



Travel Writing and Empire: A Reading of William Hodges’s *Travels in India*

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Abstract

The history of English travel narratives reveals that its origin and development is closely linked to the British encounter with the colonial ‘other.’ In the ‘golden age’ of European navigation and discovery travel narratives emerged in England in an effort to familiarise the unknown and the strange. Once the initial mapping was done by the navigators, travellers, artists and explorers went to the newly discovered territories and narrated the natural as well as the ethnographic conditions they observed there. Such travel narratives undoubtedly had a role in advancing the colonial and the imperial agenda, though simultaneously, they influenced the growth of modern form of tourism during the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century. William Hodges was the first European landscape painter to visit India. During his stay in India (1780-85) he travelled extensively and made several sketches for his paintings, forty eight of which were completed and published between 1785 and 1788 as *Select Views of India*. A few years later he wrote *Travels in India, During the Years 1780, 1781, 1782, & 1783* (1793). The present article aims to explore how Hodges exceeds his artistic self and becomes an apologist for the emerging British Empire in India.

Keywords

Mughals, Empire, travel narrative, ruins

The emergence of Travel narratives in England is closely linked to the British encounter with the unknown and the alien world. The first travel narratives were produced when Europe confronted its Eastern Others during the Crusades. Some of the medieval romances, Mandeville's *Travels* or Chaucer's "The Squire's Tale" which mark the birth of the genre of travel writing in English are narratives of Europe's encounter with the Saracens (4). Similarly, in the early modern period when European explorers and merchants went into the newly discovered territories of the globe, there was a great explosion of the tales of travel in Europe. Although, England was a late starter in terms of navigational explorations they tried to make up for their lack of travelling heroes and travelogues by collecting fictional and real tales of travels (Bohls and Duncun xv). The earliest collection of voyages in English was *The Decadence of the New World* a translation produced in 1555 by Richard Eden. It was followed by Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1589) and Samuel Purchas's *Hakluytus Posthumous or Purchas, His Pilgrimage* (1625). Both the collections became immensely popular and their popularity inspired the printers to publish tales of travels (Sherman 18-19).¹ In the seventeenth century British travellers literally became globe trotters and they took up the task of mapping the territories they visited in their travel narratives. Seventeenth century British travellers followed four different routes of travels: they started visiting various parts of Europe for educational purposes and at the beginning of the seventeenth century concept of the classical Grand Tour emerged (Ivanovic 32). A second route of their travel took them to the traditionally familiar Holy Land and the Near and the Middle East; a third trajectory was formed by the Atlantic triangle that consisted of Europe on the one hand and Africa and the Americas on the other; a fourth route led them to India and other parts of South-East Asia.

India had always been an attraction to the travellers all over the world and since the ancient days people from different parts of the globe visited India. The inflow of the Europeans into India started in the sixteenth century as the sea route to India was discovered and it was primarily for trade that the Europeans thronged to the Indian sub-continent. Famous travellers to India in the Early Modern period include Ralph Fitch (1583-91), John Mildenhall (1599-1606), William Hawkins (1608-13), William Finch (1608-11), Nicholas Withington (1612-16), Thomas Coryat (1612-12), Thomas Roe (1615-19) and Edward Terry (1616-19). Some of the travel accounts by these travellers were included in *Purchas, His*

¹ Between 1500 and 1700, 410 travel books were produced in English and another 164 were translated (Sherman 21).

Pilgrimage.² Two French travelogues were very popular in England in the seventeenth century: Jean-Baptiste Tavernier's *Six Voyages* which was translated in 1677, and Francois Bernier, who's *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, was translated in 1671–72.³ An important source of knowledge on India was the Jesuit missionaries and their important collection *Lettres edifiantes et curieuses* (1702–76). The popularity of the travel narratives on India grew proportionately with the profit of the East India Company. Between 1500 and 1700, forty four travel narratives on India came out in England (Sherman 21). As it is observed by Kate Teltscher “many of the enduring Indian travel-writing topoi” were already established by the end of the seventeenth century. India was represented as “an unchanging land where the customs of biblical times persisted, where diabolical idols were worshipped, where men were effeminate and widows followed the rite of *sati*, sacrificing themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres” (191). However, as argued by Teltscher, “until the mid-eighteenth century, it is probably more accurate to speak of a European, rather than English, tradition of writing about India” (190).

In the mid-eighteenth century certain events changed the position of the British in India. The enmity of the East India Company with Nawab Sirajudullah resulted in two consecutive battles: the British were defeated in the battle of Alinagar (1756) but won a decisive victory over Siraj in the Battle of Plassey (1757). The victory gave them complete control over the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and parts of Orissa. They achieved another important victory in the Battle of Buxar (1764), and in the following year they earned the right to revenue collection (*Diwani*) in the three provinces. The expansionist policy of the Company led to several other battles with the native rulers, the Anglo-Mysore Wars (1767-99) being the most engaging one. Many narratives of war, imprisonment and suffering of the British were written during this period: John Zephaniah Holwell's *Genuine Narrative* (1758), James Capper's *A Free Inquiry into the Various causes of the Alarming State of our Affairs in the East Indies* (1783), Henry Oake's *An Authentic Narrative of the Treatment of the English who were taken Prisoners on the Reduction of Bednore by Tippoo Saib* (1785), Innes Munro's *A Narrative of the Military Operations, on the Coromandel Coast* (1789), James Bristow's *A Narrative of the Sufferings of James Bristow* (1793), and Alexander Dirom's *Narrative of the*

² *Early Travels in India*, edited by William Foster, contains the travel narratives of all these English travellers, except that of Roe whose travel account was edited and published by Foster in 1899 in a separate volume.

³ Eugenia Vanina provides a long list of early medieval and early modern travellers to India in her article "Roads of (Mis)Understanding: European Travellers to India fifteenth to seventeenth Century" (271-73).

Campaign in India (1793) are some of them. Reports and reviews of wars in India took the centre stage in England; *Annual Register*, *Monthly Review*, *Asiatic Annual Register* and *Critical Review* reported the cruelty of the Indian rulers and the incompetence of the Indian army on the one hand and benevolence of the British administrators and the bravery and suffering of the British soldiers on the other.⁴

If military hostility represented one trajectory of the late eighteenth century Indo-British encounter, the other course was marked by the cultural exchanges between India and Britain. Under the leadership of Warren Hastings (1772-1785), Calcutta became a centre of Oriental learning and British men of different talents were encouraged to visit India. Under Hastings's direct support, The Asiatic Society of Bengal was established in 1784 headed by William Jones and a number of translations of the ancient Indian religious, philosophical and literary texts were made by the Society members. Wilkins translated the *Bhagwat-Gita* in 1785; Jones translated *Hitopodesa*, Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda* (1789) and Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* (1790).⁵ Confronted with the Indian antiquity the Europeans were overwhelmed and overawed at the ancientness of Indian civilization and Hinduism. India's past was glorified and Hinduism came to be valorised as the sunny religion of the East; as Michael J Franklin (2005) puts it: a "myth of an innocent pre-lapsarian India" was created (52). In the second half of the eighteenth century, therefore, British attitude to India was characterised by opposing emotions of fear and fascination, of condemnation and valorisation, of excitement and anxiety. William Hodges (1744-97), who set his foot on Madras in 1780 and received patronage of Hastings when he came to Calcutta in the following year, was caught up in this British excitement and anxiety over India and his *Travels in India* (1793) involves the politics of the time.

Hodges was the first landscape painter to visit India. He was apprenticed to the painter Richard Wilson who taught him the fundamentals of classical landscape painting. He put his training into practice as he travelled through various parts of England painting the landscapes he observed. Later he went on a continental tour. Hodges got an opportunity to travel beyond Europe when he was asked to accompany Captain Cook on board the

⁴ See Promod K. Nayar's "The Rhetoric of Ruin: William Hodges's India" in *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era* 15: 75-106.

⁵ Raymond Schwab gives a chronological list of works published between 1784 and 1794 to show the eruption in oriental scholarship during the last years of the eighteenth century, especially after the Asiatic Society of Bengal was established (51-52). See also O. P. Kejariwal's *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past, 1784-1838*. The first chapter of the book entitled, "The Background" analyses the modern Western effort to know and discover India.

Resolution in Cook's second voyage to the South-Pacific in 1772. On his return in summer 1775 he was employed by the Admiralty to execute large-scale paintings from the drawings and sketches made during the voyage. After the termination of the project and the death of his wife in 1777 he decided to set out for India and reached Madras in 1780.⁶ Hodges could not work in Madras due to the Second Anglo-Mysore war (1780-84) and decided to move to Calcutta in 1781. He was introduced to Hastings by a letter by John McPherson (Stuebe 659) and with patronage of the Company for the next five years he travelled through the whole of Eastern and Northern India and made his sketches. Returning home, he published *Select Views of India*, a series of forty eight aquatints in 1785 and in 1788 (Tillotson 8) and *Travels in India, During the Years 1780, 1781, 1782, & 1783* in 1793. Hodges adhered to the generic features of travel writing in *Travels in India*.

Mary Louise Pratt observes that the value of a travel narrative in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was judged by their potency to record the topographic and ethnographic descriptions of the visited places and by its usefulness as a ready reference for future tourists. Another important criterion to judge a travel narrative was its strategic position in explaining the observations from an imperial point of view. Travelogues gave clues and hints as to the prospects of the visited places to be colonised or merchandized (38-68). Hodges's narrative follows these criteria: he explains that the aim of sharing his experience of India with British readers was to address the lack of knowledge about India among the Britons who were "deeply interested" in India "which has [had] been the theatre of scenes highly important to his country" (iii). The focus of his narrative is on the topographic and ethnographic aspects of India, to illustrate the "face of the country, of its arts, and natural productions," (iv) which would feed the imperial interest of his readers. The narrative is written in a lucid prose for a wider reception; in the manner of a typical travel writer he puts emphasis on the authenticity of his narrative (iv); he clearly documents his route map and notes down the issues like security, hospitality and other travel amenities for the autonomous future travellers.

Normally a travelogue consists of two major components: the experiences and the structured representation of it. According to Anna S. Mattila, the experiences are but the aggregation of sequential events whereas the narrative interconnects all the facts of events in a structured pattern which reflects the experiences (35-36). Hodges makes a structured representation of his experience by using a number of narrative strategies: the verbal

⁶ For detailed discussion on Hodge's early life and his relationship with Hastings in India see Isabel Stuebe's article "William Hodges and Warren Hastings: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Patronage" in *The Burlington Magazine*. 115(847): 657-666.

descriptions are supplemented by his paintings. According to John Urry, paintings develop an initial tourist gaze⁷ for a place. The fourteen paintings that supplement Hodges's verbal narration serve the same function. As a landscape painter he creates structures of contrast between the European and the Eastern landscape; he builds a contrast between the beautiful and the ruinous aspects of Indian landscape; as an ethnographic observer he creates binary images of Hindus and Muslims in India; a British/India binary is also erected in his narrative. The structures of contrasts that Hodges builds in narrating his experience of India reveal his strategic position—his imperial gaze. Imperial travellers tend to view the world through their own cultural filters (Guelke and Guelke) and Hodges is no exception. Although Hodges claims to be an impartial observer (“less personally concerned”) and a “proper professional character,” the narrative proves otherwise. The project of knowledge enhancement that Hodges takes up, in other words, involves the politics of knowledge retardation (Carey 269).

The embedded imperial politics of Hodges is unravelled once his didactic approach is traced. He upholds a superior image of the British rulers compared to their Mughal counterparts. An important element of Hodges's topographical mapping relates to the agrarian activities in the provinces he travels through. Away from the climatic conditions, Hodges attempts to establish a connection between agricultural activities and governance. Most of the Mughal ruled states are shown as arid and the rulers are condemned for having no interests in the agricultural activities or in the well being of the people. He argues that it is not due to “the natural sterility of the country, which, on the contrary, I believe to be capable of producing the finest crops”, but because “all the territories ... were under the absolute direction of Mussulman tyrants” (107). In and around Allahabad and Lucknow and in the provinces under the Gwalior kings, with whom the British had enmity, Hodges depicts a desolate landscape and an equally melancholic looking, extremely poverty ridden human faces (107). The basic cause of poverty as identified by Hodges is the “private luxury and vices of the Mussulman princes;” the Mughal rulers are “the plunderers instead of the parents of their subjects” (103). Compared to this the British rulers are shown to promote agricultural activities and consequently the people of the provinces under British are prosperous. He argues that where “there is neatness of cultivation of the land, and that land tilled to the utmost of its boundaries, it may reasonably be supposed that the government is the protector, and not the oppressor, of the people” (17). When Hodges comes to Patna with Hastings he takes note of the enthusiasm of the people about ‘humble’ Hastings and observes: “They

⁷ ‘Tourist Gaze’ “is the way in which tourists see destinations” (Rojek and Urry, 113)

[native people] could not but contrast this appearance and conduct with that of their Nabobs, whom they had never seen except mounted on lofty elephants, and glittering in splendor with their train, followed by the soldiery to keep off the multitude from offending their arrogance and pride” (44). The implicit aim of his eulogy of East India Company administrators was, of course, to garner support of the common Britons in favour of the Company in India. Interestingly, Hodges’s narrative was produced at a time when Warren Hastings was undergoing trial (1788-95) for his actions in India and during trial there was a large scale debate on the corruption and atrocities of the East India Company officers in India. Hodges’s narrative might be a conscious effort to support his patron Hastings during the trials.

It is interesting to note that though Hodges condemns the Mughal rulers for their apathy to the suffering of the people, he finds little to blame the East India Company for the “Artificial Famine”⁸ of Bengal of 1770. Hodges came to India within a decade of the Famine of Bengal in 1770 and visible signs of it were still there. He takes only a cursory note of the Famine and going against history he lavishes praise on the company officials. While passing through Jungleterry he takes note of the Famine:

I have understood that it was before this time highly cultivated, and filled with industrious husbandmen and manufacturers, and the population was estimated at more than eighteen thousand people. It is, however, at present reduced to a few hundreds, great numbers having been cut off by famine, and others having emigrated in search of food. (95)

He refers to the popular view that the avarice of the British officers was the cause of the Famine but concludes that they have been unjustly defamed: “who unjustly suffered in their character, by malignant insinuations” (95). According to William Wilson Hunter’s estimate in *The Annals of Rural Bengal*, starvation and disease caused the death of ten million people or more. The increased tax on land and trade imposed by the Company and its monopoly in grain trading during the famine years have been held responsible for the “artificial famine” (Chatterjee; Dutt). The Famine, as the historians label it, was the result of the “post Plassey plunder” (Habib 408). Contrary to what is historically true, Hodges praises the benevolence of the British: “where the famine raged in its utmost violence, had taken and employed every means that liberality and benevolence, under the direction of ability, could possibly suggest for the preservation of the poor, and many of them at the expense of their own private

⁸ In 1782 John Scott wrote “Oriental Eclogues II. Serim; or, the Artificial Famine: an East-Indian Eclogue” that documented the British avarice as the chief cause of the Famine. See *The Poetical Works of John Scott Esq*, pp.139-52

fortunes” (96). Hodges’s silence on Company atrocities was deliberate. He, therefore, indulges in imperial myth making and suppresses facts whenever necessary.

If stereotyping the Indian rulers as despotic plays a significant role in Hodges’s imperial rhetoric, the recurrent images of the unmanageable, the dangerous, the ruinous and the chaotic aspects of Indian landscape and life also play an important role in constructing his imperial gaze. Hodges draws attention to two types of ruins: ruination caused by the natural process of decay and ruins and destructions by the Mughal rulers. Ruins in Hodges whether they are natural or caused by human hands are political and politicized. According to Promod Kumar Nayar, there are three stages of Hodges’s rhetoric of ruin: in the first stage Hodges describes India's wastage, emptiness, barrenness, and infertility of Indian landscape. In the second stage he attributes allegorical meanings to the ruin. In the third stage Hodges emphasizes a colonialist theme: “the negotiation of the Indian landscape's “dangers” by seeking a socio-topographical refuge and the creation of a British hospitality-space, or *locus amoenus*, within Indian wastes” (80).

Enroute Lucknow Hodges describes scenes of desolation, decay and danger: “from the town of Gohud, it is hardly possible for the imagination to figure anything so dismal, dusky, and barren.” He notes that “in this part, as a stranger passes, every now and then a savage-like being starts out, completely armed in their way.” When he is left alone on such a dangerous place for “two hours”, he feels horrified and is only relieved when his attendants return (142). Hodges seems to have received the greatest pleasure from depicting what he calls the “Magnificent ruins.” The ruins run parallel to the aridity of the Mughal landscape and they are symbolic of the decadence of the Mughal regime. Except the Taj Mahal, Hodges finds almost all other Mughal architectures in utter ruin. Important sights of Mughal ruins described by Hodges include the “ruins of a zananah” at Rajmahal (22); ruins around the city of Banaras caused by the Mughals (62); ruined fort of Lutteefpoor (84-85); Akbar’s tomb at Fatepur Sicri (“to be gone greatly to decay”) etc. Even the city of Agra is portrayed as an utter ruin:

It was impossible to contemplate the ruins of this grand and venerable city, without feeling the deepest impressions of melancholy. I am, indeed, well informed, that the ruins extend, along the banks of the river, not less than fourteen English miles. (117)

Contemplating the ruins, Hodges fears he would be lost “in the unfathomable, and perhaps impenetrable darkness of Eastern antiquities” (63).

Hodges's contemplation on the images of ruin resembles the scenes of ruins and decay of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Gothic novel and it can be defined as Hodges's "negative sublime." Linda Marie Brooks defines "negative sublime" as "the aesthetics not of identity but of difference, the gap that opens between the empirical subject and the world she perceives" (31). Hodges makes use of the negative sublime to create his (and his readers') distance from the 'world' (i.e. India) he represents. During the Romantic period the images of Gothic otherness were often used to demonize India and other orient. The feudal lords of the Gothic novel were conflated with the Oriental rulers (Kelley). Sara Suleri in *The Rhetoric of British India* explores how the Orient was often conceived in terms of decadent feudalism. According to Suleri, the British claimed to bring 'modernity' to the "feudalism" of the subcontinent (32). It is obvious that Hodges was projecting the decadent feudalism of the Indian rulers through these images of ruin; the ruins of empire, however, were potential source of imperial anxiety to Hodges and his British readers. Deidre Coleman argues that Hodges's paintings with its depiction of the fall of grand Mughals "provided a sort of warning to eighteenth century imperial Britain." Hodges's depiction of Mughal life is characterized by contrasting images of energy and delight, twined with stasis and annihilation. It is suggestive of his imperial anxiety (48).

If one aspect of Hodges's portrayal of the ruins is the process of natural decay, the other is the ruinations caused by the Mughals. The ruined palaces, mosques, mausoleums and forts are depicted as decaying under the impact time and due to the inability of the rulers to take care of them, but when it comes to ruinations of the Hindu temples he points his finger to the Mughal atrocities. Describing the ruins around Banaras Hodges observes: "Surrounding the city are many ruins of buildings, the effects of Mahomedan intolerance." One of the ruined buildings is a large circular edifice, "having evidently been a Hindoo temple, or part of one" (61). Through his rhetoric of ruin, Hodges tries to foreground the ferocity, religious intolerance and despotism of the Mughal rulers and projects them as the common enemy of the British and the Hindus. Such a representation conformed to the ideology of "Britons like Sir William Jones [who] believed that one of their historical tasks was to liberate Hindus from the effects of centuries of Mughal misrule and restore the glories of a classical, Upanishadic golden age" (Leask). Valorisation of Hinduism was a part of eighteenth century British orientalism, and Hodges's writing makes it clear that such valorisation was not merely a scholarly move; it was a trenchantly political gesture. Hodges creates opposed images of the Hindus and the Muslims. He observes that the Hindus are very hospitable, "simple and accommodating" and praises their "readiness to oblige." "In perfect

opposition is the Mussulman character; – haughty, not to say insolent; irritable, and ferocious.” In terms of occupation “Hindoos are chiefly husbandmen, manufacturers, and merchants” and “Mussulmans may be classed as entirely military” (34-35). The docile domesticable image of the Hindus was a political necessity as was the ferocious and unmanageable portraiture of the Muslims. Such an image was necessary to invite and establish British dominion over India where majority of people were Hindu subjects of the Mughal rulers. Gayatri C. Spivak’s analyses the Western myth making of the Eastern ‘other’ in terms of psychoanalysis and her psychoanalytical triangle consists of a self and two kinds of ‘others’: “a self consolidating other” and an “absolute other” (128). In Hodges’s narrative the Muslims are cast as the “absolute other,” whereas the Hindus who are conceived as effeminate, weak, gentle, meek and mild are the “self-consolidating other.”

The meek and mild image of the Hindus (their “readiness to oblige”) is further consolidated with the feminized and eroticised representation of the Hindu society. Hindu males are described by Hodges as effeminate: “they are delicately framed; their hands in particular are more like those of tender females” (3). They are delineated as harmless creatures incapable of causing any challenge to the British dominance. Hindu females are erotically portrayed: young Hindu women bathing at the ghats of Benares “sporting and playing like Naiads or Syrens” and “a beautiful female form” ascends the “steps from the river, with wet drapery, which perfectly displays the whole person” (33). His erotic gaze also falls on the women to be burned. Instead of portraying the horror of widow burning he draws our attention to her youth and beauty: “her figure was small, but elegantly turned; and the form of her hands and arms was particularly beautiful” (82). The ‘*sati*’ would become one of the standard images of the savagery of the Hindu society, but Hodges depicts a resolute lady going to the funeral pyre with no signs of fear at all. Hodges seems to romanticise the ritual of the widow burning.⁹ Apart from the description of the *sati*, the fifth chapter of the book contains another scene of sacrifice where a human child and an animal are sacrificed. Immediately after the narration of the sacrifice Hodges describes the festivities and dance of men and women: “After the rites of Bacchus had far exceeded the bounds of temperance, those who were capable of sustaining an erect position began dancing, men and women promiscuously” (93). Hodges seems to drive away the horror of the scene by recourse to the

⁹ See Hermione De Almeida and George H. Gilpin’s *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* where they explain the Romantic artists’ attitude to *sati* with reference Johan Zofanny’s painting, *Sacrifice of an Hindoo Widow upon the Funeral Pyre of her Husband*. The attitude to *sati* during the Romantic period, it has been pointed out was characterised by an ambivalence (229).

erotic. The Hindus are presented as passive, feminine, erotic, supine and silent. These stereotypes of the Easterners were part of eighteenth century and early nineteenth century Orientalism, which sustained a contrast between masculine West and feminine East (Said 137-38, 206). Feminization of the East was a necessary precondition of imperial conquest. Hodges's feminization of the Hindus served similar function in inviting the masculine England in the act of conquest.

A different aspect of Hodges's portrayal of the erotic is revealed in his description of the ruins of Zananah (i.e. harem) and the accompanying painting of the inside of the Zananah. In contrast to the description of the present ruins provided by Hodge, he paints the women in a manner that invites the erotic gaze. The women are shown in different postures, some are well clothed and some semi-naked; there is a sense of idleness around. A potbellied man is seen among the women. This man must be the over-sexed 'nabob' or prince, the keeper of the harem. To complement the painting, Hodges gives an erotic touch to his narrative by referring to "hundred of females, collected from various parts of empire, and particularly so from Cashmere a country famous for the beauty of its women" (22). The image of the harem or the Zananah enables Hodges to show the sexual profligacy of the Mughal rulers and he comments on the Mughal atrocities on women. Hodges's contemporary Burke would make use of the sexual profligacy and cruelty against women committed by Indians in his Hastings-trial speeches to condemn Hastings (Franklin 53-55). One such Indian, Devi Singh's atrocities were most vividly described by Edmund Burke (1991, 420-21). As it is noted by Franklin, India was portrayed by Burke "as an abused woman, her sources fecundity cruelly mutilated . . . spoiled and despoiled" (54-55). Hodges does not connect sex with horror in the manner Burke does. The difference between Burke and Hodges also lies in the fact that Burke demonizes the Hindu men for their atrocities against women but Hodges depicts sexuality of the Mughals and he hints that the women were forced ("hold captive") to join the Zananah (22). Burke and Hodges spoke from two different ideological positions. Hodges's narrative embodies the ideological position of the orientalist under Hastings who valorised Hinduism, but Burke's rhetoric was influenced by the Evangelicals and the Anglicists who started demonizing Hinduism to prepare the ground for proselytizing the Hindus. Both of them, however, feminised India and saw India as an abused woman, only the abusers were different.

The attempt to 'understand and interpret' India from outside, according to Amartya Sen, can be put into three distinct categories: "the *exoticist* approaches, the *magisterial* approaches and the *curatorial* approaches". The exoticist approach "concentrates on the

wondrous aspect of India”; the magisterial approach “sees India as a subject territory from the point of view of its British governors”; the third category “includes various attempts at noting, classifying and exhibiting diverse aspects of Indian culture” (141-142). The three approaches did not have any linear pattern of development and often existed together at a given point of time, and may be in the same man. Hastings, for example, is often praised for his encouragement of the ‘curatorial’ policy in India. However, what he wrote to the Chairman of the East India Company defending the utilitarian value of publishing Wilkins’ translation of the *Bhagvat-Gita* betrays his magisterial outlook. “Every accumulation of knowledge,” Hastings wrote, “and especially such as is obtained by social communication with people over whom we exercise a dominion founded on the right of conquest, is useful to the state” (as quoted in Kejariwal 24). Hodges’s gaze upon India is characterized by a combination of all the three approaches Sen speaks of: like an exoticist he paints an alluring picture of India to draw the attention of the readers and to draw them to India and like a curator he makes observation on the cultural practices of the Indians, but everything he does is filtered through his magisterial gaze. This scheme of representation was a part of the imperial strategy of the British East India Company in the 1780s. Though, it should be noted that the British policy towards India was already undergoing a major make over when Hodges’s narrative was published. Hastings was under trial for his actions in India. Pressure to allow the missionaries in India was rising and in 1792 Charles Grant’s *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain* was published. Grant pleaded that Christian mission to be allowed in India alongside the commercial activity of East India Company. Grant represents India as the classic example of a despotic country and the “cruel genius” pervading Indian despotism was “the ethos of Hinduism” (Butler 409). Hodges did not take note of these changes; his narrative embodies the rhetoric of the East India Company under Hastings.

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