without any indication of the author’s polemical intention. Beautiful poetic passages abound the first chapter:

In the rainy season our village becomes even more lushly beautiful. The rainwater comes bounding and leaping down the mountain slopes and fills the streams that encircle the village. At such times one can catch fish in the abandoned stretches of water. All that water accumulates as last in the ponds and lakes. So that’s another thing that helps agriculture ... At dawn and at dusk all the eastern and western skies are splendid to see. ... [The] bright red sun, huge and round, would wake up in the east and climb into the sky. It would make its way, peering between the trees, glowing, it's light spilling and sparkling....(4)

The language of the first chapter is quite different from the rest of the autobiography. It is more formal and follows the conventions of written language unlike the easy colloquialism of the other chapters. The beauty and serenity of the community is evoked by Bama to indicate a possibility, a hope that this place could have been idyllic to its members if the systems of generational oppression did not exist. Bama talks about the charm, liveliness, and humor of

village life where children play under open sky, women fight over water in the public and simultaneously unite over festivities, people are nicknamed by some idiosyncrasies they have exhibited either in their childhood (like a woman who used to chase after crows as a child was called *Kaakaa* even after she grew up) or a woman grinding masalas (spices) during daytime was called “midday masala” because it was an unusual act. Everybody in the *Paraya* community; men, women, and children worked from dawn to dusk, therefore, did not have the luxury to cook during the day. In this world, the supernatural intertwines with the natural as men sees *peys* or spirits in natural environment and sometimes Dalit women are possessed by them. In this chapter, she discloses the layout of the village where different castes cohabitated with one another and still practiced untouchability:

To the left there is a small settlement of ten to twenty houses, known as *Odapatti*. It is full of *Nadars* who climb palmyra palms for a living. To the right there are *Koravar* who sweep streets, and then the leatherworking *Chakkiliyar*. Some distance away there are the *Kusavar* who make earthen pots. Next to that comes the *Palla* settlement. Then immediately adjacent to that is where we live, The *Paraya* settlement. To the east of the village lies the cemetery. We live just next to that. (4)

The description creates a visual map for her readers who can understand the living condition of her community intuitively. The description of the different castes based on their communal work points out the primordality of caste hierarchy and its internalization by the members of the lower castes. Later on, Bama mentions that the school, hospital, post office, and the Church are all built in the upper caste locality making it difficult for the Dalits to access basic necessities of life. Without proper education and access to necessary health and hygiene, the Dalit communities cannot come out of the generational cycle of poverty.

The second chapter introduces the problem of caste division, and the concept of pollution and untouchability as seen and understood by a young narrator. She initially finds it funny when she sees an elder in her village bringing food by hanging it by a string, prostrating, and offering it with utmost respect to a member of a higher caste. But later she learns from her elder brother that because *Parayas* are considered lower caste, they cannot touch the food or water that is offered to upper castes because it is believed that they will pollute them by their presence. This dehumanizing experience first sows the seed of fury and revolt in a young Bama. The very thought that an important elder in her community should be put to such humiliation infuriates her and she begins to question the basic premise of this discrimination, “what did it mean when they call us *Paraya*? Had the name become obscene? But we too are human beings” (*Karukku* 13). This is one of many questions she raises in her *testimonio* as she recounts her experience with the three hegemonic institutions of casteism, religion, and patriarchy, and her shift in understanding and realization as she matures from “innocence to experience.”

In Bama’s world, home is a contested space because there is no separation of the private from the public. She challenges the concept of the domestic, a clear demarcation of the inner and outer sphere as suggested by Partha Chatterjee in his analysis of nineteenth century women’s memoirs in Bengal. In chapter five of Bama’s memoir, she narrates a vivid scene of domestic violence playing out in the public by a local Dalit man called *Udan* or the blower. The nickname was given to him because every day he would “drag his wife by her hair to the community hall and beat her up as if she were an animal, with his belt” (61). The other members of the community would gather around to watch the spectacle without making any efforts to save the woman. Recounting more incidents of patriarchal violence committed in the name of marriage, the young narrator again asks her readers poignant questions about the foundation of

patriarchy that doubly marginalizes Dalit women, based on their gender and caste identity. One of her many pertinent questions that guides her narrative is expressed in the second chapter where she asks, “how did the upper castes become so elevated? How is it that we have been denigrated? They possess money; we do not...because of this one issue of caste alone, we are forced to suffer pain and humiliation” (27). Like Ambedkar, Bama is able to see the correlation between caste hierarchy and perpetuation of generational poverty that hinders growth and development of Dalit communities. The upper castes have generational wealth that is accumulated by exploiting the Dalits, denying them ownership of land, and access to education and employment. Without creating social and economic equity and granting equal access to education and employment to the Dalits, the cyclical nature of poverty cannot change.

The rest of the chapters exposes the entrenchment of caste in all major institutions, including the Catholic Church that promised to preach the gospel of love and equality. During Church services she saw how upper caste converts were treated differently from lower caste converts. The children of her community were forced to sweep the floor and do menial labor in the Church while the upper caste converts sat at the front row and were served Communion first. Conversion was not able to eradicate the caste prejudice of the religion of their birth. The tyranny of the Church and the nuns forced Bama to think that she was “dying several deaths within” (21) and after serving in the nunnery for many years, she left the Church to join the women in her community and embrace her Dalit identity over her religious identity. Here Bama’s experience echoes the same kind of ostracization that Esther Lyons recorded in her memoir. Lyons’s marginalization was based on her interracial ancestry, her mother’s low caste, and the internal hierarchization of the Catholic Church. Like Lyons’s mother, Bama’s Dalit identity trumps over her converted Christian status, and as a member of the colonial Christian

community, her minoritization shows the complex orchestration of religion, caste, and the discourse of patriarchy.

Bama's *testimonio* is thus able to create a new sensibility for its readers who are forced not to be passive observers of events, but active agents of change. The narrator's journey from a naïve believer to a rational and practical activist reminds the readers to use reason and rationality to understand the long-standing suffering of the *Paraya* community and the real reason behind the cycle of poverty that its members are forced to go through.

Bama's account of the world of Dalit labor journeys through the impersonal but detailed description of arduous, underpaid, and unpaid work that Dalit men and women perform everyday—plumbing, manuring, sewing, weeding, harvesting, digging wells, collecting fireworks, baking bricks, etc. In this thick description, which interweaves righteous indignation at the downgrading of exacting physical labor and simultaneous pride in the scale involved in it, Bama's own presence is merely anecdotal (Pandian 35). Time is not chronological here. The addition to time is made in such phrases as “when I was studying in school” or “during Christmas celebrations....” (*Karukku*). More significantly, events do not, for the most part, follow a linear time grid. They unfold as a montage of fragments going back and forth in time challenging the teleological notion. This produces a depletion of the past-ness of the events and glosses them with a significant degree of contemporariness, as if time repeats itself instead of progressively moving forward. Thus, the past falls into the present and the time that matters is the ever-persistent now. The disavowal of the past gives a sense of immutability of caste oppression in Bama's text as she shows, “wherever you go, whatever have you studied, it seems this caste will not leave you that easily” (Bama 18). However, it is not a sentimental account of suffering. Bama does not play into the narrative of victimhood. When she describes intra and

intercaste violence and discrimination, gendered violence, and violations within Dalit patriarchy, or even the possession of spirits of poor, Dalit women, there is a rationalized approach to explain why these phenomena happens in society. Inspired by Periyar's rationalistic approach of anti-caste and anti-religion ideology, Bama's use of "raw empiricism" of describing the ordinary and everyday life of the Dalits makes Bama's text morally and politically charged, and creates a sense of urgency, immediacy, and need for protest for her readers.

The Self-Respect Movement: Bama and Rationalization of Dalit Feminist Consciousness

The growth of Dalit consciousness and Dalit literature in Tamil Nadu must be seen as a continuation of the anti-caste struggles in South India that was inspired by Periyar and his Self-Respect Movement between the 1920s to the 1940s. E. V. Ramasami (1879-1973), better known as Periyar (which means "the great leader"), belonged to an upper caste family in the Tamil country³⁹ in 1919. He joined the Indian National Congress and actively participated in Gandhi's campaign to reform Indian society and to improve the condition of Dalits (then referred to as untouchables). However, in 1925, he left the Congress, disillusioned by the bias towards the Brahmins and the upper castes within the party. By 1927 he became a vociferous critic of Gandhi when the latter acknowledged his faith in *varnashrama dharma* (caste division in Hinduism). Periyar had founded the Self-Respect Movement in the early 1920s hoping to create an egalitarian society in India where caste would be abolished, and where men and women would have equal rights. Therefore, Periyar, like Ambedkar, could not accept Gandhi's support for the caste system and its supposed primordial roots. From 1940 till his demise in 1973, Periyar was

³⁹ Periyar and the Self-Respect Movement were active during colonial rule and in independent India. In British India the region in which they carried out their activities was known as the Madras Presidency. After independence this region was divided into states along linguistic lines, and the state of Tamil Nadu was created. The phrase, "Tamil Country," that is taken from "A View of the South," by Paula Richman and V. Geetha, is a convenient short hand to describe this region.

focused on his opposition to the Indian national movement, his support for Dravidian autonomy, propagation of atheism, and his unrelenting attack on the Hindu religion (Manoharan 136).

Through articles in newspapers and public meetings, the Self-Respect Movement criticized the freedom movement on the grounds that while it claimed to represent all Indians, in reality, it represented the interests of the Brahmins, and wished to impose a North Indian Aryan culture upon a South Indian Dravidian people (McNamara 270). Within the popular imagination in the Tamil country, the Dravidian society was believed to be an egalitarian and caste-less society that was forced to change by North Indian Brahmanism. Periyar and the Self-Respect Movement harkened back to this imagined Dravidian past, and wished to create an egalitarian community among Indians, where caste would be abolished, where there would be economic equality, and where men and women would be treated as equals (McNamara 271). According to V. Geetha and V. Rajadurai, the Self-Respect Movement believed that:

[I]n place of affective bonds of kinship and a shared faith and community, new kinds of bonds of horizontal nature, implying comradeship in the widest sense of the term, were sought to be woven; such that men and women in their workaday roles and functions may interact on the basis of mutuality and self-respect. (“Towards a Non-Brahmin Millennium” 303)

With the desire to reform Indian society, the Self-Respect Movement advocated and carried out intercaste marriages and widow remarriages, demanded that women be given the same rights and privileges as men, and also agitated for the rights of the lower castes (Shudras and Dalits). Periyar was a great admirer and supporter of Ambedkar and stood by him in his demand for a separate electorate. Defending Ambedkar against his critics, Periyar stated in 1932 that “if the depressed communities are to achieve equality, it would be possible only if they

separate from the Hindus and agitate on their own” (qtd.in Manoharan 138). In propagating his radical agenda, Periyar and the Self-Respecters attacked religion, specifically Hinduism, for perpetuating the caste system and the inferiority of women, particularly Dalit women. To a lesser degree the movement also critiqued Christianity and Islam. Periyar criticized the system of polygamy practiced in Islam and the discrimination against Dalits by the Catholic Church. Periyar’s opposition to Hinduism stemmed from his belief that caste could not be annihilated without the complete rejection of the Hindu religion. The Self-Respect Movement used rationality to reveal how various aspects of religion—rituals, superstition, and fear—effectively perpetuated unequal relations between people. Paula Richman and V. Geetha elaborate on Periyar’s use of rationalism, described as “paguttarivu,” or “intelligence born out of discernment,” that he effectively deployed to judge whether cultural practices promoted or undermined social equality. According to them:

Paguttarivu ... emerges out of experience, yet a person can use paguttarivu to stand back from one’s own context and examine it critically. Thus, although in any given moment the claims of reason are far superior to those of religious thought, that moment would necessarily be superseded by another, which would give rise to a stronger and more confident reason. ... Paguttarivu represents an active rather than a reflective intelligence and one which trusts only those claims for which evidence can be produced, either empirically or logically. As [Periyar] often pointed out, to discern does not mean to accept the claims of the rational but to practice rationality by deploying one’s powers of reason in the interest of knowing. (“A View from the South” 71)

Periyar’s use of “paguttarivu” or rationalism is based on evidence and facts, a scientific approach to explain social phenomenon and superstition by exposing the bias and false claims of

religion and religious institutions (McNamara 275). He blamed religion as the source of all evils and promoted atheism among his followers. In his collection of pamphlets attacking religion entitled “Religion and Society: Selections from Periyar’s Speeches and Writings,” he uses empiricism and logic based on evidence to make claims about the way religion is used to exploit people. In his article, “Religious Fanaticism,” he suggests that organized religion is not based on faith and ideology, but it is a profiteering system that preys on people’s fears and superstition. Therefore, he asks the question, “If religion comes from God why do those who propagate it feel that if they do nothing, the religion will die?” (10). Rather, Periyar demonstrates that religion is only legitimized through propaganda and money. He continues to argue that rituals, and not ideology, are the center of all religion, and these rituals breed inequality among ordinary believers. He argued that rituals require a special group of people, a priestly class, to mediate between the people and God, and that leads to corruption and hunger for power. On the other hand, “[ritual] makes people cowards. Because it discourages independent thought, people are not able to judge what is right and what is wrong in worldly affairs. It enables some cunning people to benefit by the labour of others” (15). According to Periyar, religion is a social phenomenon that structures hierarchal relationships between people, and so has material, social, and economic consequences in the way people interact. Yet, because religion is seen as “God given” it obfuscates these unequal relationships. In “Religion is the cause of injustices in the World,” Periyar emphasizes the necessity of embarking on an atheistic “humanising project” so that men and women can develop their basic human qualities and create an egalitarian community (22). Therefore, he advocated a “political atheism” which was not just an avoidance of belief in the divine, but also constantly challenged the social beliefs, rituals, and practices of Hinduism and the caste distinction that it privileges. To the Adidravidas (he uses it as a generic

term to mean all untouchables), he said “if you want liberty and equality, do not expect anything from any religion, God, nationalism, Mahatma, or government” (qtd. in Manoharan 143). He, therefore, urged people to cultivate a revolutionary spirit of self-respect and encourage them to challenge the gods, the religion, the government, and the society that consigns them to a low caste status. Periyar’s political atheism and his propagation of self-respect in the psyche of the untouchables become his main tool of critique of religious injunction that he identified as main axis of marginalization for lower castes, particularly Dalit women.

Bama follows the scientific and rational approach of interpreting religion without rejecting it completely. In *Karukku* we see that she goes back to the very backbone of Christianity: faith, theology, and the teachings of the Bible, to explain the continuous cycle of poverty and oppression of her people for generations. Chapter seven chronicles her journey from a naïve believer to a skeptical practitioner who still believes in the theology of Christianity but prefers to pray in private and have an intimate relationship with God. The chapter begins with her confession, “I realize that the bhakti [devotion] and belief I had in God had changed in a curious way. I am myself surprised by this” (81). She talks about how the Catholic nuns and priests instilled fear in the hearts and minds of the converts, especially children who were forced to obey the words and orders of the Church ministers without feeling true conviction about the religion. They were constantly shown the picture of the devil with a “long tail, and with sharp horns, nails and teeth...” (83), and were told that he would peel the skin off their backs if they committed any sin. Along with a constant reminder of sin and penitence, the children were forced to attend Church service every Sunday. The Church was far from the *Paraya* community, so the children had to get up at dawn to attend service, otherwise they would be beaten mercilessly with a cane whose sharpness felt like a whip and “it left great weals” (82). Bama

recollects how the fear of punishment was the main motivator to attend Sunday Church, the children would initially be reluctant to wake up early on a Sunday, but the recollection of violent beatings would be enough to pull them out of bed (82). The beatings continued during catechism class on Sunday evenings when the priest would start his benediction. It was a lengthy process and young children, tired from work and study, would sometimes doze off, only to be awakened by “stinging blows on their backs” or sharp pinch on the skin by the nuns. She recounts one such incident of her childhood when she dozed off in Church and one of the nuns slapped her so hard that she wet herself. She was given a “few extra blows for that” and she screamed so hard out of pain that her mother came to rescue, cleaned her up, and took her home.

The incidents show the antithesis of religious practice with the core ideology of Christianity where love, forgiveness, and kindness are believed to be the guiding principles. The abuse she and the children received at the hands of the nuns show that even people who have dedicated their lives for an ecclesiastical cause are also not cured of human instincts of cruelty and prejudice. The behavior of the nuns was different to the people of the upper castes. Much like the experience shared by Esther Lyons in her memoir, *Unwanted*, Bama and the other *Paraya* children were repeatedly abused and ostracized by the Church. Despite the prevalence of caste in Christianity, the Church ministry believed in caste hierarchy and exhibited the same prejudice and discrimination against the *Parayas* as the upper caste Hindus. The constant fear and anticipation of sin were successfully ingrained in young minds to breed unquestioning submission. But the young Bama, though gullible at the beginning, soon started to question the veracity of the teachings of the nuns. She mentions that once she stole a bunch of flowers for her altar, tried to stick them in an electrical outlet, and consequently felt electric shock in her fingers. The incident made the young narrator fearful of God’s wrath for stealing the flowers. As she was

taught to repent, she immediately said a prayer of forgiveness and promised not to repeat the act again. The fearful submission of a young child changes quickly when she talks about how her educated and rational mind forced her to question everything that she heard in Church. She recounts that during Communion, the nuns warned them repeatedly not to touch the host with “sinful hands” or bite into it because “Jesus was inside that host” and if they did, they would bleed to death (85). Bama’s skeptical mind wanted to test the warning. Under her headscarf, she touched and bit into the host, and when the warnings did not come true, she knew that they were just “empty threats by the Sisters” (86) and should not be listened to. This refusal of blind obedience is the result of the rationalistic teachings of Periyar who questioned the premise of religious sanctions that he believed to be a hegemonic institution that perpetuated caste and gender discrimination.

The rationalistic praxis to interrogate the epistemological problems of caste-patriarchy is evident in Bama’s fictional work, *Sangati*. Written a year after *Karukku* and later translated and republished in 2005, the novel is seen as Bama’s polemic towards gendered violence and systemic oppression of Dalit women due to intersecting patriarchal structures embroiled in religion and caste hierarchy. Even though *Sangati*’s genre is fiction, it seems to be a sequel of Bama’s testimonio, *Karukku* and takes a gendered perspective on the mundane existence of the *Paraya* people. If *Karukku* was about exposing the hermeneutics of the Catholic Church laced with casteism, then *Sangati* has the purpose of documenting the eventful lives of Dalit women who are “[o]ppressed, ruled, and still being ruled by patriarchy, government, caste, and religion” (Bama, “Preface,” vii). But the novel is not about victimhood of women. The women in Bama’s work are not passive receiver of misfortune, they are also active agents of change. In the author’s own words, “*Sangati* is a look at a part of the lives of those Dalit women who dared to make fun

of the class in power that oppressed them. And through this, they found a courage to revolt” (“Preface” vii). *Sangati* defies and subverts the genre-convention of a novel. It does not have a traditional plot structure, and incidents are recorded not in a chronological order. The book has twelve chapters, and each chapter has a different story of everyday lived experience of *Paraya* women in their community. “Sangati” means news, events, and happenings, and the book is one of interconnected anecdotes. Bama makes clear her intention in her acknowledgement in this volume:

[M]y mind is crowded with many anecdotes: stories not only about the sorrows and tears of Dalit women, but also about their lively and rebellious cultures; their eagerness not to let life crush or shatter them, but rather to swim vigorously against the tide, about the self-confidence and self-respect that enables them to leap over their adversities by laughing at and ridiculing them; about their passion to live life with vitality, truth and enjoyment; about their hard labor. I wanted to shout out these stories. (“Introduction” xvi)

In *Sangati* we witness a lively and vivacious community where there is no separation of public and private spheres. Characters fight, abuse, celebrate, worship, support, and build solidarity out in the public without the veneer of privacy. The narrative, laced with the personal experience of the author, is told in first person by a narrator whose journey from childhood to maturity can be traced in the novel. The novel has a unique format. Chapters start with describing and explaining an incident, then the narrative adopts an argumentative exegesis between the young narrator and her grandmother, mother, or friend to understand the genesis of the problem, followed by a personal reflection of the narrator in hindsight. The narrator is, in the earlier chapters at least, a young girl of about 12, and in the last three or four chapters, a young

woman; But the reflective voice is that of an adult looking back and meditating upon her experience. The reflections, which may seem didactic, are a means of bridging experience and analysis, and end with the practical call for action. The form of each chapter is, therefore, exploratory, and the structure of the book as a whole seeks to create a Dalit feminist perspective (“Introduction” xvi). Sharmila Rege, a Dalit Feminist activist in her article, “‘Real Feminism’ and Dalit Women: Scripts of Denial and Accusation” identifies the purpose of Dalit feminist standpoint that seeks to trace “how and what divides women, also what connects them but does not easily unite them. It seeks a historical interrogation and revision...” of the social structures of inequity that perpetuates gendered oppression (493).

Dalit *Pennyam* or Dalit feminism has critiqued the radical approach of Dalit Bahujan⁴⁰ that often erases gender as an important marker of Dalit struggle. The history of feminist struggle in India has also shown the multiplicity and diversity of women’s experience that cannot be homogenized as simply “women’s issues.” Rajeswari Sunder Rajan in her introduction to her book, *Signposts: Gender Issues in Post-Independence India* points out the instability of the notion of women’s identity, and to the power imbalances which exist between different groups of women, under the blanket notion of gender. Taking this further, Sharmila Rege writes:

The Dalit Feminist Standpoint is about historically locating how all our identities are not equally powerful, and about reviewing how in different historical practices similarities between women have been ignored in an effort to underline caste- class identities, or at other times differences ignored for ‘the feminist cause.’ (493)

Rege points out that women’s issues are not homogenous, and they are divided along class-caste lines. Also, there is a difference of needs between rural and urban women, women

⁴⁰ Dalit Bahujan refers to the collective of caste and religious minorities like Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Castes (OBC), Muslims, and other religious minorities.

who are educated and technologically savvy versus poor, uneducated women. Even though all the groups are fighting to end gender discrimination, the nature of marginalization is different for them, and there is an inherent power dynamic that prevents solidarity among the groups fighting for a similar cause. Bama is also aware of these axes of differences as she brings to the surface the numerous forms of patriarchal violence in *Sangati* by examining the intersections of gender, caste, and religion.

Sangati teases out the way patriarchy works in the case of Dalit woman. In the first place Bama points out that both men and women work in her community but there exists a gender pay gap for equal work. Men also have independence to spend the money as they please, whereas women bear the financial burden of running the family, often single handedly. Women are also responsible for housework after they come home from back-breaking agricultural work. Even young girls are responsible for caring for their younger sibling while boys can play and lead a longer childhood. Women are also constantly vulnerable to sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace and are often shamed publicly to keep their sexuality in control. Throughout the book, Bama explores Dalit women's relationship to her body in terms of diet, health and safety, sexuality, and notions of modesty. The other purpose of this book is to tease out a positive cultural identity as a Dalit, a woman, and as a converted Christian that can resist upper caste and upper-class norms. So even though there are stories of hardships, there are also alternative stories of resistance. There is a tale of rites of passage: a coming of age ceremony, a marriage ceremony where gifts are made by the groom of the bride, a group wedding of five couples at Church, and the freedom to choose one's partner. *Sangati* is built around women's conversations—events are narrated by a polyphonic female voice and inter-personal conversations, a feature that Paula Richman claims produces a “dramatized audience” that foregrounds the experience of specific

Dalit women (qtd. in Nayar 370). What Bama does is to plot events within dialogues, thereby giving us a chance to see and hear the events through different women's lenses.

The book is rooted in everyday happenings of women working together, preparing and eating food, celebrating and singing, bathing, swimming, and coming together during trying times of the community. Towards the end of the book, there is also an important observation made on the rights and freedom of lower caste, converted Christian women who are not bound by strict patriarchal laws of marriage. Therefore, the *Paraya* women can choose their partners, are not expected to give dowry during their marriages, the symbols of marriage like the *tali* do not have a binding significance as in other upper caste communities, and widows are not discriminated against and can remarry if they choose to.

Despite these freedoms, Dalit women face the debilitating effects of patriarchal oppression. Within the community, even though Dalit men are victims of caste oppression, yet the entrenched patriarchal structure gives them power over women and children. Community informal courts and Churches are all headed by male members where women are not allowed to participate in the decision-making process. Unjust and unfair verdicts are often handed to them even when they are the victims of oppression. The novel narrates the story of a young woman, Mariamma, who is accosted by an upper caste landlord, Kumarasami Ayya, when she goes to work in the fields. He tries to pull her into a shed and rape her, but she escapes. After this incident, Bama offers two narrative events. In one, Mariamma is warned by her friend to not mention this to other people, "It is best if you shut up about this. If you even try to tell people what actually happened, you'll find that it is you who will get the blame; it's you who will be called a whore...are people going to believe their [upper caste landlords] words or ours?" (20). The warning shows how caste and patriarchy work together to silence women's voices. The

victim of sexual violence will be shamed, and the perpetrator will not face consequences and continue to perpetrate violence with impunity. This denial of speech and the consequent violence that ensues that silence constitute Bama's political critique of the social and historical marginalization of Dalit women's narratives.

After being warned not to speak, Mariamma faces a harrowing consequence when the landlord, to save his back, lodges a false complaint to the head of the Dalit community, about an illicit affair between Mariamma and a village lad, Manikkam. A meeting of the village is called, and a "trial" takes place based on the assumed veracity of the complaint because there is more weightage in the words of an upper caste man who provides livelihood to many in the community. When the accused repeatedly deny the accusation, narrate their version of the event, and are corroborated by several eyewitnesses (Mariamma's friends who were with her when the incident happened), the protestations are dismissed in the context of privileging patriarchal narrative, "Did the *mudalaali* (landlord) lie to us in everything he said?" It is insinuated that Mariamma must have behaved inappropriately, otherwise there would have been no complaint. Mariamma's wrongful guilty verdict and the public humiliation she had to undergo not only show patriarchal silencing of women's voice but also how personal voices are subsumed by "historical" voices of caste-patriarchy. She is beaten by her father and forced to pay a big fine while Manikkam is dismissed without punishment. When the young narrator admonishes her grandmother for not protesting against the injustice, the woman tells her, "From your ancestor's times it has been agreed that what the men say is right. Don't you go dreaming that everything is going to change just because you've learnt a few letters of the alphabet" (28-29). The indictment of entrenched patriarchy here shows the hegemonization of casteism by usurping Dalit voice and

individuation. It also shows how women become complicit agents of patriarchy by internalizing its rules.

The young narrator's insightful questions about the position of women in Dalit societies and the grandmother's stoic answers also show that even though Dalit men experience marginalization due to their caste, their oppression does not enable them to forge solidarity with Dalit women. In their domestic space, they exhibit the same upper caste heteropatriarchy that they have internalized by association. When *Paatti* (the grandmother) laments about how her younger daughter was repeatedly beaten, abused, and finally killed by her husband, the young narrator indignantly asks, "And you just stood there watching! Why didn't you go and shove him off?" Patti, in turn, admonishes her by saying,

You're talking like a silly child... Who was there to question the man? Even if bystanders had tried to stop him, he would have shouted at all of them, "she is my wife, I can beat her or even kill her if I want." Tell me who could have stopped him? (11)

It is surprising to see that Patti, who is a fiercely independent woman and had raised her two daughters singlehandedly, had also been socialized to believe that a wife is a property of her husband and there is no place for female agency after marriage. It is also frightening to see that there is no legal or social repercussion for murdering one's wife. Violence and abuse are normalized and accepted as "natural" phenomenon of Dalit life. But not all the characters are silent observers. The young narrator who is twelve or thirteen years old, tries to show how patriarchal ideologies seep into our collective unconscious by criticizing the elders for displaying discriminatory behaviors towards young girls and boys. She says:

Why can't we be the same as boys? We aren't allowed to talk loudly or laugh noisily;
Even when we sleep, we can't stretch out on our backs nor lie face down on our bellies.

We always have to walk with our heads bowed down, gazing at our toes. You tell us all this rubbish and keep us under your control. Even when our stomachs are screaming with hunger, we mustn't eat first. We are allowed to eat only after the men in the family have finished and gone. What, Paatti, aren't we also human beings? (29).

The young girl's astute observation of the continuum of patriarchal expectation of gender not only shows her maturity and rational approach to understand life around her, but it also shows that she and her generation will not accept this patriarchal ventriloquism like the older generation and will be agents of change. The awareness of the cycle of suffering is reflected once more when the mother of the narrator talks about the sacrosanctity of marriage to her young daughter who questions the premise of this patriarchal institution. She says:

Haven't you heard the words the priest speaks at the time of the *tali*-tying?... He says "What God puts together, let no man put asunder"... The nuns say that the promise we make to the priest is as good as the promise we make to God... We have to live our lives according to the promise we made to God, in front of four, five people. (94)

In this extended treatise on the sanctity of marriage, the narrator's mother runs what Melissa Dinverno terms "the ventriloquism of regime rhetoric" (qtd. in Nayar 94). The voice of scriptural, patriarchal authority speaks through the mother, making her an agent. The mother simply articulates what she has learned through social conditioning without exercising her subjective agency. However, the narrator tries to shift the paradigm of patriarchal ventriloquism by rationalizing the motivation behind the codes of marriage when she says, "It's by calling on all this stuff about God, the promise made to him, our sins and our good deeds, and Heaven and everlasting Hell, that priests and nuns frighten the life out of us" (94-95). She is able to see the complicity of religion in perpetuating patriarchal oppression, and by extension, caste oppression,

that has been the real cause of suffering for lower caste women in her community. She challenges the assumption that marriage ties are divinely ordained by declaring, “I am sure God doesn’t want us to be living like slaves to the day we die, without any rights or status, just because of a cord around the neck” (95). By using the same historical voice of religion, the narrator is able to create an individual language of rights and dignity to change the nature of marriage discourse. It is seen no more within the realm of the scriptural-theological, but placed within the domain of politics, law, and human rights. The reference to the *tali* and its association with patriarchal oppression is also mentioned in Bama’s other story, “Ponnuthayi” who is a feisty Dalit woman who leaves her abusive husband, starts her own business selling coconuts, and forces her husband to take care of the children by leaving them in his house. She defies every patriarchal expectation to be a good wife and mother, and when she is pressurized to return to her husband’s home by her family and society, she took a blade, “sat on top of the chicken coop of the house...[and] slashed the wedding-knot around her neck and removed the *thali*⁴¹” (70). Then she sold the *thali* and started her business with the money, “[t]he *thali* that had lain around her neck for ten years occupied the entire shop now, in the form of goods to be sold” (70).

In both the works, defiance to social expectations and a rational approach to challenge patriarchal oppression can be seen as a connecting theme. Ponnuthayi’s act of slaying the sign of her marriage is an act of courage because the woman in her community is taught from birth that the *tali* is almost ordained by God, and it is the ultimate duty of a woman to keep the honor of the *tali* and be a “good” wife. In that role, if she has to endure perennial abuse and violence of her husband, it is her fate, and nothing can be done about it. However, Ponnuthayi’s action

⁴¹ Two different spellings, *tali* and *thali*, are used in the story, “Ponnuthayi” and her novel, *Sangati*. I’m using both.

shows that through economic independence, practicality, and an absolute show of agency, a woman can resist patriarchal oppression and be the source of change in the society. In *Sangati* the narrator's education, logical approach, and rationalization technique to critique the everyday superstition of Dalit experience is also another incidence of resisting different form of patriarchies. In chapter four, the narrator describes how Dalit women are possessed by spirits or *peys* when they go about doing their daily chores. It is always the women who are possessed, never the men. After describing how the possessed woman behave and how the spirit is exorcised causing great fear and insecurity among other Dalit women who are then forbidden to go outside their homes, the narrator starts analyzing the real reason of this gendered possession. She asks, "I wondered why peys were frightened of men. I asked myself whether in that case, any and every creature were afraid of men, too?" (58). As she listened more to these stories and applied logic and reason to explain the daily phenomenon, she came to the conclusion that this was all a hoax. In a lengthy diatribe she explains the harsh lives of Dalit women who have to do back-breaking work along with their menfolk but have to face violence and tyranny of their husbands at home, and sexual harassment from their employer and other upper caste men. When they come home, there is no respite. They have to cook, look after the children, and take care of their family, and fulfill the sexual needs of their husbands even when their bodies are "wracked with pain." She further adds:

Women are overwhelmed and crushed by their own disgust, boredom, and exhaustion...The stronger ones somehow manage to survive all this. The ones who don't have the mental strength are totally oppressed; they succumb to mental ill-health and act as if they are possessed by peys. (59)

The astute observation and reasoning provided by the narrator shows a mature reflection and analysis by an experienced narrator who describes the events in hindsight. By establishing a psychological, physical, and sociological connection with the supernatural occurrences, the narrator shows how superstitions are legitimized and later used as a patriarchal tool to control women's bodies and sexualities. The analysis also points out the importance of education in eradicating these superstitious beliefs. Because Dalit women are denied access to education, they don't have the ability to critically think about the nature of their oppression or the different ways patriarchal rules and methods of control have percolated in their daily lives. The narrator's open minded and educated analysis is thus a counternarrative provided in the book that looks at different agents of oppression of the *Paraya* community. In the latter half of the novel, the narrator provides a critical intersection between religion and caste that plays a significant role in perpetuating caste-based violence for Dalits, particularly the Christians who converted to escape from the debilitating effect of upper caste oppression.

Ambiguous Conversion: Caste, The Catholic Church, and Dalitization of Christian Theology

Even though Bama's *testimonio* in *Karukku* and *Sangati* is inspired by Periyar's Self-Respect Movement and Ambedkar's Dalit liberation theology, yet she is critical of the *Paraya* community's mass conversion to Christianity as a means to escape economic hardship. She blames the community's short sightedness in the conversion because their Christian identity removed them from caste-based protection rendered by the government to protect Dalits from caste oppression. The problem with Dalit converted Christians is that they were not considered Scheduled Castes (SCs); that is, minorities who face caste discrimination under the Hindu fold, and therefore, are ineligible for reservation under the Presidential Order of 1950. Paragraph 2 of

this Schedule Castes Order mentions that no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste (Lobo 55). It was argued that caste discrimination based on purity and pollution is a Hindu phenomenon, so minorities who have converted to other religion that supposedly did not have caste hierarchy, were not considered Scheduled Castes and exempted from Constitutional reservation (Lobo 244). Although Article 25 of the Constitution guarantees “freedom of conscience and free profession, practice, and propagation of religion” (*The Constitution of India*), it is not able to protect the Dalits who leave the Hindu fold to embrace another religion, by denying them reservation and state protection under the Prevention of Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe Atrocities Act of 1989. The order was amended twice in 1956 and 1990 to include the Dalit Sikhs and Dalit Buddhists, but strangely Dalits professing the “non-Indian” religions of Christianity and Islam were excluded from protection. The differential treatment of Dalit Christians once again points out the futility of an abstract Secularism that promises to protect religious minorities because the definition of “minority” is biased here. It also shows how caste remains a crucial element of identity construction even after conversion to non-caste-based religions. To navigate the differential treatment of Dalit Christians, several Christian converts maintain a dual identity of being both a Dalit and a Christian. They use their pre-conversion Hindu identity to get economic benefits under the 1989 Act and revert back to their Christian identity in order to retain their social status.

As S.M Michael has argued in his article titled, “The Emerging Dalit Consciousness” that the denial of Schedule Caste status to Christian converts had a real socioeconomic implication. In 1983, Tamil Nadu government gave an order demanding that a Dalit person holding a government position can lose his/ her job if they convert to Christianity. There is also a provision

for those who reconverts to Hinduism to enjoy all the benefits and privileges given to Hindu Scheduled Castes. The implication is that a person loses his/her caste upon conversion but can regain it back when they reconvert to Hinduism (Michael 7). This backhanded discrimination certainly violates Article 25 that states that it is a fundamental right of all Indian citizen to “profess, practice, and propagate” any religion of their choice (*The Constitution of India*).

Caste, therefore, remained as an important identity marker for Christian converts because it is a hegemonic institution that is entrenched in the social and psychological fabric of all citizens. Ranajit Guha, in his essay, “Chandra’s Death” mentions that converting to Christianity meant a certain “civil death” for converts in the pretext that “converts are deracinated, as an outcaste, [and] no longer recognized by scriptural law as a functioning member of his or her former community” (79). This erasure of identity and existence had serious implications on property and conjugal rights. As Gauri Viswanathan has argued in her book, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief*, personal law and previous religious affiliation played a significant role in guaranteeing property rights to converts. She mentions a case where an unnamed Christian covert returned to Coorg to take possession of the land of which he was the proprietor but was driven away by both the family and neighbors because of “excommunication and the forfeiture of both community and entitlement upon conversion” that was usually practiced in the 19th century. The fact that Christian converts are not protected under the Prevention of Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe Atrocities Act of 1989 also acts as a hindrance to religious protection.

Apart from the entrenchment of casteism, another reason for the perpetuation of caste hierarchy in Christianity could be that there has been an attempt to Indianize Church services to have a smooth transition from the Sanskritic and Brahmanical culture of India. From its very

inception, Christianity has been trying to indigenize itself on Indian cultural soil by adopting Indian architectural style for Church buildings, rituals such as *aarti* in the service, and lightning lamps as well as candles, and use of the symbol of OM in Church art and chants. The continuity of Hindu rituals in Christian practices is also mentioned by Bama in *Sangati* when she talks about marriage rituals in the Catholic Church in the following words, “[a]t the moment of the tali-tying, each couple went up and knelt in front of the priest who blessed the tali and gave it to the groom to tie around his bride's neck. As the talis were tied, the musicians sitting outside broke into a loud beating of drums and blowing off pipes...” which concludes the ceremony. Tying the *tali* is a common nuptial practice among the upper castes in South India, and it is also used to conclude the matrimonial ceremonies of converted Christians. Also drums and pipes are not typically used in Christian rituals of the West, but in India there exists a harmonious cohabitation of both Hindu and Christian rituals. This is because, as K.W. Christopher has argued in his article, “Between Two Worlds: The Predicament of Dalit Christians in Bama’s Works” that:

Christianity in the east charted a quite different course and the Christian religion exists in different parts of the world in diverse forms, and diverse context. For instance, the Coptic, Syriac, Ethiopian Orthodox, and Indian traditions are so old and different from the western Church tradition that they do not fit into the Church-state paradigm of western historiography. (19)

The Indianization of Church services is a natural phenomenon in a converted religion and sometimes, practices like blowing the conch shell and playing the drum can be acts of agency of lower caste converts (S.M. Michael 58). However, the necessity to indigenize Christianity could also perpetuate the caste hierarchy of Hindu Brahmanism. Bama’s *testimonio* shows the

entrenchment of caste ideology in every structure of social existence. At the very beginning of *Karukku* Bama mentions the spatial dimension of exclusion when she describes the beauty of the village and the setup of different communities in it. She describes that the Church is located in the upper caste *Nadar* street even though majority of the congregation are from the Dalit *Paraya* community. The parish priest, whose ordination vows make him the shepherd of the flock, does not live with the flock! The clergy and the people of the convent reluctantly tolerate the Christian status of the *Parayas*. The *Paraya*'s cemetery too is isolated from the upper caste cemetery in the *Nadar* locality. The *Parayas* are thus segregated in the village and also in the Church. Narrating the spatial exclusion of castes Bama says:

I don't know how it came about that the upper caste communities and lower communities were separated like this into different parts of the village. But they kept themselves to their part of the village and we stayed in ours. We only went to their side if we had work to do there. But they never, ever, came to our parts. The post office, the panchayat board, the milk depot, the big shops, the Church, the schools—all these stood in their streets. So why would they need to come to our area? (6)

The segregation of caste meant that the Dalits were denied access to major necessities of life and lacked social, economic, and legal representation. It also shows the primordality of caste hierarchy, making it as something “natural” and given. Bama, in her *testimonio* shows that only the upper caste converts can enjoy the benefits and comforts of the Church because they alone can hold high offices and have the authority over their congregation. But the Dalits were the ones who had to give money and gifts during major festivals like Easter and Christmas to receive benediction. She also gives a detailed description of the abuse and torture Dalit children had to endure at the hands of the nuns simply for being poor. Even when she joined the convent, she

noticed a huge gap between the gospel and the actual practices of the ecclesiastical order. She noticed that the nuns discriminated between the Telegu and Tamil speaking nuns and had extremely prejudicial opinions about Dalits. Some of the ideas expressed against lower caste converts were: “There is nothing we can do for these creatures. And we shouldn't do anything for them. Because to do so would be like helping cobras” (115). “Even if we were to do something for them, they will never make progress. Their natures are like that” (115). These attitudes clearly expose the Brahmanical ideology internalized by the nuns at the convent that Dalits are inherently inferior and can never achieve any progress or development because of some fatal and incurable character flaw in them. Bama also witnessed similar hostility of the nuns towards affirmative action that was passed to redress caste oppression of Dalits as she had seen among her Hindu classmates in college. When the nuns said, “The government goes and gives these people all sorts of privileges. Why do illiterate people need all these things?” (115) it becomes clear how the epistemology of caste and casteism dominates over the Christian theology of egalitarianism and love.

In Bama’s work we see the rise of a new Dalit consciousness and theology that seeks to dismantle structures of inequality and injustice. Her autobiography and her novel, both can be read as *testimonios* representing the everyday experiences of Dalits and resisting the hegemonic power structures of caste, gender, and religion. Through her critique of the caste prejudice within the Catholic Church and the existence of caste-patriarchy in perpetuating gendered violence, Bama also interrogates the practicality of secularist principles that promises to protect religious minorities without providing a comprehensive definition of minority. The dual identity of being both a Dalit and a Christian is problematic for Dalit converts because on one hand, it does not shield them from caste and gendered oppression, and on the other, it denies them from seeking

governmental protection against caste atrocities because of their converted Christian status. Apart from the systemic oppression of caste, Bama also points out the perpetuation of heteropatriarchy within lower castes communities. The normalizing tendency of domestic violence, sexual assault, and gendered oppression recorded in both the texts offer an insight into how hegemonic ideas are perpetuated and performed in a patriarchal society. However, like a true *testimonio*, Bama's autobiography, and her experimental fiction do not end in stoic acceptance. There is no place for fatalism in her polemic against society. Her female narrators are feisty individuals who use their education and rationality to question the axes of minoritization for Dalit Christians, particularly for lower caste converted women who face multiple marginalization based on their gender, caste, and religious identity.

Conclusion

The overall purpose of this dissertation is to explore the politics of minoritization for the three groups of colonial Christians mentioned in the previous four chapters. Exploring the different axes of minoritization, I look at the ambiguous colonial policies that created internal fissures between and among domiciled Europeans and the mixed-race Anglo-Indians and the internalized race, class, and caste hierarchies practiced by the Catholic and Protestant Churches in India. The independent postcolonial state continues the exclusionary practice of colonial bureaucracy by legislating arbitrary state policies to protect minority rights. The socio-political background is a heuristic device to read the postcolonial texts I use in the dissertation. The literary representation of the different axes of minoritization mirrors the social and economic reality of Christian minorities in India. Careful analysis of the literature also suggests that minorities are marginalized not only by external factors like the state, Church, and caste hierarchy but also undergo internal minoritization based on their own racial and religious prejudice, internalized shame, and suspicion of other Christian groups. To further interrogate this two-way marginalization, it is important to focus on the different connotations of being a religious minority. The term “minority” becomes problematic for Christian groups, particularly the Dalit or lower caste converts.

Regarding economic and legal protection under the Caste Atrocity Act of 1950, the Christians were excluded. Even Dalit Christians were not considered to be part of Scheduled Castes and Tribes even though they experienced the worst forms of caste oppression from upper caste communities and the Church order. Christianity and Islam are seen as “foreign” religions; therefore, the political intention to safeguard their rights and privilege are weak because it is assumed that Hindus, particularly the poor and lower castes, converted either for the economic

and educational benefit or to acquire social status in a caste-ridden society. It is, therefore, predetermined that converted Christians have more privileges and protections than caste minorities and as a result, should need no protection from the state. Political institutions are also instrumental in marginalizing the rights of minorities; for example, if we look at the implementation angle of the Constitution, we will see that although Muslim personal law was allowed, the Directive Principles of State Policy exhorted the state to strive to introduce a uniform civil code. Therefore, articulation of the term “minority” becomes crucial for any discussion of political institutions that makes laws and policies that impact the everyday lives of minorities.

Therefore, socio-historical contexts play an important part in my discussion of the literary texts because the multiple levels of marginalization I witness all stem from colonial history, pre-colonial caste-patriarchal system, and the differential treatment of Christian minorities by the increasingly hostile Hindu nation-state. In my work, I see historical and political events as producers of texts, and as Said had argued, the text cannot be removed from its socioeconomic and political contexts. All the texts used in this dissertation were published at least two decades after India’s independence when the nation building process was still relevant. Exploring the question of who belongs and who is excluded from the postcolonial imaginations of a nation-state, I analyze the Christian minority groups that were born out of colonialism. I look at the three sub-groups: Anglo-Indians, domiciled Europeans, and Dalit Christian converts, and tease out the internal strife between and among these groups to enter the nationalist project of subject/citizen formation. In my chapters, I show that there is nothing common among these groups except their religious identity, and often there is prejudice and competition among them to receive the benefits promised by the state.

To juxtapose identities of affiliations with identities of birth, I analyze Qurratulain Hyder's "The Story of Catherine Bolton" published in 1966. This story brings together characters from all the three Christian groups I want to analyze in my research and explore why Hyder seems anti-secular or skeptical of the ideological framework of religion and its power to hold together minority lives.

In this short story, an Anglo-Indian girl, born of a converted Christian Indian woman and a poor British soldier, goes through multiple cycles of migration and religious conversions. The story orchestrates race, caste, and religion and shows how migration deconstructs supposedly stable categories of race and whiteness in the formulation of gendered and racial identities. Hyder's short story which is very different in style and content from her well acclaimed novels, shows the different axes of minoritization of Catherine Bolton, starting from colonialism, differential colonial policy to identify mixed-race population, internal prejudice of native Indians regarding Anglo-Indians, and the thinness of religion in protecting unaccommodated subjects who find it impossible to belong to a specific nation-state.

In the second chapter, I examine a memoir by an Anglo-Indian author, Esther Mary Lyons. Titled *Unwanted: Memoirs of an Anglo-Indian Daughter of Rev. Michael De Lisle Lyons of Detroit, Michigan*. Lyons's memoir claims credibility based on her experience as an illegitimate child of a Jesuit American father and an Indian Christian mother. Her use of birth certificates, Church documents, and FBI records are attempts to seek the "truth" and attain legal and social recognition. Coming from a place of betrayal and hurt, Lyons's memoir is a poignant story of suffering, poverty, and discrimination that records the hardships and oppression of a native Christian woman who commits the "crime" of falling in love and marrying an American Jesuit priest. After their marriage is not recognized by the Church and the priest is forced to

return to the United States, the two “illegitimate” children are put into the dilemma of either choosing poverty and homelessness or joining the orphanage and suffering the ostracization of the Catholic Church. Throughout the memoir, the tussle between individual aspirations and control and suppression of the Church are recorded painstakingly to show how present day discrimination mirrors the fear of racial miscegenation of colonial times. The memoir also exposes Lyons’s contradictory attitude towards her country of birth and mainstream culture. Her prejudice against other religions and contempt for indigenous culture further constitute her an impossible citizen of a postcolonial nation.

The main purpose of the third chapter is to investigate how social class is used as a trope to negotiate questions of national belonging and citizenship of disenfranchised Anglo-Indians and poor domiciled Europeans in the post-independence period. By analyzing Jaysinh Birjépatil novel *Chinnery’s Hotel* (2004) and Paul Scott’s Booker prize-winning fiction, *Staying On* (1977), I compare and contrast the conditions of the Anglo-Indians and marginalized domiciled Europeans who stayed back in India after independence, unlike Lyons and Bolton. Paul Scott’s *Staying On* complicates the problems of race and class by looking at poor white Christian characters after the fall of the empire. Scott’s novel, set 25 years after independence, portrays Tusker Smalley and his wife Lucy, an army couple who, after retirement, stayed in India and became tenants at a cheap hotel. The novel shows the dual marginalization of the Smalleys. They had a peripheral position within the inner circle of the Raj society because of their middle class background. After retirement, they face further ostracization in a new India where they find themselves replaced by a “smart set of Indians” in important positions (75). The novel focuses on a large cast of secondary and tertiary characters from different religious and ethnic backgrounds. Tension builds up through the interaction of characters and the portrayal of decay in the lives of

the former employers of the Raj. The Smalleys and other Anglo-Indian characters are replaced by the Bhooboyas and Desais, who represent the “emerging Indian middle class of wheelers and dealers who, with their chicanery, their corrupt practices, their black money, their use of political power for personal gain were ruining the country, or if not ruining, making it safe chiefly for themselves” (35). The novel also complicates the relationship between master and servant, hotel owners and tenants, and redefines power structure in both public and private spheres. *Staying On* also focuses on how Anglo-Indians and poor whites treated each other. Poor Europeans thought that Anglo-Indians suffered from performative mimicry in adopting a European way of life. On the other hand, Anglo-Indians aspired to become true Europeans to enter the inner circle of the Raj.

Chinnery's Hotel focuses on the intersectionality of race, religion, and class involved in the voluntary migration of a family of British hotel owners who felt that their business was unnecessary and incongruous in independent India. The transition of clientele from Europeans to Indians triggers the migration. However, their lives soon become a telling narrative of shattered dreams amid the economic hardships of post-war England. Like Hyder's story, this novel weaves in all the three minority communities I analyze in my dissertation. The main narrative focuses on Roger Chinnery, a British army officer who is domiciled in India. He opens up a hotel for British civilians and army officers and his children who witness the end of colonialism. In the fictional space, British officers mingle with Anglo-Indians, Parsees, and Goan Catholics, while London and the fictional town of Mhow in India are complementary to one another in articulating the displacement of marginalized groups. The Chinnerys, without the privileged socioeconomic position, feel lost and unwanted in London, a place they had idealized as their home. In London, their whiteness has no superior differential value as it did in India. Their struggle matches other

narratives written about the interwar years in England, where the increased cost of living and taxes reduced the real value of pensions and made the transition from working life in India to retirement years in Britain very difficult. Enjoying the luxury of possessing a battery of servants in India, the Chinnerys felt that their social status was reduced considerably when they had to do domestic chores and use public transportation in their daily lives in England. However, their repatriation to India does not erase the sense of displacement. Nostalgia and downward socioeconomic mobility enter into their negotiation of ideas about home and national belonging.

The fourth chapter interrogates how caste, religion, and gender problematize citizenship in postcolonial India. Here I focus on the caste hierarchy and intra-religious discrimination in South India to show how citizenship becomes a complicated category for lower castes, particularly women, in a country that proclaims to be secular. I analyze Faustina Soosairaj Rani's (aka Bama) translated memoir, *Karukku* (first published in Tamil in 1992) and her novel, *Sangati* or *Events*, first published in 1993 and later translated and republished in 2005, to point out the failure of the nation-state in protecting Dalit Christian converts.

Originally written in Tamil, Bama's memoir was translated and published in English in 2000. *Karukku* is concerned with Bama's lonely journey of self-discovery and her continuous oppression by the Catholic Church and higher caste communities. The text exposes shameless dualities of social and religious practices based on caste, not just between the higher and lower orders but also between different sects or subcategories of lower castes. The *testimonio* shows the split between being Christian and Dalit at the same time and the double standards that get legitimated by converted Christians in Tamilnadu. However, Bama neither takes the position of a victim nor accepts the oppression. Following Periyar's emancipatory ideologies, she ends her memoir by referring to the growing Dalit consciousness among members of her caste.

Sangati explores the extent of gendered caste violence within the Dalit *Paraya* community and the narrator's journey from innocence to experience as she questions the patriarchal ideologies in perpetuating this violence. Even if the book is classified as a novel, Bama subverts the genre of fiction and the commonly accepted language of novel writing to create a polemical *testimonio* of the Dalit people in her community who cannot escape the debilitating effects of caste oppression despite their conversion to Christianity.

Bama's text interrogates the problematic question of national belonging of Dalit Christians, particularly low caste women who faced multiple levels of marginalization based on their caste and gender identity. Bama's text exposes the inability to protect converted Christians from caste violence and oppression despite doling out the same protection to lower caste Hindus. Bama's *testimonio* also reveals the hostility of the Hindu majority against the state's attempt to create equity in educational and economic institutions.

To sum up, this dissertation uses postcolonial texts published after India's independence to address the issue of the minoritization of three groups of colonial Christians. Even though this group is clubbed together as a religious minority, there is nothing homogenous about them. Each group faces its own inter and intra-community hierarchization and marginalization based on different markers of identity. Despite a rich ethnographic, historical, and sociological scholarship on each of these three groups, hardly any scholarly work looks at the interconnected tensions and fractures between and among the groups, particularly in the discipline of literary studies. My research addresses this gap in scholarship by analyzing the politics of minoritization of colonial Christians within the discursive space of postcolonial literature.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Literary Studies, English (anticipated graduation date Spring 2023) University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM)
Dissertation Title: “Orphaned at Midnight: “Colonial Christians,” Caste, and the Politics of Minoritization in Postcolonial Literature.”
Graduate Certificate in Women’s Studies 2010

M.A. in English 2008
Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio
Thesis title: “Violent Self-Fashioning and Redefining the Immigrant Identity in Bharati Mukherjee’s *Jasmine*.”
Graduate Certificate in Women’s Studies 2007

B.Ed (B.A. of Education) 2005
Shri Shikshayatan College, India

M.A. in English 2004
University of Calcutta,
India

B.A. in English 2002
Loreto College, University of Calcutta, India

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

- 2022 Faculty of the Month, Indian River State College (IRSC)
- 2022 Distinguished Colleague Award, Florida College English Association Conference, Orlando, FL
- 2021 Faculty Cohort of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Leadership, IRSC and the Peace and Justice Institute of Valencia College, FL
- 2019 Rising Star Award, Faculty Advisor, Writing Club, IRSC
- 2014 Florence L. Healy Scholarship in Women’s Studies, UWM
- 2013 Asian Faculty and Student Association’s Graduate Student Achievement Award
- 2012 Best Graduate Student Research Paper in Women’s Studies, UWM

- 2012 Modern Language Association (MLA) Conference Travel Award
- 2011 Modern Language Association (MLA) Conference Travel Award
- 2010 National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) Travel Award
- 2010 James A. Sappenfield Fellowship, English Department, UWM

SELECTED TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Fall 2015-present

Assistant Professor, Full-time, Tenure Track

Faculty member, English Department, Indian River State College, Fort Pierce, FL

ENC 1101, College Composition I, ENC 1102, College Composition II, LIT 1000, Introduction to Literature, Creative Writing, and other Survey of Literature Courses.

(Classes focused on introductory college writing and research along with grammar and MLA citation practice, introduction to literary genres and theories, and literary analysis.)

Fall 2014

Adjunct Faculty, Barry University, Florida

English 210: "Writing through Literature"

(2 sections of Introductory College writing course that combined research writing and literary analysis)

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- "Precarious Masculinity: Exploring the Migrant Intellectual in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*." *Silenced Masculinities: An Edited Collection*, Forthcoming
- "The Song of the Caged Bird." *Musings of the River*, A peer-reviewed journal of the Writing Club, IRSC, 2021
- *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Edwidge Danticat*, co-edited by Dr. Celucien Joseph, Dr. Danny M. Hoey Jr., Marvin E. Hobson, and Suchismita Banerjee. Fall 2019
- "Not So Singular Home." A creative essay published in the *Indian River Review*, IRSC 2017
- "Betraying the Holy Wedlock: Imagining the Fate of Satyajit Ray's Charulata or The Lonely Wife." *South Asian Review*, Special issue (June 2014): 111-122.
- "Interrogating the Ambivalence of Self-Fashioning and Redefining the Immigrant Identity in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*." *Asiatic*. 6.1(2012):10-24.
- "The Legacy of Indian Upheaval: A Socio-Political Study of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*." *The Fogdog Review*. 2 (2008): 73-77.
- "The Inner Eye: Evolution and Transformation of Ray's Women in *Teen Kanya*." *Proceedings of the First Graduate Research Conference*, March 30-31, 2007: The Graduate School, Purdue University Calumet, Hammond, IN. 2007: 17-23.
- "Theatre of Protest: A Postcolonial Perspective." *Journal of the Department of English*, University of Calcutta, 2 Feb (2003-04): 8-12.

RECENT CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- "Student-to-Faculty Microaggression in American Classrooms," and "(Un)Doing Academic Freedom: Interrogating Political Bullying in Academia," Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), 2023

- “Anglo-Indian Migration and the Politics of Minoritization,” Modern Language Association (MLA), 2022, Virtual Conference.
- Chair, Student Panel, Florida College English Association, Boca Raton, FL, 2019
- “Precarious Sanctuary: Rethinking the Domestic in Danticat’s *Brother, I’m Dying*,” Haitian Studies Association Conference, University of Florida, Gainesville, 2019
- Chair, “Dystopic Identities: Questioning Subversion, Resistance, and Collaboration in Anglo-Indian Writing.” South Atlantic Modern Language Association (SAMLA) conference, Jacksonville, FL, 2017
- “Precarious Masculinity: Exploring the Migrant Intellectual in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Lowland*.” National Women’s Studies Association (NWSA), Milwaukee, November, 2015.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- Modern Language Association
- Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)
- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
- Florida Campus Compact
- South Asian Literary Association
- Midwest Modern Language Association
- National Women’s Studies Association
- Golden Key International Honors Society
- Tagore- Gandhi Institute for Culture Studies and Service Learning, India
- Shakespeare Society of Eastern India, India
- The Literary Society of India

LANGUAGES:

English: Advanced speaking, reading, and writing ability

Bengali: Advanced speaking, reading, and writing ability

Hindi: Advanced speaking ability