Chapter One

Knowing India: Company Policies

Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror...

There is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism; barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as much as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.[1]

— Walter Benjamin, 1992

[1] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations* (London: Fontana Press, 1992).

Chapter One

Knowing India: Company Policies

In the Introduction, we addressed how the British approached the nexus between power, knowledge and governance by systematically collecting and documenting all information they needed about the territory they had acquired or were planning to annexe. This chapter will first deliberate theories put forth in the works of Bernard Cohn, James Clifford and Amartya Sen to trace the Company Policies in India as they unfolded in response to the exigencies of the times. It will then discuss the modalities used by the Company by using theories of Cohn in order to understand the policies that led to collecting and exhibiting Indian artifacts in India and Great Britain and the eventual institutionalisation of this process during The Great Exhibition of 1851, and the subsequent creation of Department of Science and Arts in Great Britain and the creation of Art Networks across the Empire to facilitate documentation and collection of art objects.

Early British collections in India were often war trophy, or loot, sometimes claimed to be “gifts” by the defeated to appease the victors. In 1799, the British, after losing the first three battles, won the fourth battle of Seringapatam through deception by refusing to protect Tipu Sultan against the Marathas. They looted the royal treasures. The most celebrated of these objects is of course the so-called Tipu’s Tiger. (Plate 09) It was a mechanical organ hidden inside a tiger body that, when wound, produced a roaring sound

as the wooden tiger mauled an English soldier.[2] This object, along with several others, was installed in Powis Castle, the home of Lord Clive. Lady Clive, who was fixated with collecting war booty, she travelled to Seringapatam, where she "collected obsessively".[3] Later, these objects were donated to the East India Museum and were displayed in its galleries in Leadenhall Street; and now, they are on permanent display at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The news of the victory at Seringapatam was celebrated all over England in specially made panoramas. They were great painted scenes displayed 'in the round' with lighting effects, often also accompanied by music and printed companion guides. Robert Barker Porter invented panorama in the late eighteenth century. He created a special panorama titled '*The Great Historical Picture of the Storming of Seringapatam by the British Troops and their Allies'* that was exhibited in London in 1800 at Barker's Lyceum Theatre on the Strand. (Plate 10) It was a grand indoor carnival for the audience to enjoy and learn about the event. Robert Ker painted the *Taking of Seringapatam* in six weeks on a canvas that stretched over two hundred feet long on a semi-circular plane.[4] The subject was very recent: a pictorial reconstruction of the war. This panorama shows then travelled to Edinburgh to capitalise on the celebrity of the local hero (General Baird who had led the

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[2] See also Stronge, *Tipu's Tigers* and Sadiah Qureshi, 'Tipu's Tiger and Images of India, 1799-2010', in *Curating Empire: Museums and the British Imperial Experience*, ed. John McAleer and Sarah Longair (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 207–224.

[3] Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Conquest and Collecting in the East 1750–1850* (London: HarperCollins UK, 2005), 187, 186–196. See also Nancy K. Shields, *Birds of Passage: Henrietta Clive's Travels in South India 1798-1801* (London: Eland, 2009).

[4] Carol A. Breckenridge, 'The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World Fairs', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 2 (1989), 198.

siege), and later left for a national tour to other cities.[5] Panoramas marked military triumphalism for a popular audience, who was eager for spectacle and excitement. But, notably, these panoramas also reiterated the imperial 'civilizing' mission abroad. The 1830s witnessed a fashion for panoramas depicting great cities of the world, including those in India (Madras and Calcutta) where British occupation had shaped the modernising colonial townscape. These spectacles were considerably enhanced by a full military band, drums, trumpets etc.[6]

Even though as a medium panorama, was short-lived, they had a unique charm as a form of live celebration. Colourful ethnography and euphoria of a carnival added a dash of excitement. For the audience, the ethnography of the Indian Kings and Princes and of warfare, must have had a dialectical association to their own medieval times sagas, making the political realities on the Indian subcontinent irresistible and palatable. Panoramas engendered a yearning, and commemorated its satisfaction. The panorama both intensified a longing to participate in the political and military domestication of India as well as vicariously satisfied the urge of British men and women to witness the battle in person.[7] The central feelings of wonder and voyeuristic pleasure of witnessing a moment of "history" made the panorama very popular. In 1808, objects taken as booty from Seringapatam, Tipu's impressive South Indian capital; were brought to London to be along

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[5] Victoria and Albert Museum, London: E.572-1926. SCRAN online.

[6] Stana Nenadic, 'Exhibiting India in Nineteenth-Century Scotland and the Impact on Commerce, Industry and Popular Culture', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 34, no. 1 (23 April 2014): 67–89, doi:10.3366/jshs.2014.0098.

[7] Breckenridge, 'The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting'.

with other artifacts in an "Oriental repository" kept by the East Company[8]. Londoners flocked to gaze and gawk at Tipu's regalia, war trophies, displayed as exhibits. The “loot” was enshrined in the museum, or the ‘cabinets of curiosities’ which turned out to be their legal and logical resting place.

Knowing India

The Company administration in India and in London was separated by 6000 miles, a nine months of arduous sea travel. Hence, the Company administration constantly required the East India Company to innovate and improve on the information-handling tools to its long-established commercial bureaucracy.[9] A vigorous search for useful knowledge underpinned the reformist actions of government agencies. Past experience had dictated to the EIC administrators that reasonably effective management of long-distance trading activity was based upon the possession of intelligence. It was entirely natural for the managers in London to believe that close supervision of territorial possessions[10] could similarly be achieved through the establishment of command over all forms of information about India.

The British accumulation of knowledge about India became far more extensive, proactive, and sophisticated after 1785 and this has been ascribed to the action of the men who served under Governors-General Cornwallis and Wellesley. However, the initial creation and development of the Company’s

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[8] Ray Desmond and India Office Library and Records, *The India Museum, 1801-1879* (H.M.S.O., 1982).

[9] Harold Adams Innis, *Empire and Communications* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950).

[10] For a summary discussion see C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Secondary Communication in India, 1770-1870*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Foundation Books, 1999), 6–9, 56–96.

'empire of information'[11] in India arose in no small measure from the sustained encouragement given to all forms of information gathering by those in London who cultivated a corporate culture in which every piece of useful intelligence was recorded and stored at East India House for possible future use in the Company's decision-making processes.

The British had realised the need for having information-centred strategies from two earlier rude awakenings: first being The American Revolution of 1776, and the subsequent withdrawal of the US from the "First Empire"; and the other shock was the bloody "First War of Independence"[12] of 1857, which they managed to quash. Hence, the administration wanted a fool-proof system of information gathering. Also, as the home government was thousands of miles away, they needed to perfect their documentation and communication systems for a better coordination and effective governance. The management required a fool-proof system of information gathering, recording, and processing for winning wars and for the governance of the Empire.

In his book, *When Information Came of Age*, Daniel Headrick argues that between 1700-1850, both in the metropole as well as across the wider British Empire, there was a movement towards creation of ever more complex systems of information gathering, handling, and classification.[13] They also

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[11] H. V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756–1833* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[12] Commonly known as the Sepoy Rebellion, the British called it a Peasant Rebellion while Marx asserted it was a year-long First War of Independence. It was a sore thumb for the British who banned the Savarkar book of that title until 1947.

[13] Daniel R. Headrick, *When Information Came of Age. Technologies of Knowledge in the Age of Reason and Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

brought a much greater degree of organisational coherence to the written communication exchange between Britain and Asia. News and information[14] flowed in, around, and out of East India House in increasingly well-regulated and reliable channels. Attempts were made to utilise and exploit the great variety of data contained in despatches, memoranda, and proceedings sent home from the East.

The EIC expected to facilitate closer control of the overseas servants and better administration of the Company's affairs. The Company administration certainly required to know India better in order to control and contain the natives; with the Utilitarian supposition that a better knowledge would lead to a better understanding and, hence, smoother governance of India. John Stuart Mill believed that the one of the causes behind the satisfactory running of the Government of India was the fact that it was carried out in writing. Writing and putting everything on records was held supreme for an effective having an effective administration during the early Utilitarian phase. According to Mill, 'writing' was a primary mode of ensuring accountability in colonial government:

> I conceive that there are several causes as to why I think the Government of India is being carried out satisfactorily; probably the most important is, that the whole Government of India is carried on in writing. All the orders given, and all the acts of the executive officers, are reported in writing, and the whole of the original correspondence is sent to the Home Government; so that *there is no single act done in India,* the whole of the reasons for which are not placed on record. This appears to me a greater security for good government than exists in almost any other government in the world, because no other probably has a system of recordation so complete.[15]

[14] Manuel Castells, *The Informational City: Information Technology, Economic Restructuring, and the Urban-Regional Process* (Oxford, 1989) is a good entry point for the current communication theories and their impact in the urban habitat.

Early Modalities

The British accumulation of knowledge about India became far more extensive, proactive, and sophisticated after 1785 due to the action of the men who served under Governors-General Cornwallis and Wellesley. The initial creation and development of the Company's 'empire of information' in India arose from the sustained encouragement given to all forms of information collection by the higher authorities in London. They, thus, cultivated a corporate culture in which they recorded and stored every piece of useful intelligence at East India House for possible future use in the decision-making processes. This was markedly so, probably, after 1783 when the loss of the American colonies prompted considerable anxiety in Britain about the future strength and well-being of the nation and the empire.

Daniel Headrick has shown how the movement towards the creation of ever more complex systems of information gathering, handling and classification,[16] arose across the wider British state and empire. This was followed up with a vigorous search for useful knowledge for justifying the self-proclaimed civilizing mission activities of the government agencies both in the Metropole and in the colony. In the context of the Nineteenth Century advances in agriculture, economics, botany, literature, linguistics, science, and surveying, were useful tools for the better administration of an expanding empire more sophisticated models for knowledge and policies were

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[15] John Stuart Mill, "The East India Company's Charter,"33. Quoted in Dutta, p. 70

[16] Daniel R. Headrick, When Information Came of Age. Technologies of knowledge in the age of reason and revolution, 1700–1850 (Oxford, 2000).

developed.

Integral to the project of the collection of information about India were projects for the infrastructure development of infrastructure like laying of roads, canals, railways, post, and telegraph lines, etc. For all these to happen, the geographic survey of India was the most crucial. It was also known as the great trigonometric survey of the subcontinent (Plate 11) undertaken by William Lambton, George Everest, and others during the early decades of the nineteenth century. These surveys arguably enabled the Company to conceptualize and legitimize its empire, as well as to affirm that it had at last acquired a complete knowledge of India.[17] Direction and encouragement from India House thus helped to ensure that, alongside efforts to promote the scholarly study of indigenous cultures and languages, strategies were developed in India for the gathering of geographical and navigational measurements, agricultural data, and economic statistics from territories under the Company's control and beyond.

The production and distribution of knowledge is central to our analysis of the cultural encounters between the British and Indians. The British administrators constantly looked for ways of collecting information of different kinds and to appropriate them for many applications in the governance or maintenance of the regions. The practice of colonial discourse analysis revealed deep-seated anxieties then, and similar uncertainties for the

[17] For recent studies that lay different interpretative emphasis on the Company's surveying and mapping operations after 1765 see Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), esp. 9–16, 121–64, and Ian J. Barrow, *Making History, Drawing Territory: British Mapping in India, C.1756-1905* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 35–89, and C. A. Bayly, Imperial meridian: The British Empire and the world, 1780–1830 (1989), 121–6.

discipline of history can be seen in our age of post-structuralism, post-modernism, and post-colonialism. The unprecedented successful use of information in the military and marketing supremacy made the British only more dependent for it during setbacks. But, at the same time, the momentary set-backs or 'Information panics' during periods of rapid military and political challenges encouraged them to action and to refine their strategies. Thus, the bloodshed of 1857 pushed the British into making more innovative and effective developments in gathering and exploiting information.

The British administrators realized the significance of processing and putting together of isolated pieces of information into an ordered comprehensive system of knowledge in one piece. Thomas Richards, in *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (1993), refers to the sum total of knowledge about empire—including such diverse forms as exploration narratives, field observations, sketches and drawings of monuments, mapping of India's vast territories, and administrative records, results of scientific experimentation, and other documents — as the "imperial archive". The archive according to Richards was an imaginative framework within which every bit of information gathered, every piece of data recorded, every specimen collected might be placed and organized.[18] The imperial archive was housed in finite institutional spaces such as museums, record offices, and professional societies; it was a powerful governing fiction of the empire having its moorings and reference to the real-world geography.

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[18] Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (New York: Verso, 1993), 4.

Historiography

> "the presence of positionality and observational perspective need not weaken the enterprise of knowledge, and may in fact help to extend its reach."
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> Amartya Sen on 'History and the Enterprise of Knowledge'[19]

Amartya Sen reassures that the issue of subject position and individual views may be taken as strength and so need not hinder our search for Knowledge. When we endeavour to write a critical history of India under British Imperial rule, we are dealing with clash between civilizations having completely opposing ideologies. To write this from the perspective of a third ideological frame is very tricky, to say the least. The British philosophy was rooted in the Enlightenment and their endeavour was to write Universal History. The Eighteenth/Nineteenth century also saw many famous historians take up the project of writing a Universal History under the shadow of the Enlightenment. In this genre we record master works by Gibbon, Hume, Ranke, James Mill, Macaulay, Fergusson, etc. These historians had different individual ideologies and grand narratives like liberalism, orientalism, evangelicalism, and utilitarianism that they combined with the project of Universal historiography. Like his compatriots, James Mill (1773-1836) based his magnum opus, *The History of British India,*[20] on the basis of the stereotype that India had a double lack of history—it lacked the documented past as well as it appeared to be stagnant for centuries. Mill's *History* is informed by the twin notions of history, i.e. having a plan and representing progress. Thus he

[19] Amartya Sen, 'History and the Enterprise of Knowledge | New Humanist', 31 May 2007, https://newhumanist.org.uk/articles/458/history-and-the-enterprise-of-knowledge.

[20] James Mill, *The History of British India* (1817), henceforth referred to as *History*.

"graded" civilizations for their historical development. The tacit motive for such 'grading' was to provide historical and developmental case for the permanent subjection of India, and justify colonial despotism by redefining liberal notions. In his incisive indictment on James Mill's *History*, Amartya Sen in 'History and the Enterprise of Knowledge' claims that as a meta-history, it deals not only about the subject of those writings, but also about their authors, traditions, and perspectives they reflect. Sen argues that Mill's book tells us probably "as much about imperial Britain as about India."[21] Thus, we can see in the British works and policies a strong presence of the ideologies like orientalism, utilitarianism, or evangelicalism underpinning their discourses.

Generally Indian history has been considered exceptional, mainly as it fitted into no obvious western paradigm.[22] Earlier models of history writing in India were deemed closer to hagiography or mythopoeic narratives endowing individuals with divine power. Indian legacy of historiography may be, arguably, a contribution of the western tradition. In the 17th to 18th centuries, westerners in lieu of their colonial activities began research in the interest of politics and economy. The base for colonial history writings was laid in the 18th and 19th Century in the tradition of the western historiography. Indian history writings internalized the contemporary popular western theories and methods. At that time many scholars supplied the world of knowledge with the information on cultural, traditional, philosophical way of life of the eastern countries. The Royal Asiatic society started by William Jones in 1784 was the

[21] Sen, 'History and the Enterprise of Knowledge', New Humanist.

[22] C. A. Bayly, 'Modern Indian Historiography', in *Companion to Historiography*, ed. Michael Bentley (London, 1997), 687.

first institutionalized form of such studies.[23] Two main sources of inspiration were behind such studies—one was the need of Imperialism and the other, the inspiration of the Romantic age. Mill's *History* is a prominent example of a work that studied Indian society with European Utilitarian and Liberal to suggest improvements to the Imperial officers involved with the governance and policy making. Liberal philosophy of the Age of Reason was an ideology modern political rule had to keep the interest of the majority and felt that history is the story of human society's progress and economic growth which can be used to create future in a scientific way. For them only the western world was civilized, and that it was the duty of Europe to bring other societies, like that of India, to the level of civilization.

Orientalist knowledge and construction of India was based on the Enlightenment discovery that Sanskrit was an Aryan language and its interest in Oriental Despotism as a mirror of the absolutism in the Europe (France). While the first led to development of Orientalist studies in India in the fields of linguistics, history, translation of Sanskrit literary master pieces and religious, and legal texts, making of dictionaries etc. put India in the centre stage culture and arts. The second discovery about despotism in India let Utilitarian thinkers to view everything Indian from a very rigid bias. James Mill's ferocious denunciation of the barbarities of Indian society in *History* (1817) pushed India out to the margins again. Fifty years later Sir Henry Maine's *Village Communities in East and West* (1871) initiated a discussion about the status of village, commune, and property right in historic civilizations which

[23] Peter Lambert and Phillipp Schofield, *Making History: An Introduction to the History and Practices of a Discipline* (Routledge, 2004).

drew upon some of the arcane lore of the Indian district officers. This description of India soon became its definition that fitted well in the model that utilitarianism had for India. Thus actions that were taking place in India had origin and focus in Europe.

Even Marx could not find a frame in his Eurocentric panorama for the Eastern cultures, particularly India. He despaired over the 'Other', and invoked the 'Asiatic' and 'colonial' modes of production to explain why India seemed different. But now that 'decentred discourses', 'thick description', 'cultural self-representation' have become the norm in the academy, particularly in America, India has come into its own again.[24] Indian historians were postmodernists before their time, though often unknowingly or unwillingly. For Hindus, time is supposed to have been 'fuzzy' or even 'cyclical'. History in its modern form, according to this view, came with the modern state or in India with the colonial state. These statements are dubious at best. Hindu India expressed its historical memory through legends and ballads, a true representation of popular constructions of the past. Yet even Hindu kingdoms had elaborate records, genealogies and annals which could be as precise as those found in other early modern societies.[25]

While the group of thinkers, in Britain who were dissatisfied with utilitarianism found new treasure in Indian literature. They found sympathy in the Romantic ideology, where human feelings were as much important as thought for pursuing the Truth. They gave an earnest call of "Back to Nature"

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[24] Bayly, in *Companion to Historiography* By Michael Bentley, 678

[25] William Crooke and James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, Or the Central and Western Rajput States of India Volume 2 - Primary Source Edition*, [1819] Reprint (Biblio Life, 2013), 1-3.

and looked at ancient cultures with a ray of hope. Some of the historians of the Romantic tradition played important role in building History of India. In 1784 Warren Hastings established Royal Asiatic Society. The main purpose of this society was to have clear understanding about social practices, law, religion and way of life of the ruled subjects. Asiatic Society became the platform to study and analyse history, science, arts, literature and culture of Asian countries. They believed that India was the “Cradle for Sublime” thoughts of human civilization.

The British devised several strategies to make their rule effective. The early British administrators in India like Warren Hastings, William Jones, Jonathan Duncan and others glorified India’s ancient past. These scholars and administrators were called orientalists. They thought that a better understanding of Indian languages, literature and culture would make it easier for them to rule India. Important institutions that came to be identified with their efforts were the Calcutta Madrasas founded by Warren Hastings (1781), the Asiatic Society of Bengal founded by William Jones (1784), the Sanskrit College at Banaras founded by Jonathan Duncan (1794) and the Fort William College founded by Wellesley (1800). These institutions, especially the Asiatic Society and the Fort William College became the epicentre of the study on Indian culture, languages and literature. For the first time great ancient Sanskrit writers like Kalidasa and Valmiki became known to the world through translation of their monumental work into English

There was a strong streak of Benthamite radicalism in the East India Company administration. James Mill became a senior company official in 1819 after writing his monumental history of India which showed a strong

contempt for Indian institutions. From 1831 to 1836 he was the chief executive officer of the E.I.C. and his son John Stuart Mill worked for the Company from 1823 to 1858. Malthus was professor of economics at Haileybury, and the teaching there for future company officials was strongly influenced by utilitarianism. Bentham himself was also consulted on the reform of Indian institutions. The utilitarians deliberately used India to try out experiments and ideas (e.g. competitive entry for the civil service) which they would have liked to apply in England. The utilitarians were strong supporters of *laissez-faire* and abhorred any kind of state interference to promote economic development.

The history of East India Company unfolded between two charters by two British queens: Elizabeth I had signed the charter forming the British East India Company in 1599, another queen, Victoria, signed it into extinction in 1858. However, circumstances would thwart these peaceful intentions, and over the next 250 years the British would find themselves more and more in the role of conquerors and governors than traders. Not only would the British have a profound effect on India's history, but the "crown jewel of the British Empire" would also affect Western Civilization. Ironically, its career had started with a group of merchants in search of nothing more than "quiet trade." For the next ninety years, direct British rule would prevail in India. It has been said that the British Empire was picked up in a "fit of absence of mind".[26]

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[26] Sir John Robert Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (Macmillan, 1883), 214.

While some governors, such as Warren Hastings (ruled 1778-88) were known for their tolerance of and willingness to learn about the native languages and cultures and to give Indians posts in their government. However, other governors, such as Lord Cornwallis (1788-98), reversed many of these tolerant policies and dismissed most native Indians from higher posts in the administration. Getting into the nineteenth century, tensions grew between two factions: one advocating tolerance and respect for Indian culture and another claiming the superiority of European civilization over that of India. This created a growing gap between the British and Indians that also fostered growing discontent. Two other developments in the 1800s led to growing unrest among Indians. One was the growing number of Christian missionaries coming to India to preach Christianity, which clashed with the more flexible beliefs of the Hindu majority and the strong beliefs of Indian Muslims. Secondly, the British were bringing in modern technology (especially railroads) and business methods, which disrupted the traditional, slower paced culture and economy of India.

The Company administration certainly required to know India better in order to control and contain the natives; with the Utilitarian supposition that a better knowledge would lead to a better understanding and, hence, smoother governance of India.[27] To this end Charter Acts were introduced in 1793.The Charter Acts issued to the East India Company endowed it with enormous Commercial privileges and later on endowed them with the powers to rule India. The Charter Acts opened the opportunity of the free overseas trades and at the same time it was a source of income for the Crown. To make the

[27] JSM 'On writing' quoted in Dutta, 70.

overseas business attractive to investors, the Crown granted monopoly rights to the British overseas maritime companies. The monopoly charter to a company meant that trading rights in its chartered territories were denied to other British private traders. The four Charter Acts issued between1793-1853 further empowered the East India Company and the commercial privileges of the Empire. Beginning from 1793, the EIC was required to present and get approval of their administrative policies, known as Charter acts, from the Parliament of Great Britain every twenty years.

The Charter Act of 1793 was an Act of the Parliament of Great Britain which renewed the charter issued to the British East India Company (EIC), and continued the Company's rule in India. The Act made only minimal changes to either the system of government in India or the British condoning of the Company's monopoly India, but only for twenty years. Although, ever since Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), there had been a gradual shift in British opinion away from the protectionist market to free trade principles.[28] Debates for free trade continued to grow into the nineteenth century as Company officials faced a tougher battle defending their monopoly every time they needed to renew their charter in the Parliament. The charter of 1813 had specified the Company to revise their original role and to a more political function. While they were able to convince Parliament to protect some of their commercial privileges for another twenty years, the voices opposing their monopoly were victorious and other enterprises were permitted to trade in India. In 1813, the Indian trade was opened up for other

[28] Adam Smith, *The Essential Adam Smith*, ed. Robert L. Heilbroner and Laurence Malone (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986), 6.

players also. Similarly, India was opened up for missionaries. This was, also at some level, both the cause and effect for the increasing evangelical influence. Marquis of Hastings was showed sympathy for learning Indian languages and even financially helped in the starting of Madrasas and Sanskrit school.

Partially the product of the high moral tone imposed by Edmund Burke on British activity in India, these officials within the Company sought to slowly incorporate Western ideals into the traditional framework of Eastern society and gradually improve India over time, but this process of cautious integration ultimately served as a transition into the bolder advances proposed by the burgeoning humanitarian reform movements. The movement to reform the subcontinent was essentially divided into a rationalist or utilitarian wing and a religious wing that shared some similar objectives, but had very different starting points. At the time of this charter renewal, the liberal movement did have some influence in this debate, but had not yet produced a vision for the proper handling of India. Most of the voices for utilitarianism had developed their ideologies and defended their reforms with only England in mind. It was not until James Mill published his *History of India* in 1817 that intellectual liberals possessed a fairly unified conception of India that included a strategy for accomplishing their goals.[29]

The Charter Act of 1833 re-designated the Governor-General of Bengal as the Governor-General of India; Lord William Bentinck being the first person to this position. The choice for Bentinck also signalled a victory of

[29] George D. Bearce, *British Attitudes towards India 1784-1858* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 69.

utilitarian ideology and its formal acceptance among the EIC directors. It ended the activities of the British East India Company as a commercial body and became a purely administrative body. In particular, the Company lost its monopoly on trade with China and other parts of the Far East. This Act deprived the Governors of Bombay and Madras of their legislative powers. The Governor-General used to enjoy exclusive legislative powers over entire British India. However, the act attempted to introduce a system of open competitions for the selection of civil servants. However, the Company retracted this provision following opposition from the Court of Directors who continued to hold the privilege of appointing Company officials. In addition to these, the act affected India the most was economy. It began the perpetual economic subordination of India to Britain. In the years succeeding 1840, on the political side a new all India government emerged, bearing a recognizable resemblance to its Mughal predecessor.[30] The British realized that as much as agriculture and textile, crafts too constituted a lion's share in India's prosperity. In order to promote the fledgling British textile industry and, at the same time, to arrest Indian textile traditions the British ruthlessly introduced steep increase in tax –as much as 300%–on Indian textiles.

Even before this period of economic colonialism, the British powers regarded India as a source of raw materials for its industries and a market for British goods. Thus, it was cause of much of criticism and resentment felt by the political minded classes in the twentieth century. The sovereignty of the Crown in India was announced in the Charter Act of 1833; the recognition of

[30] C. L. Moat, ed., *The New Cambridge Modern History: The Shifting Balance of World Forces1898-1945*, vol. XII (Cambridge University Press, 1968), 413-14

the Mughal imperial status was gradually whittled away.[31]One neglected aspect of western influence was the policy of public works. The 1833 Charter Act addressed infrastructure issue for strengthening of Indian administration. It quickened the public works begun by Lord Dalhousie who started with communications, followed by road building in 1818, and railways in 1853. This development is specially associated with Dalhousie. The first activity was that of communications. Road-building began systematically after 1818. Dalhousie completed the Grand Trunk Road to Peshawar. Lord Hardinge took the first steps towards introduction of the railways; but Lord Dalhousie had already planned them as a system. Equipped with the experience of grappling with the English railway boom of the 1840's, he set about planning them in India on a comprehensive scale. His integrated system of rail communication, which had incalculable consequences for India, received its support from Sir Charles Wood in London, whose Railway minute of 1853 became the basis for similar developments in the colonies. In the absence of good rivers outside Bengal and the northern plain, railways tended to provide a network of social and economic arteries which would pump life-blood in a new India.

Third form of public works was irrigation. The first step in this direction was the restoration of the Mughal and Tughluq Canal from the upper Jumna to Delhi in 1820. Major early works were the Grand Anicut, two miles across the river Cauvery in the south (1835-6) and the Ganges.[32] Dalhousie completed the Canal in 1854. His record was one of ceaseless activity: in

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[31] Ibid, 418

[32] Ibid, 422.

politics, annexations; insubstantial matters, public works --and irrigation. He created the Public Works Department in 1853 and contributed to world of ideas and for the western education. The British contributed to India's progress, but not without gaining their share back either as gifts or as bribes.

Often the officers would deposit the war booty they had collected, or gifts given by the native kings to the headquarters in Calcutta from where they were forwarded to the London office for preservation. In1798, the directors accepted the proposal for opening "a public repository in this country for Oriental writings". Warren Hastings described this initiative as a "new scheme for in grafting the knowledge of India on the commercial pursuits of the Company".[33] A former Company servant Charles Wilkins, a well-connected Sanskrit scholar and founding member of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta, was convinced that the Company's accumulation of useful knowledge should be housed as a Repository. He persistently advocated for establishing it as a tangible testimonial to the Company's collection of India's cultural wealth. He offered to "take charge, and give up my whole attention towards rendering it a monument of the taste, as well as of the munificence of its founders". In due course in 1801, the Company agreed to establish the 'Oriental Repository' for which he was selected as a librarian. Wilkins's vision was ambitious: he proposed that the Repository should house a wide range of natural history collections, as well as books and manuscripts. Thus, from the very beginning a considerable variety of materials and objects were brought under his guardianship in the Library and Museum. The collections were established by

[33] Desmond and Records, *The India Museum, 1801-1879*, 4–14.

gathering together printed books and “articles of curiosity” hitherto dispersed throughout East India House and the London warehouses.[34] In 1805, the Company’s charts, drawings, and maps were placed under Wilkins’s supervision. Thereafter, the Company continued to receive collections of miscellaneous items from overseas servants on a regular basis. The materials in the Library were used primarily to support the administrative work of the Company; however, they were also available as loan to orientalists and scholars. The Repository itself proved to be a popular attraction, drawing ‘immense crowds of visitors of all classes’. The India Museum in the East India Company premises in London[35] was founded in 1801 and, later, incorporated into the Victoria and Albert Museum.

As the British consolidated their control over India in the early nineteenth century, they began to assemble earlier case studies of particular industries into more systematic knowledge across the economy as a whole. Usually appearing as part of surveys of new territories, such information represented a broad effort to understand the inner workings of local communities[36]. Perhaps the most detailed effort was Francis Buchanan’s monumental survey of the Bengal Presidency conducted between 1807and 1814. Buchanan investigated the state of manufactures as one of his seven topics of inquiry, alongside topography, natural resources, the state of

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[34] Minutes of the Committee for superintending the Library, December 1801, MS Eur. 303, vol. 35.16July 1817; Thomas H. (Thomas Hosmer) Shepherd and James Elmes, *London and Its Environs in the Nineteenth Century : Illustrated by a Series of Views from Original Drawings* (London : Jones & Co., 1831), 44, http://archive.org/details/londonitsenviron00shep

[35] Desmond and Records, *The India Museum, 1801-1879*.

[36] Abigail McGowan, *Crafting a Nation in Colonial India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 25

agriculture, divisions within communities, religious habits, and commerce.[37] He attempted to situate individual crafts within local and regional economies, which was relatively unusual for a period in which Europeans tended to focus only on export-oriented industries. And yet, his study was both geographically confined and relatively idiosyncratic, unable to comment on production processes elsewhere or even to offer the same level of analysis to all crafts within that area. A regional expression of the totalizing drive for information visible in 1851, Buchanan's survey did not come close to the Great Exhibition's attempt to survey all of India's products, let alone collect them into a single display of India's material wealth.

Dr John Forbes Royle, an East India Company surgeon, was also interested in botany and manufacturing, and produced a report *On the Exhibition of Raw Products and Manufactured Articles from India* in 1849, as well as researching the cultivation and manufacture of cotton in India.[38]He commissioned several drawings and water colour paintings which are some of the first and the finest and visual records of the respective plant species. (Plate 12) On the Himalayan landscape shows a painting presenting typical Himalayan Mountains, where Royle worked as a medical doctor for the British government. It is a part of series of drawings illustrating his efforts to botanise the Himalayas. This drawing illustrates his effort to understand the geomorphology and study the potential of its terraces to grow tea. Royle had

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[37] Buchanan's survey was edited and published thirty years later by Montgomery Martin. See as *The History, Antiquities, Topography, and Statistics of Eastern India* (London: Wm. H. Allen & Co., 1838).

[38] B. B. Woodward, 'Royle, John Forbes (1798–1858)', rev. Mark Harrison, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2010 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24239, accessed 19 July 2012]

a background in zoology as well as botany. He started collecting specimens of rocks, minerals, fossils and seeds, from various parts of northern India. Being a doctor by training and a collector by hobby, Royle had a typical utilitarian approach: at once systematic and scientific. He was involved in many disciplines including pharmacy, making of medicines as well as experimenting with agricultural products of different climates and soil conditions. A botanist at core, he carried out several plant-hunting expeditions and made accurate drawings of the specimen found during these trips.

Later on, when he went back to England to work on the Great exhibition in 1851, he was appointed the commissioner of London for the exhibition for the Indian section. After the Great Exhibition, he was actively involved in creating the Museum of Ornamental Arts, with the intention of stimulating design reform in Britain.[39] There he realized for the first of its time, that his knowledge of classification in Botany was not only very useful in collecting specimens in Geology, it could also be profitably applied in collecting craft artifacts. Thus entirely a new possibility of collecting, classifying, preserving, displaying, marketing, and writing about crafts emerged. He was assisted by John Forbes Watson, in developing the museum. Royle did exceptional work of displaying India in the Great Exhibition and starting practically a new dimension not only in knowing India but also in constructing and exhibiting it at an international arena.

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[39] See, Lara Kriegel, *Grand Designs: Labor, Empire, and the Museum in Victorian Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). For background see, Jeffery A. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). Jeffery A. Auerbach and P. H. Hoffenberg, eds, *Britain, the Empire and the World at The Great Exhibition of 1851* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

Royle was actively involved in setting up a new India museum in London. In the beginning phase of this, Royle died after acute illness, and was succeeded by Watson. John Forbes Royle was recruited as a medical professional, but he quickly learnt other tasks and became a prolific collector of specimens of geologic, botanic, and insects as well as documented these while also doing novel experiments in agriculture and climatic studies in the Himalayas. Royle will be remembered the most for his innovations and contributions in the development of a new exhibition typology--Economic Geology and Natural history museums.

Great Exhibition

The Great Exhibition was held in London in 1851. It was the first and the biggest show to celebrate the currently developing commodity culture that put England and its colonies along with other countries under one giant glass roof. Designed by Joseph Paxton, the Crystal Palace as the structure was called, was made of iron and glass, its form derived from greenhouses and railway stations, with a reference to the shopping arcades of Paris and London; famous for their visible, linear framework or skeleton of iron held together stretches of transparent glass. It also employed architecture to connect men and their objects with the landscape, and the sky; opening the interior to the exterior and vice versa. The structure itself was a great exhibition as well as a grand theatre celebrating the artifacts displayed under its 100 feet high copula where the chorus of structures and visitors gathered in a simultaneous eruption of colour, music and festivity. (Plate 05)

Crystal Palace was spread over 26 acres using 550 tons of wrought iron, 3,500 tons of cast iron, 30 miles of gutters, 202 miles of sash bars, and over 600,000 feet of wooden flooring, and was enclosed in 900,000 feet of glass. England used about half its space; while the rest of the display area was dedicated to all the other nations involved. In the words of Asa Briggs: “In its impressive building and in the wide range of exhibits it offered on display, the Crystal Palace proclaimed triumphantly the visibility of human progress”.[40]As Isobel Armstrong[41] points out, Crystal Palace was an “encyclopaedic space” that exhibited artifacts, machineries, ethnographic displays, and natural history objects. It presented straight vistas of spaces filled with abundant exhibits crammed like ornamentation in a filigree, or floating in an enormous space like the gigantic machines carving out their own space under the huge volume of the transept. The horizontal views remind us of the Victorian obsession for *horror vacuii* and highly intricate surface embellishments, while the vertical views, zooming out of the ground actions, gently prompt us of the Gothic towers disappearing in the clouds (Plate 13, 14). Its majestic spell transformed visitors into performers and their experiences into a lyrical rhapsody.

Expositions inherited two traditions of collection and displays: the first was the private royal gallery with its tight security and extravaganza and the other was the panorama and its visually exaggerated narratives, accompanied with carnivals, puerile fun and a dash of the barbaric triumphant procession rolled into one. In other words, expositions integrate important modalities—

[40] Asa Briggs, Victorian People: A Reassessment of Persons and Themes, 1851-1867 [1975], 16.

[41] Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Glass-worlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination 1830-1880* (OUP Oxford, 2008), 146-147, 152.

observational and museological, collecting and enumeration. For Tony Bennett, the Crystal Palace was an emblem of the new complex of exhibitionary technology[42]that provided a far more comprehensive space for Cole's project. Beneath its glass canopy, was laid out the utopian space for exchange between artists and technocrats, merchants and the buyers, connoisseurs and aesthetes that Henry Cole (Plate 15) had envisioned in advance of the exhibition in the pages of the Journal of Design and Manufacture.[43] We can argue that the Great Exhibition spawned and perfected a novel medium in mass persuasion of the public is who is thus educated in the most practical way to appreciate excellence"[44]and advance their taste in design.

For many commentators, the Great Exhibition was a symbol of the vindication and a monumental celebration of the free trade spirit advocated so convincingly by Adam Smith. For the old faithful as well as the newly converts, Crystal Palace was a cathedral of free enterprise for "a world economy whose principal object was growth … an 'obvious and simple system of natural liberty'".[45] Just like the genius of Smith was in seeing beyond conservative orthodoxies which reified national boundaries at the expense of such a simple system, the genius of the Paxton was to manifest, rejoice, and propagate this

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[42] Tony Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', in *Representing the Nation: A Reader: Histories, Heritage and Museums*, ed. Jessica Evans and David Boswell (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 332–62.

[43] Henry Cole, 'Exhibition of British Manufactures at the Society of Arts', *Journal of Design and Manufacturers* 1, no. 2 (1849): 59–62.

[44] Ibid 59.

[45] Roberts Stephenson, *The Great Exhibition; Its Palace, And its Principal Contents with Notices of the Public Buildings of the Metropolis, Places of Amusement, etc.* (London: George Routledge and Co., 1851), pp. 13–14.

message in an amazing architectonic experience. It was a major achievement for the Prince Consort Albert, Henry Cole, and hundreds of commissioners from all over the world who worked tirelessly to realize his vision.[46] England was not only the proud host; it was showcasing London as a major player in the Global arena as an unrivalled capital of Industrial development and of the arts.

In his speech, Albert stated that he believed no one "will doubt for a moment that we are living at a period of most wonderful transition, which tends rapidly to accomplish that great era to which, indeed, all history points".[47]A one-page layout in *The Times*, featured for the mass the exact content of the palace[48] so that the visitors could figure out before they arrived what they would want to see. The western half of the building was to house only the achievements of Britain and her colonies while the eastern half of the building housed the foreign countries exhibits, everywhere from the United States to Russia. Over 14,000 exhibitors and 100,000 exhibits came from all around the world to show off their nation's achievements during the height of the Industrial Revolution, half of which came from either Britain or her colonies. Walking into the Great Exhibition was like entering another world unlike anything that existed previously. People could see things from countries such as India, Greece, Spain, Turkey, the United States, and

[46] Liza Picard, *Victorian London: The Life of a City 1840-1870* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2005), 214.

[47] Picard, *Victorian London: The Life of a City 1840-1870*.

[48] 'The Great Exhibition', *The Times*, 21 May 1851.

Russia. These were places which most people would never go to but they could get a feel for what those people deemed important.[49]

It would not be just to say that world fairs served only colonial regimes as that will require a bipolar thinking which generated colonialism in the first place. Cohn has clearly advised not to interpret the metropole and the colony individually, but together in a single analytic field. Breckenridge[50] at an early stage suggested a better frame to interpret late nineteenth-century world fairs as part of a unitary, though not uniform, landscape of discourse and practice through precisely such cultural technologies as the international exhibition. Such technologies created an *imagined ecumeme,* in a similar way that Benedict Anderson[51] talked about print media creating imagined communities underlying the nation-state. Breckenridge calls this the "Victorian Ecumene" that encompassed Great Britain, the United States, and India (along with other places) in a discursive space that was global, while nurturing nation-states that were culturally highly specific. The Indian pavilion in the Crystal Palace was like an Oriental repository, effectively a 'wonder cabinet' that housed captioned objects that narrated them visually, conceptually, or theoretically.[52] Minimally labelled and uncluttered by such modem devices like classification systems, selective thematic displays, and retrieval concerns, such cabinets and repositories represented an eclectic aesthetic of mercantilism soon to be displaced by one of imperialism in which collecting as

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[49] *The Crystal Palace Exhibition*, xxv.

[50] Breckenridge, 'The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting', 202.

[51] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.

[52] Among others see, Bunn Mullaney (1983) quoted in Breckenridge, 'The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting'.

a sign of connoisseurship, and hence, of control. Value in wonder was derived less from an object's aesthetic associations, and more from uniqueness that was the product of its decontextualized presentation.[53]

In this chapter we saw how collecting and display of objects are connected with war trophy and the victory carnival. The meaning of objects changes the moment they are severed from their contexts, labelled, categorized, narrated etc. We also had a cursory look at the Great Exhibition and how India was featured prominently there. In the next chapter, we will deal with the relationship between objects and people and the phenomenon of collecting as an interface between two. We will also look at how the British administration tried to make collection systematic and orderly; virtually reinventing it by devising design policies.

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[53] Breckenridge, 'The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting', 199

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