

**Performing Britishness: The Emergence of British Colonial Club Culture in Colonial
Calcutta**

By
Manamee Guha
B.A., Loreto College, Kolkata (2004)
M.A., Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (2006)

THESIS
Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History
In the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Chicago, 2019

Chicago, Illinois

Defense Committee:

Rama Mantena, Chair and Advisor
Mark Liechty, Anthropology and History
James Sack, History
Laura Hostetler, History
Benjamin Cohen, University of Utah

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SUMMARY

This dissertation examines British elite clubs, their genesis and formation in London, and the specific purpose they came to play in Great Britain's colonial missions. The dissertation uses clubbability as a unique characteristic feature that enriches current identity of Britishness, especially its colonial facets. I start out by tracing the genesis of an elite club culture in London that came about at a time when there emerged a thriving commercial class of men who valued their privacy as a status symbol.

During the 19th century, at a time when British interests in the Indian sub-continent was evolving from a mere economic body to a more structured, formalized political body, it needed the right men to run the empire. The creation of Haileybury College where boys chosen to be part of the British empire in the Indian sub-continent were trained in a certain form of Britishness that predicated on clubbability and sociability as necessary skills to create and cement differences between the various groups of British men and the Indians. The exclusive practices of clubbability practiced and perfected at Haileybury was continued as a part of the ICS ethos among the men that came after the Haileybury graduates, known as the competition wallahs.

The tradition of of clubbability and sociability continued its journey from London and was institutionalized in colonial Calcutta's clubland in the formation of certain elite British clubs in Calcutta. My dissertation examines in detail the creation of the clubbable British in London, proliferation of Britishness through clubbability in colonial Calcutta, and the return of this particular colonial form of Britishness back to London once the men of the empire returned home. The return of this colonial Britishness and its presence in London through the formation of certain colonial clubs, once again reflecting on the importance of exploring the colonial nature of Britishness.

By charting the genesis and propagation of exclusive clubbability and Britishness from London to Calcutta back to London, my aim has been to show the cross currents of influences that went from the metropole to the colonial state back to the city where the culture of clubbability was created. The webs of influence that connects London and Calcutta studied through the acts of clubbability that spoke to what British colonialism stood for, shows how micro histories of men, their daily practices, make the legacy of empire a study of interconnected histories that deeply influenced lives both of the colonizers and the colonized.

INTRODUCTION

What is this dissertation about? (Context and Contribution):

This dissertation closely examines how Britishness as an identity was forged in the process of consolidating rule over the Indian sub-continent within the exclusive elite clubs that served mostly selected members of the British community residing in Calcutta. The examination of British colonial club culture, its formation in England, its successful operation and execution in colonial Calcutta, and its return back to London foregrounds a unique facet of colonialism not studied in as much detail: that institutions like the club, which were unique in the fact that they are atypically British institutions, foreshadows more about the abundant network of connections that were formed between the colonial state and the metropole. The atypical nature of British clubland has been aptly described by British historian Joseph Hatton. In his analysis, British elite clubs were unique in the sense that,

“...in no city in Europe or America are these organizations administered on such strict principles as are deemed necessary in Great Britain. An Englishman’s club for the time being is his private house. The members represent his family and friends...Whereas in America a visitor properly introduced has the full run of a club, in England he is essentially a stranger. The election of members is conducted upon the most exacting principles, and candidates are sometimes not elected until many years after they are proposed.”¹

The atypical feature of British elite clubs was its exclusivity. Admission into the clubs had less to do with the ability to pay the subscription fee and more to do with the position and status the aspiring member enjoyed in genteel British society. British elite clubs were atypical in their contribution to shaping the identity of British society and its men in ways that is unsurpassable in any other social institution across the world. In comparing the little influence that coffeehouses exercised over the elite clubs, Tom Girtin observes,

“...the clubs of London have a very decided influence on the state of society and on the interests of hotels and taverns. These once flourishing resorts of men in the upper-grades of society have been abandoned for the club-houses where the advantages of co-operation have been so conspicuously displayed...”²

¹ Joseph Hatton, *Clubland: London and Provincial*, (JS Virtue and Co., London, 1890), pg. iii

² Tom Girtin, *The Abominable Clubman* (Hutchinson and Co., London, 1964), pg. 111

British clubs, an exclusive space that thrived on maintaining privacy and restricted access, manage to complicate the dominant narrative of colonial historiography that understands the colonial dynamic as just the colonizer influencing the colonized. The study of the British club uncovers the deep network of connection developed and formed between the two cultures. The study of club culture shows that the study of empire should be a transnational one, not restricted by geographical borders and boundaries, that has the ability to cut across distinct cultural zones. The study of clubs is also reflective of another oft less marginalized facet of colonialism: that it was as much a cultural phenomenon as it was one of economic prosperity and military acquisition.

Colonialism and Clubbability:

Through examining the scope of clubbability, I argue that Britishness was not an identity that remained static over time, but was constituted within particular historical contexts and local milieus. Etymologically, clubbability, a descriptive word as a marker of identity has undergone many changes in British social historiography over time. The literal definition of the word club as postulated by John Aubrey in found its most relevant use in the beginning of the 19th century.

Writing in 1658, Aubrey wrote,

“...etymologically the word “club” claims descent from the Anglo-Saxon *cleofian*, meaning cleave, which again has the double significance of to split or divide and to adhere, at once expressive of the connection between the ideas of a division of the reckoning among those present, and an adherence or union arising from a community of interests.”³

While etymologically the word club signified a cleave and divide, the word clubbability spoke more about the changing political and social climate of Britain after the end of the English Revolution of 1640. Clubbability became synonymous with sociability that was reflective of the

³ Andrew Clark ed., *Brief Lives, Chiefly of Contemporaries Set Down by John Aubrey Between the Years 1669-1696* (Volume II), (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1898), pg. 55

changing atmosphere in Great Britain that impacted both British domestic policies as well as its overseas ambitions. According to historian Valérie Capdeville,

“...Clubbability is a quality or attribute which is intrinsically linked to the emergence and success of gentlemen’s clubs in the eighteenth century and, as such, corresponds to a significant shift, a ‘revolution’ in meaning and social practices.”⁴

In his work on British clubs, Peter Clark reiterates the close connection between clubbability, sociability and its intrinsic connection to British society. According to him, the progressive development of British club culture in London in the mid to late 18th century offers a new and innovative perspective to identify the changing dynamics of British associational culture in the changing social, cultural and political landscape of the country.⁵ In the 18th century the birth of a flourishing press, the creation of political parties, the rise of an active public sphere and more importantly the advent of a powerful merchant class in Britain, courtesy the expansion of global trade and significant changes in the way men socialized in London made clubbability an essential part of the identity of an educated, urban British man residing in London.

Further, Mrinalini Sinha and Benjamin Cohen’s works on British clubs in colonial India brings to the forefront how closely the ties between clubbability, colonialism and Britishness adds a complex layer to the British man’s identity. While Sinha’s article examines how the clubs functioned as an identity marker for British men serving in the colonial state she also examines these atypical British institutions and the clubbability they practiced as a contributing factor in the “...constitution of a distinctive colonial sphere.”⁶ Benjamin Cohen’s important work takes on the challenge of chronicling the history of clubs in colonial India and examines its practices in an

⁴ Valérie Capdeville, “Clubbability: A Revolution in London Sociability?” in *Lumen* (Volume 35, March 2016), pg. 63-80

⁵ Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of An Associational World*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2000). Also, Peter Clark, *Sociability and Urbanity: Clubs and Societies in the Eighteenth Century Society* (University of Leicester Press, Leicester, 1986)

⁶ Mrinalini Sinha, “Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India”, in *Journal of British Studies* (Volume 40:4, October 2001), pg. 489-521

overarching manner, which highlights how clubs were “...not excrescences in colonial life” but, “...important tools in shaping India’s political and public life.”⁷ The book intimately explores how the infrastructure of a club functioned in all its various facets, from the food they served, the rules they followed and to how clubs were financed. His monograph adds a complex dimension to the historiography of how imperialism was successfully implemented in India: through a broad-based study of the inimitable clubs established in colonial India, whether they were purely British ones, mixed-race ones or gender specific ones. While the aforementioned two works do an excellent job of making a rich contribution to the social and public historiography of colonialism in South Asia through the study of British clubs in colonial India, my research will narrow the analysis of studying British clubs specifically in colonial Calcutta.

Significance of Calcutta:

Calcutta can be studied as the perfect location where British men could practice Britishness, clubbability to cement an identity of power, superiority, isolation and exclusivity. Britain’s preoccupation with Calcutta as a port city for trading interests had begun as early as the early 17th century. The city is of significant importance in the history of how British colonialism gained a foothold and thereafter consolidated their power over the Indian sub-continent for more than two hundred years. Calcutta came to symbolize on its self how British rule in India transformed and changes in the attitude of British rule in India was reflected in the various infrastructural and architectural changes in the city’s landscape. Describing this close symbiotic tie that existed between Calcutta and the British rule, historian Raja Binaya Krishna Deb said,

“...The healthy example of British energy, British farsightedness, pluck and perseverance, is indelibly written upon the history of Calcutta. It is unquestionable that by British statesmanship, courage and

⁷ Benjamin Cohen, *In The Club: Associational Life in Colonial South Asia*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2015), pg. 15

firmness, England has been able to secure for herself her great Indian Empire here, in Calcutta, events of momentous consequence have been enacted, which form an important chapter in the history of the world.”⁸

Partha Chatterjee’s seminal work *The Black Hole of Empire* focuses on a close study of colonial Bengal, especially Calcutta. Calcutta serves as a backdrop for his main argument that centers around the key role the city plays in shaping the way European imperialism was being practiced upon the city. Chatterjee’s narrative takes off during the immediate aftermath of the infamous black hole incident of 1757 where he convincingly shows that incidents of chaos and conflicts in Calcutta can be directly linked back to the changing global norms and practices of modern European imperialism in the local history of Calcutta. The most compelling argument in Chatterjee’s work is this: that the business of running the empire was more than just theorizing about it; he clearly demonstrates how the theories of running the empire were implemented in daily practices. According to him, the accounts of the daily actors and institutions of the empire on the ground tell a more convincing account of the empire that shows the intricacies and the insecurities that go hand in hand with empire building. Chatterjee uses various examples like the Bengali theatre, the emergence of football clubs spearheaded by native Bengalis and the birth of a vibrant vernacular press to argue that, “...actual practices of empire as engaged in by local people in real time calls attention to the irreducible contingency of historical events that can never fully be encompassed by conceptual abstractions...”⁹

My own study of clubs follows a similar analytical study of empire building to that which Chatterjee lays out in *The Black Hole of Empire*. While the study of empire can be theorized about plenty, it is how imperial rule was established, practiced and performed on a daily basis

⁸ Raja Binaya Krishna Deb, *The Early History and Growth of Calcutta*, (Romes Chandra Ghose, Grey Street, Calcutta, 1905), pg. 3

⁹ Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2012), pg. 10

that is more reflective about what the rule of imperialism was all about. The study of clubs in this regard highlights the nebulous nature of empire building and calls into question how the men of the empire on the ground reacted and responded to the contingency of historical events. Partha Chatterjee poses a question in *The Black Hole* that asks, "...whether the company's acquisitions should be regarded as a "mercantile purchase or acquired by mutual bargain and reciprocal treaty or the fruit of arms and of terms imposed by conquerors through the terror or military force and coercion over a naked and defenseless possessor and inhabitants?"¹⁰ My own study of British elite clubs in Calcutta would show that this institution was a necessary by product of the terms of Britishness being imposed by the colonizers on the natives, but not one that was immune to the influences of the colonized natives. The force that was used as a justification for allowing some to be clubbable over others was less about exercising brute force, and more about creating rules that would exclude the majority as being clubbable. This would leave only a handful of men who were allowed to practice and perform Britishness in Calcutta's British clubland that would project them as the rightful rulers of the Indian sub-continent.

My research studies the formation of Britishness, specifically a colonial kind, an identity that was paramount to Great Britain's imperial ambitions through the act of clubbing. Clubbability and Britishness as mutually dependent identities that informed Great Britain's superiority as a colonizing power is not an aspect that has been explored thoroughly in either current social historiography of English history or in the history of colonialism. The most impactful book about gentlemanliness, clubbability and its influence on Victorian London society has been Amy Milne-Smith's *London Clubland: A Cultural History of Gender and Class in Late-Victorian Britain*. The book explores the enclave of clubland in West End that became

¹⁰ Ibid, pg. 44

the refuge of a new breed of British gentlemen who formed themselves into an exclusive society based on their ability to club. This society for Milne-Smith,

“...comprised a core group with a uniform standard of wealth, education and parentage, and yet there were always those who through talent or vast wealth were able to attach themselves to Society and mimic its lifestyle. For the gentleman this meant having well-connected friends, hunting, following the races, holding a respectable job, and of course, belonging to a gentleman’s club.”¹¹

Milne-Smith does a commendable job of studying how the clubs provided a safe haven for its members to exchange information, gamble, network and unwind, confident in the knowledge that they remain safe from prying eyes. Further, Milne-Smith describes the way memberships granted and blackballing of existing members in London’s most prominent clubs served as markers of who occupied the highest echelons in London society, that further informs existing British historiography that examines the ever-changing nature of British society during its most economic and political changes. Yet, one significant area remains unexamined in Milne-Smith’s research: how Great Britain’s identity as the leading imperial power further influenced the ever-changing Victorian British society, and it is this gap that I intend to fill through my own research.

Britishness and Colonialism:

Britishness in all its various facets has not been sufficiently explored. The typified Britishness I want to explore is immensely influenced by Britain’s colonial ambitions. This Britishness is more complex than the one that has been understood so far as being merely Protestant and non-French. The colonized form of Britishness incorporates within itself social and cultural characteristics like class status, military prowess, dignified conduct, and, the ability to practice these characteristics in public with the utmost respect and prestige. While British identity or

¹¹ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland: A Cultural History of Gender and Class in late- Victorian Britain*, (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011), pg. 38

Britishness, the term coined by Linda Colley, has been explored in all its facets, the influence of Britain's colonial enterprises on her identity has not been explored adequately.

According to Peter Sahlin, national identity is defined by, "the social or territorial boundaries drawn to distinguish the collective self and its implicit negation, the other,"¹² rather than by finding similarities between disparate groups, like language or cultural overlaps. For Linda Colley essentializing differences between groups is an effective means to understand the forging of a British identity. Historians prior to her, such as J.G.A. Pocock, had read the creation of a British identity as being made up of the affinities of the four nations of Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England with the sole addition of Britain's white settler colonies added to the list of four. For Linda Colley, Britishness as an identity was forged not because it was easy to overlook the dissimilarities between the four nations. According to her, the national identity of Britishness was forged between the four nations, albeit resting unsteadily, because of close economic ties and the proliferation of print and communications between the four nations. The economic and social exchanges between the four nations was driven by the advent of free trade. She further states that the identity of Britishness was further consolidated when "...a series of massive wars between 1689 and 1815 allowed its diverse inhabitants to focus on what they had in common...and that forged an overseas empire from which all parts of Britain could secure real as well as psychic profits."¹³ Britishness for Colley was an artificially constructed identity that witnessed some success because of Britain's growing preoccupation with France in the battlefield. It was against Catholic France that the concept of Britishness gained momentum, because of Britain's concern over protecting Protestantism. In the early 18th century, Colley

¹² Peter Sahlin, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain In The Pyrenees*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1991), pg. 270-271

¹³ Linda Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument' in *Journal of British Studies* (Volume 31, No.4, October 1992: Britishness and Europeanness: Who are the British Anyway?), pp. 316

contends that Britishness was built on the twin foundations of Protestantism and trade. Protestantism became the common factor that brought these nations together-except for Ireland, which became the focus of a crusade against the French Catholic other. Britain's growing interest in trade and reliance on the multiple market exchange is one phenomenon that Colley argues touched each and every citizen who was in either a direct or an indirect way connected to the growing mercantilist identity that Britain was starting to forge for itself.

Linda Colley establishes that Britain's ambitious interest in the market exchange was a way that Britishness was forged because of similar economic interests shared between the four nations. Yet, it does not address the central role that Britain's colonial ambitions played helping Britain transform into a mercantilist economy. Just as Britain's colonized nations' contributions to the transformation of its economy has not been adequately addressed, the crucial way in which the transformed economy's impact on Britain's social order has also not been addressed. Colley's understanding of Britishness as an overarching nationalism also glosses over the social conflicts and aggressions E.P. Thompson had detected in the social relations between the different classes, not all of who stood to benefit from Britain's mercantile ambitions. She does not address the role of class struggle in the formation, or deformation, of Britishness that was the crux of the thesis of E.P. Thompson's work, *The Making of the English Working Class*. Juxtaposing the works of Thompson and Colley, historian Theodore Koditschek says that Colley's work has managed to, "...arrest the Thompsonian trajectory of class formation...and the impending specter of class struggle has been forestalled."¹⁴ Whether it is in the understanding of the impact of colonial endeavors of Britain on its own identity or whether it be to

¹⁴ Theodore Koditschek, 'The Making of British Nationality' in *Victorian Studies* (Volume 44, No. 3, Spring 2002), pp. 390

acknowledge Britain's internal discord amongst the classes, for the Colleyite historian everything can be directed towards the 130 year war of Britain against Catholic France.

My research and dissertation registers a departure from this monolithic understanding of Britishness that keeps its focus on its European endeavors alone. Rather, my research examines in-depth how the Thompsonian class formation, specifically as it emerged in Britain's colonial enterprise in India, adds valuable insight into the formation of Britishness. Britishness was more than just about a religious and a national identity with its economic interests in the periphery. My work will bring back into focus how Britain's mercantile ambitions, especially in India, spearheaded a change in the way they saw themselves and, more importantly, how they wanted to be perceived and looked upon as a colonial power. This contrived image included military prowess, gentlemanliness, avid hunting abilities, expert sportsmen, the ability to remain disciplined and to maintain decorum in a public setting. These characteristics were closely tied with class identities because not every Briton was considered fit to perform these character tropes. It is here that I argue that these symbolic features of Britishness that had a lot to do with the image that certain British men were trying to construct in the colonies, and specifically in the clubs, is more important to add to the existing understanding of Britishness.

My dissertation examines how Britishness and British methods of clubbability were informed, inspired and influenced by their experiences in colonial Calcutta. It is one thing to theorize about how Britishness as a distinct identity marker should be practiced in the colony, but the on-the-ground reality of the men of the empire compelled them to reimagine Britishness at various times. C.A. Bayly brings up this issue in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*. According to him, "...the imperial history of the future will have to take seriously the question of how far, and in what ways, the Imperial experience contributed to the making of national identity

and regional identities in the British Isles itself.”¹⁵ As my dissertation elucidates, by the early nineteenth century, Britishness as an identity had as much to do with its identity as a colonial power as it had to do with Protestantism. It was in preparation for its colonial mission that Britishness used class and profession as makers of distinction, or rather as Colley might have put it, created an otherness as opposed to colonial Britishness.

The contrived image of Britishness was not just driven by the need to rule, it was driven by the need to be seen in a certain superior light that would provide the legitimacy to rule—both in their own eyes, and in those of others. For example, the creation of a hyper-masculine, Anglophile, colonizer identity of Britishness in Calcutta’s clubland was more of a concern in the colonial setting rather than in the metropole. Without the colonial experience of Britishness as formed in Calcutta’s clubland, Britishness would otherwise have continued to be a Euro-centric identity as identified by Linda Colley. David Cannadine’s *Ornamentalism: How The British Saw Their Empire*, addresses how Britishness came to be redefined and formulated in the colonial context. His work adds a layer of complexity to the understanding of the identity of Britishness. Cannadine argues for analyzing modern British society in terms of complex, 'layered, interlocking' hierarchies instead of examining divisions determined by economic or class factors. Extending this argument to Britain’s colonial encounters, Cannadine is reluctant to reduce the divide between the colonizers and colonized as a simple binary exercise based on race alone. As the colonizing power, they did more than just construct a generic other against which they defined themselves. In particular, they did not use denigration of “...enervated, hierarchical, corporatist, backward Africans or Asians to highlight a dynamic, individualistic, egalitarian,

¹⁵ C.A. Bayly, 'The Second British Empire' in Robin W. Winks ed. *The Oxford History Of The British Empire*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999), pp. 71

modernizing Britain.”¹⁶ In looking at the complex hierarchies that existed in the British empire and influenced the way imperial strategies were formed and implemented, both in London and colonial Calcutta, I show how this dynamic, individualistic and hierarchical British society transformed under the colonial influence. While I am in some agreement with Cannadine’s basic premise, I register my disagreement with the subtitle of his book: *How The British Saw Their Empire*. The practices of colonial Britishness were very much concerned with how the empire, and the rest of the world, saw them too.

Britishness: Creating an identity of difference:

Thus far I have discussed the creation and proliferation of colonial Britishness from the perspective of the class and status that certain Britons enjoyed more than their lesser fortunate brethren. Another crucial influence that historians like David Cannadine do not acknowledge is the role that the native Indians, or rather the Bengalis played in compelling the British to contrive the clubbable form of Britishness. The work of two eminent historians come to mind who have carefully laid out how the way the British perceived the natives helped them shape an identity for themselves that would set them as far apart from the natives as possible, thus cementing the divide of the colonizer and colonized. Both these works look specifically at the creation of a hyper-masculine British identity that propelled them to legitimize their rule over the Indian subcontinent. The important work on this subject has been Mrinalini Sinha’s *Colonial Masculinity: The ‘Manly’ Englishman and the ‘Effeminate’ Bengali in the late 19th century*. The book essentially looks at the British efforts to create a masculine identity and the controversies surrounding it through three landmark moments and events in South Asia’s colonial history: the native volunteer movement, the Public Service Commission and the 1891 Age of Consent Bill.

¹⁶ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How Britain Saw Their Empire* (Allen Lane, London, 2001), pp. 4

An essential contribution of this book has been to examine how the British and the Bengali men defined the terms of colonial masculinity in relation to one another, and further, how colonial masculinity had been defined vis-à-vis notions of colonial femininity too. The work is of interest to me because it pits the native Bengali in a pivotal role that compelled the British man to redefine what it meant to be a manly Englishman.

While Sinha's work closely examines how the British reacted to native ideas of masculinity by constructing their own version of masculinity as response, Heather Streets' work further examines the connections between knowledge and imperial authority in the creation of the masculine martial race in the immediate aftermath of the 1857 rebellion. In a bid to complicate the binary understanding of race and gender, Streets argues that immediately after the rebellion of 1857, gendered language of martial race theories entered the common parlance and these beliefs were increasingly naturalized at home in Britain too.¹⁷ Much like the inclusion of communities like the Gurkhas and the Sikhs complicated the Euro-specific understanding of a hyper masculine martial race of fighters and war heroes, so do I argue, that the identity of clubbability too complicates the simple binary understanding of race, and of the simple divide between colonizer and colonized. My work shows that clubbability was an identity marker that was open to interpretation and was susceptible to changes in the way British imperialism was being practiced on the ground. While one of the cornerstone features of British clubland is racial exclusivity, as Calcutta's clubland will demonstrate, this was susceptible to change. As the relationship between the two communities (British and Bengalis) remained tenuous, there were moments of uncomfortable yet necessary alliances that were formed, that was well reflected in

¹⁷ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture 1857-1914*. (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2004)

the occasional exceptions made to allow certain carefully selected Indian members to be allowed into these clubs during special occasions.

Why Clubs?:

The study of clubs is an interesting one. Throughout this dissertation my attempt has been to trace and illustrate the connection between British clubland and the changing nature of colonial rule as shaped in Calcutta and the mutual ways the two influenced one another. Through a close study of particular clubs, in both Calcutta and London, I have drawn a close network of social, political, intellectual and moral characteristics exhibited in the clubs that were reflective and symbolic of the changing political and social climate outside of the club. Similarly, the institutionalizing of certain clubs with a particular clientele in mind was reflective of the changing priorities of the British Empire. Clubs serve as a unique representation of how any national identity came to be shaped. This is especially true for Great Britain especially during the Georgian Era (1714-1837) and Victorian Era (1837-1901) where its identity as an imperial power was as significant as its identity as an European power was. According to Peter Clark, "...clubs and societies may have served as a vector for new ideas, new values, new kinds of social alignment, and forms of national, regional and local identity."¹⁸ To Clark's pre-existing categories of national and regional I want to add the category of international to consider how Britain's imperial impact can be understood in novel and unique ways through a close analysis of its club culture established both in London and in Calcutta. It is not just the national identities that are well represented and exhibited in British clubland. The finer categories of a social

¹⁸ Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of An Associational World*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2000). Also, Peter Clark, *Sociability and Urbanity: Clubs and Societies in the Eighteenth Century Society* (University of Leicester Press, Leicester, 1986), pg. ix

identity are also well reflected in the practices of British club culture. In her study of club culture in Victorian England, Milne-Smith argues that,

“...clubs were relevant to a much broader spectrum of the population than their members alone, and the club is an entry point into larger issues of class, gender and social life in Britain.”¹⁹

My dissertation examines how the issues of class and social life were especially dealt in Calcutta's British clubland which I argue, unlike Milne Smith, was driven by its own colonial ambitions.

New Imperial History:

Kathleen Wilson succinctly defines the contribution of New Imperial History which “...has demonstrated that the ‘local’ and ‘global’ have been difficult to disentangle since 1492.”²⁰ For New Imperial Historians the colony and the metropole should belong in the same historiographical field. I draw from and have been inspired by the works of literary theorists like Edward Said, anthropologist Anne Stoler, and postcolonial and historians of gender like Durba Ghosh and Tony Ballantyne, who have all contributed to this growing historiography.²¹ New

¹⁹ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland: A Cultural History of Gender and Class in late-Victorian Britain*, (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011), pg. 2

²⁰ Kathleen Wilson ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire 1660-1840* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004), pg. 2

²¹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Vintage Press, 1994) In this work, Said explores the overall connection between the literature of imperialist and colonial cultures. In this work he asserts that the relationship between imperialism and culture is interdependent, one arising from other as a form of control. By exploring the literary works of both colonizer and colonized cultures, Said uses a literary lens discussing classical narrative fiction of Jane Austen and Rudyard Kipling to consider the cultural impact of imperialism on both the colonizers and the colonized. Frederick Cooper and Laura Ann Stoler ed. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (University of California Press, California, 1997). This edited volume made up of 18 essays explores that just as European states weren't self-contained identities, similarly European colonies were never empty spaces to be made over in Europe's images or fashioned in its interest. The anthology delves into the connection between rule and knowledge, and how the colonizers created categories and classifications for effective ruling. Durba Ghosh's, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006) exemplifies the ways in which gendered analysis can illuminate the interfaces between the worlds of the family and politics and add considerable depth to our understanding of how cultural difference was imagined and ordered. Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2002) explores the study of empires as a spider's web which helps to take us beyond the metropolitan focused imperial history or histories of individual colonies in order to foreground the relational nature of the empire. His

Imperial Historians do not stop at examining how ideologies of superiority was ingrained into the minds of British culture at 'home' rather this historiography seeks to find ways in which the colonized society influenced the way the colonizers thought of themselves, and opens up a conceptual space in which to examine the possibility of reciprocity in British interaction with her colonies.

The concern of previous imperial historiography was to focus on military, political, and economic histories, assigning very little importance to the role of culture. For New Imperial Historians, the economic and political machinations of empire building and sustaining is a given. They are more interested in unearthing everyday stories and experiences of the people who were a part of the empire, both as colonizing power and as colonized subjects. The New Imperial Historian's main concern is to study the turbulence that went into empire building. Whether it is to examine the reformulation of a masculine identity or interactions between a European master and his native consort, for the New Imperial Historians it is the micro histories that need to be studied in context to unearth larger history of colonialism that is full of conflicts, negotiations and re-thinking of old identities. As Antoinette Burton puts it,

"Imperial history at whatever scale must do more than to admit to fragility or tensions of empire. It must account for the ordinary actors, every day practices...that made uncertainty the standard experience, rather than the exception that made the rule."²²

Although Burton speaks here in the context of subaltern stories of the empire that highlight the everyday chasms that ensued between different heterogeneous groups within empire, her highlighting of the importance of human stories is of paramount importance to me.

model of the spider web allows for a more nuanced understanding of the circulation of colonial ideas and concepts: as a crisscrossing between multiples nodes of the empire that occupied varied positions in relation to one another.

²² Antoinette Burton, *The Trouble With Empire* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015), pp. 5

My dissertation on the study of clubs and Britishness continues in the tradition laid out by the New Imperial Histories. It foregrounds the struggles and tensions that went into formulating the identity of colonial Britishness while contending with various threats at the same time. Colonial Britishness was an identity that came into being under threat from competing variations of Britishness. The space of the club becomes crucial because it provided elite British men who derived their livelihood and identity from the administration of empire a safe space where their performance of Britishness could continue uninterrupted. Even so, Britishness even in its existence in Calcutta for a little over 200 years went through various changes and transformation where this particularistic elite form of colonial Britishness had to compete with new threats to its legitimacy.

Boredom was another issue that the British empire had to contend with it once its officers started to live their lives in Calcutta. As much as the British elite club served a purpose for the practitioners of Britishness to provide them with a hallowed and sanctified space for socialization, the club was also a solution to another problem that would plague any of the British settler colonies. With very few options to allow the British officers to be occupied after a day's work meant they would be susceptible to licentious and immoral influences. Describing what boredom would compel these officers to do, W.H. Carey concludes,

“At many stations, the officers of the regiment were the only Europeans to be met with, and the want of society at such places, caused time not only, in fact, to drag heavily, but it was so much felt, that many fell into the grosser habits of drinking, in order to create excitement for a time, which, once commenced, required to be continued, and thus too often brought many a brave fellow, who in more active service would have been an honor to his country and friends, to an untimely grave, perhaps, by the hand of the duelist, the sad result of an intemperate brawl.”²³

The presence of British elite clubs in Calcutta ensured that sheer boredom did not allow the otherwise brave soldiers to fall prey to bad habits like excessive alcoholism or unnecessary

²³ W.H. Carey, *The Good Old Days of Honorable John Company: Being Curious Reminiscences During the rule of the East India Company from 1600 to 1858*, (Quins Book Company, Calcutta, 1882), pg. 191

brawls. One of the reasons it was important for the clubs to exist was to reign in the British officers and to provide them with a structured and disciplined environment where Britishness could be practiced unhindered and unthreatened by the wily ways of the outside world.

In keeping with the approach set out by the New Imperial Histories, the primary focus of my work is identity formation. New Imperial Historians see nations not as primordial entities existing from the remote ages, but as imagined constructions constantly being reimagined with shifts of power. Similarly, I see Britishness and clubbability as part of a colonized British trope that existed to justify and earn the British their position as the most able rulers of the Indian sub-continent. The reality of Britishness and clubbability existed because it was practiced and imposed, either directly or indirectly, on the inhabitants of colonial Bengal. Yet, while the identity I have chosen to study is an elite one, it is not to say it wasn't vulnerable to criticism. In focusing on identity formation, the threats to it and the identity's constant reformulation, I aim to do something more. I do not see the colonial form of Britishness as existing only in the colonial state and losing its relevance once it moves back to the metropole. I see the colonized version of Britishness remaining relevant even in the metropole, just as New Imperial Historians have opined that colonialism had impacted the colonizer as much as the colonized.

Transnational historians tend to remain most engaged with the interaction and circulation of ideas, people, and institutions. Such historians want to do away with the spatial framework of the colonizing country staying an ocean or two away from the colonized state, thus, limiting the interactions between the two. For transnational historians, it has been more important to understand the actors and characters of the empire in order to understand identity formations. As I demonstrate in Chapter Five, certain club histories reveal the complexities of imperial networks that were unconstrained by the formal boundaries of the national homeland and the official

channels that ran between them. For instance, the act of clubbability, specifically the colonial kind, did not end for its practitioners once they returned to London. The fact that elite colonial officers were not welcomed back into London's existing clubland is telling: it reveals the discord in what is oft understood as a unified understanding of Britishness, especially among the elite. However, the colonial clubbable man needed to find his own space where he could practice the colonial form of Britishness that could co-exist in London's clubland next to the more traditional kinds of Britishness that were apparently unsusceptible to colonial influence. The co-existence of the two forms of Britishness in London's clubland that were vastly different in the way they were run reveals something very crucial: that connected histories of empire offer accounts of conscious agency taken on by individuals, whether they wanted to hold on to their colonial identity or a purely national British one, thereby revealing how much of imperial history is based on choice and contingency.

My dissertation looks to complicate the current pan-European classification of Britishness to understand how the country's identity as an imperial power further complicates the definition of Britishness. I look to examine this multi-faceted identity of colonial Britishness as it was imagined in London, performed in Calcutta's British elite clubland, and lastly, I trace the return of this colonial Britishness' return to London. This once again shows how the culture of colonialism, performed and perfected in Calcutta, makes a return to London as a significant identity that redefines Victorian Britain.

Chapter Summary:

Chapter I

My first chapter examines the genesis of club culture as it grew out of the prevalent coffeehouse culture of the 17th century London. This chapter traces how club culture grew simultaneously as

a new class of elite men came to dominate the economic and social scene in London who saw themselves as superior to most around them. For these men privacy and exclusivity was paramount and the club served that precise purpose. Yet, as club culture grew it wasn't homogeneous in nature. For men of all different political affiliations and professions a multitude of clubs came to dot the skyline of London by the late 18th century. The conclusion of this chapter is that clubs were a relevant institution for London society which enjoyed unparalleled popularity at a time when Britain was starting to leave a legacy as a formidable world power.

Chapter II:

During the late 17th century when Britain was leaving its mark in transcontinental wars, it was also starting to gain a reputation as a growing colonizing power with its eyes set on grabbing the riches of India. It was also the time when Britain's own attitude towards how India should be ruled was being debated. It was felt that India needed to be governed by a small group of handpicked men who would be imbued with the spirit of a certain kind of Britishness. Thus, Haileybury College was created that was to provide its students with the qualities that would instill in them a colonial Britishness. This colonial Britishness and its training is important in this study because in later Chapter I see it as a precursor to clubbability, a marker of differentiation between the haves and the have nots. Yet, over time Haileybury could not continue to thrive and graduates of Haileybury who joined the coveted ICS were replaced by what they came to be known as informally, the competition wallahs. These men too felt and saw themselves as the fit rulers of India. Such men felt the need to separate themselves, physically and socially, from the other British men in Calcutta who were not in the coveted ICS. The formation of this exclusive identity that was shared by only a few makes colonial clubbability in Calcutta that much more effective. While the graduates from Haileybury were well trained in the world of socializing with men of their own kind, the competition wallahs were brought up in a different ethos. Yet, their

experiences in India soon informed the competition wallahs the importance of socializing with men with whom they had more in common in terms of their occupational interests. Inspired by the legacy of sociability as institutionalized by the Haileyburians, the competition wallahs “...were directly encouraged to assume an attitude of a patronizing and superior character...”²⁴, which was best displayed in Calcutta’s British clubland.

Chapter III:

This chapter takes us into the heartland of colonial Calcutta at a time when the monopoly of East India Company was ending which meant any man who could afford a passage to the docks of Hooghly could go there to make wealth. There was a jostle for space between the colonizing powers that did not set one group apart from the rest. The men from Haileybury and the competition wallahs had set themselves apart in that they knew the code of conduct and did not want to be seen in the company of their inferior brethren. While the need for clubs in Calcutta intensified among these select men, there was a simultaneous shift in the way Britain was starting to colonize India and specifically Calcutta. Replacing the more open-minded Orientalists with the more close-minded Anglophiles who were coming to rule India one also witnessed a similar change in the landscape of Calcutta where the British were more concerned about leaving an indelible mark to show their position of authority.

Chapter IV:

While there was shift in the kind of buildings the British were erecting to display the superiority of their own power, a thriving clubland emerged in Calcutta. This chapter delves into some of the most well-known and prestigious colonial clubs and the way they were run. The clubs studied in detail in this chapter vary from a sports clubs, to a gentlemen’s only club to a club that was brought into existence only to showcase the most formidable statues and beautiful paintings of

²⁴ Sir Henry Cotton, *Indian Home and Memories* (T Fisher Unwin, London, 1910), pg. 66

Britain's overseas conquests. Further, this chapter examines how a colonial Britishness identity had been flourishing in the way these elite men came together and clubbed and how much this one specific identity became a cornerstone of who they were in India.

Chapter V:

This chapter takes the colonial British identity and colonial clubbable attributes back to London with the men returning to London from their formidable positions of power in the colonial state. Yet, colonial Britishness and the ability to club in a colonial setting were not seen as virtues that made the traditional clubs covet them. Thus, emerges a thriving culture in London entirely dominated by colonial clubs. This demonstrates that colonialism was as much a marker identity for the colonized as it was for the colonizing power Great Britain. The colonial clubs mainstreamed tenets of colonial culture into the lives of everyday Britons, thus directly linking the colonial state with the metropole.

CHAPTER I

THE EMERGENCE OF CLUBS IN LONDON: GROWTH, PROLIFERATION AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF CLUBBABILITY IN VICTORIAN LONDON

The opening chapter of this dissertation traces the genesis of clubbability in late Georgian and Victorian London. In the early 19th century, at a time when England was undergoing economic and political transformations nationally and globally, a new group of economically prosperous, self-fashioned elite men emerged in London. These men had established themselves in various fields either locally or in a global marketplace and therefore saw themselves as an elite and exclusive group who stood apart from and were far superior to the rest of their countrymen. This self-aggrandized view led these men to make changes in their private spaces as well as in their public interactions. For such men, inclusive spaces of sociability like the coffeehouses held little charm. As a select group of men who thought of themselves as exclusive, elite and superior, they needed a similar space in which they could socialize. It is thus that the British elite club culture emerged. Although clubs originated in London to serve the needs of a few, they would inspire changes in the social fabric of how London society functioned, and in due course, spread as an institution to meet the needs of Englishmen abroad.

A profound influence on the English coffeehouses of the 17th century had been the French salons. Just like in England, in France too, public spaces of sociability like salons, cafés and theatres were emerging as a viable public sphere. The first formally established salon was Madame Rambouillet's salon, "le Chambre Bleu" (the Blue Room) in 1618.²⁵ As more salons emerged in France, they worked on a familiar structure: they provided its members with an exclusive space to indulge in refined entertainment like singing and poetry. While the model of

²⁵ Benedetta Craveri and Teresa Waugh translated *The Age of Conversation* (New York Review of Books, New York, 2005), pg. 27

the salon was imitated by the English in terms of the infrastructure, the British club takes on a more exclusive character which was dedicated less to indulging in entertainment and more to being representative of a thriving genteel British society.

The chapter starts by closely examining the culture of coffeehouses, their continued relevance and popularity and their eventual demise as an elite institution of sociability, among the newly emerged class of men. The chapter will then examine the various kinds of clubs that served to meet the heterogeneous needs of these men. It is important to trace the historical context in which the club emerged in London so as to understand its growing popularity later on in colonial Calcutta.

THE CULTURE OF COFFEEHOUSES: A PRECURSOR TO THE CLUBS

The evolution of the modern club as keystone of British identity marker occurred over the course of three centuries. First, came the tavern or coffeehouse, such as Peele's Coffeehouse, where a certain number of people met on special evenings for purposes of social conversation, incidentally while consuming a good deal of liquid refreshment. Then emerged the beginnings of the club proper—as some well-known houses of refreshment being taken over by the proprietor by a limited number of clients for their own exclusive use, and the landlord retained as manager, as at White's. Finally, starting from the mid 18th century there emerged in London's clubland the palatial modern club like the Boodle's, not necessarily for sociability alone, but replete with every comfort and owned by the members themselves. The nature of the clubs gradually changed from entertaining only worldly merchants to what Joseph Addison described as a "...set of men who consciously established themselves into a fraternity and met once or twice a week upon the

account of such a fantastic resemblance.”²⁶ As London’s clubland grew, it would play a crucial role in the shaping of Britishness as exhibited and practiced both in England and in the colonies. While the role of the club in constructing a certain form of Britishness served Britain’s domestic and international ambitions, the culture of clubland was simultaneously responding to the existing forms of sociability that survived in London like the coffeehouses and taverns. In short, the evolution of the club from a house of call like a coffeehouse, to a center of interest, school of character of building, and a social training ground reflected the needs and character of the social and economic moment. As T.H.S. Escott surmised, “...the representative club of the period will be found in a monument, a reflection and the epitome of the virtues, vices, the social forces or foibles and tendencies which marked the time.”²⁷

The first coffeehouse opened in Oxford in the 1650s and others quickly followed, often evolving from older, mismanaged taverns. Coffeehouses were the first of a kind of location of sociability that attracted both local gentlemen and merchants, and those who had traveled abroad. In London during the 1670s it was said that “all the neighborhood swarm” to them like “bees and buzz there like them too.”²⁸ The focus of the coffeehouse of the 17th century remained on sociability based on the amiability and geniality of its members. Conversations in the coffeehouses centered around the consumption of coffee and the informal camaraderie among members. Membership in the coffeehouses was certainly not based on exclusivity or status. While the walls of the coffeehouses were more porous in who would be allowed in, particular conversations and the comradeship enjoyed between members with similar interests was significant. Whether it was a discussion about politics, theology, or literature, each coffeehouse

²⁶ Joseph Addison, ‘The Spectator’ (Volume VI), (J and R Tonson and S Draper, London, 1730)

²⁷ T.H.S. Escott, *Club Makers and Club Members* (T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1914), pp. 33

²⁸ Tom Girtin, *The Abominable Clubman* (Hutchinson of London, 1964), pp. 10

attracted a specific clientele, without specifying it as a rule. An avid coffee drinker and a member of various coffeehouses, the poet Alexander Pope wrote a descriptive poem about the central role the beverage played as a catalyst to sociability within the walls of the coffeehouse. Writing to his friend Henry Cromwell Esq. in 1711 Pope observed,

“As long as Mocha’s happy tree shall grow,
While berries crackle or while mills shall go;
While smoking streams from silver spouts shall glide,
Or China’s earth receive the sable tide;
While coffee shall to British nymphs be dear;
While fragrant streams the bended head shall cheer;
Or grateful bitters shall delight the taste,
So long her honour, name, and praise, shall last!”²⁹

It was not just the promise of a hot cup of coffee that brought men from various classes into the coffeehouses, but the promise of sociability.

While the overall character of coffeehouses remained open, specific coffeehouses emerged that catered to the definite needs of its patrons. In the 17th century, coffeehouses were seen as a society of men agreeing to follow some very basic rules, like maintaining the decorum of the place. Coffeehouses became the location to discuss politics, plays, or the latest foreign news. In the early part of the 18th century, there were said to be no less than 2,000 coffeehouses in London catering to every profession, trade, and class. Every political party also had its own favorite coffeehouse. Witnessing the large proliferation of various coffeehouses in the city of London, Ralph Nevill summarises,

“...the lawyers discussed law or literature, criticized the last new play, or retailed the legal scandal at Nando’s or the Grecian.... City men met to discuss the rise and fall of stocks, and to settle the rate of insurance, at Garraway’s or Jonathan’s... whilst military men mustered to grumble over their grievances at Old or Young Man’s near Charing Cross. The St. James’ and the Smyrna were the headquarters of the Whig politicians, whereas the Tories frequented the Cocotree or the Ozinda’s in St. James’s Street...”³⁰

²⁹ Dr. Johnson, *The Works of Alexander Pope, Esq. in Verse and Prose With A Selection of Explanatory Notes and The Account of His Life, Volume VIII*, (Nichols and Son, London, 1812), pg. 261

³⁰ Ralph Nevill, *London Clubs- Their History and Treasures* (Volume I), (Chatto and Windus, London, 1911) pg. 3

While most of the coffeehouses catered to issues of national interests, it is during the Restoration period (1660-1688) that there emerged a growing interest in Britain's global interests. Specific coffeehouses like the Mermaid Tavern came about at a time when British men who had made their fortune overseas wanted a space to discuss their overseas expeditions. While coffeehouses like the Mermaid may not have been an able predecessor to the later elite clubs, the ethos of the two was similar: celebrating Britain's overseas ambitions and being steadfast in the belief that Britain could become the foremost colonizing power in the world in the near future. The origin of the Mermaid Tavern on Bread Street remains controversial. It served as an institution that offered its patrons both alcohol and coffee and was established some time during the reign of Queen Anne who ruled over England, Scotland and Ireland from 1702 until her death in 1714. The Mermaid Tavern was instituted by Sir Walter Raleigh and "...was frequented by the choice spirits of the age; Shakespeare himself, with Beaumont, Fletcher, Seldon, Cotton and Ben Jonson."³¹ By 1600 Sir Walter Raleigh had built a reputation for himself as a world traveler. In both literary and artistic circles he, of course, had his detractors. His book *Discovery Of The Large, Rich and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* was severely criticized by David Hume as "...the grossest, most palpable lies ever imposed upon the credulity of mankind."³² And yet, his portrait hanging up on the walls of The Mermaid Tavern celebrated his position as a world traveler and explorer of some repute. Painted by Sir John Everett Milais and titled 'Raleigh's Boyhood', it represents the "...future Mermaid's Club finder exactly as he was often seen on the Salterton beach, eagerly taking in the tale of oceanic enterprise in all latitudes poured forth by

³¹ Major Arthur Griffiths, *Clubs and Clubmen*, (Hutchinson and Company, London, 1907), pg. 7

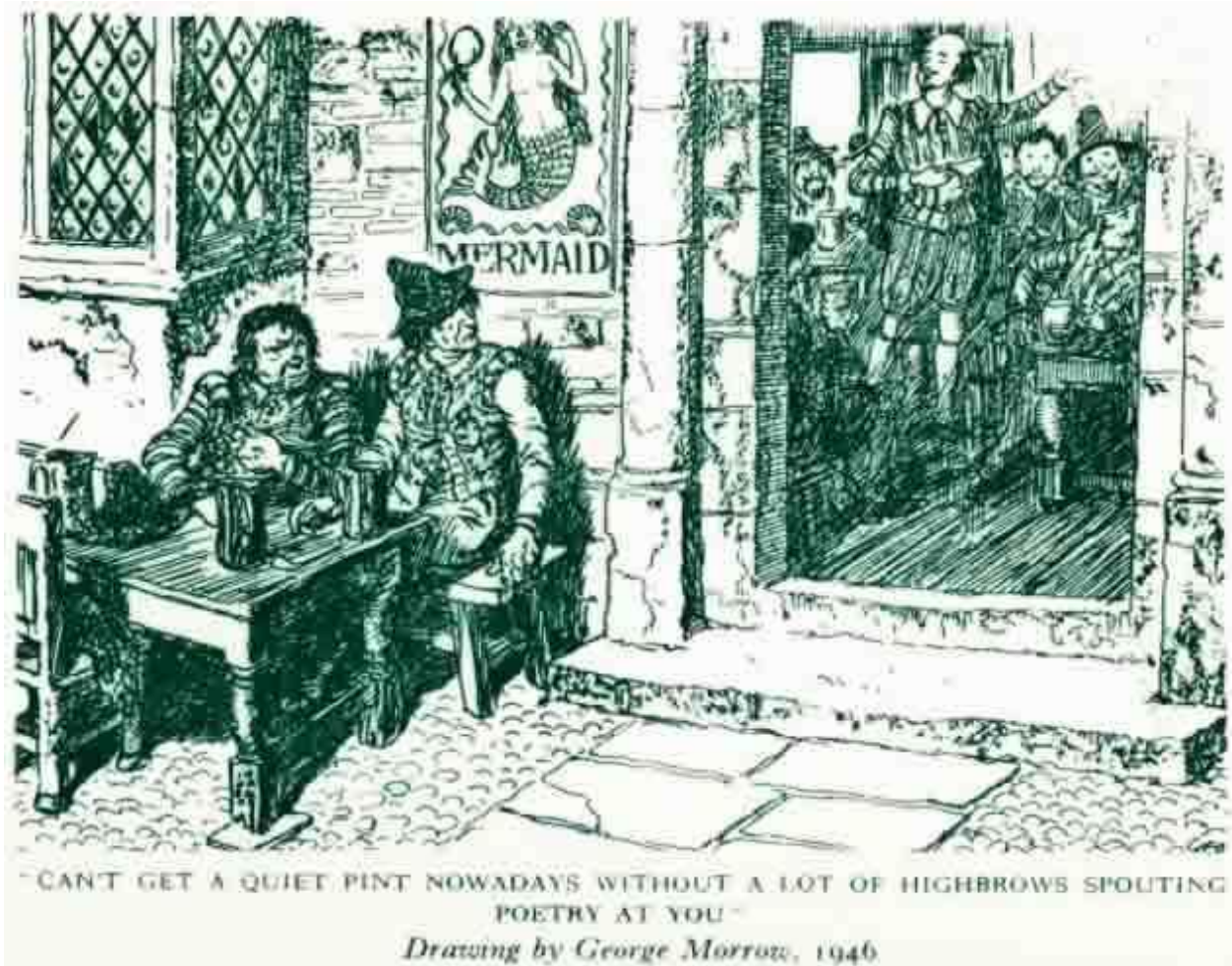
³² David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, (PF Collier and Com., New York, 1909-1914), pg. 271

some weather-hardened and sunburnt sailor.”³³ Raleigh had also gained a reputation for himself as the

³³ THS Escott, *Club Makers and Club Members*, (T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1914), pg. 29



Picture Courtesy, Alfred Noyles, *Tales of the Mermaid Tavern*



A Modern Artist's Comic Conception of the Mermaid Tavern, Picture Courtesy, National Archives, London

earliest of empire builders and as the first of Imperial Free Traders. Recorded accounts of the time, discuss how during their meetings at the Mermaid, Raleigh openly advocated for open trade by citing examples of certain nations like Holland that grew potent with abundance through imports; although they produced very little of substance themselves, yet their coffers of wealth never dried up. His justification was that nations like Holland were taking advantage of paying small custom duties for the profitmaking purposes.³⁴

The preoccupation with global trade worldly exploration and discoveries of other parts of the world dominated the discussion at The Mermaid Tavern. Its list of members was only made up of travelers and merchants who had traveled outside of England. In its discussion of worldly matters, the members saw benefits in celebrating global enterprises of English merchants, The Mermaid can be seen as an early precursor to clubs like the Orient and the Travellers which were set up precisely to celebrate the colonial business interests of British businessmen. In a poem titled ‘A Knight of the Ocean Sea’, the poet raises his drink to celebrate the various members of The Mermaid Tavern and their overseas accomplishments. The poet Alfred Noyes applauds and writes,

“Silence a moment held the Mermaid Inn,
Then Michael Drayton, raising a cup of wine,
Stood up and said, - “Since many have obtained
Absolute glory at have done great deeds...
... God from the time that He first made the world,
Hath kept the knowledge of the Ocean-sea
And the huge Equinotically Continents,
Reserved unto this day. Wherefore I think
No high exploit of Greece and Rome but seems
A little thing to these Discoveries
Which our adventurous captains even now
Are making, out there, Westward, in the night,
Captains most worthy of commendation,
Hugh Willoughby- God send him home again
Safe to the Mermaid!- and Dick Chauncellor,
That excellent pilot. Doubtless, this man, too,
Sir Humphrey Gilbert was worthy to be made
Knight of the Ocean-sea. I bid you all

³⁴ Alfred Noyes, *Tales of the Mermaid Tavern*, (Frederick A. Stokes Co., New York, 1913)

Stand up, and drink to his immortal fame!”³⁵

Coffeehouse culture was more than just about socializing. It was about the meeting of like-minded men. The societies that frequented the coffeehouses like The Mermaid, made up of literary figures like Ben Johnson and William Shakespeare, merchants and travelers like Francis Beaumont and Sir Walter Raleigh were characterized by their wit and their ability to versify. The Mermaid Tavern as a specific example of a space populated by lawyers, merchants, literary figures who used poetry within these spaces to utilize it as an aesthetic commodity, a pleasure exclusively available to a cultivated elite who possessed the requisite education, leisure and above all civility or its appreciation. The use of poetry and verses in their discussion went hand in hand in setting themselves up as a space of civility far removed from the rowdiness of alehouses. A 1617 engraving by William Marshall titled ‘Lawes of Drinking’ compares the world of tavern and the alehouses, uses poetry as a marker of social distinction that signifies the social and cultural differences between ‘the leisured quality and the working commonality.’³⁶

Hand in hand with the use of verses in that conversation, certain coffeehouses and taverns also started to pay special attention to their conduct within the premises. They took their roles as tavern members seriously, and not just as a source of leisure. Unlike the later exclusive club, the coffeehouse did not exclude potential members on the basis of rank and birth. However, despite the egalitarian nature of the coffeehouse, it still held an attraction for its members who looked to this venue of sociability to converse with men whose knowledge, interests and social position would be of mutual value. One of the prime examples of the openness of the coffeehouse was in

³⁵ *ibid*, pg. 15-16

³⁶ William Marshall, “The Lawes of Drinking”, frontispiece to Blasius Multibus (Richard Brathwait), *A Solemne and Joviall Disputation, Theoreticke and Practicke; Briefly Shadowing The Law of Drinking* (1617), British Library Board

the way seating for members was arranged within the premises. From the arrangement of its seating the distinct impression one gets from within the coffeehouse is that any member who could pay the sum of 12 pence for a coffee was welcome. The principle of equality established by the open seating arrangement encouraged conversation between strangers and also recommended equality and openness as the principle of conversation. Published in 1665 in the *The Character of A Coffeehouse*, an anonymous author wrote,

“Now being enter’d, there’s no needing
Of complements or gentile breeding,
For you may seat you anywhere,
There’s no respect of persons there...”³⁷

In addition to the open seating arrangement, the policy of entry into the coffeehouse remained fairly expansive and inviting. The coffeehouses prided themselves on providing an open space for their patrons to discuss various political, economic and social matters and were not bound down by a strict code of rules and regulations, a feature that would become a cornerstone feature of London’s clubland less than a century later. In 1674, one Paul Greenwood published a short and ironic poem titled ‘The Rules And Orders Of The Coffeehouse’. Parodying the city laws that governed the lives of private individuals and contrasting it with the unrestricted approach of the coffeehouses, Greenwood mocked,

“Enter Sirs freely, But first if you please,
Peruse our Civil Orders, which are these,
First, Gentry, Tradesmen, all are welcome hither,
And may without Affront sit down Together:
Pre-eminence of Place, none here should Mind,
But take the next fit Seat he can find:
To limit Mens Expence, we think not fair,
But let him forfeit Twelve-pence that shall swear
Lastly let each Man what he calls for *Pay*,
And so you’re welcome to come everyday...”³⁸

³⁷ ‘The Character of a Coffeehouse- Wherein Is Contained A Description Of The Persons Usually Frequenting It With Their Discourses and Humor, (London, 1665)

³⁸ John Timbs, *Clubs and Club Life in London- With Anecdotes of Its Famous Coffeehouses, Hostelries, and Taverns from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Time*, (Chatto and Windus, London, 1899), pg. 271-272

Further underscoring the relaxed nature of the coffeehouse, a print of the period shows,

“...five persons...in a coffeehouse, one smoking evidently, from their dresses of different ranks of life: they are seated at the table, on which are small basins without saucers, and tobacco pipes, while a waiter is serving the coffee.”³⁹

An image like this would not be a common sight at the elite clubs that followed the coffeehouses.

The openness of the coffeehouses culture where men of various ranks could sit together at the same table smoking is antithetical to what one witnessed at the elite clubs later.

The lack of stringent rules did not mean that the coffeehouse and its patrons did not follow certain implied guidelines that were thought to be fit for a place like a coffeehouse. Coffeehouse behavior, whether intentionally or not, still manifested itself through an implied code of good conduct. Behavior in the coffeehouse “...was egalitarian in nature- a rarity where people from all walks of life could come together and interact in a setting that would become popular for approximately a century. This democratic approach, offering a center for free expression and communication, helped create the stage for future political and ideological dialogue that would lead to the evolving behavior of an egalitarian England”⁴⁰. The open, democratic and liberal approach that members took in the coffeehouse is reflective of the attitude of the men who adopted a certain manner they thought appropriate to the setting of the coffeehouse. Despite, the inclusive nature, the open nature of coffeehouses meant that occasionally ill-behaved men would find their way into the premises and act in a way that went against the coffeehouse culture that aimed to foster intellectual discussion about literature and politics by men of a certain pedigree.

³⁹ ‘The Character of a Coffeehouse- Wherein Is Contained A Description Of The Persons Usually Frequenting It With Their Discourses and Humor, (London, 1665), pg. 273

⁴⁰ Scott Shriner, ‘Symbols of Behaviour in Mid-17th Century English Coffeehouses’ in *Open Educational Resources*

It was precisely the populist nature of the coffeehouse that invited discussions of all topics by any man who had something constructive to contribute, that the clubs of the 19th century actively established themselves against. If the coffeehouses kept their doors open under the presumption and hope that the particular space would provide their patrons an amiable and congenial atmosphere for healthy and intellectual debates, the elite clubs would take active steps to ensure that only handpicked members who could afford to pay the hefty membership fee and who belonged to a similar class and profession would be allowed to enter the hallowed interiors of the club. As the Georgian and the Victorian era cemented differences between social classes based primarily on economic disparities, the open atmosphere of the coffeehouses no longer offered this exclusive group of men the space of sociability that these private individuals desired.

The clubs remained as strict and exclusive as they did about their membership because the open policy of membership popularized at the coffeehouses attracted all kinds of men. The coffeehouses had set a precedent for drawing out men who maligned what the social institution of the coffeehouse stood for, described in one source as a “...resort of dandies and of politicians, or again of professional newsmongers” or even “temples of Venus.”⁴¹ Contemporary accounts of the time aren’t always ready to heap praises on the coffeehouses and what they stood for. More importantly, they were critical of a handful of men who came to the coffeehouse for more than a cup of coffee and participation in a healthy debate. While recognizing the importance of the institution of the coffeehouse as a center of sociability that contributed to the creation of an English culture, author Sir John Fielding also warned travelers visiting English coffeehouses due to the presence of certain sharpers. In 1776, Fielding wrote,

“...A stranger or foreigner should particularly frequent the Coffee-houses in London...(which) will give him the best insight into the different characters of the people, and the justest notion of the inhabitants in

⁴¹ Madame Van Muyden, *A Foreign View of England In The Reigns of George I and George II: The Letters of Monsieur Cesar de Saussure To His Family*, (John Murray, London, 1902), pg. 361

general...yet some of these are not entirely free from sharpers. The deceivers of this denomination are generally descended from families of some repute, have had the groundwork of a genteel education, and are capable of making a tolerable appearance...they lie in wait for those who have more wealth and less knowledge of the town.”⁴²

Fielding warns his readers that the so-called deceivers at the coffee house will try and insinuate themselves in the company of acquaintances and strangers whom they watch at every opportunity to fleece. Fielding wants his readers to be wary about strangers who look to be unnecessarily deferential and are constantly encouraging one to indulge in cards, dice, or at the billiard table.

It is not a stretch to imagine that the very inclusive nature of the coffeehouses could possibly have led to the entry of men who were probably not in the coffeehouse for the spirit of being social. It is, therefore, not surprising that as the Georgian era was coming to an end during the first half of the 19th century, with British society devolving into very clear hierarchies, at a time when Britain’s colonial enterprises started playing a pivotal role in the shaping the exclusive nature of Britishness, that a populist and inclusive institution like the coffeehouse would fall out of favor. A rise in the consumption of drinking in public among the English elites was also a vital ingredient in the swift proliferation of clubs in early modern Britain. As Victorian imperial Britain became progressively more complex, hierarchical, and more conscious of their status as the colonial trailblazers, London’s club culture not only provided congenial shelter and support, but also supplied several of the key features of the social architecture of a hierarchical and exclusive society: drinking in moderation, controlled social mixing, a combination of privacy and public openness and a predominantly masculine environment.

⁴² Sir John Fielding, *A Brief Description of The Cities of London and Westminster, The Public Buildings, Palaces, Gardens, and Squares*, (J. Wilkie, London, 1776), pg. 261-262

THE EMERGENCE OF CLUBS AS SPACES OF SOCIABILITY:

As the Georgian era drew to a close and the Victorian era emerged in England, it brought about subtle social changes in English society. Several groups continued to swell in importance, namely, the men who controlled the capital. Despite the burgeoning importance of this capitalist class, the landowners who had thus far controlled much of the wealth still continued to hold their undisputed position. As the upper classes felt the need to separate themselves continuously from their lesser privileged countrymen, the club became an institution of manners and a center for the promulgation of expressing class and occupation-based interests. Social power did not exist in isolation; it is a network that combines other external factors like privilege, occupation, inheritance and political and religious connections. These connections were well represented in the various elite clubs that started mushrooming in the city of London. The rise of private aristocratic clubs like The Whites and Almack tolled the knell of coffeehouses. Fashionable societies combined with all-male cheer, the fraternity of trade, and non-denominational piety to come together in the club. Clubs created identity and partisanship. Political clubs like The Calves' Head cheered either the Whigs or Tories, Hanoverians or Jacobites and the members carried these allegations out on the street with their flags, cockades, sashes, colors and chants.

Talking about the singular nature of most elite clubs, Bernard Darwin observed,

...there is that large body of clubs, which have each a particular purpose of an indoor character, more sedentary and presumably more intellectual; musical, dramatic, chess and card playing, debating, political, paper-reading, scientific clubs and heaven knows what besides. They may be large or small, meeting in their own houses or in those of individual members. It is utterly impossible to enumerate, impossible even to classify them, but they all possess that one essential quality of a club, that the most distinguished personage in the world cannot belong to them, if a proportion of the members do not want him. He may come singing songs of Apollo or bearing rich gifts, but the humblest, if there be enough of them, can bar the door against him.⁴³

The tendency for potential club members to form different clubs based on varying interests, whether they be political, military, gambling or artistic, was driven by more than just status and

⁴³ Bernard Darwin, *British Clubs*, (William Collins of London, London, 1943), pg. 9

class interests; political allegiances were being constantly reflected in the growth and dissemination of certain clubs. Furthermore, the rise of Britain's colonial interests had also started to be felt in London's clubland, demanding separate venues different from the elitist political clubs that solely reflected domestic political interests of their members. Political clubs such as The Union (1804), The Carlton (1831), The Reform (1834), and The Conservative (1840) admitted solely those of that party in whose interests they had been brought into existence. According to British social historian Tom Girtin,

“...the foundation of The Reform, according to GM Young, was intended to a counterweight to the pure Whiggery of Brooks's and involved as much agitation as a Cabinet shuffle. And the Carlton had arisen from the defeat of the Tories at the General Election of 1831: conceived in such a moment of gloom it tolerated no sloppy ideas of pleasant social intercourse.”⁴⁴

Further, Girtin claims that the growth and spread of specific political clubs with specific interests and causes in mind transformed the way West End clubs had come to function so far: as a mere social center for gentlemen who belonged to a similar way of thinking. Politics and political management were dominating conversations at these elite clubs, so much so that an article in *The Gentleman's Magazine* concluded that “...within a few years of its foundation the clubs in London contained the substantial strengths of conservatism in England.”⁴⁵

Clubs emerging at this time should be seen as recording and epitomizing the social movements and progress of the time. A respectable genteel man of the time, it is said, would much sooner change his coat than his club membership. In no other city in either Europe or America, were clubs administered in on such strict principles as the clubs in England. An Englishman's club functioned as his second home, the members of which served as his friends

⁴⁴ Tom Girtin, *The Abominable Clubman*, (Hutchinson, London, 1964), pg. 34-35

⁴⁵ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, (Issue date, 1873), pg. 73, British Library

and family. The exclusive, all-male bastion of the club was a moniker that was well represented even in the architecture of the club premises. According to historian Tom Girtin,

“...London clubs eventually established and housed by the middle of the nineteenth century could be summed up as confident, serious and masculine...the stronghold of masculine society at a period of great national power.”⁴⁶

During the nineteenth and twentieth century, the British elite club remained as the singular citadel of all masculine social space where women were barred from entering.

Unlike the British elite clubs set up in colonial Calcutta where the restrictions against the entry of women was occasionally lifted for special days, the British elite clubs in London never made such exceptions. Exclusivity at the clubs was not just class based but also gender based. The identity of the clubbable genteel man needed to be protected and preserved and cast in a separate manner than that of his private identity. While the Victorian man's private identity was sacrosanct, protected from the outside eye, so did his identity as a clubbable man deem the same kind of privacy, even if it meant it excluded the same women from his family. In Victorian England, the genteel man's need to visit the club, away from his family abode was justified in a very interesting manner, that once again reiterates one of my central argument: that clubbability, or the ability and the luxury to club, was central to creating the character of the British Victorian gentleman. Justifying the need for the gentleman to club, away from his family, Mrs. Catherine Grace Frances Gore writes,

“London clubs, after all, are not bad things for the family men. They act as conductors to the storms usually hovering in the air. The man forced to remain at home and vent his crossness on his wife and children is a much worse animal to bear with than the man who grumbles his way to Pall Mall and, not daring to swear at the Club servants or knock about the Club furniture, becomes socialized into decency. Nothing like the subordination exercised in a community of equals for reducing a fiery temper.”⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Tom Girtin, *The Abominable Clubman*, (Hutchinson, London, 1964), pg. 85

⁴⁷ Mrs. Gore, *Sketches of English Character* (Volume II), (Schulze and Co., London, 1846), pg. 45-46

The club was not just an escape or a mere haven for men of a similar class and a similar ethos to want to share a sanctified space carved out for their own specific needs. The club was an institution of character building that would compel its members to act and conduct themselves in a manner that was befitting a Victorian gentleman, a rule that would not strictly be adhered to at one's own home. While accounts from the time usually portray the club and their members as misogynists who shuddered at the thought of women entering their hallowed clubs, but it was not as simple as that. The British elite club was an identity defining institution for an exclusive group of men within the halls of which a strict code of conduct had to be observed to earn and keep their place as a Victorian English gentleman.

The quick proliferation of different clubs catering to the needs of various classes of British gentlemen is symptomatic of the ways in which the British society was viewing itself. The nature of clubs that emerged during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is indicative of the multitude of ways that Britain wanted to be represented and looked upon. While the political clubs were one of the kind of clubs catering to the politically conscious members of London society, from the mid-nineteenth century, there emerged another cluster of clubs catering to the need of Britain's colonial administrators. The emergence of the specific colonial clubs is a matter that is discussed in Chapter V. Suffice it here to mention that as Britain started to make a mark for itself in wars overseas, the men who won the wars, wanted their own identity represented and celebrated in London's clubland in the form of service clubs. Such officers who were returning from the French Wars or expeditions in Afghanistan and Egypt were used to the idea of communal living. These men were united in a community of professional interests and experiences which were certainly not shared by the vast majority of the members of the existing clubs. First came the Guard Club in 1815, followed by the United Service Club (1817), the

Junior United Service Club (1827) and the Army Navy Club (1837). Before the discussion of these service clubs, one needs to look in-depth at clubs populated by men who considered themselves global explorers and international travelers who once again, like the service members, found very little in common with the members of the more traditional clubs existing in London.

Political clubs were just one of the kind of clubs emerging to cater the needs of specific groups. The Alfred Club established in 1808, catered specifically to the needs of travelers and men of letters. The idea of the Alfred first suggested itself to a little group of fashionable men of literature in John Murray's Albemarle street parlour. In his autobiography Lord Byron reminisced about his time at the club and its members almost fondly,

“...I was a member of the Alfred, too, being elected while in Greece. It was pleasant; a little too sober and literary, and bored with Sotheby and Sir Francis D'Ivernois; but one met Peel, and Ward, and Valentia, and many other pleasant or known people; and it was, upon the whole, a decent resource in a rainy day, in a dearth of parties, or parliament, or in an empty season.”⁴⁸

The Alfred was not aimed at being a club to discuss political matters or air political concerns. It was supposed to be, as Lord Byron says, aimed at men to meet in a convivial setting, to share and discuss matters of similar interest. And yet, as a club the Alfred never managed to retain its popularity with its members. For contemporary writers of the time, the Alfred did not really align itself with a political or a social cause. In its personal composition and comparatively sedate spirit, it foreshadowed more closely than any other institution of the Regency period the ordinary club product of the Victorian era.

One of the reasons the Alfred did not stand the test of time and eventually found itself absorbed into the Oriental Club in 1858 was because the club lacked a focused membership and

⁴⁸ Thomas Moore and George Gordon Baron Byron, *Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron (Complete In One Volume With Notes)*, (John Murray, Albemarle Street, London, 1839), pg. 303

its founders were more interested in setting up a club as ‘...just the thing for us.’⁴⁹ The laissez faire attitude that the members of the Alfred had adopted towards securing its position as a unique club worked initially when in one year it had attracted 354 potential members for 6 vacancies. However interest later dwindled leading to the club’s eventual extinction. By the beginning of the 19th century, as Britain’s position as a formidable world power intensified, both in domestic and foreign affairs, the emblematic British institution like the club had to serve a purpose more than the mere gratification of appetite, the card table, and the gossip of the smoking room. Surmising the reasons that could lead to a club’s demise, Major Griffiths cites such factors as, “...the competition of the modern restaurant, the tendency to high play, the lack of sociability...”⁵⁰ While the Alfred may have provided its members with a comfortable meeting spot, some of its members lacked the acceptable amiability that had come to be expected from British elite clubs. In a private letter written in early February 1818 to the bishop of Llandaff the Earl of Dudley complained,

“...The Club is not so great a resource as many respectable persons believe...I have passed many quiet comfortable hours there. A duller place than the Alfred there does not exist. I should not choose to be quoted for saying so, but the bores prevail there to the exclusion of every other interest. You hear nothing but idle reports and twaddling opinions. They read *The Morning Post* and the *British Critic*. It is the asylum of doting Tories and driveling quidnuncs...you belong to a much better club already!”⁵¹

Other than the preponderance of political and social clubs, another category of clubs was meant for travelers. Unlike the Alfred, the Travellers club, established in 1819 by Lord Castlereagh, did continue to attract patrons that had traveled in other parts of the world, whether for work, business or leisure. The qualification for membership into the club was specific: it was meant for candidates who as rule had to have traveled out of the British Isles to a distance of at

⁴⁹ THS Escott, *Club Makers and Club Members*, (T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1914), pg. 128

⁵⁰ Major Arthur Griffiths, *Clubs and Clubmen*, (Hutchinson and Company, London, 1907), pg. 5

⁵¹ *Letters of The Earl of Dudley to The Bishop of Llandaff*, (John Murray, Albemarle Street, London, 1840), pg. 195-196

least 500 miles from London in a straight line. And yet, it wasn't always easy for the club's committee to check a member's credentials to ascertain whether they had travelled the required distance to qualify them for membership. During the time that the Travellers existed there were numerous instances of discoveries made of members who had not traveled the prescribed distance. An investigation was started into the alleged accusations and the newspapers of the day published lists of places which involved sufficient qualification for membership of the Travellers.⁵² Writing about the so-called world view of the members of Travellers club, the poet Theodore Hook satirized:

“The travelers are in Pall Mall, and smoke cigars so cosily,
And dream they climb the highest Alps, or rove the plains of Moselai,
The world for them has nothing new, they have explored all parts of it;
And now they are club footed! And they sit and look at charts of it.”⁵³

Despite, being self-confessed world explorers, the members of the Travellers club much like members of other contemporary clubs, enjoyed all kinds of comforts that one might have expected at their private dwelling. According to club historian John Timbs, such comforts that the members had access to, “...the command of an excellent library, with maps; of the daily papers both from London and foreign lands; the principal periodicals; and every material for writing; with attendance for whatever the members may desire”⁵⁴. According to Edward Walford,

“...every member at these clubs was a master without the troubles of being a master. He could come when he pleased, and stay as long as he pleased. He had the command of regular servants, without having to personally manage them. He had access to whatever meal or refreshment he chose without worrying about the time, and served up with the cleanliness and comfort of his own home.”⁵⁵

⁵² John Timbs, *Clubs and Club Life in London- With Anecdotes of Its Famous Coffeehouses, Hostelries, and Taverns from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Time*, (Chatto and Windus, London, 1899), pg. 202-205

⁵³ GL Apperson, *The Social History of Smoking*, (GP Putnam's and Sons, New York, 1916), pg. 197

⁵⁴ John Timbs, *Clubs and Club Life in London- With Anecdotes of Its Famous Coffeehouses, Hostelries, and Taverns from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Time*, (Chatto and Windus, London, 1899), pg. 19

⁵⁵ Edward Walford, 'Pall Mall: Clubland' in *Old and New London* (Volume IV), (Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., London, 1878)

All that was expected of the members was conduct deserving and appropriate of an elite club. Despite being made up of members that had few political connections at home, and had spent considerable time abroad, the members of the Travellers club still followed a code of conduct within the club. The performance of this form of behavior, typical to the club, can be called a certain kind of Britishness. This Britishness still followed a same ethos: maintaining discipline, retaining decorum in a congenial atmosphere, especially important for men to maintain who had spent most of their time away from London, overseas. From the way they carried their coats and hats, to the way they interacted with other members, or kept their distance, these learned behaviors, are all emblematic of the institutionalizing of a certain kind of Britishness that, had become necessary. From a non-Englishman's perspective, the performance of a club member looks almost comical, but this learned and practiced routine, I argue, is symptomatic of a certain kind of power that was used as a tool to be performed and practiced by selected members of the British elite who were also eligible to be a part of London's clubland. Writing to a friend in 1822, Louis de Vignet wrote,

“...When I do not know what to do with myself from 8 to 11 in the evening I go to the Travellers Club, composed of the most distinguished men in English society. There is a fine library, three magnificent drawing-rooms with a hundred newspapers in every language and of every political colour, an excellent fire, billiards, cards, coffee...I arrive with a serious expression, I take off my hat in the English manner—that is to say with a bad grace and as if someone was dragging it off me and having read two English newspapers, one Governmental, the other of the Opposition, together with Hansard, I rise and, joining my hands behind my back I pace slowly up and down a fine carpet; and after an hour of this gentle exercise I stretch myself upon a large sofa and having placed two cushions under my head and one under each of my arms, I balance my right leg on my left knee, only taking the decision to place the left on the right on special occasions; when my reflections on the political future of nations, or regrets for my friends bother me more than usual...I get up with an effort, I fling my hat on my head and my cloak over my shoulders and I make my way back to my lodgings through the long streets...”⁵⁶

Discipline, decorum and manners of members were the cornerstone of the right kind of clubbability. Other than the material comforts, the clubbable man could expect more from his club of choice. According to Walford,

⁵⁶ Louis Vignet, *Fond du Sac D'Un Vieux Touriste- Rapsodies Alpestres*, (Imprieries, Villefranche, 1886), Translated by an anonymous author, pg. 217-18

“...to men who reside in the country, or are visiting London during their furlough, a club membership is particularly advantageous. The member will only have to take a bedroom and he will have everything he wants in the most convenient way. Married men who have families still residing in the colonies, find in the arrangements of a club the nearest resemblance to the facilities of a home; and bachelors of moderate incomes and simple habits are gainers by an institution like the club in a degree beyond calculation. The men can live much cheaper, with more ease and discipline, in far better style, and with much greater advantages like joining polite society, than formerly.”⁵⁷

Further, as Walker observed in 1835,

“Before the establishment of clubs, no money could procure many of the enjoyments which are now within the reach of an income of three hundred a year and neither could the same facilities of living, nor the same opportunities of cultivating society, have been commanded twenty years since”.

Walker further states, “...in my opinion, a well-constituted club is an institution affording advantages unmixed with alloy.”⁵⁸ Despite the existence of clubs in London’s clubland that was perceived to cater to the social, economic political needs of potential members, a huge void still remained for men dedicated to the colonial enterprise of Britain.

The purpose of this chapter has been to trace the emergence of a specific area of sociability in London, i.e. the gentleman’s club. In terms of my dissertation it is important to introduce this chapter to set up the context for the emergence of the culture of clubbability in London. The following chapters will see the how the culture of clubbability combined with the proliferation of a colonial form of Britishness that was expressed, performed and played out in Britain’s clubland in Calcutta.

⁵⁷ Edward Walford, ‘Pall Mall: Clubland’ in *Old and New London* (Volume IV), (Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., London, 1878)

⁵⁸ Walter Thornbury and Edward Walford, *Old and New London: A Narrative of Its History, Its People And Its Places*, (Cassell and Company Limited, London, Paris and Melbourne, 1891),pg. 140

CHAPTER II

SOCIALIZATION FOR RULE IN INDIA: BRITISHNESS, CLUBBABILITY AND THE TRAINING FOR COLONIAL RULE AT HAILEYBURY

Introduction and Overview:

This second chapter examines how certain characteristics were identified as a necessary means to consolidate and exercise British rule over its Indian colonies. Britishness, in its colonized form, embodying its role as a colonizing power, was a cornerstone feature identified as necessary to impose British rule over her colonies. One key institution helped train the future rulers of India in learning and practicing the colonized nature of Britishness was a certain college. Haileybury College, set up to train chosen boys for their future in India did more than just impart an education in the classroom. This chapter explores how Britishness was imparted to the institution's students both inside and outside the classroom to indoctrinate in them belief in their own superiority. Other than Britishness being imparted and engrained in the students inside and outside the classroom in everyday practices, there was a key component of Britishness that the boys of Haileybury were trained in that set them apart from the other British men in India: clubbability. According to Mrinalini Sinha, clubbability as it related to the colonizer and colonized created an opportunity to explore the criterion of the core and peripheral criteria of clubbability which was then used by the colonizer elite to determine the clubbability of the colonized. According to her, the social space epitomized in the club was "...implicated in dramatizing a very specific and limited construction of whiteness in India."⁵⁹ Their socialization at Haileybury fostered and trained future leaders of the Indian sub-continent to club, to fraternize with men who were imbued with the same spirit of Britishness, one that was more exclusionary than inclusionary. This chapter demonstrates how the training in Britishness and clubbability at

⁵⁹ Mrinalini Sinha, 'Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India', *The Journal of British Studies*, (Volume 40:4, October 2001), pg. 505

Haileybury was a key marker of distinction that set the graduates of this institution apart from other Britons and most certainly, the locals of India. It was also under the aegis of these men that a thriving British clubland came to proliferate in Calcutta. British clubland in Calcutta allowed the graduates of Haileybury to practice and perform what they were taught at Haileybury: an innate belief in their own superiority. The training of this particular colonial Britishness and clubbability helped support British rule in India.

The second half of the chapter looks at the simultaneous growth and consolidation of a new form of colonial Britishness in the landscape of Calcutta with the establishment of the Government House. It is my contention that the construction of the Government House under the guidance of Lord Wellesley in 1799 was part of a larger shift in British colonial attitude towards India. The formal setting up of Haileybury in 1806 was once again reflective of the new wave of colonial attitude that was more about ruling based on created differences. In *Ideologies of the Raj* Thomas Metcalf identifies British ideologies of rule in India in terms of a steadfast creation between similarities and differences between natives and British explored across a range of issues from ideas of law to attitudes across art and architecture.⁶⁰ I explore how the practices of a kind of colonial Britishness was simultaneously being created and popularized in Haileybury in Hartford and was being reified at the Government House in Calcutta. While Haileybury crafted a new form of performing colonial Britishness to teach its students based on principles of

⁶⁰ Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (The New Cambridge History of India, Vol. III, Pt. 4) (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994) Further, Nicholas Dirks' *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Harvard University Press, Harvard, 2008) uses the impeachment of Hastings and Edmund Burke's critique of the empire building allowed the empire to be refashioned into a moral undertaking. He uses scandal as an analytic tool to argue that British agents of empire building had to create, cement and establish differences to the supposed corrupt religious and social practices of South Asians. HV Bowen's *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008) examines what PJ Marshall characterized as the transition from "trade to dominion" in British endeavor in India or what Bowen identifies as the East India Company's shift from being a "vast empire of business to becoming an organization that was devoted to the business of empire." (pg. 298)

exclusion and created differences, it was continued as practices within the sanctified space of the Government House. Britons normalized a form of colonial Britishness at Haileybury that was continued as standard practice at the Government House, the new seat of reimagined power of British imperialism. These two different sources of a recreated form of Britishness would converge, as I show in later chapters, in the British clubland of Calcutta.

HAILEYBURY COLLEGE: TRAINING IN BRITISHNESS

On 30th April 1834 a discussion started to bring into place ‘*An Act For Effecting Arrangement With The East India Company and For The Government of His Majesty’s Indian Territories*.’⁶¹ Specifically, several enactments were discussed and passed regarding the admission of students into Haileybury College, after it was formally established in 1806. The discussion of 1834 was crucial in understanding the history of the institution because it was in this year that Haileybury’s transformation from an all boy’s boarding school into an institution that exclusively trained men headed for the Indian empire was completed.⁶² This transformation

⁶¹ ‘An Act An Act For Effecting Arrangement With The East India Company and For The Government of His Majesty’s Indian Territories till the Thirtieth day of April One Thousand eight hundred and Fifty four’, (August 28, 1833). Part of the Saint Helena Act 1833, also known as the Charter Act of 1833 that extended the East India Company’s charter for another 20 years is an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom in *Gulielmi IV. Regis, Anno Tertio & Quarto* (3 & 4 Will 4 c 85), pg. 1081-1085

⁶² One of the foremost monographs that drew out the networks of connection between public schools, ritualism and empire building was PJ Rich’s *Chains of Empire: English Public Schools, Masonic Cabalism, Historical Causality and Imperial Clubdom* (Regency Press, London and New York, 1991). This book was essentially concerned with causality of British imperial rule by ritual as encouraged by the English public schools. Further, Rich argues that ceremonialism that was taught at the public schools bolstered the image of the Britons as a colonizing power, a tradition continued in India’s British clubland. As the logic of British rule started to be based more on differences it was most well reflected in the English public school ethos. Ronald Hyam in *Empire and Sexuality (Studies in Imperialism)* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991) and JA Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism (Sport in the Global Society)* (Frank Cass, London, 1998) trace a significant shift in the nineteenth century in how masculinity came to be defined: maleness now needed to be more hardened, militarized and focused on bravery and to lose the more feminine touches like sensitivity and a caring attitude. Both of these authors examine the public school as the perfect breeding ground for the construction of this British masculinity exemplified by stoicism, hardiness and endurance. Patrick Duane’s *Gentlemen Emigrants: From the British Public School to the Canadian Frontier* (Douglas and McIntyre, Vancouver, 1981) uses the Canadian colony as a case study to investigate the effectiveness of British public school education in the running and administering of colonies by the men who were products of the English public education system.

of the institution into a training ground for the men of the empire occurred around the same time that the British Parliament was starting to recognize India's huge importance as a colonial state in their quest to become a world power. It was decided as a principal policy that for every four students admitted into the college, one would be expected to fill a vacancy in the civil establishment of India within four years of graduating from the college. The commissioners in charge of making the rules, regulations, and provisions for the college were given complete autonomy in securing the fittest candidates for admission, and for the examination and qualifications of such candidates, as well as for the appointment and remuneration of the fittest examiners, who would then be reviewed and approved by the Parliament. Made up of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, Haileybury College was to "...best adapt to secure the appropriate education of young men intended for the Civil Service of the *East India Company in India*."⁶³ The discussion held under the King William the Fourth regarding the revamping of the college was formalized into an Act on May 9, 1838, shortly after his death.

Haileybury College was modeled on the Fort William College instituted in Calcutta in 1800 by Lord Wellesley. It is significant to note here that while Britishness was starting to seem more about an attitude of superiority taking over the running of the empire, the administrators of the empire were still drawing influence from their Orientalist predecessors, even when the question of the most effective means to run Haileybury came up. Popularly known as the 'University of the East' the College of Fort William was supposed to give potential civil servants a vocational and intellectual introduction to India. Wellesley's plan was to provide the young men coming from Britain three years of intensive training in all Indian languages and subjects

⁶³ 'An Act to Enable The commissioners For The Affairs of India to Make Rules and Regulations For Haileybury College (9th May. 1838), *Anno Primo, Victoriae Reginae, Cap. XXII*

like mathematics, chemistry, zoology and history before they ventured off to either the Calcutta, Bombay or Madras Presidencies. According to Wellesley, the training for these men at the College of Fort William was essential to coincide with the changing nature of The East India Company's more powerful presence in India. For him, the training of the men needed to be more as officials of the state than as commercial agents. Justifying the importance of the Fort William College for the training of these men, Wellesley said,

“...they are required to discharge the functions of magistrates, judges...in all the complicated and extensive relations of those sacred trusts and exalted stations, and under peculiar circumstances, which greatly enhance the solemnity of every public obligation, and the difficulty of every public charge.”⁶⁴

While Wellesley's views about the usefulness of the Fort William College were well received, the problems with the setting up of such an institution quickly became evident. The first question that came up was one about who would have control over the running of the institution. On the question of jurisdiction, Wellesley's more egalitarian approach on the question of admitting students on merit went against the autonomy of the Directors of the company. Meritorious admission to Fort William College went against the Director's privileges of appointing students for admission at the Fort William College based on their own and the Governor General's recommendations.

It was not just the threat to the Director's authority that made the college in Calcutta an unpopular proposition as time went on. The Directors of the East India Company had also decided that the expense of running the college in Calcutta wasn't cost effective. While the changing nature of colonialism alone would have justified training its agents in London, evangelical influences were at work that also necessitated the preparation of the training of

⁶⁴ 'Notes With Respect To The Foundation Of A College at Fort William, July 10, 1800 in *The Despatches Of The Marquis Wellesley*, edited by Montgomery Martin, (London, 1836), pg. 325-326



Haileybury College, Illustration by IC Buckler in 1831 at the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies

colonial officers to be conducted in London. A vocal Evangelical, Charles Grant came up with a compromised re-working of Wellesley's ambitions regarding the Fort William College in Calcutta. According to Grant, formative years spent in India for men of the empire might negate the vision of the Company's civil service as the vital spearhead of Western cultural and Christian change.⁶⁵ Instead of waiting for the students to be trained in Calcutta after their arrival, it was felt to be more effective if the moral and physical training of their future leaders could be carried out in London.

⁶⁵ Henry Morris, *The Life of Charles Grant, Sometime Member of Parliament for Inverness-Shire and the Director of the East India Company* (John Murray, London, 1904), pg. 243-244

In his reasoning for the necessity of setting up a college like Haileybury, Rev. T.R. Malthus, Professor of History and Political Economy, compared the future officers representing the East India Company to pilgrims about to embark on their journey fully prepared. More specifically, he wanted the future rulers of India to be battle-ready and prepared for all eventualities, thereby making Haileybury College the crucial training ground to groom men destined to rule over the Indian empire as representatives of Britain. He argued it was detrimental to the students if they were prematurely exposed to the moral and physically degenerate influences that were sure to be present in India. According to him, for the future rulers of the Indian sub-continent it was important to have,

“...an interval allowed, which may confirm both his strength and his principles. Let him be granted a period of training, which shall fortify him with English habits and English feelings. Let him have time to fall in love with his country...like other elevated and enlightened attachments, it will guard his absent virtue and stimulate his exiled ambition.”⁶⁶

T.R. Malthus wasn't alone in his thinking that the men being trained to lead India as representatives of Great Britain needed specialized training, both inside and outside the classroom, in English ways and manners. It had come to be accepted that the training of these men for their roles in India, morally, physically, sentimentally, and intellectually, was certainly symptomatic of the changing nature of how the practice of colonial rule was shifting from an economic conglomerate running the daily affairs of India on an ad hoc basis to a formalized structure of power that was hierarchical and ordered.

The creation and structuring of Haileybury College coincided with the changing logic among imperialists about how India should be governed, which made the institution a key cog in the East India Company's mechanism of consolidating and continuing rule of India.

⁶⁶ Rev. TR Malthus, 'Statements Respecting The East India College, With An Appeal to Facts In Refutation Of The Charges Lately Brought Against It In The Court of Proprietors', *Quarterly Review*, (Murray, London, 1817), pg. 123

Historiography of colonial India on the topic of British rule over India has well documented the transformative nature of imperial rule, which from the beginning of the 19th century witnessed dramatic change in the interaction between the British colonizers and the Indian colonized.⁶⁷ British imperial rule slowly became more autocratic in nature, intent upon creating and maintaining differences between Indians and British for better and more effective governance and implementation of law and order. During the beginning of the 19th century, the East India Company and the British Parliament became persuaded that effective governance of India lay in the proper grooming and training in the character of its implementers and their moral, social and cultural sensibilities. Haileybury College provided a space for the cultivation and production of an idea of Britishness that was exclusive in character, upheld and displayed all that was superior about it, and thus served the needs of Britain's changing imperial ambitions. The need to understand the history of Haileybury is critical to understanding the history of British elite club culture in colonial India. Much like the elite clubs, Haileybury too was an exclusive space where membership or admission was not accessible to everyone. Like the club, the sanctified interior of Haileybury fostered a specific culture of sociability that closely resembled the implied superiority of colonial Britishness. It is the practices learnt within the interiors of Haileybury that

⁶⁷ Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996) was one of the foremost monographs that talked about the ways the British acquired knowledge that was imperative for them to determine, codify, control and represent both the Indian past and in the process, creating their own identity antithetical to the Indian one. Nicholas Dirks ed. *Colonialism and Culture* (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1992) explores the complex ways in which beliefs, discourses and customs reinforce differences between the natives and the Britons which in turn helped the colonizers express their power. Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper ed., *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2011) argued that faced with internal and external challenges on a daily basis, the empire builders needed to improvise on a daily basis. Imperial repertoires of rule needed to be flexible, not constrained by their geographical location, but rather open to innovation and that means the practicing of differences between communities. The common thread between these works and many others was that they all argued successfully how culture was used as a category to create and implement differences in the history of British colonialism in India.

was continuously performed in the Calcutta's colonial clubland, that has been termed as the ability to club or clubbability.

Initially called the East India College, the Company had leased Hartford Castle when the college first opened its doors to handpicked boys in February 1806. At the time the responsibility of the daily running of the college was handed over to a new standing committee comprised of the Court of Directors, the Committee of College. This new college committee was made up of a Chairman, a deputy Chairman and nine senior members from the Court of Directors. The direct involvement of the Court of Directors in the admission process, and in the daily running of the college, shows how invested the Company was in the college and its students. It played a key role in representing the Company's economic, political, and social interests in India. Architect William Wilkins was hired in December of 1805 to complete the building of the college. Wilkins produced a,

“...dignified Greek design, planned as a square of buildings enclosing a glass quadrangle. The main feature of the college was the southern block, 430 feet long, broken by three imposing Ionic porticoes and faced with Portland stone.”⁶⁸

Construction of the college at Haileybury estate began in May 1806 and the East India College was officially transferred to Haileybury in 1809, when its name was also changed to Haileybury College. The Charter Act of 1813 recognized the legitimacy of the college and stipulated that all appointees would have to complete four terms at Haileybury before they could proceed to India.

From the time of its establishment in 1806 till its eventual closing in 1857, Haileybury College went through two markedly different phases, transitioning from a boarding school into a training ground for future imperialists by 1834. Until 1833, Haileybury College fashioned itself

⁶⁸ J. Mordaunt Crook, 'Haileybury and the Greek Revival: The Architecture of William Wilkins RA', *The Haileyburian*, (Hertford, Haileybury, 1964).

essentially as a boarding school for boys. Long before the formal establishment of Haileybury as East India College in 1806, a provisions charter of 1793 that discussed the establishment of the college, ensured that most boys entering the college were admitted through patronage and personal contacts, being trained for employment either in England or in India. The original Committee of Correspondence discussed the issue of appointing a headmaster rather than dean or principal. The significance of this is while the school functioned as a boarding school for boys, the headmaster's authority reigned supreme in daily administrative decision-making. As the character of the institution evolved from a boys' boarding school to a training ground for future imperialists, the Directors of East India Company continued to play a more active and dominant role, thereby diminishing the responsibility of the headmaster. Further, the Directors changed the designation of the headmaster to dean, a more appropriate position for when the transformation of the school to a college would be completed.

The confusion regarding what Haileybury's purpose was continued till 1833, when the *Act For Effecting Arrangement With the East India Company* was tabled for discussion. After 1833, it was decided that students were not to be admitted until they had attained the age of 17, and the institution at last began to approximate to collegiate standards both in its curriculum and more importantly in its purpose.

While there were some deep rooted philosophical changes made in the way Haileybury College was run, especially after 1834, the college continued to be inspired by the methods of the College of Fort William established in Calcutta almost a 100 years earlier. The syllabus at the College, with a focus on the study of India, its history, geography and the linguistic study of Indian languages, was kept intact. Yet, while the syllabus may have followed a similar pattern to the College in Calcutta, what Haileybury College was trying to implement in terms of an ethos

was markedly different from anything the East India Company had tried earlier.⁶⁹ Former Governor Generals like Wellesley had been more interested in providing the future officers of India with a deeper intellectual understanding of how Indian society functioned to rule over them more effectively. For Wellesley, this understanding was the true sublime of British legislation and government. Yet, as time progressed, Britain's political presence in India grew, and with the prominent evangelical influences at work and the emergence of a professional ethic among the Company's men, the mood for collaboration with the natives came to an end.

Under the emerging ethos it was a prerequisite for anyone with ambitions to join the civil service to be consciously trained to remember to wear their Britishness with pride, as a marker of distinction. This Britishness was closely tied up with the virtuosity of displaying masculine traits like bravery, discipline, respect for authority and an innate belief in the superiority of the British nation. Acknowledging the spirit of Britishness that was conditioned in the students as a part of their everyday training a former student spoke about the long term impact of a Haileybury education on the minds of its students,

“...It was here that we first became cognizant of the fact that we were members of the Civil Service, a body whose mission it was to rule and to civilize that empire which had been won for us by the sword; it was there that we first became firmly impressed with a conviction that, as members of such a body, there were certain traditions to be kept up and handed over to our successors, a political faith to be cherished, and a code of public and private honor to be maintained.”⁷⁰

It is my contention here that the training the students received in a code of conduct learnt and practiced at Haileybury was carried on as a tradition of performance of clubbability within the interiors of the British elite club. The training of the boys at Haileybury instilled with a certain

⁶⁹ Percival Spear, *Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth Century India* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998) traces a very isolated life of the writers arriving to Bengal in the eighteenth century and soon falling prey to the degenerate native influences. The story of discord, disunity and a the lack of a sense of association between the writers and junior men of the company was also the topic of Dennis Kincaid's, *British Social Life in India: 1608-1937* (Rupa Publications, New Delhi, 1938)

⁷⁰ Sir M. Monier-Williams, *Memorials of Old Haileybury College* (Archibald Constable and Company, Westminster, 1894), pg. 93

spirit of Britishness was symptomatic of the changing ideologies of colonialism that was more about upholding Britishness while keeping native influences at bay. The new ideologies of colonialism had a direct bearing on the way Haileybury was being represented and on its functioning. A note written by T.R. Malthus clearly lays out the priority of turning boys into men, to train impressionable minds, and this is where the change in the way Haileybury was being administered, as discussed in 1834, becomes evident. The tenor of the College underwent a drastic change in its administration and in its purpose as evidenced in T.R. Malthus' own understanding of what the College should henceforth be aiming to do. Writing seventeen years before the meeting of 1834, T.R. Malthus wrote,

“...from the moment of their arrival in India, these boys must and will be men...the object of their education, therefore, for the two to three years immediately previous to their departure, ought specifically to be that which has incurred so much shallow censure, the infusion of manly feelings, and the formation of manly habits, at an earlier period than usual.”⁷¹

The preoccupation of the founders of Haileybury College was about building the characters of impressionable young men to prepare them for their eventual roles as the masters of India. This training course embarked upon at Haileybury had less to do with pure academic training of men, and focused more upon building the character of such men, through the practice and rigorous ritualization of a certain kind of masculine Britishness.⁷² This Britishness was

⁷¹ Rev. TR Malthus, 'Statements Respecting The East India College, With An Appeal to Facts In Refutation Of The Charges Lately Brought Against It In The Court of Proprietors', *Quarterly Review*, (Murray, London, April, 1817), pg. 125

⁷² Gender, nationalism, race and empire has been subject of various studies in imperial, South Asia and British historiography. Masculinity, was an ever changing marker of identity that the British middle class men both in the metropole and in the colonies exhibited and refashioned depending on the threats it faced. It is this self-definition of the British masculine identity that the other (British working class, the colonized subject) were judged on the basis of and declared as effeminate or feminine. Cultural expressions of imperialism grew noisy, racist, with a rising self-consciousness about their authority to rule is the subject of Patrick Brantlinger's *British Literature and Imperialism (1830-1914)* (Cornell University, Ithaca, 1990), British men couched external and internal threats to their gender identity in biological terms, signifying the importance of physicality to definitions of masculinity in Elizabeth Collingham's *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001), Philippa Levine ed., *Gender and Empire (Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series)* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001) discusses how Anglican male only species were encroached upon by a variety of actors which threatened their immutable core of masculinity. It is here that I see the emergence and proliferation of the elite

unique in that it was predicated on the assumption that its practitioners would steadfastly remain courageous in action, maintain coolness in danger, and remain calm in fatigue and privation. Other necessary characteristics that Haileybury College fostered in its boys were a union of firmness with gentleness in command and the exercise of promptness and cheerfulness in obedience. These particular features of Britishness, were created and practiced expressly for the purpose and extending and consolidating British colonial rule by its practitioners who cleaved together to constitute a fraternity, wore the same mask, had the same manners, and exercised the same volition. The performers of Britishness, for the purposes of securing imperial hegemonic control, was learned at school, rehearsed and recreated at the clubs, and then put to use in running the colonies.

During Haileybury College's brief existence, there were numerous debates surrounding the institution and its utility. Ideological debates raged on about how it should be run to best serve its students. The crucial question to ask here would be: what kind of teaching would serve the purpose of the students of the college to later become employees of the Company? Would the students stand to benefit more from learning more deeply about India in the way Wellesley had envisaged, by developing a more empathetic understanding of Indian history and culture? Opposed to this view were the Anglicists who were firm in their belief that the best way Haileybury could train its students for their careers in India as representatives of the Company was to gain a firm grounding in European subjects like political economy, classics and British history. Eventually it was decided that the curriculum should be a combination of training in Oriental subjects as well as being tutored in European subjects.

club in the colonial context as crucial. The club was the only haven left to the upper grade officers of the British colonial state where Britishness and masculinity could, for the most part, be practiced and performed unthreatened by outsiders.

The next question that split the officials in charge of running the college was that of the overall orientation of the institution. Should conscious focus be on the practical and academic learning of subjects or a more focused attention on character building? Company officials were aware that while academic knowledge was a part of the training for the boys, it certainly wasn't the composite whole. The East India Company directors wanted to make sure that their representatives (once residing in India) would continue to cherish and uphold a set of values reflective of the affective profile that they had been trained in at Haileybury. The tenets of imperialism were deeply concerned with the encouragement of particular dispositions and closer attachments and links among the graduates of the college that would consolidate the social, colonial and physical division between colonizer and colonized.

The close forms of mutual association formed between the men at Haileybury had been held as crucial and were incorporated into the daily rituals at the school. The sense of camaraderie that developed between the graduates continued long after they had graduated and moved on with their professional commitments in India. The appreciation that the students of the institution felt for the training they received to prepare them for India is well evidenced in a speech that was delivered by one of its most well-established graduates. The continued association between the students of Haileybury College, reminiscing about their glorious training and time spent at Haileybury is well evidenced at a dinner held in Calcutta on January 23rd, 1864. Describing the importance of this dinner, the invitation emphasized that the,

“...opportunity was taken of the presence of numerous Civilians from all parts of Bengal, Behar and Orissa, and even Benares, to set up a Haileybury dinner. The idea, which originated with one or two gentlemen resident in Calcutta, was warmly and generally taken up by members of the Service, who had been educated at the East India College.”⁷³

⁷³ *The Statesman*, 20th January, 1864

The dinner was attended by Mr. Beadon, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal at the time, and eighty-five Civilian officers. Mr. Beadon toasted the,

“...Governor-General (Sir John Lawrence 1864-1869) as an ‘old Haileybury man’ were received with a burst of applause from all quarters of the room, and the local allusions, in the speech on Haileybury, to College dignitaries, College studies, local scenery, and College servants, elicited similar marks of feeling on the part of the guests...”⁷⁴

The seating arrangement for the dinner was not organized by rank or official precedence. Rather it was organized in order of the years and terms each man had spent at the college. Among the most prominent names present at this dinner were Sir Charles Trevelyan (Deputy Secretary, Bengal Presidency) who graduated from Haileybury College in 1828, W S Seton Karr (Vice Chancellor, University of Calcutta) who graduated in 1842, S S Hogg (Registrar, Calcutta High Court) who graduated in 1853 and C J Mackenzie (Lieutenant, British army) who graduated in 1855. The dinner was touted as the largest gathering of the members of the Civil Service that had ever taken place in Calcutta.

In his own recollection of his time spent at Haileybury W.S. Seton Karr reminisced about the location and the greenery that surrounded the college calling it a,

“...plunge in the Lea immortalized and the angle of Izaak Walton...of an evening stroll down that well-known lane...with its high banks, on the high road at the bottom of which that genuine historical character, the late Mr. Gilpin rode on his memorable race from Edmonton to Ware.”⁷⁵

The dinner was significant for a number of reasons. It was held at a time when only five years previously Haileybury College had been formally abolished and entry into the Civil Services was conducted through open examinations where any student with a Bachelors’ degree was eligible to apply for the exam. Melancholic about the end of the Haileyburian era, Seton Karr pondered,

“...whether we consider the extent and diversity of the lectures, or the ability and earnestness of the professors...or the bond of union amongst us all to which our institution gave rise, our feelings, I think, on

⁷⁴ Sir M. Monier-Williams, *Memorials of Old Haileybury College* (Archibald Constable and Company, Westminster, 1894), pg. 100

⁷⁵ Ibid, pg. 91

hearing the extinction of the College...to use the quaint, but striking and characteristic words of Mr. Le Bas, it was a disruption of many ties, and a dilaceration of many feelings.”⁷⁶

Even while the guests at this dinner mourned the closing of their beloved college, they were still hopeful that the sense of associations and fraternity that these men had fostered would be carried on by the successive generation of Civil Service officers. The group implored the next group of Civil Service officers to uphold the virtues of Britishness that had been so proudly performed by the Haileyburian men. While acknowledging at this dinner that scholastic knowledge was crucial for better administration of India, Mr. Seton Karr and the audience agreed that the bond of association formed between the men of the same profession was a far more important virtue to uphold. In a bid to continue the tradition of encouraging professional camaraderie and fostering a sense of associational life between the officers, Seton Karr said,

“...for some years past all the junior posts in the Service have been filled, and filled efficiently, by a new order of men, who owe their appointments to tried competitive merit and not to the accidents of private and political connection or of birth. I feel sure that we shall all be anxious to exhibit in the Service of the Crown the same zeal and fidelity, and the same anxiety to carry out, to the full, the policy of the Government of the day, that we exhibited to the best of masters, the old Company...we shall hold out to every fresh member the right hand of fellowship and wish him success in his work...we shall be content to be far surpassed in talent, if we are only equaled in integrity and honor. I trust they will not disdain to adopt from us some of those traditions...that, wanting the union which was supplied by Haileybury, they will remember that the reputation of a public body, to be built up securely, must rest no less on rectitude of intention and on probity of character, than on any depth and variety of scholastic attainment...”⁷⁷

It is here that the role of the British elite club becomes crucial. The club helped bridge the transitory phase between the Haileyburian trained officers and the later emerging competition wallahs. Overlooking the differences in their background, it was more important for the men of Haileybury College to initiate and guide the competition wallahs into how to practice and perform the most appropriate kind of Britishness in colonial Calcutta. Clubbability, as I will later argue, was one of the key component of this Britishness that first emerged in the training at

⁷⁶ Ibid, pg. 181

⁷⁷ Ibid, pg. 181

Haileybury, recreated and rehearsed in Calcutta's colonial clubland, and was continued as a key identity marker for the later rulers of India.

The sense of associational brotherhood that the college fostered among its students stood the test of time and was rather proudly displayed and celebrated in the far-off regions of Bengal. It was this sense of association of Britishness formed at Haileybury that would lead to the founding of British clubs in Calcutta that provided a permanent home for the celebration of this burgeoning sense of brotherhood.

One of the numerous ways in which Haileybury trained its students for India was to provide and condition them to an isolated experience where they could be compelled to turn to each other for support, thereby fostering a sense of association with each other. It was the hope of the college that in learning to associate based on the similar training they had received at the College, they would not feel the need to turn to Indians to fulfill any void for sociability. The success of such an attempt was appreciated by Sir Monier Monier-Williams, Professor of Sanskrit, Persian, and Hindustani at the College. Despite being an Orientalist at heart, Sir Williams saw the clear benefit in isolating the students of the college to the point where their principle source of sociability had to be sought out from one another. During his tenure at the college Sir Monier noted that "...the very isolation and rusticity of the College was not without its advantages."⁷⁸ For the students and faculty alike, having been thrown to their own resources, and being shut up within the four walls of a rather dreary quadrangle did not take away the growing need for conviviality. So, as a result, the men of the College, "...seemed determined to make themselves agreeable to each other, and to cultivate under all circumstances a

⁷⁸ Frederick Charles Danvers, Sir M Monier-Williams, Sir Steuart Colvin Bayley, Percy Wigram, The Late Brande Sapte and Many Contributors, *Memorials of Old Haileybury College* (Archibald Constable and Company, Westminster, 1894), pg. 117

mutual *entente cordiale*.”⁷⁹ According to Sir Monier, this resulted in, ‘...a very sociable and neighborly society or community of human beings living together in the utmost possible harmony and accord.’⁸⁰ A key component of Britain’s continued domination over India was a sense of brotherhood and association among its main proponents. Haileybury College taught its students to socialize with one another based on a common set of principles and beliefs, the training and conditioning to lean on one another and exclude others not from a similar background was later the key feature of club life in colonial Calcutta.

Long before Sir Williams had written about the effective advantages this isolated experience had on the students and faculty at the college, the creation of such associations were being written about when the college was still at a nascent stage. Recognizing the advantages in cultivating the minds of the boys in a secluded and insulated environment, Reverend Charles Webb Le Bas, first a professor of Mathematics in 1813 and later principal of the College from 1837 to 1843, wrote to a friend,

“...it is a signal blessing to have within reach a few well informed, enlightened neighbors, disposed to meet frequently in an easy, confidential, unambitious manner, and most of them united by that similarity of habit and feeling and principle, which residence at an University is sure to communicate to those who are not wholly unworthy of its benefits.”⁸¹

The easy communication, encouraged by the frequent meeting between like-minded men, encouraging the growth of informal association was a tradition that was carried out throughout the duration of the existence of the college.

Haileybury College was set up on principles that were similar to the ones that clubs were set up on the basis of. A conducive, safe and disciplined environment where one could meet occasionally to exchange news and opinions with his peers, to debate and discuss issues of

⁷⁹ Ibid, pg. 117

⁸⁰ Ibid, pg. 117

⁸¹ Ibid, pg. 117-118

common interests was what was common between the college and the clubs. One of the most vociferous advocates of club land in London was Joseph Addison. According to him,

“...man is said to be a sociable animal; and as an instance of it we may observe, that we take all occasions and pretences of forming ourselves into those little nocturnal assemblies, which are commonly known by the name of Clubs. When a set of men find themselves agree in any particular...they establish themselves into a kind of fraternity, and meet once or twice a week, upon the account of such a fantastic resemblance.”⁸²

While we see that the elite clubs most certainly followed this ethos in their daily functioning, it is the resemblance of a common goal, to rule India as effectively, that made Haileybury College flourish for as long as it did. Haileybury College was established with the intention of creating and training British boys before the start of their professional lives in India. More importantly, the boys of the college were supposed to embody the new logic of British rule in their performances that makes Haileybury the perfect precursor to the emergence of British elite clubs in colonial Calcutta.

Functioning in a more informal manner than most other institutions, Haileybury encouraged the men and the boys to socialize, not just within their own circle but also cutting across the invisible boundaries between teachers and students. The training at the college encouraged the students to take on leadership roles like their instructors, to train for their role as imperial masters of the Indian sub-continent. Sir Monier, once again, praised the utility of such an experience. The learning of the correct kind of sociability was crucial for training the minds of these young men who were “...cut off from the outer world...[and] deprived of the advantage of that wholesome intercourse and useful attrition.”⁸³ To counter the effects of this secluded atmosphere, the faculty at the Institution took it upon themselves to, “...throw open their homes

⁸² John Timbs, *Clubs and Club Life in London- With Anecdotes of Its Famous Coffeehouses, Hostelries, and Taverns from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Time*, (Chatto and Windus, London, 1899), pg. 6

⁸³ Frederick Charles Danvers, Sir M Monier-Williams, Sir Steuart Colvin Bayley, Percy Wigram, The Late Brande Sapte and Many Contributors, *Memorials of Old Haileybury College* (Archibald Constable and Company, Westminster, 1894), pg. 116

to all these young men who appreciated the amenities and refining influences of domestic life.”⁸⁴

The tradition of leaning upon each other, based on a common conditioning and training of the mind, for these boys held them in good stead once they arrived in India.⁸⁵

Fulfilling the plans that the creators of the institution had to separate and segregate its students, to condition them to lean on one another and to keep at bay everyone else who hadn't been trained in a fashion similar to their own, served the colonial ideology of distinction. Politically, colonialism functioned through the brute force of power and through political maneuverings, but the basis of the rule had far more to do with the way the rulers of the empire represented themselves through performances of Britishness. Isolation, exclusion, and practices of distinction, all traits of Haileyburian Britishness consolidated the ideologies of colonialism more than political machinations.

While the interaction between the faculty and the students certainly advanced a sense of belonging to an elite circle, encouraging, nurturing and training in the growth and proliferation of a certain kind of Britishness, the students were also encouraged to adopt and practice forms of clubbability amongst themselves. The practice of socialization that was started at Haileybury was an antecedent to the later production and dissemination of a similar culture in Calcutta's clubland. The atmosphere of clubbability practiced at the College can be seen as an

⁸⁴ *ibid*, pg. 116.

⁸⁵ Historical studies on the role and contribution of Haileybury College for the purposes of ruling effectively over the Indian colony remains scanty. One of the most effective articles that have come out in the recent times that links Haileybury College's contribution to British colonial enterprise from the time it was formed to the time in 1858 when the college finally shut its doors has been Callie Wilkinson's 'The East India College Debate and the Fashioning of Imperial Officials 1806-1858' in *The Historical Journal* (Volume 60, No. 4, December 2017, pg. 943-969). Some other studies that have indicated the role of Haileybury College as being significant have been Jacob Thiessen's, 'Anglo-Indian Vested Interests and Civil Service Education, 1800-1858: Indications of an East India Company Line', *Journal of World History* (No. 4, 1994, pg. 23-46), Emmeline Cohen, *The Growth of the British Civil Service, 1780-1939* (Allen & Unwin, London, 1941) and Keith Tribe, 'Professors Malthus and Jones: Political Economy at the East India College, 1806-1858' in *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* (No.2, 1995, pg. 327-354).

early precursor to the way clubland was set up in Calcutta in another twenty years' as discussed in Chapter III below. Much like the clubs in Calcutta, the less grandiose version of it in Haileybury was about likeminded boys forming an association where food and drinks were served aplenty. However, strict rules and regulations were not so stringently laid out for how the members of this club within the college were supposed to behave. In summarizing how this microcosm of the later burgeoning club culture came to flourish, Sir. Monier observed,

“...sometimes two or three students formed themselves into a club to breakfast and mess together in the same room...I may mention, too, that in my student days the authorities winked at the existence of “the club” *par excellence*; that is, of a room enlarged by being cleared of its bed-recess and furnished with an extra number of chairs or couches...In the room eight or ten men met for breakfast and lunch, and in the evenings nominally for tea, but often to drink wine...and to indulge in forbidden revelries.”⁸⁶

While the later functioning and running of the clubs, either in London or Calcutta was remarkably more refined and disciplined, as an early precursor it is how the institution of forming “the club” was encouraged among students of Haileybury in ways that later galvanized the growth and popularity of a thriving club culture in Calcutta.

The way the boys at Haileybury were being trained, with a focus on learning about Western philosophies and British history while receiving training in Indian languages, constituted a unique curriculum for an English school at the time. One of the most vocal proponents of this kind of unique academic training given at Haileybury College, T.R. Malthus, described the students of the institution as forming a sort of caste. His usage of the distinctive term caste, had less to do with socio-economic disparity, and more to do with the exclusive background and orientation of the boys of the college who were hand-picked to receive training on how to run India, that not every school boy in England was privy to at the time. In justifying his using the moniker of caste to describe the Haileyburians, Malthus argued that it,

“...applied to an institution which should collect a great number of young persons of various births and educations...which should so collect them at the age of sixteen...which should instruct them in the same

⁸⁶ Ibid, pg. 61

branches of European knowledge as are taught in British seminaries...In fact, the European part of the education, which such seminary would afford, would be peculiar only in this, that it would be *peculiarly general*..."⁸⁷

Responding to critics of the College who felt that training disseminated in Oriental languages might tarnish the image of the institution, Malthus was confident that wasn't going to be the case. According to him,

"...he who supposes that a society otherwise of British feelings and habits, could be converted into an Indian *caste* by a slight initiation into one or two foreign languages, must have a singular idea indeed of British feelings and British habits!"⁸⁸

For the educators of Haileybury, the primary purpose of the institution was to enable its students to acquire British feelings and habits in ways where they were convinced of their own superiority and to believe in the supremacy of their own race and nationality that would legitimize their positions as rulers of India.

This sense of pride in being British and practicing Britishness, while it brought the men of the institution closer together in a sense of bonding and association, by default also served to create distinctions between themselves and their future Indian subjects. Merely thinking of themselves as being a superior class of men wasn't enough, it had to be practiced and ritualized in a way where that superiority was believed, established, and performed. There was a need for the men of the college to be trained in a way that would convince them of their purpose and duty to rule over the barbaric Indians. In acknowledging the success of the efforts in training their students, an alumnus of the institution, during a speech delivered in Calcutta said,

"...that without some principle to elevate, some bulwark to fence them, and some compass to guide, men, though of the most shining of capacities or the most solid attainments, would never govern India successfully, or would ever govern it long."⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Rev. TR Malthus, 'Statements Respecting The East India College, With An Appeal to Facts In Refutation Of The Charges Lately Brought Against It In The Court of Proprietors', *Quarterly Review*, (Murray, London, April, 1817), pg. 134

⁸⁸ Ibid, pg. 127

⁸⁹ *The Statesman*, 20th January, 1864

The moral compass about the righteousness and the exemplariness of the British imperial project in India was further confirmed and reiterated in 1857, the year of the Mutiny. The Mutiny and its aftermath had a profound impact on the students and the faculty of the college. Accounts from the time describe in great detail the sadness that fell all over campus once the news had reached them. For example, Monday October 5th, 1857 was a day appointed by to be kept for fasting on account of the disasters and humiliation suffered in India, in solidarity with their British brothers. The faculty had, however, decided to focus more on the actions of their compatriots displaying bravery and fortitude in the face of the wickedness that had started the Mutiny and to target the collective enemy here: the Indians who had participated and initiated the Mutiny. The evangelical orientation of the Institution saw mass prayer meetings being held for the students and faculty alike to pray for the safety of their men.

Yet, not all reaction to the Mutiny at Haileybury was so muted. Once the Mutiny had been controlled and the reins of Delhi were back in the hands of the British, the college was in a celebratory mood. The celebration of the indestructible spirit of the British that was exhibited by the students were wild and uncontrolled. This seemed to go against the very rubric of training they had received at Haileybury that emphasized self-control, discipline and fortitude as the cornerstone of colonial Britishness. Yet, the boisterous and undisciplined celebrators of Britain's win in India were not punished in this instance. Observing the incident, Sir Monier summarized,

“...so great indeed was the excitement that the Dean allowed the young men to light a huge bonfire in the quadrangle...and to feed the flames they did not scruple to throw in chairs, tables, doors, and every inflammable article they could lay their hands on...the universal jubilation among Dons, students, and servants made it quite impossible for the Dean to haul any culprit over coals.”⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Frederick Charles Danvers, Sir M Monier-Williams, Sir Steuart Colvin Bayley, Percy Wigram, The Late Brande Sapte and Many Contributors, *Memorials of Old Haileybury College* (Archibald Constable and Company, Westminster, 1894), pg. 130-131

While the spirit of revelry may have been allowed to have gotten out of control, the administrators of Haileybury were quick to warn the jubilant young men on their requirement to keep the Indians at bay and more importantly, under control. The Mutiny of 1857 brought to the forefront the enormous responsibility that rested on the shoulders of the graduates of the College in maintaining control, exhibiting and practicing a superior form of Britishness in India, and keeping the natives under check, all of which was to further the economic and political interests of the Company, and thereby maintain colonial control in India.

The last ceremony that was held on the campus of Haileybury was in 1857 (the college was officially closed in 1858). Under the Government of India Act of 1858 once the East India Company had been nationalized, the existence of the college was not deemed as necessary and it was decided to close down the institution. Mr. R.D. Mangles, Chairman of the Directors of the East India Company, delivered a moving speech imploring the students and reminding them of their duties and responsibilities once they would leave for India. Asking the fresh graduates to follow in the footsteps of British officers who had gone ahead of them, Mangles openly advocated for maintaining clear lines of separation from Indians for more effective rule in the immediate aftermath of the Mutiny. In an excerpt from the speech published in a newspaper the next day, and while talking about the days of collaboration between Indians and British being over, Mangles explicitly stated,

“...up to the time of this fearful outbreak, mutual confidence and goodwill have subsisted between the governing race and the natives whom they governed. There was full trust on both sides...But now unhappily that charm has been destroyed, and now for many years to come there must exist distrust and suspicion at least, if not more bitter feelings, between those who rule and those who form the subject body.”⁹¹

⁹¹ *The Times*, 8th December 1857

The fact that the word race enters this speech is significant. The race here signifies the community of boys graduating from the College who were destined to spend their professional lives in India. The race in this speech enhances the exclusive relationship of fraternity that existed between a minority community who were destined to become the powerful force of rule to be established over colonial India.

The mutiny of 1857 marked a watershed for British rule in India. The specific training received by the men at the College, that celebrated all that was great and noble about being British while being aware and cognizant of India and its culture, that had been thought to be appropriate and suitable for the British ruling class seemed to have become less useful post-1857. The semi-collaborative nature of British colonialism as evidently taught to the students of Haileybury, in the classroom, was found to be less useful; the non-academic training received at Haileybury, focused on manliness, building up associational relationships, seemed to be the more appropriate training for the rulers of India. In this changing political climate, the graduates of Haileybury, insistent upon keeping themselves separated and segregated from Indians, spurred on by fear and mistrust, would make the emergence of clubs an integral part of the divisive nature of British colonialism.

The long-term effect of Haileybury College and its ability to impact the minds of its students needs to be remembered and acknowledged because it shaped the way the colonizers implemented policies and conducted themselves with each other in different settings and scenarios. Reminiscing about their formative years spent in Haileybury, the author of *A Life of Cornwallis*, editor of “Selections from the Calcutta Gazette,” and a former student of Haileybury, W.S. Seton Karr, proudly declared,

“...it was here that we first became cognizant of the fact that we were members of the Civil Service...it was here that we first became firmly impressed with a conviction that, as members of such a body, there were certain traditions to be kept up...a political faith to be cherished, and a code of public and private

honor to be rigidly maintained. There, too, springing out of similarity of tastes and pursuits, or created by the generous spirit of rivalry through which not an atom of bitterness was ever produced...laid the foundation of those firm and lasting friendships...which, in, years after remained proof against diversity of experience and difference of success.”⁹²

This legacy of Haileybury lay in the key role it played in providing a space for a group of like-minded men of a similar orientation coming together, to form bonds inside and outside the classroom that continued long after they had reached India. Careful management and salutary discipline that bound the men of a similar ethos together at Haileybury and later at the British elite clubs, both in London and Calcutta. The language T.S. Peppin uses to summarize the associational character of an elite club is similar to the way Haileybury College functioned.

According to Peppin,

“...the sense of corporate action and common effort is, perhaps, the most important and far-reaching result of such an institution as this, and it is easy to see how this is bound up with that capacity for organization and independent effort which has been so strikingly evident among the industrial classes of late years.”⁹³

This alliance that was forged, formed, practiced, and performed at Haileybury continued its legacy through the club as discussed below in Chapter III.

While it is easy to criticize the institution and its contribution, it still played a key role in fashioning an attitude for men who were groomed to represent Britain in the Indian colony. The institution came to embody within itself debates and uncertainties about education, identity formation, and empire. The connection between identity formation, the ability to rule over India, and practices of ritualized Britishness are also key to understanding why, in later years, the gentleman’s club became such a crucial part of British empire in India.

⁹² Frederick Charles Danvers, Sir M Monier-Williams, Sir Steuart Colvin Bayley, Percy Wigram, The Late Brande Sapte and Many Contributors, *Memorials of Old Haileybury College* (Archibald Constable and Company, Westminster, 1894), pg. 9

⁹³ TS Peppin, *Clubland of the Toiler: Exemplified by the Workmen’s Club and Institute Union* (JM Dent & Co., London, 1895), pg. 7

Despite its earlier success in recruiting and training men for careers in India, the East India Company Board that ran Haileybury College was frequently at loggerheads with the Parliament about how India as a colony was being administered under the Board's tutelage. The charter drawn up by the East India Company Board was discussed and approved by both Houses of Parliament in 1793. It was then renewed three times, in 1813, 1833 and 1853, with each renewal chipping away a little of the monopolistic power of the Company's trading interests. In the Act of 1853, the Directors of the East India Company ended up losing their privileges of nominating men to the Indian Civil Service. Haileybury College still continued to survive, but, changes had started to be proposed that would establish a competitive examination to replace the Director's patronage that had been the predominant trend at Haileybury.⁹⁴

In July of 1855 when Mr. Vernon Smith was President of the Board of Control that oversaw the running of the East India Company, Parliament passed, "An Act to Relieve the East India Company From The Obligations To Maintain The College at Haileybury". It stated that after January 31st 1858, the college would be closed, and that no student should be admitted after January 1856. Parliament also deprived the Company of civil patronage and existing admissions practices were replaced by open examinations. When the early murmurs of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 had started, the Parliament had insisted upon devising an alternative to the Haileyburian model of training boys for their roles as colonial administrators. Even prior to the passing of the Act of 1855, a Royal Commission Report was presented in 1853. A recommendation was made to change the entrance requirement for the Indian Civil Service to include open competition. Educational reformers urged the government to wrest the power away from the Company that had selected men through patronage alone. Charles Wood, serving as the President

⁹⁴ Callie Wilkinson, 'The East India College Debate and the Fashioning of Imperial Officials 1806-1858' in *The Historical Journal* (Volume 60, No. 4, December 2017, pg. 943-969)

of the Board of Control that oversaw the running of the East India Company, did not see examinations based on open competition and Haileybury as particularly compatible.

Yet, Wood was a supporter of the education being imparted at Haileybury, and commented that, "...the only place where an education could be acquired that would fit a person for employment in India was at Haileybury."⁹⁵ Yet, champions of civil service reform in the nineteenth century like Sir Charles Trevelyan and Lord Macaulay, wanted to end the monopoly of Haileybury as the only institution deemed fit to produce the right civil servants for India. On November 30, 1854, while presenting the Royal Commission Report to the Court of Directors, Wood claimed that he did not think the continued maintenance of Haileybury desirable and that a bill should be introduced for its abolition. It was the irrelevance of Haileybury in serving the need of the new crop of civil servants that compelled him to tell the Court of Directors that,

"...this college as, it is now constituted for the education of youths from the age of 17, appears to me to be altogether unsuited to the instruction of gentlemen, many of whom may have passed through the full course of education at one or other of the universities."⁹⁶

The closing of Haileybury came at a time when higher education like a university degree was no more a monopoly enjoyed only by certain classes. Boys from middle class families had now started to have ambitions of joining the colonial civil services that had been opened up to any qualifying college graduate.

Writing in the early 1850s, Benjamin Jowett, fellow and tutor at Balliol College in Oxford wrote to William Gladstone, MP, about the advantages of opening the appointments to general competition. He urged that the advantages of a University education for future Indian Civil Servants was incalculable. Further, he wrote to Gladstone,

⁹⁵ Govt. of India Bill...Ordered by the House of Commons to be Printed, 9th June, 1853', 3rd series, cxxvii, 3rd June 1853, especially columns 1156-8

⁹⁶ Wood to Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the East India Company, 30th November 1854, *Parliamentary Papers* (1854-55), pg. xi

“...I cannot conceive a greater boon which would be conferred on the University than a share in the Indian appointments. The inducement thus offered would open to us a new field of knowledge: it would give us another root striking into a new soil of society...it would give an answer to the dreary question which a college tutor so often hears asked by a BA...what line of life shall I choose, with no calling to take orders and no taste for the Bar and no Connexions [sic]who are able to put me forward in life.”⁹⁷

It is interesting here to note that the plan in 1853 was not to abolish Haileybury entirely (that would not happen for another 5 years). The initial plan was to allow students from universities like Oxford and Cambridge to compete with graduates from Haileybury. Doing away with the legacy of patronage for nominations to the post of the Indian Civil Service was the first priority. The proposed replacement to the system of patronage was to hold open competitions where men, no older than twenty-two, with a university degree should be allowed to compete in the examination. Further, the open examination was meant to test the student’s expertise in the best elements of a liberal education. The aim of this new system of selection was meant to attract English gentlemen, with the intellectual abilities and connections within society that the universities enabled them to cultivate, to compete for the Indian posts. In the process of having graduates from Oxford and Cambridge replacing graduates from Haileybury, a crucial sacrifice was made. While the students of the universities were prepared with a more superior understanding of India, the sense of fraternal brotherhood that was consciously developed among the students at Haileybury was not a focal point of the training of graduates from Oxford and Cambridge.

The administration of Haileybury in 1853 realized that it needed to adapt to the new system to prepare its students to compete against their university contemporaries. In making fundamental changes—like holding an entrance examination for interested students and allowing students to opt out of learning about Indian history and geography—changes were also being

⁹⁷ Evelyn Abbott and Lewis Campbell ed. *Letters of Benjamin Jowett, M.A.*, (John Murray, London, 1899), pg. 185

made to the constitution of the college and within its staff, the latter being found to be lacking and inadequate in keeping up with the changing requirements. It was while the reformers and the politicians were trying to come up with an effective method of selection procedure for men to join the Civil Services, that news of various small unrests and uprisings from India started to reach the Parliament in London. Since Haileybury was starting to fail in meeting the requirement of the educational reformers, there was wild outburst of indignation that was expressed against the confusing dual system of governing India: University educated competition-wallahs vs. the more cohesive and close-knit associational training received by impressionable boys at Haileybury. Eventually, the method allowing students admission through a combination of patronage and competition devised in 1853 was abolished. In 1859, the East India Company expired and the government of India was taken over by the Crown.

COMPETITION WALLAHS AND THE PROLIFERATION OF BRITISHNESS:

In the post-Haileyburian era, the Indian Civil Service (ICS) system became more structured and more formalized. In summarizing the working of the British Civil Service historian Braibanti noted that "...the principal features that distinguished the modern British Civil Service were open entry based on academic competition; permanency of tenure irrespective of political party change; a division into grades or classes according to whether one's function was responsible or merely routine; a regular, graduated scale of pay; and a system of promotion based on a combination of seniority and selection by merit."⁹⁸ The main tenets of the competitive examinations were to be implemented and put into effect with the help of a commission. The commission was initially made up of Lord Ashburton, Dr. Henry Melvill (Principal

⁹⁸ Ralph Braibanti ed., *Asian Bureaucratic Systems Emergent from the British Imperial Tradition* (Duke University Press, Durham, 1966), pg. 370

of Haileybury College), Benjamin Jowett and John George Shaw Lefevre. These men came together in 1853⁹⁹.

There are parallels to be drawn between the ways in which the Civil Service system was organized and how the British elite clubland functioned. Order, regularity, sharply created divisions between who was allowed to be clubbable, the division between temporary and permanent members, a carefully laid out code of conduct to be followed, all show how the Britons made it a priority to represent their empire a certain way. British empire in India was not just about military conquest and political oppression. The great chasm that existed between the training of boys at Haileybury and the competition wallahs was often a bone of contention between the two groups. Highlighting the critical view that supporters of Haileyburians took of the competition wallahs, David Gilmour concludes,

“Admirers of the Haileybury product thought it more important that an official should be a cricketer and the champion of the bullied fags than that he should have got a Double First at Oxford. They looked down on the new breed of Civilians as milksops, too weedy to stand the climate and so unathletic that they could not even shoot or ride properly.”¹⁰⁰

The way the British rule was successfully carried out was based on how it was represented and the public image it cultivated. The way the Haileyburian students conducted themselves, the strict code of conduct that the later competition wallahs had to adhere to all found their most potent representation in the club, a successful symbol of what the British rule in India stood for.

There were three main principles laid out for how future men of the ICS were going to be recruited. The first two principles laid down by the commission were that the age for joining the Civil Service was raised to twenty-five and a requirement for the examination was a high degree

⁹⁹ Anthony Farrington, *The Records of the East India College, Haileybury and Other Institutions* (H.M. Stationary Office, London, 1976)

¹⁰⁰ David Gilmour, *The Ruling Caste: Imperial Lives in the Victorian Raj*, (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2005), pg. 64

in general education, not something that was geared towards any special or technical study of India. As detailed in the report prepared by the commission:

- 1) “It seems to us that it would be great improvement to allow students to be admitted to the college up to the age of twenty-three, and to fix twenty-five as the latest age at which they can go out to India in the Civil Service...it is also desirable that he should have received the best, the most liberal, the most finished education that his native country affords...We think it desirable that a considerable number of Civil Servants of the Company should be men who have taken the first degree in arts at Oxford and Cambridge.
- 2) ...Nor do we think that we should render any service to India by inducing her future rulers to neglect, in their earlier years, European literature and science, for studies especially Indian. We believe that men who have been engaged...in studies which have no immediate connexion with the business of any profession...will generally be found...superior to men who have, at eighteen or nineteen, devoted themselves to the special studies of their calling.
- 3) The third principle laid down by the commission was an extension of the first two. It was that the successful candidates, graduates of Oxford and Cambridge, once having passed the examination, from that period on for no less than one year, nor more than two years, should devote their time in England to prepare for their special duties in India.”¹⁰¹

While the basic tenets of the commission’s report on conducting the open examination remained the same, over the years, the age and the maximum age for departure to India went through several revisions. In the initial years, after Haileybury had been formally shut down and in the aftermath of the Mutiny, the leaders felt it was crucial to send out the successful candidates, or the competition-wallahs, as soon as they had passed the examination, rather than allow them two more years in England to acquire special knowledge about India. Within ten years the plan had been modified, once again, into making students attend university, pass the competitive examination at an earlier age and be shipped off to India immediately. The British government’s priority was first to give its ICS officers a high general education, an outstanding university education, and do away with any special training geared towards their upcoming careers in India. The ICS system was being understood and represented as a social institution for its practitioners. The bureaucratic system remained essentially a closed system, and yet continued to condition personality traits, affecting individual behavior and became a source for

¹⁰¹ Govt. of India Bill...Ordered by the House of Commons to be Printed, 9th June, 1853’, 3rd series, cxxvii, 3rd June 1853

norms and a means of re-diffusing both personal and bureaucratic norms. The bureaucratic system remained closed off enough to allow its practitioners to remain insulated from a social order, and yet continue to remain its most shining examples, thereby making themselves and their social institution aspirational for the ones outside of it.

One of the main differences between graduates of Haileybury and the competition wallahs was that the former group came from varied, heterogeneous background. Their family backgrounds, their initial education, and their family's wealth and prestige varied vastly. All that the competition-wallahs had in common with each other was their university education and them having successfully passed the open examination that made them eligible to join the ICS and serve their tenure in India. Unlike their Haileyburian predecessors, the camaraderie amongst the competition wallahs was missing. In terms of forming an association, all that these men had was their shared university education which, in their own eyes, set them apart from any other British group of men who were serving in India. In the most disdainful tone possible, an ICS competition wallah officer complained bitterly, and demanded monetary compensation, for having to share his rank and prestige with a military man who had obviously never attended either Oxford or Cambridge and had therefore not earned his right to be accorded the same honor as himself. Complaining about his colleague from the military background the ICS officer lamented,

“...the Heaven-born attempts no concealment of his opinions concerning the necessity of closing the backdoors by which military officers and others who do not bear the guinea stamp of the ‘competition-wallah’ contrive to enter the commission...he was compelled to vent his wrath by drafting memorials to the Secretary of State, demanding an increase of pay to compensate him for the injustice...when a man rejected from the ICS enters the army as a University candidate, and thence makes his way *via* the Indian army and the military police into the ranks of the elect, the whole principle of competitive examination is in danger.”¹⁰²

¹⁰² *An Eastern Backwater*, Boxwallah, (Andrew Melrose Ltd., London, 1916), pg. 20-21.

Instead of uniting men who had all chosen to serve in India, the competition wallahs used their own elite university education as a marker to distinguish themselves from other British men who may not have come up the ranks in the ICS through open competition. Competition wallahs earned their positions and ranks in the ICS through their intellectual abilities and therefore they felt a sense of disdain for military men especially, who did not necessarily have to go through the rigorous examination process, but rather found loopholes to enter the coveted ICS. Thus, the military men were seen as upstarts who had not gone through the rigorous training to earn the coveted title of joining the ICS.

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of power can help us to understand this shifting and conflicting dynamic. Power in his view can be predicated on it being culturally and symbolically created and sustained through constant practices within an interplay of agency and structure. Habitus, for Bourdieu is "...the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them."¹⁰³ For more than 30 years, Haileybury had sustained itself on producing and training its students into acting and thinking in specific ways, sustaining a certain form of disposition, a specific kind of Britishness. The specific forms of training had less to do with classroom teaching and more to do with introducing, training and sustaining their students with an ethos that had more to do with character building according to a masculine identity of power. This disposition was constantly reiterated in the daily life of the students, to the point where it became natural for them to think and feel superior about themselves thereby convincing them of their authoritative position as the future rulers of India. More importantly, Haileybury fostered a

¹⁰³ L. Wacquant, *Habitus: International Encyclopedia of Economic Sociology*, (Routledge, London, 2005)

culture of brotherhood and camaraderie where the students were trained and conditioned into a similar disposition, into forming a network predicated on a specific form of Britishness, performed long after they had left Haileybury. More than academic training, Haileybury's main contribution was the creation of a genuine *esprit de corps* which made its graduates more than just a band of officials and almost like a band of brothers. Or, rather like being members of the club.

Sir George Trevelyan, who was a proud product of the open examination method, remained unhappy about the isolated nature of a university education that did not encourage or train its students to build associations with each other that would sustain them in India. Talking about the vastly different training experience of the Haileyburians vs. the competition wallahs, Trevelyan observed that,

“...Haileybury formed a tie which the vicissitudes of official life could never break...wherever two Haileybury men met they had at least one set of association in common. What matter if one wore the frock-coat of the Board of Revenue, while the other sported the jack-boots and the solar topee of the Mofussil Commissioner? Had they not larked together in Hartford? Had they not shared that abundant harvest of medals which rewarded the somewhat moderate exertions of the reading man at the East Indian College?...advantages of Haileybury outweighed the defects.”¹⁰⁴

Competition wallahs on the other hand, had no such old school ties to bind them together, for the men to feel like they were part of an old school association, once they found themselves alone and isolated in India.

Critics of the Haileybury system would certainly have been happy to have the old system replaced by the competition wallahs who were trained in more liberal ideas and exhibited less social arrogance, thereby identifying themselves as a breed of officers to India who were primarily intellectual civilians who had little to nothing to do with hereditary associations and had no connection with the concept of entitled patronage that Haileyburians had. The

¹⁰⁴ Sir George Trevelyan, *The Competition Wallah*, (Macmillan and Company, London, 1895), pg. 6-7

political capabilities of the competition wallahs have been well recognized in the annals of history. After the Mutiny of 1857, the effective administration of India as a colony depended on the shrewd and well thought out decisions made by the new breed of ICS officers.

Acknowledging the steadfastness and professionalism of the new officers, a British official commented,

“Old customs and institutions of the Company’s rules were still in operation in the first years of the Crown, but by the end of the year 1862 they had given way to the more scientific methods launched by an organized Legislature...Universities in the Presidency towns began to produce educated graduates; and an Act of Parliament held out to duly qualified natives a prospect of admission to some of the higher posts of the administration... The Civil Servants who came from Europe were no longer nominees of the “Directors” but men of mark who had often taken good degrees at Oxford or Cambridge, Dublin or the Scottish universities...A certain groundswell remained in public feeling, to tell of the stormy passions of the great Revolt, but peace and plenty had returned.”¹⁰⁵

While India as a colony was being managed under the tutelage of the East India Company, the intention of the company officials was to maximize economic profit, it came at the cost of implementing policies in India that remained unpopular. After India had been formally established under the British Crown as its dependency, the new crop of ICS were far more attuned and able to implement better and more effective social and political policies in the sub-continent.

While the effectiveness of the open competition system may have stabilized the political situation in India, the means of dealing with the social and cultural isolation felt by these officers remains the focus of this study. It is here that the role of the club becomes crucial: the club helped bridge the gap between the varied educational backgrounds that the Haileyburian boys and the later competition wallahs came from. It is as, Robert Putnam put it, “...some forms of social capital are, by choice or necessity, inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive

¹⁰⁵ Henry George Keene C.I.E., *A Servant of John Company: Being The Recollections Of An Indian Official*, (Thacker Spinck and Company, London, 1897), pg. 228

identities and homogenous groups.”¹⁰⁶ While for the Haileyburians it was an institution they had been trained to utilize as members of the same institution, for the competition wallahs the club became crucial to join. It gave them a sense of belonging to a small elite group of men entrusted with the responsibility to run the Indian colony. What the Haileyburians had experienced in the sense of belonging to an association that stood the test of time in India, joining the club gave the competition wallahs the same sense of belonging and a taste of associational life. The need for the competition wallahs to feel included into an exclusive social circle in the colony was aptly expressed by one of colonial India’s foremost competition wallahs, Sir George Trevelyan. He talked about the lack of social cohesiveness among the competition wallahs, lamenting that,

“...our situation is very different. Few of us are lucky enough to have more than two or three acquaintances among the men of our own years: and while our seniors persist in looking on us as a special class, we have no bond of union among ourselves... the idea entertained by the natives is droll enough: they say that another caste of Englishmen has come out.”¹⁰⁷

For Haileyburians their associational identity was more than just about being a graduate of the school in Hartford. It was about recognizing and acknowledging the capabilities of men who have been chosen for the ICS who were entrusted to effectively rule over India and to represent Britain by displaying Britishness in its very finest forms.

At the time when Haileyburians and competition wallahs were finding ways to be inclusive with each other was a time when the political and social landscape in India was undergoing many changes. In 1870, an act was recommended that would bring further changes to the administration of India. It read in part: “...the Indian Government with the sanction of the Secretary of State, should be at liberty to appoint a native of India to any office although he had

¹⁰⁶ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, (Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000), pg. 28

¹⁰⁷ Sir George Trevelyan, *The Competition Wallah*, (Macmillan and Company, London, 1895), pg. 82-83

not been admitted into the covenanted civil service.”¹⁰⁸ Eventually, after some changes, a new Provincial Service was passed in 1892-93, that was filled mainly by Indians as both Covenanted Civilians and to fill the uncovenanted offices. The fear of losing their prestigious jobs to English educated Indian was just one of the many insecurities that plagued the Haileyburians and the competition wallahs. Now they would also be in danger of being pushed out by Indian competition. Even during the pinnacle of their most glorious days, the ICS officers always wanted to carve out a space for themselves that they did not need to share with either other British professional men with whom they had little in common or with Indian colleagues.

Summarizing the need for the British ICS officers to jostle for a space for themselves with other British men was documented by a traveler to Calcutta, Montague Massey. In his observations, Massey wrote,

“...members of the Civil Service were very exclusive, holding themselves much more aloof...the military formed another distinct set; while the mercantile people, lawyers, barristers, and others not in any government service, had their own particular circle. This marked cleavage did not, however, prevent the different “sets” from having quite a good time, and as I have said, even if they did not mix together very closely and intimately, we all in a way knew each other.”¹⁰⁹

Irrespective of their pedigree and training, whether it was at Haileybury, Oxford, or Cambridge, the ICS officers continued to remain the proud practitioners of Britishness that established their national identity. The civil service officers remained protective of their prestige and status that their job offered them. And they closely aligned it to their innate pride in their Britishness.

The ICS officers’ legitimacy for their own profession and the prestige associated with it could only come from the highest office in India at the time, the Governor General’s office. The

¹⁰⁸ Govt. of India Bill...Ordered by the House of Commons to be Printed, 10th May, 1871’, 3rd series, cxxvii, 10th May, 1871

¹⁰⁹ Montague Massey, *Recollections of Calcutta Over Half a Century*, (Thacker, Spinck and Company, Calcutta, 1918), pg. 26

Government House had become the epicenter where civil service officers could claim it as a space within which to effectively display all the fine qualities of Britishness seen as basic social and cultural requirements that came as a prerequisite of the job. The next section will look at the growing popularity of Government House as the one official space that was supposed to be truly British in nature and character. The section will further explore why over time the Government House failed to continue being the main space of socialization for the British ICS officers, thereby leaving a huge void for some other space of socialization, British in nature and character, to fill.

CELEBRATING BRITISHNESS IN CALCUTTA:

Once Warren Hastings was announced as the first Governor General of the Presidency of Fort William (Bengal), the tenor of British rule underwent a significant transformation that set the tone for British rule in India for the next 100 years. It was from this point on that the British Parliament decided to initiate a form of a more structured rule in Bengal which they wanted reflected in the architecture of Calcutta. The British Parliament was determined to interfere “for better regulation of the British territories in the East Indies” and while renewing the Charter of the Company, enacted a variety of important changes in its constitution.¹¹⁰ In May of 1772 Warren Hastings was elected as the Governor-General, not just of India but of the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal and was therefore invested with supreme authority over all the British possessions in India. The Charter also asked for certain civic developments to coincide with the changing nature and the growing importance of British rule in India and especially Calcutta, where a significant portion of the ruling British men lived.

¹¹⁰ Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism and the Colonial Uncanny* (Psychology Press, Calcutta, 2005), pg. 37, 50

It was around the mid-18th century that a colonial nationalist pride in being British started to emerge, especially in the class of men who henceforth came to India to begin and end their professional careers. While the white nabobs¹¹¹ were still in existence and dominating the image, there emerged another phenomenon back in England described as Britishness. From the mid-18th century, Britain's overseas conquests roused in people a sense of imperial patriotism that found expression in populist politics. In 1740, 'God Save The King' was sung for the first time in Britain and in the same year 'Rule Britannia' was first published.¹¹² Britain's growing colonial ambitions in India and the prior loss of America, gave the imperial patriotism a new and more aggressive character best understood in the daily practices of Britons and the lives that they came to live overseas.

Extending Linda Colley's definition of Britishness, I demonstrate how the essential quality of difference, which I argue adds an element of complexity to the current understanding of Britishness, came to be manifested in British colonial Calcutta: in the layout of the city. This is best exhibited in the ways buildings of importance dotted the city's skyline, and in the kind of events hosted in these locations of importance. At the same time, the British transplants who were coming to India were motivated by more than just making personal financial fortune. As the priorities of the empire changed, colonial rule witnessed a significant transformation in the attitude of the men who were running it. Britishness had now come to mean a lot more than representing the Company and its own economic interests.

¹¹¹ William Dalrymple, *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth Century India* (Penguin Books, New York, 2003) Using the love story of James Achilles Kirkpatrick and Khair-un-Nissa Begum, Dalrymple blurs the boundaries between the British and the Indians to examine the intersectional relationships between race, gender, status and religion

¹¹² Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 2009)

An exhibition of loyalty and patriotism was starting to be deeply embedded in each British citizen who was henceforth coming to India. Formal education and the right kind of training as an Anglophile was only a part of the process of retaining their Britishness. Training at Haileybury, Oxford, or Cambridge, had conditioned the future imperial rulers to take pride in their nation, in their developed characteristics that made them fit to rule over the Indian sub-continent. The creation and construction of a imperial territory was equally important in establishing the image of superiority for the British. The layout of Calcutta, the buildings that emerged as more and more British residents started to make the city their home, speaks to a larger discourse of how imperial rule was based as much on the theory of establishing and practicing difference as it did on displaying those differences for all to see.¹¹³ As the city grew and the Company sunk its teeth into Bengal more firmly, the activities of the city's British residents became more multilayered and multidimensional. The Maidan, the Town Hall (completed in 1813), and lastly the Government House (completed in 1803) were crucial additions to the landscape of Calcutta. The public character of a space like the Maidan or of a building like Town Hall belies the exclusivity of how these locations actually came to function. Similarly, The Government House served as the official resident of the Governor General, but it also became the location where a cohesive social life and practices for the British elite emerged that served as an early precursor to how club culture came to be institutionalized during the period of high imperialism.

¹¹³ Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj, The New Cambridge History of India* (Volume III, Part IV) (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997) discussed in detail how as the colonizing force the British looked to create, formalize and practice differences between themselves and the others in a way to legitimize and justify their logic of rule over India. Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics* (St. Martins' Press, New York, 1980) discusses the legal regulations put into place by the colonizers to physically separate the bodies of the British and the Indians. The social and physical

The Government House functioned as more than just an official residence of the Governor General. The Government House was used as the location where the Governor would be responsible for receiving dignitaries and hosting banquets to celebrate special occasions. Just as the Empire of India had grown out of the orders that emanated from the supreme residents of the House, so had the capital city, of which Government House was the hub, spread and grown in like proportion from the 18th to mid-19th century. The atmosphere of Calcutta, with its teeming population, its immense mercantile interests, and the breeze and buoyancy of life, had a great and invigorating influence upon the Government House. British imperial rule was taking on a more public character,

“It was perpetually beckoning the Government of India from its bureaux, and the Viceroy from his study...scarcely a day passed in which the modern Viceroy was not called upon to perform some public or ceremonial duty in the premises.”¹¹⁴

The practice of using some kind of official resident by the current Governor General had remained a prevalent practice before construction on the new Government House had even begun. It has been recorded by contemporary writers that among his other professional commitments, Hastings was particular about assuming three kinds of regular entertainments for select guests. One of these was the,

“...public breakfasts where in addition Hastings practiced a constant and liberal hospitality: the official dances and dinners at the Old Court House, which on its upper floor had the only room in Calcutta large enough for a considerable company: and the private parties and concerts in Hastings Street or at Alipore.”¹¹⁵

Hastings gained infamy for entertaining nobility from across the region including Indian nobles like the Nawab of Oudh, Prince of Scindia and at various other times the Maharajas of Nepal, Kashmir, and Jaipur. He lived like the de facto ruler of Bengal and it showed in the way he lived

¹¹⁴ Marquis Curzon of Kedleston, *British Government in India: The Story of the Viceroys and Government Houses* (Volume I) (Cassell & Co., London, 1925), pg. 28

¹¹⁵ *ibid*, 203-204

a life of regality and luxury during his tenure as Governor General. His own establishment of servants, and equipages rivaled a Mughal king's residence and he always insisted on a troupe of servants following him as he moved from room to room.

The former residence of the Governor General, before the construction of the Government House was not seen as a fitting resident for the de facto ruler of Bengal. Frenchman M. de Grandpre, who was visiting Calcutta in 1789 under the Governor Generalship of Lord Cornwallis was less than impressed about the accommodation of the Governor General,

“The Governor General of the English Settlements East of the Cape of Good Hope resides at Calcutta...as there is no palace yet built for him, he lives in a house on the Esplanade, opposite the citadel. The house is handsome, but by no means equal to what it ought to be for a personage of such importance. Many private individuals in the town have houses as good; and if the Governor were disposed to any luxury, he must curb his inclination for want of the necessary accommodation of room. The house of the Governor of Pondicherry is much more magnificent.”¹¹⁶

The only way to complement the changing tenor of British rule in Bengal was to create an official residence of the Governor General in an imposing looking, authoritative building.

Once the construction of the new Government House was completed at 1803, it was the role that the Governor General and his accommodation came to play in practicing a certain kind of Britishness that remained a bone of contention between the British residents and the various Governor Generals. From the time of Cornwallis' rule, the definition of Britishness came to be distinguished more on the basis of differences than on similarities that the earlier generation of Orientalists had advocated for. From the time of Cornwallis' tenure as Governor General (1786-1793), interests in Oriental metaphysics or language and history was not encouraged in the British residents living in Calcutta. Under Cornwallis, the fashion of hosting ostentatious dinners at the old Government House was also mostly abandoned. When he came to India in 1786, he arrived with explicit instructions from the Directors to pursue a policy of all-round economic

¹¹⁶ *ibid*, pg. 154

austerity. He abandoned the public breakfasts, and dispensed with the country houses bought and designed by his predecessor. Further, unlike his predecessor, Cornwallis would never allow himself to be followed by a security guard, except on state occasions. He led a very modest life and did away with the tradition of hosting a regular breakfast or dinner. Yet although he was abstemious in his own manner of living, he never neglected his duty as a Governor General and the customary big festivities that needed to be held at the premises of the work in progress Government House. He wrote to his son on 17th August 1789 describing a fête which he had hosted in celebration of the king's recovery. The illuminations from the fête were all blown out by a storm, but,

“...the supper, which could not be put out by rain, was a very good one: some of the gentlemen who stayed late were nearly extinguished by the claret; seven of the finest ladies in the place and twelve gentlemen sang the Coronation Anthem, so that upon the whole you see that it was a magnificent business.”¹¹⁷

Cornwallis would seem like one of the few Governor Generals of the time who managed to strike a balance between displaying an ostentatious display of Britishness in all its finest glory and leading the most modest lifestyle in his private life.

Cornwallis also made a remarkable change in the social lives of the British who came to live in Calcutta, a change that would later prove useful for the powers that be in demarcating themselves from the non-official British. Under the watchful eyes of the otherwise reticent Cornwallis, dancing was encouraged after dinner to temper the drinking habits of his guests.¹¹⁸ While this may seem an insignificant detail, it was a policy that was later practiced and institutionalized in Calcutta's clubland: to keep the consumption of alcohol at a respectable level, so that the men who are in charge of running the colonial state are never caught in an

¹¹⁷ Charles Ross ed., *Correspondence of Marquis Cornwallis*, (Volume I) (John Murray, London, 1859), pg. 422

¹¹⁸ Emma Roberts, *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindostan With Sketches of Anglo-Indian Society*, (Volume III), (Carey, Lea and Blanchard, Philadelphia, 1836), pg. 280

embarrassing position. Once again, the concern with how the British empire and the men involved in its running that was of primary concern. The effectiveness of Cornwallis' policy of introducing dancing right after drinking and dinner was considered effective in the words of John William Kaye, a British military historian. As Kaye observed,

“Before the coming of Cornwallis there had seldom been much if any dancing after supper. The gentlemen dancers were commonly too far gone in drink to venture upon any experiments of activity demanding the preservation of the perpendicular.”¹¹⁹

As compared to his predecessor Hastings, Cornwallis was more open and receptive to the idea of celebrating occasions of national pride to feed the needs of the British residents in Calcutta, even while curtailing his own personal expenditures.



Southeast view of the Government House, Picture Courtesy: British Library

¹¹⁹ Dennis Kincaid, *British Social Life in India, 1608-1937*, (George Routledge & Co., London, 1938), pg. 120-121

Between the modest ways of Governor General Cornwallis (1786-93) and Wellesley's tenure from (1798-1805), significant changes were occurring in the attitudes of the British in India which was reflected in the practices at the Government House. By the time Wellesley became Governor General, British rule had become more formalized, structured, and institutionalizing Britishness in everyday life was becoming a part of daily practices for the men representing the British monarchy in Calcutta. Another significant change occurred between the rule of Cornwallis and Wellesley. As the latter's tenure in India approached Britain had gone from being a mere merchant nation into a burgeoning naval and military power establishing their superior power by winning battles in international areas like in India, Afghanistan and Egypt. As an administrator, Wellesley was well known for making certain additions to the landscape of Calcutta that still exist today. He founded the College of Fort William for the training of British men who intended to join the services of the British Crown to rule over India. Second, and more importantly, it was under his tutelage that the Government House was completed, whereas Cornwallis still continued to use the less impressive older residence which was unfit for pomp and display, which went hand in hand with Cornwallis' reserved ways. Wellesley's aim was to create a magnificent palace as the residence of the Governor General that would forever keep on display the richness that the British Empire had acquired in India, and the refined tastes and ways that the masters of the Empire felt needed to be displayed to overawe anyone who looked upon it. Wellesley was of the opinion that exhibition and splendor were indispensable mechanism of British government and Wellesley perfected that in colonial Calcutta's landscape. The banquets, pomp and ceremonies celebrated within the palatial structures in Calcutta was a part of his conception of British rule in the East.

British pride as displayed by Wellesley at the Government House would serve as an inspiration for what clubland came to do in another thirty years. While the clubs may not always have had the financial means that Wellesley had, the tradition of displaying pomp and parade and it going hand in hand with continuing British rule was adopted by the club and continued as an integral feature of British imperialism.

In the 1770s in order to protect its commerce, the Company took control of Karnataka and Bengal. The quest for security proved unending. The conquest of territories wasn't enough. What made Britishness unique was the fact that each of these victories was celebrated with a banquet and an ostentatious display of all that was great about British conquest and the culture of those living in India. Wellesley's tenure was exceptional in the celebration of Britain's wins, not just in India but across the world. Other than holding a celebration for the King's birthday, Wellesley held a great breakfast on 30th April 1802 for approximately 700 men and women of the settlement to celebrate the anniversary of the fall of Seringapatam. On the 9th of August the same year, he held an elaborate breakfast to welcome back General Baird and the officers who had returned from the Egyptian campaign. In the year 1804, on the 15th of March, Wellesley hosted a magnificent ball, supper, and illumination in honor of the peace concluded with Scindia and the Raja of Berar, and a dinner on 23rd September of the same year in commemoration of the British victory at the Battle of Assaye.¹²⁰

A description of one such celebration shows how Wellesley spared no expense or effort to display and celebrate Britain's growing legacy as a colonial power,

“...The invited company of 800 Europeans assembled at Government House at 9pm; the Governor General, on entering at 10 pm, held a durbar for the *vakils* and native gentlemen in the North verandah; thence he marched in procession to the upstairs Ball Room where he took his seat...The dancing in which 40 couples led off, then commenced and continued till midnight, when the company descended to a magnificent sit

¹²⁰ Sir Robert Rouiere Pearce, *Memoirs and Correspondence of the Most Notable Richard Marquess Wellesley* (Volume II) (Richard Bentley, London, 1846)

down supper in the Marble Hall. At 1 am the fireworks began on the south front, with huge set pieces and transparencies, and portraits of the heroes of the hour. This display was witnessed by the Governor General, the Chief Justice, Members of the Council and the Judges, from the south portico. Meanwhile the whole city around Government House, and as far as the Fort, including the latter, had been illuminated throughout the evening. At 2:30 am the dancing recommenced; and at 4 am His Excellency retired.”¹²¹

One group that remained conspicuous by its absence at such festivities held at the Government House were the aristocratic, landowning Bengalis who had, up until the tenure of Wellesley, remained close allies of the East India Company. Even though there were instances of sociable interactions between the upper class Bengalis and the British in Calcutta¹²², it certainly did not rise to the level of sociability that the British men were used to.

The invitations to local homes for any special celebration was not going to fulfil the need that the British felt to socialize in ways that were exclusionary in nature. As the chasm between the British and the native Bengalis grew with the intense efforts of the former to set themselves apart from the latter, it is safe to say that such sociable interactions between the two disparate groups eventually dwindled. One of the reasons that clubs became more popular as British rule intensified in India, and specifically in Calcutta, was that the space of the club became a reverential space for the British of a certain class. This was the space where they were not forced to interact with either the natives or the lower-class British out of compulsion and were not subjected to a sense of decorum that they felt was below their own set of lofty standards.

¹²¹ Marquis Curzon of Kedleston, *British Government in India: The Story of the Viceroys and Government Houses* (Volume II) (Cassell & Co., London, 1925), pg. 209

¹²² Col. Cuthbert Larking, *Bandobast and Khabar: Reminiscences of India*, (Hurst and Blackett, London, 1888)



The arch at the main entrance to the Government Hall, Painted by Henry Fraser in 1826. Pic Courtesy: British Library



'The Bengal Levee' depicting Lord Cornwallis holding a levee at the Government House, Printed by James Gillray in 1792. Pic Courtesy: British Museum



Grand canopy in the Throne Room at the Government House, Picture Courtesy: Getty Images

While the British presence in India grew slowly in the nineteenth century, this presence changed enormously. Many of the alterations had taken place before Victoria's ascension in 1837. The nabobs had departed, along with their native concubines and their opulence and the fruits of the pagoda tree. In David Gilmour's opinion,

“The nabobs and their sartorial vulgarity had been replaced by men in black frock coats who wished to emphasize their Britishness and to demonstrate the moral and cultural superiority of their civilization. They had come not to revel in the Orient, but to improve it, transform it—and in the process to limit its revelry”¹²³.

As Linda Colley has rightfully argued, Britishness needed a formulation in opposition, or as a response to, contradictory ideas that were considered un-British. The genesis of an original and unique Britishness that rejected any impure syncretism, or influences of the colonized, its growth, popularity, and spread cannot just be seen as responding to native degenerative influences.

While the creation of a Britishness deeply rooted in racial and class-based practices was crucial to the operation and the running of the empire, its mere creation was not enough. Such a unique kind of Britishness needed to be practiced and lived and believed in by the people who were seen as its most successful promoters. It is here that the role of the club becomes so crucial to the formulation, functioning and successful display of a unique Britishness that resulted from Britain's overseas conquests and interaction with natives and other groups of British men. The practicing of the colonial form of Britishness to impose authority and justify their presence found their perfect location in the British elite club. As differences between groups became more pronounced, such differences were played up and enhanced, thereby making the existence of an institution like the elite club an absolute necessity in colonial Calcutta. A fitting example of how

¹²³ David Gilmour, *The Ruling Caste: Imperial Lives in the Victorian Raj*, (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2005), pg. 11

the promoters of Britishness saw themselves was well summarized by a Mrs. Graham who in 1810 wrote, “Every Briton (in Calcutta) appears to pride himself on being outrageously a John Bull”¹²⁴ And, for the numerous John Bulls who were growing tiresome of the forced interactions with the natives and the British communities who weren’t active servants of the British Crown, the club provided them with the exclusive space and privacy to interact with men who were fitting company for themselves.

Britishness had started to be popularized in the colonial context before the emergence of clubland in Calcutta. As I have argued, the Government House can be seen as a precursor to the arrival of clubland. The House provided a space for the Governor General to display with pride and pomp Britain’s successful campaigns in India and overseas, special days that would make the British living overseas proud to be a part of the legacy. And yet, the Government House fell out of favor with the British community residing in Calcutta very shortly before the beginning of the 20th century. One of the reasons was the emergence and the popularity of club culture that was flourishing. Club culture was also replacing some of the perceived flaws in the way Government House hosted and carried out social events and soirees that were closely linked to the successful practicing of a unique Britishness.

One of the obvious flaws, as I have mentioned earlier, was the inviting of the Indians to banquets that many British residents felt should be unique and exclusive to them as natives of Great Britain. Simultaneously, at the time we see Britishness taking on a class based character in addition to what had so far been displayed as a racial character. Since the arrival of the Europeans and specifically the British to Calcutta, the city witnessed the presence of the largest

¹²⁴ Dennis Kincaid, *British Social Life in India, 1608-1937*, (George Routledge & Co., London, 1938), pg. 118

and the most active group of tradesmen living and working in the city. Other than in the obvious way of trading goods and commodities with other parts of the world, the group called traders started including other kinds of traders within it too. According to Chris Furedy, "...by mid-19th century in India the Europeans who engaged in import and export commerce as partners of the agency houses and as brokers or bankers were the commercial men"¹²⁵. While most of these traders were predominantly British, there were a smattering of Armenians, Jews, Portuguese and French traders who made the British business community in Calcutta a thriving and successful one. The numbers of the traders speaks for itself; "Proprietors and independent tradesmen numbered between 200 and 250 in 1830, their number tripling by the end of the century. Until the 1830's the East India Company controlled the numbers and types of tradesmen through the bond system. By the 1850's, diversification of local trade and services gave the city a very adequate complement of tradesmen. Predominating in the trade directories, with between three to six tradesmen or firms of each kind, were retailers proper (provisioners, Europe shopkeepers, drapers), artisan-retailers (jewellers, coach-builders, bootmakers, watchmakers, cabinetmakers) and servicers such as hotel-keepers, undertakers, stablekeepers and apothecaries."¹²⁶

Through the nineteenth century, with the British government's political presence in India gaining more power than ever before, the trading community could not ever be considered to command the same kind of respect and prestige as the British civil servants. Socially, the tradespeople that included bankers and merchants were seen as decidedly subordinate and occupying a lesser social position. Yet the tradesmen through their financial clout managed to find their first form of institution shaping impetus by forming the Calcutta Traders' Association

¹²⁵ Chris Furedy, 'British Tradesmen of Calcutta 1830-1900: A Preliminary Study of their Economic and Political Roles', in C.B. Sealy (ed.) *Women Politics and Literature in Bengal*, (East Lansing: Asian Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1981), pg. 4

¹²⁶ Ibid, pg. 32

in 1830 where as a community they were able to influence and have a say in the city's physical and institutional development. Yet, Governor Generals of the time were delighted with the formation of such an association. To Bentinck it represented a new infusion of independence and usefulness in Bengal society and was consonant with his general desire to encourage European settlement in India, particularly of those who could contribute "European capital and skill" to the country.¹²⁷ As an extension of the goodwill shared between the Governor General and the trading community, the top echelons of the British trading community often found themselves invited to the Government House on important evenings, and enjoying the same social strata as the men who had come to see themselves as exclusive, superior and better than their tradesmen counterparts.

Unlike Governor Bentinck, contemporary writers of the time were less than hopeful about the free intermingling of the representatives of the British Crown (civil servants, naval officers) and the leaders of the business community. Writing candidly, Ms. Roberts lamented "...an unlimited *entrée* into Government House to Europeans of every description would not, we believe, be considered advisable...". Further, she echoed the popular sentiment of the time that when men from such disparate backgrounds are brought together, it necessarily will not lead to social cohesion as expected. The social, political and cultural differences between the trading and the civil community was insurmountable and therefore, she felt,

"...far from engendering friendships between them, the only effect of such indiscriminate assemblages will be to bring the public parties into disrepute, and to render private society more rigid and exclusive than ever."¹²⁸

¹²⁷ John Rosselli, *Lord William Bentinck: The Making of a Liberal Imperialist 1774-1839*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1974), pp. 194-201

¹²⁸ Emma Roberts, *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindostan With Sketches of Anglo-Indian Society*, (Volume III), (Carey, Lea and Blanchard, Philadelphia, 1836), pg. 222

As predicted by Roberts, it wasn't long after this, in the early 19th century, that elite clubs catering specifically to the professional services of the British Crown emerged and thrived. Making a conscious attempt to leave out the British trading communities, they thereby made the distinctions between the British communities living in Calcutta more rigid.

Other than the questionable company that slowly made the Government House less popular as the location of sociability, there were certain other reasons too for its demise. The Government House had always functioned according to how the Governor General of the time wanted it to run. The degree of sociability and the evenings of banquets and dances never remained consistent. Regularity and consistency of events, unlike at the newly emergent clubs, depended on the whims and fancies and personality of the Governor General, who was considered the supreme in charge of maintaining a certain standard of sociability in Calcutta.

Therefore, we see under Hastings, Wellesley, and Cornwallis the avenue of socializing was kept more regularly open for the British residents of Calcutta, who were allowed opportunities under these Governor Generals to wear their Britishness with pride. Yet, there were other Governors who did not believe or see the need to constantly open up the gates of the Government House to celebrate any or every kind of occasion. The Earl of Dalhousie (1848-1856) and Sir John Lawrence (1864-1869) were severely criticized¹²⁹ for not upholding the tradition of allowing the men and women of the British empire the opportunity to feel that sense of national pride when celebrating the monarch's birthday or commemorating a military victory of the British. Lord Dalhousie's primary goal was to rule and further consolidate the British Empire and found little enjoyment in entertainment. He therefore kept his social obligations only to the minimum. His disdain for sociability is well apparent in a private letter he

¹²⁹ Marquis Curzon of Kedleston, *British Government in India: The Story of the Viceroys and Government Houses* (Volume II) (Cassell & Co., London, 1925), pg. 227

wrote in 1850, where he complained to the receiver "...Like a fool I gave the people a ball, where they danced in a temperature something under boiling water till past 3 in the morning."¹³⁰ While he may have felt that holding of audiences with the British residents of Calcutta a futile exercise, "...to be fond of show...to be careless of the Company's money, to be stingy of my own, are meanness so odious to me that I own it cuts me..."Yet, he believed in holding himself up to the highest standard when meeting other state dignitaries,

"...when as a representative of a sovereign I go to meet a sovereign in his state, it is my duty to go in a manner fitting the character I represent. It would be as indecorous to neglect such state as it would be to go into a gentleman's drawing room without my coat and my stockings about my heels."¹³¹

It is here that we see that the ethos of Britishness needed to be displayed with pride, the idea of how Britishness was represented and how it was portrayed. Much like the reluctant Lord Dalhousie still represented on his self the pride of being Briton, so did the elite club: practicing Britishness with pride. Lord Dalhousie saw himself and himself alone as the representative of the British Crown and Company. He was punctilious and almost exacting in his observances of what he regarded as the necessary forms of state. It is also important to make a crucial distinction here between men like Dalhousie who remained austere in their degree of sociability in private and someone like Wellesley whose rule was characterized in celebrating every British victorious milestone. The former did not feel any inherent love of display but rather carried out the display from a sense of duty and temperament inured to command. This distinction would become less rigid in the club. Unlike Dalhousie, club members of the Bengal Club (1827) and The Royal Turf Club (1847) felt the need for display among themselves, and not only on the part of the Governor

¹³⁰ Marquis Curzon of Kedleston, *British Government in India: The Story of the Viceroys and Government Houses* (Volume I) (Cassell & Co., London, 1925), pg. 227

¹³¹ *ibid*, 228-229

General, was a mechanism necessary to maintaining power. Displaying power was indispensable to consolidating it.

The austerity measures that Dalhousie carried out would have found support among the owners of the Company back in London. For a considerable period of time the Company's board had complained that the Governors of India had been wasting precious resources and time on turning the Government House into a location of festivities that they felt undermined the work of the British in Calcutta. While the Directors of the Company leveled criticism against the Governor General for any unnecessary expenditures in hosting dinners or illuminating the city, the British residents, the proponents of Britishness, the men and their families who held the most authoritative powers in the colonial state, felt that banquets and dinners at the Government House were not doing enough and were falling short of the standard that they were used to in London. Ms. Emma Roberts's persistence in her complaints shows how the invitees felt that the society created in the Government House could never match up to London Society, "...In these degenerate days, so little state is kept up that, after the first half hour, the representatives of Sovereignty quit their dignified post, and mingle with the assembled crowd." It wasn't just the absence of acceptable and respectable social decorum in the Government House that offended guests like Ms. Roberts. It was also the absence of the right artifacts and symbols of Empire that made guests feel less pride in their sovereign nation. Once again, turning to Ms. Roberts, the embarrassment at the lack of artifacts is evident when she says,

"...there is no established rule respecting the entertainments at Government House; no service of plate, or decorations for the table belonging to the establishment...and it is whispered that there are not always a sufficient quantity of silver forks for all the guests, and that the side tables are sometimes supplied with a manufacture of steel of no very tempting appearance."¹³²

¹³² *ibid*, 220-221

The trend of celebrating events at the Government House was dependent on the personal and professional preferences of the Governor and what his professional priorities were. As a rule, Shimla had been declared as the summer capital of the British government since the time of Sir John Shore. As a result, the Governor would spend the three months from May to August in Shimla. This would leave the Government House without a Governor, which thereby would stop any scope of socializing for the three months when the Governor was out of the city. The dissatisfaction felt by the British community living in Calcutta about the temporary nature of sociability was echoed by Ms. Emma Roberts when she complained, "...the grandeur of the banquets depends entirely upon the tastes and liberality of the person who holds the appointment of the Governor General for the time being..."¹³³ Calcutta society felt enraged enough to vent to the newspapers about the absence of the Governor General from his seat of power for the three months during the year, thereby shutting the doors of the Government House from any scope of sociability. Responding to some criticism Lord Dalhousie highlighted the nebulous position of the Governor General and the British society in Calcutta and its strongly voiced and sometimes conflicting expectations,

"...when the G.G. remains at Calcutta, the up country journals abuse him for wallowing listless and inactive in 'The Ditch.' When he goes up to the N.W. Provinces, the Calcutta papers abuse him for amusing himself wandering about the country, and enjoying cool leisure in his 'mountain retreat.'" ¹³⁴

Writing in 1904, Curzon saw a parallel growth in the increasing number of British settlers in Calcutta and a rise in the number of guests invited to the Government House. According to him, at the beginning of the 19th century under Lord Wellesley's governorship, parties of 600-700 were the usual number entertained. During mid-19th century under Lord Canning the number

¹³³ *ibid*, pg. 221

¹³⁴ *ibid*, pg. 228

of guests entertained went up to 1,000. During Curzon's own rule, the number of guests being entertained at the Government House crossed the 2,000 mark. The nature of the events held at the Government House remained national in character. They celebrated the glory associated with Britishness at the State Evening Party and the Garden Party and the superiority of the British army at the Proclamation Parade in the grounds of the Government House. Curzon was of the opinion that such national celebrations all started to imitate one another because their purpose was the same,

“...the social habits of our age in respect of dancing and other matters, rendered a good deal of the former ceremony obsolete, and beyond the State Procession and the State Lancers, with which the proceedings opened, I cannot recall that there was anything to differentiate a State Ball in Calcutta from other entertainments.”¹³⁵

The monotony of the national only events held at Government House found its perfect foil in the fully established clubland that had permeated the social life in Calcutta very prominently by the time of Curzon.

It is important to make a crucial distinction here that sets apart the sociability of the Government House popularized from the early nineteenth century and the British gentleman's club culture that followed one hundred years later. At the Government House the events were centered around celebrating Britain, the Company, the Crown, and the Governor General. The British residents of the empire, who aspired to be invited to the Government House, were incidental to the nationalized celebration rather than being the ones being celebrated for their superiority. Britishness that, I argue, was influenced by the idea of the national spirit constantly being celebrated at the Government House, metamorphosed into another phenomenon based on ideas of exclusivity, separation, and isolation, found its perfect performing ground in the club.

¹³⁵ *ibid*, pg. 234

With the establishment of White's in London in 1693, the city understood the importance and necessity of a thriving elite club culture. What were the compelling economic, political and social conditions in London that made club culture synonymous with an English public sphere and made club members view the space as something more than an excrescence? And in another hundred years how did the colonial context in Calcutta change for the club to emerge as a building block of India's civil society?

CHAPTER III

CREATING COLONIAL LEGITIMACY THROUGH THE ACT OF CLUBBING: BRITISHNESS, ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE AND THE PERFORMANCE OF IMPERIAL RULE IN COLONIAL CALCUTTA

Introduction and Overview:

One of the key markers of what I call colonial Britishness was its exclusive nature. The colonial and elite form of Britishness needed space, privacy, and a habitually comfortable space in which to practice their Britishness. This chapter argues that the elite form of Britishness was essentially contending against inferior practices of Britishness by the low-class English subalterns and the British non-official community. This form of Britishness was neither elite, nor exclusive, and practiced by men who remained largely unconcerned with portraying British superiority to consolidate her position as the legitimate rulers over India. Using Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* in this chapter, I explore why the club would become such a crucial space, both in its concept and in its physical location, for the British elite men to practice this exclusive form of colonial Britishness.

After the abolition of the East India Company's monopoly in 1813, it became easier for British men from various professional backgrounds to find means to be successful in Calcutta. In the early 19th century as the British population entering Calcutta became more heterogeneous in nature, multiple spaces of socialization emerged to cater to the needs of the varied Britons. While such a diverse group of men from various backgrounds started to make their presence felt in Calcutta, there were also an exclusive group of men arriving: newly graduated ICS men trained and educated at Haileybury in an exclusive form of Britishness who were intent on socializing with those had been trained in a similar ethos like their own. This led to a chasm between the civil servants and the others which, I argue, was reflected, in the emergence of different spaces of socialization in Calcutta starting from the beginning of the 19th century.

One of the main groups of arriving Britons that the British ICS immediately registered disagreements with were the arriving Christian missionaries. At a time when global missionary initiative across the colonies was reaching a new high it coincided with a period of frenetic British political and economic assertion. Calcutta was one such city where the work of the missionaries and the ICS often came to clash based on their ideas about how the empire needed to be represented and ruled. Protestant missionary evangelism and British European expansion were not two sides of the same coin. The clash between these two groups emerged on how Britishness should be best represented: in its evangelical form or in the form of men of the empire who were trained to wear colonial Britishness on themselves with pride, aptly represented in the elite club in colonial Calcutta.

CREATING DISTINCTIONS AMONG BRITONS IN INDIA:

In an official charter passed by the British Parliament in 1813, the official monopoly of the East India Company was permanently abolished and trade relations with India were opened up to anyone who had interest in participating. Even before the discussion of this Charter had arrived on its doorstep in 1812, Parliament had already started to receive numerous petitions that supported the breaking down of the East India Company's monopoly, with numerous petitions also being put forward by the Company and its direct benefactors advocating for the retention of its own monopolistic rights¹³⁶. A geographical tug of war over trading rights between London, representing the East India Company, and merchants and traders from towns such as Sheffield and Leeds wanting a share of the Indian trading pie, resulted in Parliament opening up the privilege to trade in India for anyone with means. As a result, Britain witnessed men from various backgrounds and economic classes, rushing to lands abroad to grab a share of the

¹³⁶ Raymond K Renford, *The Non-Official British in India to 1920*, (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1987), pg. 280

lucrative trading pie that had been under the control of the East India Company. A look at the number of non-official men arriving in India after the passing of the Charter of 1813 reflects a community entering India that was older, and more socially and culturally integrated with men of their own profession, but not necessarily sharing any previously formed cultural or social ties with men from other professional backgrounds.¹³⁷

The discord between British men of various professions only managed to intensify as colonial rule was becoming more rigid and structured in the Indian sub-continent. In the years following the Charter passed in 1793 by Parliament that renewed the East India Company's monopoly to trade and rule in India, British men continued to arrive to the colonial state in various capacities. In Calcutta, recognized as the chief center of Government in India since 1773, there were 585 non-official Europeans (British, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, etc.) in residence in 1793, whilst in the mofussil or country districts of the Bengal Presidency non-official Europeans were then numbered at 281. By 1804 the number of such Europeans resident in Calcutta and its districts was reported at 1,037, and for Bengal as a whole, at, 1616. Moreover between 1793 and 1812 some 402 free-mariners and forty-five free merchants had proceeded to India under license from the Company's Court of Directors.¹³⁸ Once the Parliament cut out the East India Company's monopoly over trade in India, the number of men entering India, not as

¹³⁷ Harald Fischer Tiné, *Low and Licentious Europeans: Race, Class and White Subalternity in Colonial India* (Oriental Black Swan, Hyderabad, 2009) argues that whiteness in colonial India was determined not by colour or ancestry alone, but primarily by culture, through complex interplays of class, gender and political anxiety. David Gilmour, *The Ruling Caste: Imperial Lives in the Victorian Raj*, (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York, 2005) tracks the lives and careers of ICS employees in their social milieu, leisure pursuits and family affairs. Gilmour studies this group as a sheltered cocoon who kept their interaction with the non-ICS Briton as much as possible and created an isolated lives for themselves. Michael Edwardes, *High Noon of Empire: India Under Curzon* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1965) describes 'the Edwardian way of living, the routine of daily life, their clubs, pastimes and their attitudes towards women, foreigners and men not of the same social class as their own.' EM Collingham's *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj (1800-1947)* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2007) studies the symbolic significance of physical barriers that separated classes and communities from one another in colonial India. Collingham's definition of the European bourgeois body needed it to be protected, physically, culturally and socially.

¹³⁸ Raymond K Renford, *The Non-Official British in India to 1920*, (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1987), pg. 4

representatives of the British Crown, but rather as private individuals multiplied. By 1814, merely a year after Parliament endorsed the Charter, in mainland British India there were approximately 1500 British personnel who were not recorded as being in the Service of His Majesty or of the East India Company. Roughly speaking, 1100 of these men were in Bengal, 240 in Bombay and about 115 in Madras.¹³⁹

It is important to further break down the category of these men who came to India for both trading and other purposes. As the trade of the sub-continent flourished, it is not too far-fetched to imagine that new avenues of employment would open up for British men who found more job opportunities for themselves in India rather than back home in the United Kingdom. Under the very broad category of non-official British, meticulous registers from the time show that for easy record keeping, they were broadly put under ten categories with some room for overlap. The most economically well-off of the group of non-officials would have been the partners or prospective partners in established mercantile houses. The partners were in charge of the various mercantile houses that started mushrooming all over the Indian sub-continent, especially in Calcutta, right after the relaxation of the Charter. Such men were at the forefront in representing the interests of the non-official British community living in Calcutta when inevitable conflicts would arise with the official British community. Another category of non-official British were men of law, university educated, often upper class. Barristers, attorneys, and smaller clerks assisting the barristers formed the second formidable group representing the non-official British community in Calcutta.

¹³⁹ John Mathison and Alexander Way Mason (Secretary's Office, East India House), *An East India Register and Directory for 1815, Corrected To The 21st November, 1815, Containing Complete Lists of Company's Servants, Civil, Military and Marine at The Different Presidencies in the East Indies, Together With Lists of the Europeans, Mariners &c Not In The Service of the East India Company*, (Cox, Son and Baylis, London, 1816)

As the opportunities for economic growth in India multiplied, more British men from various professions started to make Calcutta their home. The need for spaces of socialization similarly saw a huge uptick. Up until the beginning of the nineteenth century, socialization among the British community in Calcutta was informal and remained unregulated. The easy going and fluid structure of making house calls at one's neighbor's house or carrying letters of introduction to meet an acquaintance were gradually replaced by institutions that served the same purpose but in a more formalized space. Spence's Hotel located between the fashionable area of Government House and Tank Square gained quite a reputation for itself. For the sum of Rs. 6 *per diem*, Rs. 40 a week, or Rs. 100 *a mensem*, the proprietor John Spence fed and housed his guests comfortably. Sea captains of good reputation and other well-to-do businessmen of educated classes made great use of this hotel. A later hotel, Auckland Hotel, catering essentially to merchants and ship captains advertised their space as one where the "...reading rooms were for merchants, brokers, and captains of ships."¹⁴⁰ Such hotels had come up in order to discourage seafaring men and merchants of repute from ever going near a tavern, thus avoiding exposure to the impure influences of that area of the city.

Before the proliferation of hotels, taverns were the only social spaces that was available to the men. Yet, the moral looseness of taverns quickly earned them suspicious reputations among the more higher classes of British men. Warning his countrymen who were soon to visit India, Williamson cautioned that the atmosphere of a typical tavern as made up of promiscuous company, shabby treatment, and a penchant for identifying gullible novices. Once the effect of cheap alcohol subsumes the newbie completely, according to Williamson, he is likely to "...associate with the ordinary company of the common drinking-room, where he is irretrievably

¹⁴⁰ R Pearson, *Eastern Interlude: A Social History of the European Community in Calcutta*, (Thacker Spink and Co., Calcutta, 1933), pg. 203

gone.”¹⁴¹ Once a patron loses his position due to his association with tavern culture, it makes it impossible for him to be admitted into any respectable circle. As the exclusionary nature of British colonialism intensified, it comes as no surprise that tavern culture slowly started to become irrelevant for the respectable ruling community.

Visitors to the city in the early nineteenth century were happy to notice that men coming to join the services of the East India Company, or, later, the British Crown, did not have to take recourse at taverns, or depend upon the hospitality of other residents. Further, the men would not be required to take temporary accommodation while living alone and left to fend for themselves in a city that was essentially unknown to them. As the British population coming to Calcutta multiplied and came to perform its varied functions within a structured and stratified society, social space reflecting a split between the official and the non-official emerged, and men were expected to rigidly adhere to these hierarchies. This rigid structure did not allow taverns to be recognized as a legitimate space of socialization. Other recognized and legitimate spaces of entertainment, including hotels, were frequented by the visitors to Calcutta who felt the need for a respectable place that would be available for them to socialize in, a concept they were familiar with in their time spent in England. Ms. Emma Roberts, visiting Calcutta in the 1820s observed,

“...the capital of Bengal has become too large to admit of the continuance of old customs; boarding, and other houses of public entertainment have been opened, and conducted in so respectable a manner, that notwithstanding the great difficulty of subduing ancient prejudices, no person, however fastidious, can now scruple to become an inmate of them.”¹⁴²

Despite the existence of the numerous hotels and public entertainment spaces for the enjoyment of the refined, educated and the upper classes of British society, yet these too, proved to be insufficient.

¹⁴¹ Douglas Dewar, *Bygone Days in India*, (John Lane, The Bodley Head, London, 1922), pg. 31

¹⁴² Emma Roberts, *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindostan With Sketches of Anglo-Indian Society*, (WH Allen, London, 1837), pg. 3-4

At the same time, another burgeoning non-official community that was slowly starting to make its presence felt, one especially blessed by the British Crown and Parliament: the missionaries and educators, although the relationship between the church represented by the missionary societies and the state represented by the East India Company did not always remain amicable. According to Ian Copland, the relationship between the church and the state was initially cool, yet it, "...gradually warmed as the two parties came to realize they had a common interest in providing 'civilizing' Western education to the Indian elites.". Later, he observes, after 1857 the relationship between the Crown and the church did not remain harmonious once the needs of the state changed, which is well reflected in the changing colonial policies of the state with a simultaneous decline in the evangelical influences on the state.¹⁴³

The Charter of 1813 not only relaxed the monopoly of the East India Company. Clause XLIX of the 1813 Charter also permitted in India the creation of a Bishopric and three Archdeaonries to serve the growing British community in India. While this carefully worded clause did not specifically mention missionaries, the clause did say that

"...sufficient Facilities ought to be afforded by law to persons desirous of going to and remaining in *India* in furtherance of adopting measures tending to 'the Introduction...of useful Knowledge, and of religious and moral Improvement among the native inhabitants of British India to promote their 'Interest and Happiness'..."¹⁴⁴

The designers of the 1813 Charter saw the work of the missionaries as pivotal in their ambitions to strengthen their hold over India. The idea was that as Britain continued to spread its realm of power in India, both economically and politically, a cultural and moral conversion of the natives needed to occur almost simultaneously. British claim of moral and cultural superiority, coupled with very little sympathy for the culture of India and her institutions, made the British empire

¹⁴³ Ian Copland, 'Christianity as Arm of Empire: The Ambiguous Case of India Under the Company c. 1813-1858' in *The Historical Journal* (Volume 49, No. 4, 2006, pg. 1025-1054)

¹⁴⁴ Company General Court Minute, 26 January 1813, in *Paper Respecting The Negotiation...for a Renewal of the East-India Company's Exclusive Privileges...after...1814*, pg.196

take on a cultural character at first, based on essentializing differences of civilization and religion between the colonizer and the colonized. The arrival of English missionaries in India, and especially in Bengal, was in a bid to help the Indians "...see the Company's government as a fundamentally Christian one, which would raise the profile of Christianity in the country and help to create an atmosphere in which that religion could flourish."¹⁴⁵ An uneasy compromise was made between the Parliament and the missionaries that focused on the bestial and absurd nature of idolatrous Hinduism and was a way for the Crown to justify the active presence of missionaries as necessary to assisting the natives' moral regeneration.

Britain's colonizing enterprise, presented as the civilizing mission, was practiced and implemented in India in various ways. India, and in particular Bengal from the late 18th century had witnessed a civilizing process led by a group of well-meaning British men who were undertaking their own means to civilize the natives. These Christian missionaries undertook a more religious, yet informal approach to spread the word of Christianity, thereby, hoping to inspire the natives to convert to their faith, and thus civilizing them.

The dual mission of the civilizing process, religious and political, worked in tandem, but the advocates of each process did not see eye to eye with the other in regards to their mission in India. The ICS officers were more interested in carrying out a process of civilizing through representation, rather than actively participate in any civilizing mission like the missionaries. The officers carried this out through embodied performances in an enclosed environment, without ever allowing the natives to breach the symbolic barrier created between the ruled and ruler.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2002), pg. 32

¹⁴⁶ Race ideology and empire has been in discussion both in British and South Asian historiography. One of the foremost works on this has been Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper ed., 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda' in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997) that argued that race identities were shaped by imperial encounters as well as conflict within

The missionaries functioned with very different aims. For the missionaries, the work was unstructured and based solely on close interaction with the natives. Needless to say, as the colonial enterprise started to get more structured, formalized, and politicized by the nineteenth century, specifically after the Mutiny of 1857, the use of religion as a reason to justify their presence in India was no longer a priority for the Parliament or the East India Company. As we shall see, the civilizing process of the missionaries would not fit the changing rhetoric of British colonialism as it entered its high phase in the late 19th century, thereby making the civilizing work of the missionaries increasingly irrelevant to the British colonial enterprise.

Current historiography of South Asia has interpreted the nexus of connection between the evangelicals and the officers of the empire in various ways. According to A.F. Madden writing in the *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, the late nineteenth century witnessed a “developing sense of imperial mission for Christianity and civilization.”¹⁴⁷ K. M. Panikkar went further, arguing that Christian evangelism represented an attempt by the Europeans to impose “a mental and spiritual conquest” as a way of buttressing their political authority.¹⁴⁸ Certain historians like Susan Visvanath, Susan Thorne and Catherine Hall have compellingly demonstrated how Evangelicalism, during the Imperial Age, moved from the periphery to the centre of British social and political life.¹⁴⁹ This can be supported by evidence from Haileybury where the

Europe as well. Shula Marks, ‘History, The Nation and Empire: Sniping from the Periphery’ in *History Workshop* (Volume 29, 1990, pg. 111-119). Also, Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Routledge, New York, 1992). Race, sports and masculinity has also been discussed sufficiently JA Mangan ed., *Manliness and Morality: Middle Class Masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940* (St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1987). How race was used as a tool to preserve the alienness of the ruling group has been one of the main arguments of Partha Chatterjee’s *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993). Also, Kenneth Ballhatchett, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics 1793-1905*, (St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1980)

¹⁴⁷ E.A. Benians, Sir James Butler and C.E. Carrington ed., *The Cambridge History of British Empire* (Volume III) (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967), pg. 344

¹⁴⁸ K.M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance*, (The John Day Company, New York, 1953), pg. 314

¹⁴⁹ Susan Visvanth, ‘The Homogeneity of Fundamentalism: Christianity, British Colonialism and India in the Nineteenth Century’ in *Studies in History* (Volume 16, 2000), Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the*

students received lectures by a teaching staff that included a number of ordained Church of England clergymen. Among the noted Evangelicals teaching at Haileybury were William Dealtry and W.E. Buckely who had been commanded by the Court of Directors to inculcate in its charges a respect for Christian values.¹⁵⁰ While there was a period of collaboration between the evangelicals and the officers that lasted based on setting up an English education system, the period of collaboration did not last long. Contending this opinion has been the emergence of another historiography that see evangelism as having "...served the purposes of empire has been replaced by one that holds that relations between church and state on the frontier were characteristically temporary, grudging, and self-interested- and that the two are likely to undermine each other."¹⁵¹ Post 1858, imagined and created differences between the natives and the Britons were established, practiced and repeated. According to T.R. Metcalf,

"...Lord Ellenborough, an unsympathetic governor- general, who followed Grant as president of the BOC, would later assert that the innovation of giving government grants to missionary schools had destroyed 'the neutrality to which we have at all times pledged ourselves to adhere'. His successor, Lord Stanley, agreed: 'while professing religious neutrality we have departed widely from it in fact', he wrote in September 1858."¹⁵²

Leading up to 1857 as the nature of colonial rule transformed, the disdain that the ICS officers, the de facto rulers of the colonial state felt towards the work of the missionaries is evident in their attitude and treatment of them. Writing in the mid-19th century, Reverend William Hart categorized the ICS into one group that was actively averse to the work of the missionaries,

Making of an Imperial Culture in nineteenth century England (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1999) and Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002)

¹⁵⁰ Bernard S. Cohn, 'Recruitment and Training of British Civil Servants in India 1600-1860' in Ralph Braibanti ed. *Asian Bureaucratic Systems Emergent from the British Imperial Tradition* (Durham University Press, North Carolina, 1966), pg. 119 and 132

¹⁵¹ Andrew Porter, 'Religion and Empire: British Expansion in the long Nineteenth Century' in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* (Volume 20, 1992), pg. 376-77, 245

¹⁵² Quoted in T.R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857-1870* (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1965), pg. 91

while the second group remained indifferent towards the work of the missionaries. The first group of British men, Hart says, felt nothing short of,

“...indifference tinged with a somewhat adverse opinion...it is not at all on unfriendly terms with the good people who are doing the work, but it feels that they might have been employing their time and toil to much greater advantage. Their attempt was looked upon as a sad waste of money and of time...”¹⁵³.

While the aforementioned group remained reluctant witnesses to what the missionaries were doing, the second group of ICS detractors were symptomatic of the changing nature of the rule of colonialism during the time. The skepticism about the relevance of religion as any contributing factor to the colonial project was felt by the ICS. The men of the ICS were more interested in playing up differences or play up the performative production of difference, namely the superiority of their own race, and in the process reminded the natives of their inherent degeneracy, thereby cementing the relevance of colonial rule. Talking about this second group of British ICS administrators, Rev. Hart said,

“...there are also those who take a definite stand against the missionary. They consider that he is not merely doing no good, but that he is doing harm. He unsettles the minds of the people; he helps to encourage aspirations that make men discontented with the ancient way and with the present lot. There are those who find no pleasure in hearing of the conversion of the despised Indians, and who will have nothing to do with a native Christian.”¹⁵⁴

The self-fashioning of the British ICS officers to see themselves as an elite group that could not possibly have either hereditary or cultural similarities with Indians, would mean that they would advocate for a more formalized and politicized civilizing mission. By the period of high imperialism of the mid-19th century, the Britons had rejected the earlier civilizing Orientalist mission of educating them to turn them into brown *sahibs*. Instead, in the years immediately leading up to 1857, the Britons intentionally worked on playing up differences and, further,

¹⁵³ W.H. Hart, *Everyday Life in Bengal and Other Indian Sketches*, (Charles H. Kelly. London, 1906), pp. 233-234

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, pp. 235-236

cementing them into a constructed reality that the rule of colonialism came to be based upon. It is in this refashioned rule of colonialism that the performance of the empire becomes crucial.

The more formalized and politicized civilizing mission was practiced in the form of gentlemanliness, which as the colonial project became more politicized became more useful than the turn to Christian theology. R. Pearson noticed the change in attitude in the men of the empire, who took on the garb of gentlemanliness as they simultaneously rejected the efforts of the missionaries. Noticing this change in attitude, Pearson writes,

“...When English no longer looked upon Christianity as ‘the be all and end all,’ they sought for some other standard by which to measure their assumed superiority, and their growing prosperity and consequent demand for a life of ease and refinement determined that this standard should be the quality of ‘gentlemanliness’.¹⁵⁵

Social classification in the colonial state started to take more precedence than religious differences, thereby making the emergence of club culture that was much more relevant in the justification of the colonial enterprise. The simultaneous growth of British clubland and the ICS members of these clubs, who were trained to enact, perform and embody Britishness on themselves at all times, met the needs of the time for British colonialism to continue its hegemonic control over the subcontinent. The question that one begs to ask here is this: what was the driving logic or the fundamentals in the exercise of the British seeking legitimacy to rule over India?

At a time when the Charter for trade was being opened up to India, creating more wealth-making opportunities for the British, and Christian religious and moral superiority was being bandied about on a regular basis, the administrative structure of the Company in India was also becoming more formalized. Generally speaking, as British society in Calcutta became more

¹⁵⁵ R Pearson, *Eastern Interlude: A Social History of the European Community in Calcutta*, (Thacker, Spinck and Co. Calcutta, 1954), pg. 98

formalized it needed to be run by better trained, highly educated and hyper-conscious Anglophiles of the 19th century who were keen on ruling less through assimilation of local knowledge and practices, and more through maintaining differences. It became imperative for this latter group of strict adherents of Britishness, to make themselves as exclusionary as possible, which included in the spaces they picked out for their own sociability. At this juncture, there entered the ICS officers, in their most powerful and influential form, to usher in a different form of legitimacy for the British presence.

IDEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR BRITISH COLONIAL RULE:

Around the same time that these changes were taking place in the British colonial state, James Mill's canonical text *The History of British India* (1817) was published. His work extolled the virtues of British presence in India as a very useful and remarkable tool for the civilizing mission of the native Indians. Despite being opposed to the continuance of the Company's trading monopoly and seeing monopolies as belonging to an unenlightened and semi-barbarous age, he had only very gracious things to say about British rule in India. According to Mill, British rule in India "...with all its vices, is a blessing of unspeakable magnitude to the population of Hindustan."¹⁵⁶ For Mill, the true leaders who would lead the brutish natives into the path of class and civilization will be the administrators of the British empire. In Javed Majeed's reading of Mills, he claims Mill "...wanted to maintain that the past had no relevance for defining cultural identity, nor for shaping programmes [sic] of reform for Indian or British society."¹⁵⁷ For Mill, a simple form of government tempered by European honor and European

¹⁵⁶ James Mill, *The History of British India* (6 volumes), (Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, London, 1817), pg. 171

¹⁵⁷ Javed Majeed, 'James Mill's 'The History of British India' and Utilitarianism as a Rhetoric of Reform in *Modern Asian Studies* (Vol. 24, No. 2, May, 1990), pg. 211-212

intelligence was needed to govern India, thereby not leaving the running of the colonial state in the hands of money-hungry traders and merchants.

For Mill, one of the most effective ways to impose British rule in its most refined form in India was through the setting up of a monarchy, that would function in the similar manner as it did in England. According to Mill, "...instead of sending out a Governor General, to be recalled in a few years, why should we not constitute one of our Royal Family, Emperor of Hindustan with hereditary succession."¹⁵⁸ For Mill, British colonies were a source of power and patronage for the ruling elite. The colonies, for Mill, were about sustaining the power of the aristocracy, who use the myth of the economic riches in the colonies, to justify Britain's role as an imperial nation.¹⁵⁹ The source of power for the ruling elite in the colonies, I argue, was best and most effectively represented in the club. The position of the ruling elite British class in India was strengthened by being members of the club, which in turn, would play a vital role in transforming patriotism into a sort of national identity, the colonial form of Britishness.

The British elite club, whether in London, Calcutta or in any other city that has historically seen continued British presence, may seem to be inspired in many ways by the popular so-called liberal utilitarian theorists of the time. For classic utilitarian thinkers like Jeremy Bentham, the idea of making a codified legislation for purposes of maintaining law and order was tied up with the inherent idea of happiness. For him, the ideological formation of a reform or civilizing movement cannot occur organically unless the creators of said legislation find ways to maximize their own happiness and minimize their own pain. Utilitarianism essentially bases the authority of a functional and stable government and the sanctity of

¹⁵⁸ *Edinburgh Review*, Apr. 1810; *Eclectic Review*, Jan. 1814, vol. I, p. 147; and 'Colony' reprinted in *Supplement to Encyclopaedia Britannica*, as separately reprinted, pg. 156

¹⁵⁹ James Mill, 'Colony', reprinted in *Supplement to Encyclopaedia Britannica*, as separately reprinted, pg. 31-33

individual rights upon their utility. For Utilitarians like Bentham, every institution in the government is supposed to serve a purpose whereby its utility can be gauged and tested.

We can extend Bentham's notion of utilitarianism as it functions in the government, to help us to understand the contemporary logic and workings of the club environment as well. The enormous power wielded by the ICS officers could be isolating. The club, in Bentham's principles, could serve the purpose of allowing a small group of ICS officers the ability to socialize with one another, thereby promoting happiness by expanding opportunities of satisfaction (exclusive space, privacy, controlled socialization) and gratification of desire for the same. The club served as a locus where the officer might "...after his day's work...for an hour or two take his ease into the society of men of his own race, and those whose habits and customs were the same as his own."¹⁶⁰ At the same time, the elite club served as more than just a location of socialization. The space fostered the growth of a self-fashioned identity of Britishness. The club was a haven for its members, provided a happiness for its members, which would be a utility that could be used to exercise continued British rule over India.

A social institution like the British elite club as such served both to provide a location in which the ICS men could distinguish themselves from other Britons, and the political purpose of legitimizing colonial rule, while not being recognized as an official institution of the colonial state. Yet, the club provided for its performing members the space to act out their superior version of Britishness that was not privy to everyone. The club also provided a haven and sacred space where the rulers of the colonial state would not be scrutinized constantly, something they abhorred coming from their much less superior brethren and the subjects of the colonial state.

¹⁶⁰ WH Horne, *Work and Sport in the Old ICS*, William Blackwood and Sons Ltd., Edinburgh and London (1928), pg. 21-22

The club was not an officially mandated arm of the British colonial state. Yet, by its very existence, catering to a very specific need for a very specific set of people, the club's influence and symbolic significance played a crucial role in the way the stratified British society of the colonial state functioned and behaved. The club served the purpose of situating itself in a location, in the heartland of Calcutta, the seat of British power, as a symbol of all that was great and noble about being British.

Yet, being hopeful about emulating the right form of Britishness, with all its practices and performances, was not enough for a native to even hope to gain entry into the club. The strict, scientific, screening process of choosing members for the club was in direct contrast with the superstitious and outdated social system that the Indians adhered to. The club would seem to serve Mill's recommendation of upholding an example of high civilization, where men were selected for membership based on merit, rather than the irrational system of selection of jobs based on the caste they were born into. The irony being that while the British eschewed India's own caste system as signal of their inherent backwardness stemming from their irrational belief system, the British elite were practicing a similar practice of exclusion based on their own unfounded categories. The exclusive practices that defined Britishness in the ICS clubs would have qualified as a potent symbol of high civilization for Mill.

THE CLUB AS A LOCUS OF CULTURAL CAPITAL:

Pierre Bourdieu's idea of habitus helps us to understand how a select group of men with the right training and ingrained with the belief they could exercise total and complete control of India based on legitimacy created in a setting that would garner them maximum happiness and peace of mind to carry out their duties as the de facto rulers of the Indian subcontinent, found its very best incarnation in the club. Bourdieu defines habitus as "...a structuring structure, which

organizes practices and the perceptions of practices.”¹⁶¹ As has been argued previously, these men, educated either at Haileybury, Oxford, or Cambridge had been imbued with ideas of superiority and exclusion in their daily lives; the idea of ruling by association had been ingrained as a part of their moral education.

For Bourdieu, the concept of habitus is very closely linked with created social structures in a specific field which is essential to understanding how more than one habitus can co-exist interlinked to one another in various ways. We can use the concept to understand the elite club as the location of capital, which according to Bourdieu should not simply be reduced to economic terms. Bourdieu expands the notion of capital from merely its economic conception, which focuses on material exchanges to include non-material forms of capital that he sees as making a vital contribution to the disposition of a person and society. According to Bourdieu,

“...the constitution of a science of mercantile relationships which, inasmuch as it takes for granted the very foundations of the order it claims to analyze— private property, profit, wage labor, etc.— is not even a science of the field of economic production, has prevented the constitution of a general science of the economy of practices, which would treat mercantile exchange as a particular case of exchange in all its forms.”¹⁶²

In other words, for Bourdieu purely mercantile ambitions have to be understood in the larger context of human and social capital, all of which are deeply interlinked to one another.

Bourdieu divides up his conception of capital into four sub-categories: economic capital, social capital, cultural capital, the sum total of which he sees to be as symbolic capital.

Bourdieu’s four species of capital all, either individually or in some combination with one another, add to the success of people within that habitus. The British elite club in colonial Calcutta was a space where men who shared a similar habitus (training, skills, temperament and

¹⁶¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. (Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1984), pg. 80.

¹⁶² Pierre Bourdieu, ‘The Forms of Capital’, translated by Richard Nice for Nico Stehr and Reiner Grundmann ed. *Knowledge: Critical Concepts* (Volume III, Knowledge and the Economy), (Routledge, London and New York, 2005), pg. 94.

disposition) came together to safeguard their distinction at a time when exclusivity and differences were becoming the hallmarks of how British colonialism was being established in India.

Borrowing Marx's understanding of capital in economic terms, Bourdieu expands the understanding of what capital can entail in the symbolic realm of culture. The symbolic realm of culture including similar traits, mannerisms, sartorial choices, credentials and tastes that one has acquired by virtue of being part of a similar class are what Bourdieu would define as embodied habituations. In the case of the club, current and potential members had been trained in a similar ethos and spirit, they had been socialized in a similar manner, taught the conduct of a gentleman, and thereby became part of the same realm of symbolic culture, to which the majority of Britons were not privy. Bourdieu further divides up how cultural capital can be understood through three different structures: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. The British elite club was a manifestation of its members' habitus that can be seen as embodied (the atypical form of mannerism that represented Britishness in its very finest form)' objectified (the physical possessions, loots of victory donated to the club by its members, thereby reflecting the brave and masculine form of Britishness); and institutionalized (the category of who is clubbable, which is to say capable of practicing Britishness in its very finest form).

Why was it so important for the official British community in Calcutta to use the club as a means to set up a separate habitus for itself? Why and how did the club serve as a required tool for the practice and implementation of a specific form of cultural and symbolic capital, and how and why it was necessary for the colonial project? For Bourdieu, the two most important tenets of cultural capital are that; 1) it is transferred by family and education and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications, 2) this capital is usually not

transferable or to be used for assimilation.¹⁶³ Embodied capital, or cultural capital symbolically sat in the institutions that groomed the men to run the empire. Over the course of years, during the nascent stage of the boys' lives, institutions like Haileybury ingrained and trained to think for themselves and their conduct as the bearers of colonialism's cultural capital. By the time the men graduating from Haileybury, or later generation of competition wallahs, reached Calcutta, they had completed their acquisition of cultural capital in all forms. In their daily lives and practices, such men had been familiarized and conditioned to act and conduct themselves in a certain manner, one befitting their role as colonial masters. The importance of the practice of this embodied cultural capital cannot be overstated, and it seems to have permeated each and every action of the British ICS officers, who were fully imbued in the spirit of Britishness and right conduct.

The deeply ingrained understanding of what it means to be a British gentleman was about more than just establishing a racial, national, or socially superior identity. It was about embodying the practices that make one a gentleman and how successfully they had to be practiced on a daily basis in every movement and every interaction. This is also indicative of the intensive grooming and specific education that these men had received in their nascent years, which was so exclusionary to them that it made it impossible for them to socialize with other groups who had not received a similar upbringing. Discussing the very detailed expectations and conduct of a gentleman, Douglas Dewar, a barrister and subsequently a British ICS officer, notes,

“...as soon as he enters a regiment, an English officer has to follow two professions: the one, the more important, that of a gentleman;...It is serious business, the study of the thousand and one forms by which

¹⁶³ Pierre Bourdieu, 'Habitus' in Jean Hillier and Emma Rooksby ed. *Habitus: A Sense of Place* (Routledge, London, 2005), pg. 125, 136. Also see, Jason D. Engerton and Lance W. Roberts, 'Cultural Capital or Habitus? Bourdieu and Beyond in the Explanation of Enduring Educational Inequality in *Theory and Research in Education* (Volume 14, No.2, 2014, pg. 193-220).

the regular gentleman shows himself; he exhibits this by the way in which he cuts his meat, invites others to take wine, helps himself to salt. It is necessary for him to know to salute those whom he meets, and when to turn away his head. Then, it is no small thing to know how to appear in public, how in church, what functions he should honour with his presence; the way to word a letter, fold it, seal it, despatch it, are the object of grave deliberations.”¹⁶⁴

These grave questions of conduct becoming of a gentleman had to find a suitable place to be practiced in, where one could be surrounded by the men who would influence others in the appropriate way. The very specific space where the gentlemanly conduct could be practiced and performed turned out to be the British elite club. The club functioned as a sanctified space where there was a certain way a fellow member could be addressed, where the manner in which one drank the wine either won the approval or raised the ire of fellow members. The elite club was firstly the space where men of a similar habitus congregated to perform the very finest version of Britishness. It was also the space where un-British like conduct would be policed. Discipline and the maintenance of a clubbable conduct was as important as the space of the club was, thereby making the space the perfect location for the performance of Britishness.

For Bourdieu, symbolic capital is closely related to honor and recognition. According to Bourdieu this kind of capital is not a standalone, independent of the other three kinds of capital. Rather, social, cultural and economic capital all come together to create symbolic capital, the source from whence the ruling class can dispense its rule and exercise its authority. Symbolic capital usually works with the tacit support of peer competitors, but it also needed to be recognized and legitimized by subordinate groups. The goal of the symbolic capital is to generate an implicit consent whereby the less privileged people would want to emulate the habitus of the more privileged, rather than resist it. The British elite club existed and performed a clubbable Britishness with the same intention: the habituation into the performances at the club was aimed at creating and in the maintenance of distinction. The daily ritualized performances of this

¹⁶⁴ Douglas Dewar, *Bygone Days in India*, (John Lane, London, 1922), pg. 232

clubbability naturalizes the distinction as a given by making it appear that the ability to club or perform a certain kind of Britishness is not a privilege for everyone. The symbolic capital that the elite club came to exercise is “...worthy of being pursued and preserved.”¹⁶⁵ For Bourdieu, the importance of symbolic capital rests on the usefulness of the capital in the larger power system (in this context, the colonial state). Symbolic capital is reflective of the external and internal recognition, i.e. the value accorded by the system and its characters that are supposed to exercise this power in their rule in the eyes of the less privileged.

The view of the value of the club as an institution of sociability alone is a simplistic one. At an informal gathering held in 1826 at Town Hall in Calcutta, Lt. Col. the Hon. J. Finch explained the respective advantages the newly established Bengal Club would bring to its members, both in the city and the mofussil. He says,

“...the want of some such public place is sensibly felt, as those who constitute the society of Calcutta have no place where they can spend an idle half hour agreeably, those who are occasional visitants only too often find themselves utter strangers. To both classes, therefore, some one building which shall always be open to them, which they may securely and pleasurably visit and where they may have a chance of meeting with old friends and acquaintances...will, I conceive, be an arrangement of such obvious advantage that to be successful it needs to be only known.’¹⁶⁶

The obvious advantages of the club, as a meeting place for like-minded men from the same profession, is an understandable one. It is when the club, in its entirety, is put in a larger context in the political landscape of colonial Calcutta that its advantages can be fully gauged.

As mentioned earlier, the relationship between the official and non-official British community was never a very amicable one. The differences between the two communities was even more pronounced as the colonial state started to become more formalized. Haileybury had imbued its students with a spirit of greatness that was thrust upon them by virtue of them being

¹⁶⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977), pg. 182

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in HR Panckridge, *A Short History of the Bengal Club, 1827-1927*, pg. 1

the potential de facto rulers of the colony of India. They were an exclusive and privileged group, unparalleled, professionally and culturally, by the non-official British community in Calcutta. The British military community similarly had proven its mettle in the battlefield in Europe and had emerged victorious. While the men of the British military did not occupy the pride of place that the British ICS officers did, they were second in the English professional hierarchical ladder in the sub-continent. To prove their legitimacy as power to be reckoned with in the colonial state military clubs were established both in Calcutta and London as a habitus for British military to claim their position in the hierarchy. Claiming that being British superseded all other identities for the colonizers was not entirely accurate. Within the larger rubric of British identity, profession played a far bigger and more divisive role in the British colonial state than any other category. The rulers of the colonial state were creating an exclusivity for themselves from two ends simultaneously. While on the one hand they rejected any racial assimilation with lower class Indians, they simultaneously rejected any national assimilation with British men who did not come to India holding coveted positions in the colonial administration.

Even at a time when the British had rejected many of the indigenous social tenets in the Indian sub-continent, it is interesting to note how their own administrative structure functioned in a manner similar to the Indian caste system. Drawing parallels between the two, noted historian and author H.E.A. Cotton identified three British caste affiliations,

“...the ruling caste, who like the Brahmins of old, reserve to themselves in perpetuity all situations of authority and emolument under the State: the military caste, who keep alive the tradition that India is held by the sword: and the mass of non- officials, who, as a rule, are too absorbed in their professions and pursuits to concern themselves with abating the exclusive pretensions to place and power of the civilian and the soldier.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ HEA Cotton, *Calcutta Old and New: A Historical and Descriptive Handbook To The City*, (Newman and Company, Calcutta, 1907), pg. 251

If, according to Cotton, the large group of British non-officials were not interested in trying to maintain an image or practice Britishness in their daily lives, as expected of the ICS men, this only led to increasing the chasm between the two communities. While the ICS were conditioned, trained, and socialized in the ways befitting their future role as the rulers of the Indian colony, the non-official British community was not privy to a similar upbringing. The spirit of Britishness did not touch the two communities in a similar manner. While the British ICS officers knew that their job entailed a combination of power and representation, symbolizing the strength of Britain in the most dignified light, the British business community was compelled by another set of priorities.

Since the mid-17th century, the British merchant had been driven by one priority alone: that is to make their stay in India as economically profitable as possible. Other than that, the British merchant was interested in "...the display of wealth, the craving for amusement, the enjoyment of the pleasures of the table."¹⁶⁸ The craving for amusement that so drove the British merchant community invariably led them into trouble, which once again, added to the growing tension between the official and non-official British community residing in Calcutta. Not bound by the covenant of the ICS, not having to carry the responsibility of representing Britishness in its very finest form, not compelled to act in a certain manner, usually meant that the merchant community landed into trouble, thereby becoming a cause for embarrassment, both for Britain and for its esteemed ICS fraternity. As the number of British merchants coming into India multiplied, the conduct and behavior of the ones who were motivated only to make money soon drew the ire of their ICS counterparts, who criticized the British merchants for embarrassing the British nation, the entity whose prestige they were trying so hard to uphold.

¹⁶⁸ Kathleen Blechyden, *Calcutta Past and Present*, (Thacker and Company, London, 1905), pp. 107

While hearing the British merchant community complain about the lack of respect accorded to them by the natives, author 'Boxwallah' complained,

"...the men who chiefly complain of lack of courtesy from Indians fail to perceive that they themselves are the chief cause of any decline of British prestige...Trade's unfeeling train is largely recruited from men...from a class of Britons who attempt to exact from the natives a show of respect they have never received at home, and to extort by bullying a deference which is not yielded to their superiority of character."¹⁶⁹

Character is what set the official British community apart from the non-official community.

Character in its very finest components is how the Victorian bourgeois man stood apart from anyone else. Character was perceived as a natural born set of qualities that had to be performed on a regular basis to justify and legitimize their claim to elite status. The elite professional men, through the act of clubbing in Calcutta's colonial exclusive clubland, earned their respect in the manner in which they conducted themselves, thereby earning them the moniker of the most legitimate rulers of the Indian sub-continent. Unlike the merchant community, the men of the ICS found ways to command the respect by their performance of clubbability.

One of the ways in which the official and non-official British community did not see eye to eye was in the ways to socialize and conduct themselves. For, the British ICS officers, performing Britishness did not end at the end of the workday. Its practice was a characteristic ethos that had become a part of who they were as men of the empire. The club and the members within it were always exhibited as the true practitioners of the immense cultural capital from which stemmed the logic of imperial rule. The cultural capital divided the one who could club from the ones who couldn't. Mrinalini Sinha makes a distinction between the two groups and sees it as contributing factor to how modern colonialism as a "...civilizing mission refers to the tension that arises out of...the idea of modern Europe as unique and exceptional...and on the other hand the idea of universality of the European experience for endless replication in far off

¹⁶⁹ Boxwallah, *An Eastern Backwater* (A. Melrose, London, 1916), pp. 69-70

lands.”¹⁷⁰ Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu, could not be transferred, it either had to be imbibed or trained from within; the non-official British community could never be seen accorded the same prestige as their official counterparts. Yet, this cultural capital, according to Sinha, did have the ability to travel from London to Calcutta, based solely on one’s ability to club.

As the merchant classes in Calcutta started to prosper economically and made Calcutta their home, an enormous change in the attitudes of these men was becoming noticeable. Whether the merchants functioned as representatives of East India Company or as free merchants after 1813, the senior and more prosperous merchants broke away from the practice of dining and socializing with the underwriters of the Company, thereby separating and creating another strata within British society in Calcutta. The merchants started to rent or build houses for themselves, setting up social venues with various amenities available at their disposal. For their sociability, the early successful merchants of the East India Company had looked to set up commercial ventures of the type that later became a prototype for the emergence of the clubland of the 19th century. Such enterprising merchants also realized the need for respectable spaces of socialization that the men of the empire were seeking as a refuge after a day’s work. For example, Mr. William Parks had applied for a license in 1762 to keep a garden house as a place of entertainment for the gentry of Calcutta. While Mr. Parks was granted the license by the Council he was also given strict instructions to keep his garden house closed during the early afternoon to ensure that the company writers and merchants might not be tempted by the idea of the garden house to deter them from their day’s work.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Mrinalini Sinha, ‘Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India’ published in *Journal of British Studies* (Volume 40, No. 4, 2001), pg. 492

¹⁷¹ R Pearson, *Eastern Interlude: A Social History of the European Community in Calcutta*, (Thacker, Spinck and Co. Calcutta, 1954).

While the idea of setting up the one of a kind garden house was a successful one, it would take another fifty years until private institutions, in the form of Calcutta's clubland, would form the basis of Britain's symbolic importance and come to dot the skylines of Calcutta. The predominant socializing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was still held privately in homes where formal dinners would be the normal trend in the evenings. And yet, the uncouth socializing occurring at such dinners became a normal socializing trend during such dinners predominantly thrown by the rich merchants. Describing the ungentlemanly-like conduct at one such dinner where he was invited, R. Pearson observed,

“...supper was a gay, informal meal, at which the practice of bread pellet throwing was popular, and Richard Barwell (merchant with the East India Company) achieved local distinction as the ‘champion bread pellet thrower’, on the grounds that he could snuff out a candle at four yards. This particular diversion came to a sudden end, however, when one gentleman, caught unawares by a pellet which hit him in the face, returned the compliment by hurling a leg of mutton at the thrower...”¹⁷².

The embarrassing conduct of the non-official British community started to be documented by the English language press in Calcutta. In describing the ethos of the newly prospering merchant community residing in Calcutta, an English newspaper of the time complained that “...there is a general depravity of conversation and manners, both in male and mixed societies.”¹⁷³ The wives of these merchants, the very few who did reside in Calcutta, were also set to high standard, one that the polite British society of the time did not think the wives could match up to. The high standards and the price for not being able to meet those lofty ideals was well evidenced with one personal advertisement published by the management of the Theatre in the Calcutta Gazette in 1797 targeting an ill-behaved merchant's wife who had come to watch a show. The advertisement in the Gazette read,

¹⁷² *ibid*, pg. 164.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, pg. 169

“...a certain person who made her appearance among the Company in the first night of the performance is desired to take notice that in future she will not be permitted to remain in the house should she be so ill-advised to repeat her visit.”¹⁷⁴

The biased criticism against the conduct of the British merchants and their families came at a crucial time and it certainly were not occurring in isolation. As the growth and economic prosperity of the British merchants solidified their position as the money makers in Calcutta, they were often starting to clash with the empire builders who were starting to draw up a more rigid, strict and structured form of rule in India that would usher in the phase of the ICS in the 19th century.

¹⁷⁴ WS Seton Karr, *Selections from Calcutta Gazette*, (CT Cutter, Calcutta, 1865), pg. 606

CHAPTER IV

PERFORMING CLUBBABILITY: CREATING DISTINCTION, BRITISHNESS AND THE LEGITIMACY TO RULE

Introduction and Overview

This chapter starts out by considering Judith Butler's exploration of the symbolic and iterative relations of performance and its role in the buildup of a legitimized power structure that helped to establish British rule in India for more than 250 years. The first half of the chapter extends Butler's ideas into an architectural discourse to understand how spaces were colonized by the British with the express need to separate and segregate, for implementing governance. The basic premise is that the creation of social spaces can take place through the reiterative enactment of performative practices that are almost mythological in nature. This seemingly simple claim has profound implications not only for how we come to understand the spaces of state power but also the creation of other spaces of hegemonic power, namely the British clubs in colonial Calcutta.

Space, according to Judith Butler, comes to exist everywhere. Spatial performance, as a concept, draws from the both Foucault and Butler where space "...as a regulatory ideal functions not only to govern our own bodies in space, but also to produce the relations of the body in space...space-acts are the enactments within that space which secure both one's gender and the norms of space."¹⁷⁵ One of the key arguments of this chapter is going to be that the relation of British clubland to the practitioners of clubbability within it should be seen as an enactment of the perceived superiority that was the basis of British rule in India, or what can be defined as the enactment of Britishness.

¹⁷⁵ Jan Smitheram, "Spatial Performativity/Spatial Performance" in *Architectural Theory Review* (Volume 16, Number 1, April 2011), pp. 60

The second half of the chapter moves inside the actual British clubs where rigid categories placed on members ensured the execution of Britishness was carried out smoothly. Examining categories of British clubbability like membership, rules of clubbability, and rule breakers help us understand how the performance of these categories reflects on the productive relationship between the terms performance and performativity. Butler emphasizes the distinction between the two arguing that, "...whereas performance presupposes a preexisting subject, performativity contests the very notion of the subject."¹⁷⁶ The sum total composite of the two provides a rich theorization of the subject (the club member) who acts in a space and time (within the club). The subject for Butler come to exist in a certain role only so far as they continually perform according to the dictates of the performance.

While drawing on Judith Butler's theorization of performance and its enactment of power in a space, I also use front as Erving Goffman understood it. My intention in this chapter to see British clubland's front as a physical layout where performativity of Britishness was most fruitfully practiced in an almost sacred space. The front stage performance, according to Goffman, is "highly intentional and purposeful and can be habitual."¹⁷⁷ The setting, or the front, as Goffman argues, was so that members could use the particular setting of the club as a part of their performance because they cannot begin their act until they have brought themselves to the appropriate place and would have to terminate their performance when they left the location. I will describe the architectural and topographical features of British clubland in Calcutta in terms of the front as Goffman defined it. However, I also show that while the British clubland did provide a legitimized front for the performance of Britishness, performativity did not stop there.

¹⁷⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Volume 36, (Routledge, New York, 2006), pg. 33

¹⁷⁷ Erving Goffman, *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*, (Free Press, New York, 1963), pg. 145

Clubbability and Britishness, while perfected at the club, was extended beyond the boundaries of the club space, reiterated to normative status, and thus became the cornerstone feature of continued British dominance in India.

CHANGES TO THE GEOGRAPHICAL LANDSCAPE UNDER WELLESLEY (1799-1802)

Replacing Sir John C. Shore as Governor General, Lord Wellesley's tenure in India lasted from 1798 to 1805. Despite his stint lasting less than a decade, Lord Wellesley's contribution to the rise and consolidation of British rule in India was immense. It was under his directive that initial attempts were made to transform the British East India Company from a mercantile company to an imperialist organization. For Wellesley, it was important that the transformation in attitude and nature of British rule had to be accompanied by physical changes in the landscape of the city of Calcutta. In his famous Minutes of 1803, a detailed plan he laid out to revamp the landscape of Calcutta that he presented to the British Parliament, he stressed the importance of renovating the landscape of the city, as a means to display the indestructible nature of British rule.

Wellesley saw his attempts to leave an indelible British mark on the city as an opportunity to restore order and symmetry into the city that had been run amok by the flagrant ways of the Bengalis who had no sense of aesthetics and therefore left the city looking as chaotic as it did. In his words,

“The increasing extent and population of Calcutta, the capital of the British empire in India, and the seat of supreme authority, require the serious attention of Government...In those quarters of the town occupied principally by the native inhabitants, the houses have been built without order or regularity...the appearance and beauty of the town are inseparably connected with the health, safety and convenience of the inhabitants, and every improvement which shall introduce a great degree of order, symmetry and magnificence in the streets, roads, *ghauts*, and wharfs, public edifices and private inhabitations, will tend to meliorate the climate, and to secure and promote every object of a just and salutary system of police.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ JN Dasgupta, 'Wellesley's Scheme For The Improvement Of Calcutta', *Bengal Past And Present* (XV, No. 29-30, July-December 1917, pp. 82-85

The beginning of the nineteenth century in the history of British rule in India saw the advent of significant changes. Gone were the days of collaboration with the locals as the Orientalists had thought to be an effective way of ruling. As the nature of British rule in India became more powerful, formal and political, differences, whether created, imagined or real, were used as a justification for continued British presence in India. It is in the new form of imperialistic hegemonic British rule, based on creating distinctions, that Wellesley's observations become so important. For the British rulers, it wasn't enough to practice and implement colonial policies of differentiation, essentially based on race and class, that had become the new *modus operandi* of British colonial rule. The cultural and social differences based primarily on the perceived superiority of the British needed to be visually represented.

The same year the construction of the Government House was completed, Wellesley delivered his Minutes in 1803. With the intention of impressing the subjects of the colonial state, the Government House symbolized the gradual transformation of British rule in India.

Describing the new imposing building, John Archer writes,

“...unlike its predecessor, the new structure was no longer one mansion among several of comparable scale. Instead it wholly dominated all others. Indeed, by appropriating and fencing off an extensive tract of ground beyond its south front, the new building exacted an additional act of bodily deference by virtually all who went past...Both visually and physically, then, the new structure became a statement of the imperial splendor in which Calcuttans were given the opportunity to bask- and which simultaneously demanded notable changes in the physical performance of their lives.”¹⁷⁹

The demand for the notable changes in the physical layout of the city was not only about beautifying the city but was also inextricably linked to the creation of a British city. The

¹⁷⁹ John Archer, 'Paras, Palaces, Pathogens: Frameworks For The Growth of Calcutta, 1800-1850' in *City And Society* (XIII, I, 2000), pg. 33-34. Other significant works that study colonial architecture and power in the larger field of the study of establishing colonial rule would be P. Scriver and V. Prakash ed., *Colonial Modernities: Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon* (Routledge, New York, 2007), Tapati Guha-Thakurtha, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (Columbia University Press, New York, 2004), Thomas Metcalfe, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and British Raj* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989) and Christopher Tadgell, *The History of Architecture in India: From Dawn of Civilization to the End of the Raj* (Phaidon Press, London, 1990).

revamped landscape of British Calcutta was concomitant with newly trained men of the empire who did not see themselves as mere traders, but rather as the most effective and legitimate representatives of the British Crown in the Indian sub-continent. The requirement for a newly constructed seat of power in Calcutta constructed on the neoclassical canons of design emulating the styles of national and imperial European capitals, required the right men to populate it. Noting the need for this change in the men running the empire, Lord Valentia talking about the changes Wellesley had initiated, opined,

“...the sums expended upon it have been considered as extravagant by those who carry European ideas and European economy in to Asia, but they ought to remember that...India has to be ruled from a palace, not from a country house; with the ideas of a Prince, not with those of a retail dealer in muslins and indigo.”¹⁸⁰

The need to replace the indigo merchants with men trained expressly with the intention of one day ruling over India was felt acutely at a time when the logic of colonial rule was being re-invented.

A reorganized form of British rule would serve a multitude of purposes. In the refashioned architectural landscape of Calcutta, power was exhibited and displayed in an outward form. Wellesley’s plan unearths a crucial connection between the appearance and beauty of the town and the need for order, symmetry, and magnificence, replacing the thatched roofs and haphazardly constructed houses with imposing mansions with tall windows and pillars constructed to mathematical accuracy. The need for this reconstructed view of the city had symbiotic links to the way power would be exercised, imposed and performed.

Doreen Massey defines the sense of place as “...always constructed out of articulations of social relations...which are not only internal to the locale but which link

¹⁸⁰ George, Viscount Valentia, *Voyages And Travels To India, Ceylon, The Red Sea, Abyssinia and Egypt In The Years 1802-1806* (Vol. II), (F.C.&J Rivington, London, 1811), pg. 181-182.

them to elsewhere.” The ties between past and power are crucial for Massey. According to her, “...the identity of places is very much bound up with the histories which are told of them, how these are told, and which history turns out to be dominant.”¹⁸¹ The justification of the British empire needed to be recreated and reimagined. Unlike in the seventeenth century, the dominant history of the British in India could not be about the self-fashioned white *nabobs*, the lecherous and immoral representatives of the East India Company, or any other British community that was incapable of practicing and upholding the virtues of eighteenth century Britishness in daily life. The nature of the British authority had transformed into a hegemonic, singularly powerful rule that was based on ideas of superiority, distinction and rational ideas of superiority, or what can be understood to be an affective definition of Britishness. The premise of this kind of authority was based on the inherent belief in Britishness and its practice being the cornerstone on which imperial rule was formulated. Yet, this Britishness was not sufficient as a theoretical framework to exercise its authority in the Indian subcontinent; this Britishness needed the right practitioners to perform and practice its main tenets on a consistent basis in selected locations.

Wellesley’s Minutes of 1803 coincided with the emergence of Haileybury as an institution to train future imperialists of the Indian sub-continent. This would not be a mere coincidence that the creation of an institute specifically for the purposes of training future bureaucrats of India, coinciding with Wellesley’s Minutes based towards improving Calcutta speaks of a larger shift in the ethos of British colonialism. The boys graduating from Haileybury were trained and imbued with the spirit of Britishness, one of its main tenets being creating a sanctity of exclusivity, only allowing those in with whom they share

¹⁸¹ Doreen Massey, ‘Places And Their Pasts’ in *History Workshop Journal* (No. 39, Spring 1995), pg. 183, 190.

common principles, which can be understood as an example of distinction. Hand in hand with that, comes the changes in Calcutta's landscape distinctly dividing the white and black part of town. These future representatives of British monarchy arriving to India to start their professional tenure, had been trained and imbued with the spirit of Britishness. These men were trained and expected to replace the current crop of British merchants and private individuals who, even as representatives of the British East India Company, were acting primarily with interests related to economic profit, usually thereby compromising the image and the prestige of Great Britain in the eyes of the world. Replacing money-hungry private merchants with an elite class of British men, trained and equipped to represent and practice Britishness in its very best form, went hand in hand with the changing logic of British rule in India.

British colonial rule as it was exercised on India was based as much on supposedly scientific evidence of superiority as it was based on the way British imperialism was represented and visually presented.¹⁸² The tenets of Britishness were first conceived and created on differences and imagined distinction. It was thereafter practiced and performed by a chosen few to lend the specific tenets of Britishness legitimacy and the corresponding authority to rule.

¹⁸² Christopher Pinney's article, 'The Material and Visual Culture of British India' in Douglas M. Peers and Nandini Gooptu ed. *India and the British Empire* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012) explores how the empire was represented in imperial architectural styles, photographs and in other artistic endeavors, Alison Blunt's, 'Imperial Geographies of Home: British domesticity in India, 1886-1925' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (Volume 24, No. 4, 1999, pg. 421-440) blurs the boundaries between the public and the domestic spheres to see the central role the private sphere played in shaping colonial policies through a thorough examination of domestic diaries, paintings and songs, and Sarah Monks' 'Visual Culture and British India in *Visual Culture in Britain* (Volume 12, No. 3, 2011, pg. 269-275) studies the colonial nation as a framework through a critical engagement with how it was represented visually in popular culture.

The *maidan*, a vast expanse of well-manicured green open area, acted as a physical barricade protecting the sanctity of the British nerve center in Calcutta, and offered its regular visitors hygienic, fresh air free of any pollutant elements from the native part of town. While the environment and the offer of fresh air to its visitors may not have been a crucial tenet of Britishness, the *maidan* and the purpose it served was both social and cultural. Two accounts, one of the foul and infected native part of Calcutta, the other a salutary description of the area around the *maidan*, show why creating areas like the *maidan* was crucial to the practice of Britishness. The definition of Britishness was primarily driven by the creation of differences based on conceptualizing ideas of differences between them and us. In his scathing description of the native part of Calcutta, J Jameson the Secretary of the Medical Board noted,

“...the greatest part of the street in question is covered with ranges of small huts situated nearly in close contiguity to one another, and occupied by the very lowest description of natives. The ground on which they are built, being very low, readily retains the soil and animal filth carelessly allowed to collect by the natives and in wet weather is often entirely under water...the remaining portion of the tract is occupied by...tanks...and...by several ranges of necessaries erected over hollows in the ground.”¹⁸³

¹⁸³ GOB, Judicial Civil, No. 2, 3, June 1801, West Bengal State Archives.



Chitpore Bazaar painted by Charles D'Oyly in 1820. Chitpore Bazaar stood at the edge of Black Town. The temple in the background was often referred to as the Black Pagoda by the British, once again reiterating the blackness of native Calcutta. Picture Courtesy: V&A Gallery

This description stands in stark contrast to the *maidan* and the various advantages it offered to its daily visitors.

An account of the area, a stone's throw away from that described in the most unflattering terms by Jameson, notes,

"Calcutta's chief glory is its *maidan*, that great green open space, which at once the playground and the very lungs of the city. Almost the size of Hyde Park, and quite unfenced, the *maidan* spreads itself from Esplanade to Chowringhee, the two principal European shopping streets of Calcutta...The *maidan* is government property and must be kept clear for purposes of defence. Old Fort William stands in the centre, surrounded by a moat,...the west boundary of the *maidan* is the River Hoogly, and close alongside is the Strand...Here motor cars follow one another in an apparently endless stream, returning by one of the numerous roads, which bisects the *maidan*, while their occupants "take the air."¹⁸⁴

The *maidan* served as more than just the lungs, or a location of green relief, for the city of Calcutta. The *maidan* acted as a buffer, a location that physically cemented the differences between the *haves* and *have-nots*. With only very few being allowed to visit the green sprawling

¹⁸⁴ A. Claude Brown, *The Ordinary Man's India* (Cecil Parmer, London, 1927), pg. 35

garden, the *maidan* both created legitimacy and delegitimized any right of the majority from having access to it. The sacredness of the *maidan* was significant, symbolically, politically and socially. It is where the right kind of British men, the torchbearers of Britishness could roam about freely, without being disturbed by unwanted elements.



A recreated colour photo of the *maidan* reprinted by P. Carpentier. The photo depicts a cricket match played between 68th Light Infantry Team and the Calcutta Cricket Club in 1861

Further, Britishness was given a bigger boost by accompanied physical changes in specific locations in the city of Calcutta. The symbolic changes that accompanied the growing popularity and spread of Britishness worked in tandem to lend British rule the legitimacy it needed. Wellesley's insistence on revamping and reorganizing the landmarks in Calcutta was needed to allow Britishness to be given its most effective display. The symbiotic ties between the practitioners of Britishness and the visually impactful physical locations where they could proudly practice and display the virtues of Britishness became key for the identity of Britishness

to have lasting success, and more importantly, helped to establish the legitimacy that Britain needed to rule over India.

Mildred Archer, commenting on the prospering organic relationship between the men practicing Britishness and the locations where they practiced this most effectively observed,

“...this building (the Government House), virtually a palace, is of political as well as architectural interest since it reflects the change of attitude which was showing itself at the end of the century. At the time the British were beginning to see themselves in a new light. They were no longer merchants, traders and shopkeepers, but had become rulers.”¹⁸⁵

As discussed in Chapter Two above, the growing need to normalize and uphold Britishness had found its most effective location in the Government House, the highest seat of power in colonial India at the time. Yet, it wasn't just in their official capacity that the men practicing Britishness found the most potent locations to practice it. As bureaucrats, spearheading British rule and authority effectively, meant that in every role, whether as officers, friends, men, husbands, or club members, the rulers had to constantly find locations, both private and public, to continue to effectively display the aspirational form of Britishness. The key locations in colonial Calcutta that symbolized and stood as representations of British legitimacy like the Government House, the various official seats of power representing the British colonial state, the official residences and the clubs all had one common location that connected all of these sites. The *maidan* stood testament to the growing close knit, cordoned off and guarded nature of British colonial rule.

Creating Britishness in the *Maidan*

In the redesigned landscape of British Calcutta, the elite clubs became a part of a legacy that still exists and thrives. Post 1803, Calcutta witnessed the construction of regularized and methodically planned road patterns, an extensively effective drainage

¹⁸⁵ Mildred Archer, 'A Georgian Palace In India, Government House, Calcutta', *Country Life* (9 April, 1959), pp. 754.

system, and unified terrace housing. Planned sequences of open spaces and squares became the key features of the newly renovated Calcutta. The originators and practitioners of Britishness lived and worked in this new part of the city, having felt the need to symbolically and physically cordon themselves off. The two most attractive features of this newly constructed white Calcutta were the vast expanse colloquially referred to as the *maidan* and the impressively well-constructed race course. Both of these locations, and the way they were utilized by the ones who were allowed to use them, speak very effectively to the way British imperialism was being rethought and practiced based on exclusivity, isolation and superiority.

The *maidan* served as more than just the lungs, or a location of green relief, for the city of Calcutta. The *maidan* acted as a buffer, a location that physically cemented the differences between the *haves* and *have-nots*. With only very few being allowed to visit the green sprawling garden, the *maidan* both created legitimacy and delegitimized any right of the majority from having access to it. The sacredness of the *maidan* was significant, symbolically, politically and socially. It is where the right kind of British men, the torchbearers of Britishness could roam about freely, without being disturbed by unwanted elements.

The *maidan* played out the question of race most significantly. The native Bengali was barred from entering the space and numerous instances and complaints of Bengali men trespassing the barrier of the cordoned off *maidan* made it into the newspapers of the time. Policing of this sort discouraged other natives from infringing the boundaries of the *maidan*. Natives could also be arrested for minor indiscretions like not following the prescribed dress

code. In a newspaper editorial (1882) complaining about the way natives were treated, an anonymous native wrote,

“Sir-On the evening of Wednesday, the 22nd instant, a few Bengali gentlemen were walking up and down as usual on the *maidan* of the Eden Gardens. Suddenly, a police sergeant came up to them and told them, in the midst of a large group of men...in an insulting tone and manner, ‘Get over to the other side. I have already told you once, and I won’t tell you anymore.’ The gentlemen above mentioned were quite confused but eventually yielded to his wishes without uttering a single word, for fear of getting into fresh trouble. I am quite at a loss to know why the policemen insulted the gentlemen above alluded to. They were not guilty of any heinous crime. The only thing, so far I can guess, that they were wrong in was that they were dressed in their national costume. Now, does that offer any grounds for their thus being insulted? If so, it would perhaps be better to make the fact public instead of reserving it for police-sergeants like the above to impart. Mr. Harrison, the Commissioner of Police, is a gentleman, and I beg to draw his attention to the fact above mentioned.”¹⁸⁶

The seemingly innocuous incident of inappropriate dressing to enter the *maidan* does not on its own seem a major infraction. It is more important to examine such small incidents in the larger context of the kind of British domination exercised on India at the turn of the nineteenth century. Distinction based on differences, both imagined and created, and thereafter normalized became the basis on which British rule was furthered. It is not enough to create these distinctions. It needs to be complemented by a constant practice of it. For the practice of these defined distinctions, it was crucial to find the right locations to practice principles of uniqueness, exclusivity and superiority: the very tenets of British imperial rule. The importance of physical and geographically key locations as sites ripe to practice politicized, racialized and socialized ideas of differences has been the focus of study in various location at various momentous occasions in the past.

¹⁸⁶ *The Englishman* (March 22, 1882) quoted in Ranabir Ray Chaudhury, *Calcutta: A Hundred Years Ago* (Nachiketa Publications, Kolkata, 1988), pp. 42-43



An overview of the *maidan* with the Tank Square to the right and the Government House in the background.
Picture courtesy: Alamy

The *maidan* was a symbolically created space that transcended the subjective need for the British for an exclusive space for themselves and facilitated their need for objective capacity to superiority and restricted space to turn into material truth. The location and social and cultural significance of the *maidan* is significant. Despite the *maidan* predominantly being a physical space, it made an impact as a social space that had symbolic significance too. Using Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of space, the *maidan* can be seen as an integral part of the social world that "...presents itself, objectively, as a symbolic system which is organized according to the logic of difference, of differential distance."¹⁸⁷ Despite the significance of the *maidan* as an objective location, it also worked within a symbolic system that carried enormous symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu, symbolic capital can be seen as "...the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition."¹⁸⁸

Describing the space as one that "...provided (Calcutta) with a lung without which she would be

¹⁸⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, "Social Space And Symbolic Power" in *Sociological Theory* (Volume 7, Issue 1, 1989), pp. 20

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*, pp. 23

a center of malaria...and from fair gardens and recreation grounds spread out round her in the beautiful country beyond...”¹⁸⁹, Craik makes an important point about the importance of the location of the *maidan*. The *maidan*, and the neighborhood immediately surrounding it, came to be recognized as a disease-free, hygienic, exclusive area that impressed and pressed upon its selected visitors the practice of Britishness, a performance of imperialism that justified its very own existence.

It was not just the physical spatial changes that was concomitant to the transforming nature of British colonial rule starting from the early 19th century. British colonial rule now had to be represented, practiced and embodied. E.M. Collingham describes the change in the character of British rule where the body is as important as the policy changes in the state. According to her, “...late nineteenth century anthropology conceived of the body as the physical outer map of the moral inner man. It was believed that, along with racial characteristics, cultural and moral characteristics could be read off from the body.”¹⁹⁰ The body itself needed protecting through strict codified implementation of hygienic laws. Measures to make the city more structured, maintaining a high level of cleanliness had been started in the early 19th century when it was felt that for British rule to be implemented effectively, it needed a clean and sanitary environment in which to do it. In a letter dated 8th October 1807, the superintendent general of police while writing to the chief secretary to the government observed,

“...many nuisances at present exist, which, in a growing population like that of Calcutta, it is essential to the convenience and health of the Inhabitants [sic] to remove...the inconvenience arising from the erroneous principle upon which drains have been constructed...which is certainly the greatest, although by no means, the only evil which exists.”¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Sir Henry Craik, *Impressions of India* (Macmillan and Co., London, 1908), pp. 212

¹⁹⁰ EM Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c. 1800-1947* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001), pg. 121

¹⁹¹ Judicial (Criminal) 16th October 1807, Consultation No. 1

The implementation of drains to clean out sewage, the installation of water tanks to provide safe drinking water for the inhabitants of Calcutta was one part of the story to modernize the city, stringent rules were also being put into place that forced the population to adopt more healthy habits.

In a judicial proceeding of 1863 a number of strict laws were codified to ensure that the people of the city abided by these rules. These rules included that no person was allowed to wash or cleanse on any public street or use water from any tank or reservoir. Any person suffering from any contagious disease was not allowed to bathe in any of the bathing places which belonged to the Justices. Butchers and fruit vendors were ordered to clean out all filth by the end of the working day. Any breach of these laws could be fined up to Rupees 20, and by the following year the police arrested around 10,000 people for the flouting of these rules.¹⁹²

Similar stringent rules were put into place for how the *maidan*, as a sanctuary of shady and delightful spots, was to be maintained. In 1808, the authorities decided that,

“...the whole of the space from the river side which is bounded by the road leading to the Calcutta Fort Gate Way should be closed in some manner against carriages and horsemen...and only palankeens and foot passengers to admitted thereon. The inhabitants who reside thither, for exercise of walking...would then no longer be annoyed...”¹⁹³

THE CREATION OF CLUBLAND AND ITS INSERTION INTO COLONIAL CALCUTTA:

As the seat of British colonial power, the city of Calcutta was meticulously designed to make an effective impact on the subjects of the colonial state, as well as on the Crown and Parliament back in London. Each and every location was carefully picked out, buildings

¹⁹² Bye-Laws made by the Justice of Peace for the Town of Calcutta under the Act vi of 1863.

¹⁹³ Judicial (Criminal) 21st October 1808, Consultation No. 4. An excellent compilation of archival documents that chart the transformation of Calcutta from a cluster of three villages into the second city of the British Empire has been put together by Bidisha Chakraborty and Sarmistha De, *Calcutta in the Nineteenth Century: An Archival Exploration* (Niyogi Books, New Delhi, 2013).

were arranged methodically for greatest impact and for the exercise of utmost power. The clubs were no exception to this rule. This section will explore how British clubland in Calcutta became part of a larger tradition of a re-created landscape that was initiated by Wellesley and resulted in the construction of the Government House, the *maidan* and the Race Course. British clubland in Calcutta found its location in and around these institutions, which was a key factor in earning the clubs legitimacy and power. These clubs in turn became the perfect institution where Britishness could be practiced and performed within.

The British clubland in Calcutta was influenced entirely by the clubs' counterparts in London is a fact well known. Yet, it was not just the unique characteristics of clubbability that came to be replicated in Calcutta. The priority that the location of the club was accorded by club members in London was seen as a successful tradition to be ideally repeated and copied in the newly constructed clubland in Calcutta. Yet, it was not just the unique characteristics of clubbability that came to be replicated in Calcutta. The priority that the location of the club was accorded by club members in London, was seen as a successful tradition to be ideally repeated and copied in the newly constructed clubland in Calcutta.

According to architect Stanley C. Ramsey, discussing Britain's clubland,

“...earlier social clubs are to be found in St. James' Street, a street conveniently adjacent to St. James' Palace, and famous in the annals of the eighteenth century. Pall Mall is the chosen neighborhood of the literary, political and Service clubs of the early and middle nineteenth century; whilst the later social clubs are to be found for the most part in Piccadilly...this is clubland proper.”¹⁹⁴

The emergence of an exclusive club culture meant an exclusive group of men had made their presence felt from the mid-seventeenth century in London. A new kind of narrative, which spoke of patriotic triumph and dynastic power and was organized around routes and spaces

¹⁹⁴ Stanley C. Ramsey [F.], “London Clubs” in *Journal Of The Royal Institute Of British Architects* (Vol. XXIX, No. 14, 20 May, 1922) (Read Before the Royal Institute of British Architects, Monday, 3 April, 1922).

of promenade, consumption, distinction and display was imposing itself on the fabric of Westminster. The genteel public of this new West End- or rather its masculine half- was also catered to by a new generation of clubs in or near St. James'. Another reason for the club boom was the realization that members could found a club collectively, bypassing the proprietary system of the older, political aristocratic houses in St. James' Street. This encouraged clubs of a more specialized type to form, whether for travelers, scholars, graduates or half pay officers left kicking their heels by the ending of the wars. Men of the last stamp flocked to the new of the first generation, the United Service Club in Regent Street, of 1817-1819 by Robert Smirke (subsequently demolished).¹⁹⁵

Similarly, in Calcutta the emergence of the club culture had to occur in a location that would lend it credibility, prominence and an assumed legitimacy. Most of the prominent clubs that the British elite frequented were located in the most prominent street of white Calcutta, the Chowringhee. In his detailed overview of the landscape of Calcutta, noted historian H E A Cotton examines Chowringhee as a, "...prominent landmark of Calcutta, and in the days of Holwell we find mention made of it as the road leading to Collegot."¹⁹⁶ It is at the intersection of Chowringhee and Theatre Road that a flourishing British theatre scene emerged in the early 19th century, although it later dwindled.¹⁹⁷ Along the stretch of Theatre Road there stood the houses of many prominent members of the British administration. John Herbert Harrington, a future member of the Supreme Council, lived in the east beyond Theatre Road. Sir Comer Petheram, Chief Justice of Bengal from 1886 to

¹⁹⁵ Philip Mason, *The English Gentleman: The Rise and Fall of an Ideal* (William Morrow and Co., New York, 1982)

¹⁹⁶ HEA Cotton, *Calcutta Old And New: A Historical And Descriptive Handbook To The City*, (W Newman and Company, 1907), pp. 280

¹⁹⁷ Grant Colesworthy, *Anglo-Indian Domestic Life: A Letter from An Artist in India to His Mother in England* (Thacker & Spinck, Calcutta, 1862), pg. 165-166

1896 lived on Harrington Road, right off Chowringhee. Along this particular stretch stood the palatial homes of other prominent figures of the British administration: Mr. Samuel Middleton (member of the Civil Service), Sir Arthur Macpherson (Judge of the High Court from 1865 to 1877) and Sir James Fitzjames Stephen (Law Member of Council from 1863 to 1872). It is in this consecrated neighborhood that the prestigious Bengal Club first made its appearance.



A view from the north end of the Chowringhee Road looking northwest across the Dhurmtollah Tank leading up to Theatre Road. The Government House stands to the extreme left. The flat fronted, verandaed building at the front was the Adjutant-General's house. Picture Courtesy: Bourne & Shepherd, undated

It is in the symbolic layout where the colonial clubland emerged that Erving Goffman's idea of the front becomes relevant. The 'front' becomes the space where Butler's performativity theory can be utilized to give Britishness its most fertile expression. Goffman's novel conceptualization of identity construction is based on personal exchanges and how every interaction requires individuals to perform an image, using the metaphor of

the theatre to differentiate between the front and back stage behavior. The performativity of clubbability displayed by the club members in the front stage is what Butler sees as being physical and non-verbal which enables and constructs "...an identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief..."¹⁹⁸ The reiterative nature of performance of Britishness as clubbability, to make it appear functional and normal on the basis of it being practiced every day, is another instance of how the tradition of London's club culture was successfully adopted and adapted in Calcutta's British clubland.

The idea of the forming of the Bengal Club, or as it was initially known as the Calcutta United Service Club, was conceived at the beginning of 1826-27. An informal meeting was held at the Town Hall held under the presidency of Lt. Col. The Hon. J. Finch, later the first president of the club, on November 29, 1826. Reporting on the meeting, a newspaper article of the time said,

"...On Thursday last a meeting took place at the Town Hall to consider the institution of the United Service Club, when it was determined to form the Association proposed on as wide a scale as might be practicable...His Lordship readily accepted the office of Patron and was pleased to express himself much interested in the success of the project."¹⁹⁹

Discussing the success of the proposed club, Lt. Finch said,

"...a plan is under consideration for the establishment of a club in Calcutta similar to those instituted in London...which have proved there so successful...such associations...will be infinitely more serviceable in Calcutta, where nothing like a respectable hotel or coffee-house has ever existed..."²⁰⁰

Finch then went on to lay out the utility of a space like the Bengal Club. According to him, a resort of company is needed where those who constitute the society of Calcutta who have

¹⁹⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity*, (Routledge, New York and London, 1990), pg. 191

¹⁹⁹ Government Gazette (February 5 and 8, 1827)

²⁰⁰ HR Panckridge, *A Short History Of The Bengal Club 1827-97*, (Calcutta, 1927), pp. 12

nowhere else to go can spend half an hour ideally. It bears to repeat Lt. Finch's words regarding why a club like the Calcutta United Service Club was needed in Calcutta. The importance of the location and space for Finch was paramount because the club would be in a building which,

"...shall be always open to them, which they may securely and pleasurably visit...where they may have a chance of meeting old friends and acquaintances, without the trouble of searching for them...where the formality of interchanging cards may be substituted for more cordial greeting."²⁰¹

The importance of picking the right location to situate the club for most effective impact is a situation that arises repeatedly in the history of British club culture in Calcutta. Due to space constraints and the growing popularity of the Bengal Club, its committee was compelled to search for better premises within just over a decade. In the year 1838, the premises of the club was moved to,

"...that capital upper roomed brick built messuage tenement or Dwelling House, lately in the occupation of Messieurs Allport, Ashburner, and Company, situated, lying and being in Tank Square in the town of Calcutta."²⁰²

The resituated location of Bengal Club may have given it more open grounds and a spacious compound, but it turned out to be not such a popular location for most of its members. A member wrote a critical review of the new location. In an editorial 'Extremity Of The Town' the anonymous author writes,

"...The lease of the present Club House in Tank Square expires, we believe, at the end of the present year and a new locale being required for the Club, we hear that the residence mentioned has been fixed upon...We do not think, as regards situation, that the choice is a very happy one- a Club House should be set down in a more central position than the Chowringhee Road. It should be in the principal thoroughfare of Calcutta- certainly not stuck out at the extremities of the city where few, who do not reside in that particular locality, are disposed to wander. People are not much inclined to go out of their way even to pay a visit to the Club; but they are willing enough to drop in at all times, when they happen to be passing by it."²⁰³

²⁰¹ Ibid, pp. 12

²⁰² Ibid, pp. 25

²⁰³ *Bengal Hurkaru* (September 29, 1841) quoted in Ranabir Ray Chaudhury, *Calcutta: A Hundred Years Ago* (Nachiketa Publications, Kolkata, 1988), pp. 60.



Bengal Club at its Chowringhee location. Picture Courtesy: Private collection from Bridgeman Images.
undated

While the debate about the decentralized location about the Bengal Club continued, it soon became apparent to its members and the committee that the resituated location of the club would not suffice for two crucial reasons.

The importance of the location of the club was about far more than just logistical changes. During the time that the club was first being moved from Esplanade to Tank Square, simultaneous changes were occurring in the governance of the British East India Company over its Indian colony. The Company was moving towards institutionalizing more centralized, formalized political structures of power that frequently came into conflict with the interests and demands of the non-official British community. The increasing centrality and formalization of British power profoundly impacted and, in turn, was impacted by British colonial clubland.

The third location of the club was once again decided based on the changing dynamics of the British official community *vis-à-vis* their non-official counterparts. As the political and social chasm between the two communities pushed them further apart, space became a site for struggle to acquire legitimacy.

The struggle for Bengal Club to select a new locale was part of a larger identity building attempt that the British colonial state was encountering. The next location picked by the club committee proved to be far more useful in terms of geography, symbolism, and distinction, thereby imbuing British elite club culture of Calcutta with additional power.

From its location that was previously an agency house, the Bengal Club found a location that was steeped with historical meaning and relevance by virtue of who previously lived in the house and also because of its proximity in the heart of colonial White Calcutta. Eminent historian of Calcutta H.E.A. Cotton describes its location,

“...*Park Street* [sic] and the districts to the south of it, are almost entirely inhabited by Europeans and contain some of the best residences in the city. Within the last half century this quarter has been considerably extended, a large number of new houses having been erected, and new streets and squares...There are also some good houses in the Circular Road, which have been drained and greatly improved by the construction of foot-paths, and the planting of avenues of trees.”²⁰⁴

And it was in this aristocratic neighborhood that Thomas Babington Macaulay rented one of the good houses between the years 1834 to 1838 when he was serving as the Law Member of the Supreme Council. Bengal Club took over the lease of the building and took possession of two adjacent properties thus expanding its base.

Not only did Bengal Club inherit the property from a worthy predecessor like Macaulay, it also adopted another legacy that was known to be a common phenomenon at

²⁰⁴ HEA Cotton, *Calcutta Old And New: A Historical And Descriptive Handbook To The City*, (W Newman and Company, 1907), pp. 268

the time when Macaulay resided in the house. In his account of his uncle's times spent in the house, Sir George Trevelyan reminisces,

“...On the Friday of every week, these chosen few met round Macaulay's breakfast table to discuss the progress which the Law Commission had made in its labours; and each successive point which was started opened the way to such a flood of talk, legal, historical, political and personal, that the company would sit far on towards noon over the empty tea-cups, until an uneasy sense of accumulating Despatch-boxes drove them, one by one, to their respective Offices.”²⁰⁵

The tradition of like-minded men, belonging to a similar professional class, discussing how best to effectively disseminate the rule of Britain over the Indian sub-continent, sitting in a created atmosphere that was sacred to these men, is in a nutshell what British clubland in Bengal was all about.

The club provided its members with both an informal and a structured environment to conduct their affairs. The club was the sole space where the legitimate members of the colonial state could continue to perform and club in a manner that set the institution apart from any other rival location. The intention of British clubland in Calcutta was to provide a sacred and protected environment away from the gazing eyes of everyone else, where the clubbable man could still use it as a 'front' to practice Britishness in its refined form. The club can be used as a mechanism to complicate Goffman's distinction between the front and back where the former becomes the focus of the gazing eye, while the latter is where the performance can be dropped when away from the gazing eye. While the club may seem like the haven, the sanctuary where the members would be away from the gazing eye, that may not be accurate at all times. Occasionally, the members themselves would be gazing and refereeing someone's conduct to decide on their ability to club.

²⁰⁵ Sir George Otto Trevelyan, *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, (Longmans Green, London, 1876), pg. 423

Outcomes of performativity in the club was always monitored and controlled so as to ensure that the performance of Britishness was never susceptible to threats. The 4th clause of Rule 7 of the bye-laws of the Bengal Club states that,

“...any infraction of the Club rules shall be taken immediate cognizance of the Committee, in case of the occurrence of any circumstance likely to disturb the order and harmony of the Club, to call a General Meeting giving due notice thereof, and in the event of its being voted at that Meeting, by two thirds of the persons present, that the name of any Member or Members be removed from the Club...”²⁰⁶

The enforcement of discipline against infractions in the club was taken with utmost seriousness. While unsurprisingly, most club histories do not document the disciplinary actions they took against members, contemporary accounts from the time occasionally mention incidents of unrest arising between club members. The member could let their guard down in the club, but only in the terms that was amenable to the policies of the club’s committee.

An indignant editorial was published in *The Englishman* detailing the conduct of one member of the Bengal Club against another. Further, the author demanded that the club take the strictest action against the erring member. The editorial stated,

“...a proposition to be brought forward by Mr. Longueville Clark, supported by Col. Beatson and a few other officers of high rank, to eject Mr. Stocqueler from the Bengal Club, on the ground...of his having published the *Military Mouthpiece* in the *Englishman*. The series of articles or letters under that head, have been full of severe comments upon the character and capacity of Col. Lumley, which from the first we regarded as wanton defamation. Indeed, from the repeated attacks upon him, and the strong language employed, an impartial reader could not but suspect there must be some private motive for these endeavors to prejudice the mind of the commander-in-chief against that respectable officer....The *Englishman* asks what, if the comments in the *Military Mouthpiece* were wanton defamation, ‘what is that to the purpose?’ To which we reply- a great deal. It will scarcely be denied, we presume, that, if a member of the club indulges in wanton defamation of other members, that is a circumstance likely to disturb the harmony of the institution; and, if so, according to the spirit and letter of the rules of the Bengal Club, the member who indulges in such defamation is liable to be expelled.”²⁰⁷

This was an instance when clubbability and Britishness became dependent categories on each other, the former required to legitimize the latter. The club administration was implored to take

²⁰⁶ “Miscellaneous Occurrences-Bengal Club-Calcutta” in *The Quarterly Oriental Magazine, Review and Register*. Vol. VII, Nos. XIII and XIV, January-June 1827 (Messrs. Thacker and Co., St. Andrews Library, 1827), pp. 361-362

²⁰⁷ *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China, and Australasia*, Vol. XX-New Series, May-August, 1836, (WM. H Allen and Co., London, 1836), pp. 13-14

action against the editor Mr. Stocqueler, led by the British community of Calcutta who were watching the performance as it was unfolding within the club premises. Letters to the editor at the time described the club committee made up of gentlemen in whom the British residents had,

“...great confidence in the honour, the independence, and the high feeling of a certain number of that body, to believe that they would lend themselves to a transaction which must be so offensive to every member, whose feelings are not warped, and whose judgment is not biased by individual partialities, and professional or family connection.”²⁰⁸

Despite the club being such an exclusive institution with restrictive access to most residents of the city, controversies in the club could still become a matter to be debated by the British residents of Calcutta in the public realm. Once again, the performativity of what the club committee decides to do about the misconduct of its members puts it into the front stage, to use Goffman’s understanding of it.

In response to the editorial published in the *Englishman*, the Bengal Club committee responded in a manner that was characteristic of a private institution that was insistent upon protecting its isolation while continuing to maintain their superiority and exclusion in the public eye. The meeting of the club committee occurred in two stages about this controversy with two very resounding conclusions. On December 30, 1836 the Bengal Club held a committee meeting which was attended by around forty to fifty members of the club. The Hon. Mr. Melville who chaired the meeting said,

“...that the statement contained in an article of the *Englishman* newspaper, of the 11th inst., wherein it is alleged, that the manner in which the invitation to the Commander-in-chief was preferred, was obviously to subserve selfish and slavish purposes, is untrue, and conveys a scandalous imputation on some of the members of the club.”

Further, the committee in a bid to defend the honour and sanctity of the club stated that,

²⁰⁸ Ibid, pg. 13

“...the very reprehensible editorial article of the *Englishman* newspaper, of the 11th inst., has not disturbed the harmony and order of the club.”²⁰⁹ For the committee of the Bengal Club it was important to uphold and maintain the sanctity of the club and to ensure its continued privacy, thereby giving the impression that it was immune to any kind of criticism leveled towards it from the outside. Once again, it is crucial to understand the orientations of these clubbable men as it relates to the idea of performativity. For the men in the club it was vital to hold the orientation of performativity in continuity as they inform the process of clubbing in relations to the individuals and the collective desires of those who have massive stakes both in outcomes and in the embodied engagement of the process.

The Bengal Club was not the only elite British club that established itself in the heart of white Calcutta. Most contemporary clubs of the time wanted to situate themselves at key locations, surrounded by the right monuments and structures, so as to be associated with the physical formality of the layout of white Calcutta. Such endeavors were acknowledged and their efforts applauded by visitors to the city. Noticing the centralized location of Dalhousie Institute, H.E.A. Cotton observed,

“...the handsome façade of Writers’ Buildings which we admire to-day, will be looked for equally in vain. But some attempt had been made to clothe the gaunt nakedness of the huge barrack-like whitewashed structure... The Dalhousie Institute is represented by its entrance portico alone, with its statue of Lord Hastings. Towards the south, however, the Metcalfe Hall, which is completing the fourth year of its existence, serves in some measure to dispel the atmosphere of unfamiliarity. But there are no warehouses or ungainly godowns along the Strand Road to obstruct the river-view of its graceful proportions.”²¹⁰

Yet, while the Dalhousie Institute wanted to be located near the heart of *maidan*, surrounded by the imposing structures of Government House and Fort William, it met with a lot of opposition.

While permission was granted to erect Dalhousie Institute at one end of the *maidan*²¹¹, Her

²⁰⁹ Ibid, pg. 75

²¹⁰ HEA Cotton, *Calcutta Old And New: A Historical And Descriptive Handbook To The City*, (W Newman and Company, 1907), pp. 186

²¹¹ Order No. 255, dated, 16 July 1860

Majesty's Government made it amply clear that the area west of Fort William, the site of the Dalhousie Institute, should henceforth be maintained with no sanctions allowed for future buildings to be erected there.²¹²



Front view of the Dalhousie Institute. Picture Courtesy: Bourne and Shepherd (1865)

It is evidently clear that for the British government the maintenance of the open expanse of the *maidan* was of utmost importance, at the risk of not allowing any other private buildings to be institutionalized there. Lt. Governor, JP grant vehemently opposing the institutionalizing of the Dalhousie Institute claiming that, "...encroachments to break the rule will daily become stronger, and if the temptation is one yielded to, the covering of the whole plain with buildings will, be only a question of time."²¹³ The setting up of the Dalhousie Institute created such a furor in the administrative circles that after it was granted permission, the Justices of the Peace in a

²¹² Judicial (Judicial), November 1860, Proceeding No. 280

²¹³ Judicial (Judicial), April 1860, Proceeding No. 110

meeting held on 6 February, 1865 resolved that, "...no portion of the enclosure known as "Tank Square" should be given up for a site for the Dalhousie Institute, or for any building whatever."²¹⁴ Since permission had already been granted to the erection of Dalhousie Institute, this rule was stringently adhered to after this.

Similarly, the Calcutta Cricket Club was constructed and built within a physical environment that displayed and projected Britishness in its very Euro-Grecian form, an ideal location for the practice of Britishness and clubbability that had key attributes like sportsmanship, decorum, and gentlemanliness as integral characteristic features. Describing the surrounding area and the exact location of the club, Cotton once again paints a picture of greenery, hygiene, order, and beauty, all of which celebrates the very best of Britishness. In his description Cotton writes,

"...On the western side of the promenade a band stand has been erected, where the Town Band, or the band of one of the Regiments stationed in the Fort, play every evening. The gardens themselves are laid out with winding paths and artificial water, interspersed with a profusion of flowering trees and shrubs...The portion devoted to promenading is well illuminated with the electric lights. In the gardens is a fine Burmese Pagoda, removed from Prome after the war in 1854, and re-erected here in 1856. Adjoining the gardens is the ground of the Calcutta Cricket Club, on the west side of which is a pavilion. Round the whole is a broad grassy ride for equestrians, enclosed by shady walks and plantations."²¹⁵

While smaller clubs like Dalhousie Institute or the Calcutta Cricket Club enmeshed themselves in the right locales to lend themselves the air of legitimacy, other clubs tended to appropriate the right spaces in which to display their Britishness.

CELEBRATING BRITISHNESS INSIDE THE CLUB

While the nature of colonial rule may have undergone transformations over time, certain tenets of British imperialism remained immutable to change. One such characteristic of British imperialism that stood steadfast in the face of other changes was the inherent character of British

²¹⁴ Judicial (Judicial), February 1865, Proceeding No. 86

²¹⁵ HEA Cotton, *Calcutta Old And New: A Historical And Descriptive Handbook To The City*, (W Newman and Company, 1907), pg. 322

valor and bravery in the face of constant adversity from opposing forces from all sides. A cult of manliness and masculinity had articulated British empire and projected it a certain way.²¹⁶ This means that the impact of bastions of male culture like the Victorian public schools, and British clubland started to practice and perform ideals of Victorian manliness, athleticism, and militarism, all compounded together to form the idea of British masculinity.

The masculine, clubbable form of Britishness was performed not just through practices but rather proudly displayed in the objects and in the décor that individual clubs put up. The objects and the displays all functioned as what Bourdieu would define as "...capital when it is perceived by an agent of self-recognised power to name, is to make distinctions."²¹⁷ An institution like the Dalhousie Institute was established on the south side of Dalhousie Square. While writers of the time claimed that the building did not boast of any pretensions to architectural beauty, the building was made up of a grand hall 90 feet by 45 feet, the ceiling of which was a semi-circular roof which was richly decorated. Within the institute, the patrons had the use of a library, reading room, and a billiard room.²¹⁸ Yet, the primary reason for the erection was "...as a monumental edifice, to contain within its walls statues and busts of great men."²¹⁹ To add an air of credibility and legitimacy, the Dalhousie Institute was inaugurated on 4th March 1865 with full Masonic honors in the presence of Lieutenant Governor Sir Cecil Beadon. The inclusion of Beadon, a stalwart leader representing official British India is extremely useful. For clubs like the Dalhousie Institute the inclusion of such official figures like Beadon earned their

²¹⁶ Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The Manly Englishman and the Effeminate Bengali in the Late Nineteenth Century (Studies in Imperialism)* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995) and Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton ed., *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2005)

²¹⁷ Loic Wacquant, *Towards A Reflexive Sociology*, pp. 238

²¹⁸ HEA Cotton, *Calcutta Old And New: A Historical And Descriptive Handbook To The City*, (W Newman and Company, 1907), pg. 235

²¹⁹ *ibid*, pg. 909

space a legitimacy, an indirect seal of approval of the official British government ruling over India.²²⁰

The objects proudly displayed within any of the elite clubs carried symbolic capital that defined the club space as a distinctive area that was unlike any other location of British colonial power. Such objects gave their onlookers a sense of what the British imperial state stood for: regality, victorious spirit, a representation of the most powerful nation in the world. The club used its sanctified space to display spoils of British victory worldwide, and the British heroes who won these victories for the nation.

The entrance portico of the Dalhousie Institute contained a,

“...fine statue of the Marquis of Hastings...bearing the following inscription ‘In honour of the Most Noble Marquis of Hastings, K.G. Governor-General of British India from the year of our Lord 1813 to 1823. Erected by the British Inhabitants of Calcutta.’”²²¹

Next to the statue of Hastings, stood a brass bust of Mr. John Remfry, the first Honorary Secretary of the Institute. Within the institute there also stood statues of other great British noteworthy figures like “...Brig.-General Neil C.B. and of Major General Sir Henry Havelock, Bart, by Noble; and busts of Major-General Sir James Outram and Brig.-General

²²⁰ *The Englishman* (December, 1865) quoted in Ranabir Ray Chaudhury, *Calcutta: A Hundred Years Ago* (Nachiketa Publications, Kolkata, 1988), pg. 70, 73

²²¹ HEA Cotton, *Calcutta Old And New: A Historical And Descriptive Handbook To The City*, (W Newman and Company, 1907), pg. 909



DALHOUSIE INSTITUTE, CALCUTTA.—*Interior of the Great Hall.*

Picture Courtesy: West Bengal State Archives (1870)

John Nicholson, who led the storm at Dihli [sic] by Foley.”²²² The institute stood as a physical testament to the creators and the successful officers of the British empire, all of whom were given pride of place at the institute. Much like Bengal Club earned its legitimacy in the eyes of the people through renting the right properties that had direct

²²² *Handbook of the Bengal Presidency with an Account of Calcutta City with Maps and Plans* (John Murray, London, 1882), (Part II, pg. 121)

connections and an official legacy, the Dalhousie Institute lent itself an air of legitimacy in the eyes of its patrons as an institution representative of the power of British imperialism comparable to Government House. Lord Dalhousie, the figure after who the institute was named had a statue made to commemorate his tenure as the Governor General of India from 1848 to 1856. While the statue first found its home in the Throne Room at the Government House, it was then transferred to the Dalhousie Institute on the opening of that building.²²³ Britishness, as Linda Colley describes it, may have been an elusive concept best understood in the attitude of the men practicing it. Here we see that Britishness clearly found physical ways to display its magnificence in the heartland of the British Raj, in its statues and paintings. These paintings and statues stood as a testament to the indomitable spirit of being British that convinced these men of their own superiority, and more importantly, acted as symbolic capital for those who had the opportunity to observe it from the outside.

Bengal Club, arguably the foremost of British clubs set up in colonial Calcutta found similar ways to display and celebrate *Pax Britannica* by turning its interiors into a hallowed abode that could almost be mistaken for a shrine to celebrating the British monarchy, and the foremost leaders of the British empire. In a trophy that was designed by the Bengal Club for the Calcutta Races, we see a symbol celebrating the queen and the crest. Designing the trophy and presenting it at the Calcutta Races, one of the officially recognized races held for the British population in India, made a significant statement. The presentation of the Bengal Club's trophy at the official Calcutta Race earned the club the legitimacy of a formally accepted institution, an extension to the idea of the British empire.

²²³ HEA Cotton, *Calcutta Old And New: A Historical And Descriptive Handbook To The City*, (W Newman and Company, 1907), pg. 910

In describing the design of the trophy in detail, HR Pankcridge, historian of the Bengal Club writes,

“...one form is that of the ancient galley which is supported by two spiritedly modelled sea horses. On the prow appears Victoria with her trumpets in one hand, the other holding forth the crown for the successful candidate...the horses are modelled by Messrs. Hamilton and Co., and possess great spirit and vigor; they appear to us to be very accurate and beautiful in their figures, form, development of muscles, etc., and are, we believe, unrivalled in their size and execution by anything before attempted in India...”²²⁴

The trophy in itself combined grandeur, stature and regality all of which was to celebrate and display the very best of Britishness on the part of whoever would eventually win the trophy, as well as representing Bengal Club and what it symbolized in the social landscape of the British colonial regime.

Among the other possessions of the club were busts of the Right Hon’ble Sir Charles Metcalfe, GCB and President of the club from 1827 to 1837 and also that of General Sir James Outram, GCB and President of the club from 1860 to 1861.²²⁵ Not only were these prominent figures in the history of the club in particular, but figures like Metcalfe and Outram were stalwarts in establishing British rule over the Indian sub-continent and therefore had legitimately earned their place in the hallways of the club. Among the other prominent men whose achievements were celebrated within the club walls was of Sir Edward Ryan, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Calcutta from 1833 to 1841. On the other end of the dining hall stood the portrait of William Bracken who served as the Collector of Customs from 1845 to 1855.²²⁶

While these portraits hanging from the wall may not seem significant on their own, they do in fact shed light in crucial respects when seen in the particular context in which they came about. The men whose portraits were hung in the interiors of the club served as model examples,

²²⁴ HR Pankcridge, *A Short History Of The Bengal Club 1827-97*, (Calcutta, 1927), pp. 26-27

²²⁵ Ibid, pg. 79

²²⁶ Sunanda K. Datta Ray, ‘Jeeves to Tradition’s Rescue Until Clubs Find Indigenous Level of Stability’ in *Bengal Club: A 100 Years* (Private Publication), pg. 46

personifications of the authentic practitioners of Britishness. These were men with distinguished military careers, civil servants and judges. Their position and achievements acted as an index to the character of the club and to its history. They served to inspire the current members of the institution to remind them to uphold a sterling legacy created by the likes of men like Metcalfe and Outram. More importantly, the portraits of the men spoke to the kind of membership that a club like the Bengal was soliciting. The club was essentially meant for those who had already achieved professional and military distinctions, not for those who might regard the club membership of as a means of moving forward.

British clubland in elite white Calcutta served as an epitome of distinction. It made itself as unreachable, exclusive and distinguished as it could. As has been argued in this section, it did so in the way British clubland was physically set up and within the landscape of Calcutta. Next, the club itself and its interiors distinguished themselves, each focusing on their own forms of exclusivity. So, while the Royal Calcutta Turf Club would not allow anyone but full-time members to have access to the most premier seats of the race course, the Bengal Club ensured to only honor the doyens of the British empire who had a direct link with the club.

In another crucial sense does the distinction in British clubland in Calcutta play out: membership. While the physical location of the club and/or the carefully hand-picked decorative items within the club can only add so much to the legacy of British elite clubland, it is the actual members of the club, the ones who were picked to be fit to club, who would either make or break its reputation. This next section explores how the performance of Britishness and clubbability played itself out within the club. What was the basis of membership? Who were the more sought-after members, and who were the ones that the club administrators always wanted to keep at a distance? How was performance carried out by the best of the British nation, and how were

the detractors penalized? In this next section I also explore the close ways in which club activities were directly influenced by the constantly changing and elusive nature of British colonialism. The performance of Britishness through clubbability is a new and important facet through which we can understand the rule of British colonialism.

CLUB MEMBERSHIP: SELECTING THE RIGHT MEN

Membership into the clubs was not just about selecting the right men to allow them to congregate in a congenial and contrived atmosphere of conviviality. I have argued that Erving Goffman's analysis of the 'front' is useful in understanding how a certain prescribed role of decorum and internalized norms was well displayed by British clubland in Calcutta. Yet, the highly intentional, habitual and purposeful performance of Britishness did not stop when it no longer had an external audience.

The overlap of the front and the back in colonial Calcutta's clubland, and the prevalence of features of clubbability and the performance of Britishness as universal norms of behavior expected to be adopted by all clubbable men, at all times, was reiterated by the most illustrious of clubbable men. In 1906, Lord Ampthill, former Governor of Madras, was invited to give a speech titled "British administration in India" at the Junior Constitutional Club in Piccadilly, London. While the speech in itself was nothing out of the ordinary, it is the candor with which Lord Ampthill spoke that is noteworthy. As a former member of the Madras Club, his speech sums up the very essence of club life in India, and I would argue, is specifically relevant to Calcutta. His speech, without mentioning it explicitly, touched upon the need for men of the clubs, the same who were at the forefront of the empire, what their duties and expectations are. Noting the importance of the location of his speech he says,

"...you have come to hear me talk about India with something of the informality and freedom from reserve which I might employ in a circle of clubmates or in the smoking room of a country house, and it is in this

capacity that I propose to address you...I felt that it was a public duty for one who owes a great deal of experience, and possibly some knowledge, to his employment in the public service to impart some of it to those who are taking part in the public affairs of this country. I felt that that was a public duty, and it seemed to me that there was no better place or occasion where I could, at any rate, attempt to fulfil that duty than within the walls of this Club. (Applause)”²²⁷

The word public duty becomes key here. The ICS remained a public job which had to be carried out with a certain poise and dignity on the part of the man on display.

While the men of the empire may have found a safe location in which they could speak with candor, it would not usually be accompanied by a relaxation of rules or the code of conduct. The relaxation of the atmosphere or the frequent camaraderie shared between men of a certain class may certainly have been a cornerstone attraction of British club life in Calcutta. What was not entertained, however, was behavior or ungentlemanly displays which would bring into question the very foundation of Britishness, the innate belief on which the entire empire rested. One needed to be clubbable if one wanted to be allowed to practice Britishness and this clubbability came with a certain set of rules. In pointing out the ability to club for some in London, author G.A. Sala wrote,

“Clubism is a great mystery...and its adepts must be cautious how they explain its shibboleth to the outer barbarians. Men have been expelled from the clubs ‘ere now for talking or writing about another man’s whiskers, about the cut of his coat, and the manner in which he eats asparagus...”²²⁸

While the barbarians outside the realm of the club may have been a few, the barbarians sauntering right on the edge of British clubland in Calcutta were many, and they came from all races and classes. One of the most effective ways the un-clubbable sorts could be kept out was through the strict rules of membership, a hallmark feature of every British elite club. This next portion explores the rules of membership institutionalized in some of the most elite British clubs

²²⁷ Lord Amphill’s Speech to the Junior Constitutional Club, Junior Constitutional Club Papers, MSS EUR E233/58

²²⁸ GA Sala, *Things I Have Seen* (Cassel and Co., London, 1894), pg. 145

in Calcutta, the penalties endured if any rules were broken and the constant threat to club life that came from the ones who were never going to be deemed to be clubbable.

Membership within the hallowed institutions of the club was primarily seen as a right that was inherently connected to the person's background or pedigree, which was closely tied up with the person's profession. One of the leading functions of clubbability was sociability. Members used the club space to congregate and consort in. One rule that was beyond the scope of flexibility was the exclusive manner in which members were selected. In describing the categories of members that a club picked, historian Arthur Griffiths came up with three categories. According to him, the first group of clubbable men were born to club,

“...some are born to club life, some achieve it, many have it thrust upon them. The gregarious instinct is overmastering in the first-named. To be alone is abhorrent to them; they must consort with their fellows, see them, talk with them, eat, drink, pass many hours with them.” The second group of clubbable men “...grow into it gradually, but it suits them surprisingly well. If they are ever introspective or retrospective, they wonder how they could have existed before they joined a club. The best of everything is at their disposal; material comforts and intellectual delights of the sort that appeal to them...they will find some eager antagonist at chess ready...or they can haunt the billiard-room to play or look on with unflagging interest, or they can live in the card-room.” The third group of clubbable men were “...driven to frequent a club...they are mostly bachelors, widowers...single men who for the moment have no home of their own.”²²⁹

While Griffiths' analysis of British clubbable men is geographically and nationally restrictive, the same three categories are found to be applicable in the British clubland in Calcutta in various combinations. This is once again most evidently seen in the way the elite clubs in Calcutta conducted their membership selection. The first group who have clubbability thrust upon them as a necessary marker for distinction can be the graduates of Haileybury for whom the idea of not forming networks of association with their fellow school mates in far off Calcutta would be going against their very training. One of the upcoming members of the prestigious ICS community arriving to Calcutta from London was J.H. Rivett Carnac a civil servant who later

²²⁹ Major Arthur Griffiths, *Clubs And Clubmen*, (Hutchinson and Co., London, 1907), pg. 202-204

served as the aide-de-camp to Queen Victoria and King Edward VII. Upon his arrival to Calcutta Carnac was,

“...driven down to the cricket-ground and enrolled as a member, then taken off to the Bengal Club, affected by the Haileybury civilian of those days, the United Service Club being more in favour with some of the military and the new group of what were termed “Competition Wallahs”...during the next few days I was introduced to many people at the club and favoured with much interesting information relating to India.”²³⁰

In the rule book published right after its founding in 1827, the Bengal Club committee decided that out of the five hundred men who were going to be elected to join the club, a specific group of men of a specific profession would be given preference. The most coveted men courted by the committee of the club were,

“...Civil Servants of five years’ service” closely followed by them were men from the “...Officers of His Majesty’s and the Honourable Company’s Military Service, Captains of five years of Service.” The club’s next targets for potential membership were the “...Officers of the Medical Department of five years’ service and Captains of the Honorable Company’s Marine and Regular service, The Bench, Bar, and Clergy, on their arrival in the country.”²³¹

It was only after members had been selected from these elite classes that non-official British men were to be considered for admission. The rules about restricting the membership for private British men were explicitly stated in the first circular printed by the committee of the Bengal Club, which states, “...when we consider the subsequent development of the club...it was not at first apparently intended that those engaged in Commerce should be eligible for membership.”²³² The number of such men were to be restricted to a hundred; they would have been very highly outnumbered by the most elite men of the most elite services serving the British empire. Further, to keep the club membership exclusive to the members of the Honorable Company and Crown, the club committee came up with the category of original members. According to this distinction, the category was reserved for the men who had been present at the inception of the club or joined

²³⁰ JH Rivett Carnac, *Many Memories Of Life In India, At Home, And Abroad* (William Blackwood and Sons, London, 1910), pp. 29-30

²³¹ “Miscellaneous Occurrences-Bengal Club-Calcutta” in *The Quarterly Oriental Magazine, Review and Register*. Vol. VII, Nos. XIII and XIV, January-June 1827 (Messrs. Thacker and Co., St. Andrews Library, 1827), pp. 361-362

²³² HR Panckridge, *A Short History Of The Bengal Club* (Calcutta, 1927), pp. 9

the club within the year. The list of the original members shows us an illustrative group of men, the makers and leaders of the British empire. Among the men chosen as the original members were The Right Honorable Lord Combermere; Lieutenant Colonel Dawkins', Captain White, 59th Regiment, Native Infantry; Mr. Mathews, Civil Surgeon; Mr. H.T. Prinsep; and Captain Jenkins.²³³ The original members had certain privileges conferred to them: "...membership was granted without being balloted, and one's name would be listed (for posterity) as an original member,"²³⁴ Further, the original members were invited to join other associational clubs, once again, accommodating the transient nature of the life of a British civil servant. This was especially beneficial for members of the Senior United Services Club in London who were invited to and even required to intimate to the Bengal Club of their desire to join within a month of arriving to Calcutta. The courtesy was reciprocal.²³⁵

Yet, when it came to bearing the financial responsibility of the club on a daily basis, the club committee turned to British private agency houses. Despite the club having in its early years, marked its exclusivity at the expense of allowing non-official British men as members, the rules weren't the same when the club was in need of money. At its inception, some of the founding members of the club as heads of agency houses like Palmer & Co., Alexander & Co., and Mackenzie & Co. were invited to become the official treasurers of the club. Membership was fixed at Sicca Rupees 250 to be paid in advance by either a permanent or an original

²³³ "Miscellaneous Occurrences-Bengal Club-Calcutta" in *The Quarterly Oriental Magazine, Review and Register*. Vol. VII, Nos. XIII and XIV, January-June 1827 (Messrs. Thacker and Co., St. Andrews Library, 1827), pp. 383

²³⁴ Benjamin Cohen, *In The Club: Associational Life In Colonial South Asia* (Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 30

²³⁵ Major General Sir Charles Jackson, *History of the United Service Club*, (Published by the Committee of the United Service Club, 1937)

member. The amount of 250 in itself would have excluded a majority of British men from ever being able to join the club.²³⁶

For the longest time Bengal Club stayed firm on their rules about their membership. As a rule, no non-British person was ever considered eligible to become a permanent member of the club. This rule was only lifted after 1950. While the original rule book said that no more than 500 members would be allowed to join the club, in subsequent years this rule was relaxed. The number of members who could join the club was increased when the club required funding for its daily functioning. While the number of civil service personnel greatly outnumbered the number of private British personnel, eventually members of the latter group were often allowed to hold positions of authority within the club.²³⁷

Yet, in its inception and early years the position of the president of the club always remained with a civil servant of the British ICS. After eleven years of a British ICS officer leading the affairs of the club, senior officers of the British army led the next seven years. Four of those years were under Major General Willoughby Cotton and three years under Lord Ellenborough. It is interesting to note that Lord Ellenborough's tenure as the president of the Bengal Club coincided with his tenure as the Governor General between 1842 and 1844. While being elected as the president of the club may not have been significant on its own, it was a crucial step in one way. This is once again reflective of the enormous amount of importance that the institution enjoyed in the colonial state. Electing a president who was also the head of the colonial state lent the club credibility and legitimacy unlike any other. As the power of the colonial state was consolidated under the British Crown, similar changes were witnessed in the administration of the club. After the men of the ICS and the military, it was the British men of

²³⁶ HR Panckridge, *A Short History Of The Bengal Club* (Calcutta, 1927)

²³⁷ *Bengal Club, Rules and Regulations with List of Members* (1898)

the judiciary who started to enjoy unprecedented importance in the colonial state post 1864. In that year, the Calcutta High Court was established where the judiciary had a powerful presence in the state. From 1864 to 1870 all the presidents of the club were the men of the British judiciary.²³⁸

While the beginning of the nineteenth century saw unparalleled power being enjoyed by men of the British civil services, the history of the British colonial state underwent another transformation starting from mid- 19th century. The establishment of the Peninsular and Orient Steamship Company in 1840 made communication between Britain and India faster and more efficient in 30 days. Such improved communications, and the ending of the Company's licensing system, led to a steady growth in numbers- from 2,150 non-official Europeans recorded in British India in 1830 to just over 10,000 at the beginning of the 1850s. Of these 6,749 were in Bengal, 1,661 in Madras and 1,596 in Bombay.²³⁹

As the number of powerful agency houses in Calcutta grew, the leaders of these houses started to command certain positions of importance in Calcutta's British clubland. While a representative institution like the Bengal Club was wary about admitting non-civilian British men into their space, a small minority group of representative British men from the non-official category made their way in, based entirely upon their prestigious position as the economic spearheads of the private British economy in Calcutta. The leadership in the club continued to come from the civil services and judiciary with business making sporadic forays into the hallowed ranks. J.J. Keswick, senior partner of the Jardine and Skinner agency house, was the first president of the club from the non-official background who remained the president from

²³⁸ HR Panckridge, *A Short History Of The Bengal Club* (Calcutta, 1927), List of Presidents, pg. 59-62

²³⁹ Raymond K Renford, *The Non-Official British In India To 1920* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1987), pg. 15

1882 to 1885²⁴⁰. While the rules of membership limiting private British men continued to be enforced, concessions and allowances were always made when it came to heading the affairs of the club, which included overseeing its daily financing.

PERFORMANCE AND CREATION OF DISTINCTION AT THE RACE COURSE

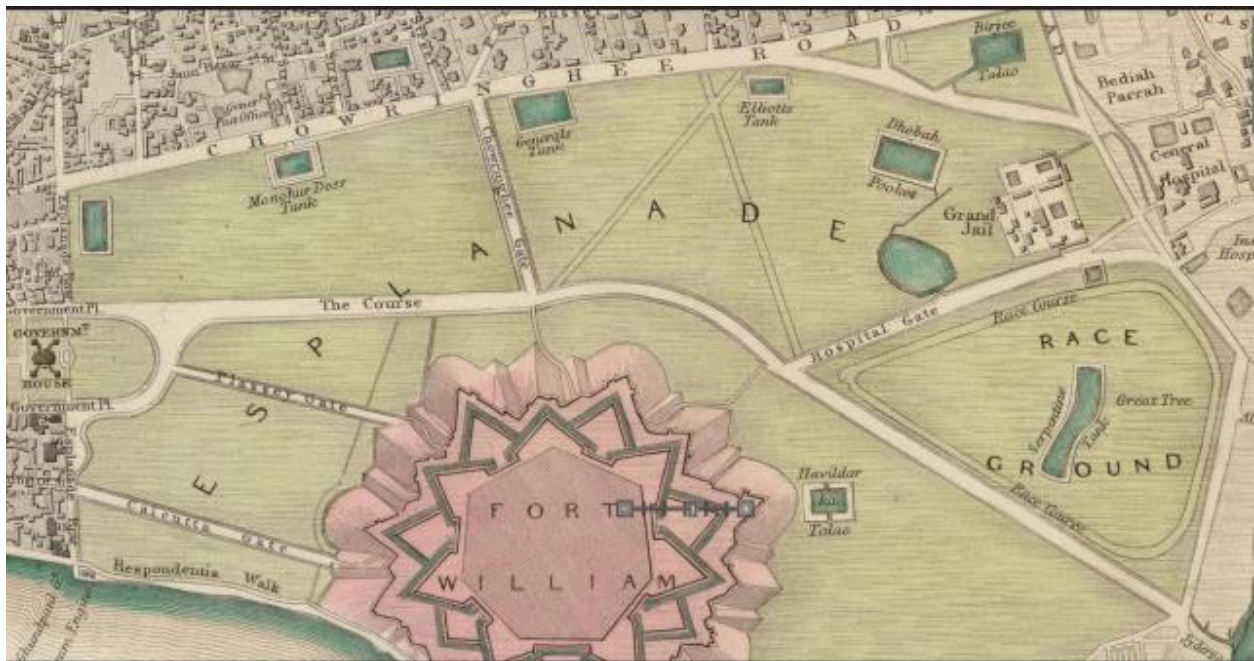
British clubland in Calcutta did not exist in a simplified binary manner, whether it was in terms of the ethos of the club, the membership or the location of the club. The universalizing principal held the culture of clubbing together, whether in London or Calcutta, was the private nature of the space. While the institution of the club may have had a public image, the space itself was private, special, and protected.

A close social association always continued between the club members and their interactions in the *maidan* and the race course. The clubs were British, the *maidan* and the race course were all part of a network that displayed, practiced and performed Britishness.²⁴¹ While the *maidan* became a prized locale, its beauty and symmetry symbolically representing the order and stability of the British empire, the second prized locale of the British colonial state was the race course. The race course, which later turned into a club, combined within it many different characteristics of a typical British club (exclusivity, beauty, discipline), and was administered by the British men for their own. Much like its counterparts, this club too adopted a code of conduct naturalized over time, namely the performance of Britishness from which the members were never allowed to take a break. In one key category, the race club complicates our understanding of the club culture in colonial Calcutta. While most clubs remained concerned about protecting the privacy of the institution and its members, the race club could not afford the same luxury. It

²⁴⁰ HR Panckridge, *A Short History Of The Bengal Club* (Calcutta, 1927), List of Presidents, pg. 60

²⁴¹ Sudipto Basu, 'Spatial Imagination and Development in Colonial Calcutta, c. 1850-1900' in *History and Sociology of South Asia* (Volume 10, No. 1, 2016, pg. 35-52)

was a club essentially based around the racing of horses and, therefore, it's very survival was predicated on it being outside. The race course club, and the way it functioned during races, once again points to how the idea of front and back and the performances within cannot be clearly demarcated.



David Rumsey Historical Map (cropped) London: Chapman & Hall (1842) Picture Courtesy: Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge

The description of the remade race course from the early 20th century brings to life the vision that Lord Wellesley had imagined when he had announced in his Minutes from 1803 the plan to beautify the landscape of Calcutta, to make a lasting legacy of the British empire on the landscape of Calcutta. In describing the landscape of the race course, an observer noted,

“...the race-track stretches a huge ellipse, in the centre of which is greensward almost as far as the eye can see, and above and beyond, tower the stately proportions of the Victoria Memorial, a wonder in white marble, while close by is the slender spire of the Cathedral, a bit of old Calcutta architecture which for grace and beauty has not its equal in the city.”²⁴²

²⁴² A. Claude Browne, *The Ordinary Man's India* (Cecil Palmer, London, 1927), pg. 152

It was not just a coincidence that the race course came to occupy a central location in the British topography of Calcutta. The race course was more than just a well-planned and maintained expanse for the horses to race in.

The first recorded account of the race course was organized by the Bengal Jockey Club in the late 1700s. On January 2, 1794 *Hickey's Gazette* recorded,

“...The stewards present their compliments to the subscribers to the races, and take this opportunity to inform them, that a breakfast with music, &c. will be provided in tents, on the course after the races, on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, the 16th, 17th and 18th January, and a ball and supper at the theatre on Wednesday, the 18th where they hope for the honor of their company.”²⁴³

It was this kind of unstructured and unregulated nature of watching and gambling on horses that compelled Lord Wellesley during his tenure as Governor General to ban any kind of horse races and associated gambling. Understanding the need for Wellesley to do so, Lord Valentia surmised “...on Lord Wellesley's arrival in the country, he set his face decidedly against horse racing and every other species of gambling...”²⁴⁴ Despite such legislation, a small number of races were still being held in the outskirts of Calcutta. Wellesley's drive to clean up, beautify and to leave a lasting legacy of the British empire on Calcutta did not stop with creating new spaces of solitude and exceptionalism for its British residents. Efforts like the banning of racing and gambling were efforts that went hand in hand with the other efforts of establishing the proud tenets of Britishness in the landscape of the city as well as in their everyday practices.

The culture of horse racing underwent a dramatic alteration in the span of half a century. The culture of horse racing and gambling needed to be reexamined at a time when the British empire was looking for any means to earn legitimacy for audiences both in Great Britain and in India. The change in the culture and rules of racing, as introduced by Wellesley, was less about

²⁴³ *Hickey's Bengal Gazette Or The Original Calcutta General Advertiser (A Weekly Political And Commercial Paper Open To All Parties But Informed By None)*, January 2 1794, pg. 28

²⁴⁴ WH Carey, *Good Old Days Of Honorable John Company Being Curious Reminiscences Illustrating Manners And Customs Of The British In India* (Vol. I), (Cambray and Co., London, 1906), pg. 138

the sport and much more about representing and performing Britishness in its very finest. Yet, racing was a sport that was enjoyed by British elites before they arrived in India. How could the elite men, who thought of themselves as superior, and who enjoyed their physical and social isolation from the rest, come to enjoy the sport if it were denied to them in Calcutta? The enjoyment of racing was important for the men of the exclusive and elite ICS to participate in. The need for the sport of horse racing to be associated and run by the right kind of British men so as to not let it gain any infamy was felt once the sport was once again revived in the early 19th century. It is here that the creating of a well thought out race course under the establishment of Royal Calcutta Turf Club becomes key.

A few years before the establishment of the Royal Calcutta Turf Club the need for such exclusive space was expressed. The need was for a space where racing and the gambling associated with it could be practiced by only certain men who were considered capable enough to run it with utmost regard to stringent rules. According to author J.H. Stocqueler,

“...the total absence in India of the class “black-leg” or indeed of any class of persons who look to turf speculations as a livelihood...contributes not a little to enhance the general popularity of the races; and in fact the supporters of the Indian turf should be composed exclusively of gentlemen, either members of the civil or military services, or wealthy individuals whose pleasure it is to encourage sport.”²⁴⁵

As time went on, horse racing earned a moniker as a sport to be enjoyed and watched by the elite and to be integrated into their patterns of sociability while they lived in Calcutta. As racing came to be accepted more as a marker for status and legitimacy, rather than viewed as a quick means to deceive innocent men, its character underwent a dramatic transformation in a very short time. For starters, it was in the 1820s under the aegis of Lord Moira that the ban on horse racing was

²⁴⁵ JH Stocqueler, *The Handbook of India: A Guide To The Stranger And The Traveler, And A Companion To The Resident* (H Allen and Co., London, 1845), pg. 348

lifted and the sport gained the acceptance it needed among the elite British community of Calcutta.²⁴⁶

It is once again important here to reiterate the point about the architectural and social improvements in British clubland that went hand in hand with the change in the nature and attitude of the British empire. The Royal Calcutta Turf Club was founded in 1847 to fulfil the express need to regulate all aspects of horse racing in Calcutta. The Turf Club further improved the conditions of the race track and added a note of civility and class to the idea of a sport that had thus far gained an ill reputation for being a gamblers' sport. Further, the Turf club won itself legitimacy in the eyes of the people, the ones deemed fit to become members and the ones who were considered unworthy, by being the only club to be allowed to practice legal gambling. In imitating the practices of their counterparts in London, Royal Calcutta Turf club annually hosted The Derby and the St. Ledger, thereby ensuring that horse racing and legitimate gambling, legacies and traditions of polite British society, could continue in Calcutta under the watchful eyes of the club.

There existed close symbiotic ties between horse racing and the nature of the British empire in India. During the late 18th century, horse racing was a sport to be watched and which gave its spectators opportunities to rampantly place bets. It was not well organized and neither did it look to increase its importance as anything more than an amusement for its onlookers. The informal nature of the sport was symptomatic of how the empire saw itself. The British empire at the end of the eighteenth century still saw itself as an economic corporation with the aim to make the Company and its shareholders a lot of money. The cavalier attitude of these men was well represented in social occasions such as horse racing where the class and racial lines remained

²⁴⁶ *Selections from Calcutta Gazettes of the Years 1806-1821 Showing the Political and Social Conditions of the English in India* (Office of Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, 1868) pg. 313

blurred. Describing the seemingly unhealthy and uncomfortable arrangements that the Bengal Jockey Club offered to its spectators during the 18th century, W.H. Carey notes,

“...on arriving at the race-stand, where the floor is covered with straw and a carpet, you may incase yourself in upper Benjamins and cloaks innumerable, and still fail to guard against the bitter cold of the morning; but in three or four short hours, when the sport has terminated, the heat, glare and dust become almost insufferable, and you hasten home to divest yourself of all but an under-garment.”²⁴⁷

The difference between how the Bengal Jockey Club functioned in the mid-18th century to how the Royal Calcutta Turf Club of 1847 operated, shows a remarkable transformation of how the empire functioned. In a one hundred year span, the straw mats and the rampant betting on the horses was replaced by a club that was administered efficiently within a building that stood as a powerful testament to all that the British found admirable in themselves. The opening of the Royal Calcutta Turf Club in 1847 and the way this establishment conducted its business stood in stark contrast to how its predecessor functioned. In a lengthy description, the editor of *The Empress* sketches a day at the race course for us. Long gone are the days of the floor being covered by carpet and sawdust. While the British elite could do little to control the unpredictable weather that Calcutta is infamous for, the club found ways to ensure that its members, the *crème de la crème* of British society, could enjoy the sport in all the comfort and luxury that could be provided to them.

In his description of a typical day at the races, Claude Browne first notices the three grandstands all of which are constructed of solid masonry, almost three stories high, complete with electric lifts and fans. While seasonal members had a refreshment room and a tea room to choose from while they took a break from the races, regular members of the Royal Calcutta Turf Club experienced a little more exclusivity. According to A. Claude Browne,

“...All these stands have an uninterrupted view of the whole race-course, and one, the stand reserved exclusively for members of the R.C.T.C., is immediately opposite the winning post. Members have a

²⁴⁷ WH Carey, *Good Old Days Of Honorable John Company Being Curious Reminiscences Illustrating Manners And Customs Of The British In India* (Vol. I), (Cambray and Co., London, 1906), pg. 139

separate entrance and a special parking place for their cars, as well as their own tea room and refreshment-room...”²⁴⁸

Moving inwards, Browne notices that the three grandstands are meant for three extremely varied group of people. The first and most important of the enclosures is frequented by Europeans as well as elite natives. On the day of an important race, the enclosure is packed with, “...ladies in their daintiest dresses and their escorts in spotless white and cream, while the stewards of the club flit here and there attired in grey morning coats and grey top-hats.”²⁴⁹ The race and the club is given a further boost of legitimacy by the presence of the H.E. The Governor, usually appearing in an unofficial capacity.

The exclusive nature of this first enclosure was never explicitly mentioned by Browne but it was implicitly practiced. In an incident in the year 1840 a well-to-do native witnessed other natives being barred from entering the first enclosure although they had paid the requisite fee of Rs. 100. A complaint he subsequently wrote anonymously to *The Englishman* stated,

“...you will greatly oblige by saying whether the building on the Race Course for the accommodation of visitors usually called the “Stand” is or is not equally open to the public, Native or European. I put this question because I was witness to several native gentlemen of respectability being impertinently refused admittance to the Stand this morning by a peon stationed for the purpose at the bottom of the stairs leading to the upper storey of the building. The peon upon being questioned as to whom he derived his authority from refused to answer, saying that several ladies had been robbed of their things. I am sorry the poor creatures should be so unfortunate, yet I cannot say why the Natives should be blamed for it without reason.”²⁵⁰

While the first enclosure gained notoriety as a citadel of exclusivity that could not be penetrated by just about anyone, the second and third stands predictably were a lot less strict with their rules of entry. According to Browne,

“...the second enclosure also has a large permanent stand and a totalizer...soldiers in uniform are admitted free to this enclosure, and it is patronized also by Anglo-Indians and Indians of the middle class. The third enclosure is purely an Indian one, and the accommodation is usually taxed to its uttermost, for the price of the admission is very low.”²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ A. Claude Browne, *The Ordinary Man's India* (Cecil Palmer, London, 1927), pg. 149

²⁴⁹ Ibid, pg. 150

²⁵⁰ *The Englishman* (Friday January 10, 1840) quoted in Ranabir Ray Chaudhury, *Calcutta: A Hundred Years Ago* (Nachiketa Publications, Kolkata, 1988), pp. 46

²⁵¹ A. Claude Browne, *The Ordinary Man's India* (Cecil Palmer, London, 1927), pg. 150

While it might not be hard to imagine clubs like the Bengal and Calcutta managing to keep themselves shrouded in mystery given that most of their activities were all confined within the walls of the club, the effectiveness with which it successfully managed to exclude the non-worthy is what made Britishness as successful as it was in the colonial context. This characteristic of Britishness is best understood when it is practiced in a seemingly open space like the race course or the *maidan*. Power, the display and performance of it, requires locations that are symbolically significant. The *maidan* and the race course provided their daily visitors with a potent stage on which to practice the aspirational form of Britishness that they knew most would never be able to attain. Such spaces were created by the makers of the empire for the men who were running the empire. Just like these spaces weren't open for everyone, limited also was the right to practice Britishness.

Every club found its own unique ways of performing the similar tenets of Britishness, whether it was in the objects they displayed, or in the way they conducted horse races. Each of these locations spoke to the idea of power, displaying that power and simultaneously rejecting most men's desires to one day be able to practice that power. The rejection of the right to club or clubbability had its very core insularity as means to ensure their uniqueness.

CHAPTER V

LONGING FOR BELONGING IN LONDON: COLONIAL BRITISHNESS RETURNS HOME

Introduction and Overview:

Britishness, specifically the colonial kind, grew and flourished in the colonial state for reasons that have been discussed in the previous chapters. While clubland in colonial Calcutta allowed colonial Britishness and clubbability to prosper, its legacy continued long after its practitioners had left the confines of the colonial state. After locating the emergence of a specific form of Britishness in England, tracing its proliferation and growing popularity in Calcutta, this last chapter takes the contrived identity of clubbable Britishness back to where it was created, England.

The Senior United Service Club, The Junior United Service Club, The East India Club and The Oriental Club allowed the practitioners of colonial Britishness and clubbability to continue uninterrupted in London. Each of the four clubs, specifically created to cater to the needs of men returning from the various colonies came to thrive and prosper in area of Pall Mall and St. James.' Clubbability, as has been previously argued, was seen as a typical English characteristic. Each of these four clubs catered to the needs of the men of the colonies, who were well versed in colonial clubbability, in various ways. These military and colonial clubs functioned under a new philosophy that foregrounded Britain's identity as an imperial power in mainstream society of England; in its décor, practices, membership, dinner menu, and even in their selection of honorary members. The membership at these colonial clubs was meant specifically for the members of the colonial state who worked there in various capacities; the Oriental was populated primarily by colonial English business community as well as men who served in official capacity for the British Crown in the colonies, the East India and the Junior

United Service was essentially reserved for the ICS and the colonial armed forces. Examining these four essentially colonial clubs is crucial to complicating the unilateral, unrelenting and homogeneous understanding of British identity. The homogeneous identity of Britishness took into account the nation's military achievements, its religious identity as the leading Protestant entity in Europe, and as the nation that spearheaded the era of industrialization, none of which accounted for the nation's identity as a colonizing power. The complexity of a colonial clubbable British identity as displayed at these three colonial clubs complicates the national identity of being British.

In closely studying the genesis, establishment and the running of the four colonial clubs my aim in this chapter is twofold. One aim is to highlight the novel concept of colonial clubbability that London had been unaware of up until the establishment of the East India Club. This is to disprove the hypothesis that colonialism did not impact the metropole as much as it did the colonial state²⁵². Through the act of colonial clubbability, the very identity of being British is complicated by adding the layer of a colonial identity to it. The second related goal is to use the study of the three clubs to add to the current historiography of colonialism by seeing them as a part of connected histories.²⁵³ Seeing how colonial clubbability was practiced in Calcutta, and then studying its travel back to London, shows that the history of colonialism connected nations and cultures in ways that Tony Ballantyne defines the webs of empire.

²⁵² David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire: Ideas in Context*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001) focuses on Britain's imperial achievements in the Americas and the Caribbean and studies the British identity as "Protestant, commercial, maritime and free" (pg. 95). This monograph does not take into account the various nuanced identity formations spearheaded by Britain's colonial conquests in other parts of the world.

²⁵³ Tony Ballantyne, 'Race and the Webs of Empire' in *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* (Volume 2, No. 3, 2001) recognizes the "...strong vertical networks that welded Britain and its colonies together and the importance of horizontal connections between colonies suggests that the web is a useful metaphor for conceiving of the structure of the empire".

Colonial Britishness was not just used to display national pride in London. The Oriental Club was a colonial club that was one of a kind that celebrated Britain's achievements in India. Over time, cultural facets of colonialism brought back to London by the members from Calcutta started to gain popularity and be consumed in mainstream culture. Spices, teas, and Anglicized Oriental recipes were becoming part of typical British day to day culture because of clubs like the Oriental making it easy for such products being brought back to London from India. Colonial Britishness was not just an elusive concept to be practiced by a select few and neither was it confined within the walls of a club like the Oriental. Colonial Britishness and some of its key characteristics like Indian ingredients and beverages were slowly becoming part of day to day daily consumption patterns of common British people.

The addition of colonial clubs to the landscape of London adds a layer of complexity to the British identity that was emerging in London from the mid nineteenth century. The growing popularity of colonial clubs in London was indicative of the growing influence of Britain's colonial enterprise domestically. The popularity of essentially colonial clubs like the East India, United Service, Junior United Service and the Oriental was precisely because of the way they operated: run by men of Britain's various colonies who ensured that the club of their choice remained imbued in colonial characteristics. Colonial club makers and club members alike, were portrayed as types of their time, when Britain's imperial achievements were starting to garner more front-page attention in the press in England. The relevance and ramifications of Britain's colonial enterprises were played out and displayed with pomp and glory for London to witness in the institution of colonial clubs in London's clubland that continued to have deep ties with Britain's overseas enterprises. The affairs of the club, combined with how members were selected and were expected to behave within the club premises, reflected upon a specific set of

national life and manners that echoed the cultural practices of colonialism that had been purposely practiced in Calcutta.

MILITARY AND COLONIAL CLUBS:

The evolution of Britishness was forged in two modes. First, there was the language of patriotism: national identity was given more importance than religious ones. Created imageries of nationalism shaped Britons understanding of their character. Historian Peter Clark has argued that Britishness arose not as an ideology, but as a recognition of the fact that patriotism can manifest itself in various ways, and could be used as a force for political change. The second mode in which Britishness was forged and fashioned was in the fire of battle. The factors that fostered the genesis and stability of Britishness were closely connected to combat. Britain had never lost a war after the 17th century, except in 1783²⁵⁴. Defeat at the hands of the Americans did not lead to a disintegration of national identity, rather this led to a clarification and reimagining of the relationship of Britons amongst each other and between the metropole and the colonies with acts of Parliament concerning India in 1784, Canada in 1791 and Ireland in 1800. This is coupled with the experience that the British had undergone in 1707 when the Act of Union between England and Scotland had forced the two members to create a new nation in unity²⁵⁵. One of the reasons why Britishness despite being a contrived and a created identity managed to succeed was because different regions of Britain came together having transcended their linguistic and cultural differences to form a united conception of themselves as guardians of the British Empire. Nowhere was this united front more visible than when Britain was imposing

²⁵⁴ Peter Clark ed. *Cambridge Urban History of Britain 1540-1840* (Volume II), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000)

²⁵⁵ Linda Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument' in *Journal of British Studies* (Volume 31, No. 4, 1992, pg. 309-329)

its colonial rule over India. And no other institution could have served as a better example of what Britishness stood for more than the elite gentleman's club. As an institution, the club superseded differences and allowed handpicked men who shared certain commonalities, whether they be political, professional, cultural or literary, to congregate for purposes of conviviality and conversation.

While in theory, Britishness and the practices of it, especially in the battlefield did cut across regional and linguistic differences, in its every day other practices Britishness remained essentially a class based and a profession based identity. The club played out these differences in the way they were set up and run. It was in London's clubland, the focal location, of the performance of Britishness, that class and even more prominently professions played a pivotal role in the establishing, institutionalizing and practicing of varying kinds of what being a Briton meant. A formidable group of men, led by servicemen who had served in wars in the continent found a social space suited to their own taste lacking in London in the form of service clubs. Moreover, the principal creators of service clubs like the Junior United Service, felt that the current clubs could not meet the need for returning officers and to acclimatize them back into British society.

The chronological time frame when the four clubs were formed is indicative of the need for Britishness to celebrate, first, its military achievements and second, its colonial successes. The first of the military clubs formed was the Senior United Service Club in the year 1816. During the first meeting to propose the formal announcement of the club, among the 70 officers present, there were 12 generals and 16 Lieutenant generals. Lord Lynedoch, a war hero and the proposer of the club stated,

“...the want of a General Military Club permanently established in London, and possessed of a suitable house, appropriated solely to its use, has been generally felt by officers of all ranks of the army; the advantages of such an institution are almost too obvious...It must materially contribute to the comfort and

respectability of officers of every rank, to have a place of meeting where they can enjoy intercourse with economy, where they can cultivate acquaintances formed on service, and where officers of different ranks can have frequent opportunities of knowing each other, where a good collection of books and maps will always be ready for use of members, and where officers may meet in the most creditable manner, and on moderate terms.”²⁵⁶

In a personal correspondence to Lord St. Vincent, Lord Lynedoch further stressed on the need for a club, dedicated to serve the needs of military officers. The idea for the club, Lord Lynedoch wrote,

“...originated from its being a subject of general complaint, that officers coming to town occasionally, and for a short time, and being therefore precluded from belonging to the best established clubs, were necessarily driven into expensive and bad taverns and coffeehouses, without a chance of meeting their friends, or any good society during their stay in town.”²⁵⁷

The fact that this club filled a void and a need for the officers of the military for when they arrived back in London is evident from the amount of support that the creators of this club received. One of most vociferous supporters of the club came from the Duke of Wellington. A month before his historic win at the Battle of Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington in response to a letter of support solicited by Lord Lynedoch replied,

“...I received your letter of the 29th April...of officers who had served last war in the Peninsula, who had come to a resolution to form themselves into a club of 600 members, and that they had done me the honour [sic] to desire that I should belong to their Society...I shall be most happy and shall consider myself highly honoured in belonging to their Society. (*Brussels, May 5th, 1815*)”²⁵⁸

The fact that this club was being seen as a society, as an exclusive and secluded space for the meeting of men of the military where their interaction was limited to one another had its detractors. The forming of the club on its principles was met with criticism from London society. In scathing attacks against the formation of the club, a statesman like Lord Liverpool said,

²⁵⁶ *The United Service Club and Its Founder, With an Appreciation and Catalogue of the Pictures and Busts in the Possession of the Club*, pg. 15

²⁵⁷ Major General Sir Louis Charles Jackson, *History of the United Service Club*, (Published by the Committee of the United Service Club, May 1937), pg. 2

²⁵⁸ Cecil Aspinall-Oglander, *Freshly Remembered: The Story of Thomas Graham, Lord Lynedoch*, (The Hogarth Press, London, 1956), pg. 274

“...a general military club, with the commander-in-chief at the head of it, is a most ill-advised measure...neither the Prince Regent nor the Duke of York should have anything to do with it...it will inevitably create a prejudice against that branch of our military establishment...”²⁵⁹

Further, “the subject was debated in Parliament, in March 1816 and most of the members were against it. The club was described as a “formidable body and constitutionally dangerous.”²⁶⁰ The criticisms laid out against the club was less about the club being set up as an exclusive space for men of the military men to socialize but, the concern was more with what it would mean to the smooth running of the British government and if such an institution would pose a threat to it.

Yet, it was not just the government that was unhappy about the setting up of the Senior United Service Club. The club remained extremely exclusive and their membership laws remained very strict, where no one below the rank of Commander in the Navy and Major in the Army were to be admitted and admission was restricted to 600 members only.²⁶¹ The early 19th century, especially during the Napoleonic Wars, one witnessed a huge uptick in the number of men joining the army. By 1813, the regular British army comprised of over 250,000 men²⁶² and the navy was made up an impressive 140,000 by 1812.²⁶³ These number are crucial because as the number of men joining in any rank under Commander in the navy and Major in the army burgeoned, the Senior United Service Club proved inadequate to meet their needs because of their stringent membership policies.

The need for a Junior United Service Club was felt to cater to the needs of all the soldiers who wished to join a club and who did not qualify or could not afford the steep membership fee

²⁵⁹ *The United Service Club and Its Founder, With an Appreciation and Catalogue of the Pictures and Busts in the Possession of the Club*, pg. 16

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pg. 16

²⁶¹ Major General Sir Louis Charles Jackson, *History of the United Service Club*, (Published by the Committee of the United Service Club, May 1937), pg. 2

²⁶² David Chandler and Ian Beckett, *The Oxford History of the British Army*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003)

²⁶³ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 2009)

of 15 guineas for an entrance subscription and then an annual fee of 5 guineas.²⁶⁴ The two clubs could co-exist because they were being patronized by two different classes of members. While the Senior United Service Club essentially desired the senior ranks of British defense, the Junior United Service Club filled the clubbing needs of the junior ranked military men. This once again complicates the monolithic understanding of Britishness, in this case the one adopted by the British servicemen. The senior members of the defense, while battling side to side in the field with their junior compatriots, did not necessarily want to continue to socialize with them in the same space. The subtle differences that existed within the overarching understanding of Britishness is reflected in the way clubs, specifically the service clubs, two of which existed simultaneously to serve the needs of the British servicemen. In an advertisement published in the *Star* on June 15th 1816 it said,

“...The first general meeting will be held at the British Coffeehouse, Cockspur Street on Thursday the 20th June instant, at Two o’clock precisely, for the appointment of a Committee and for the arrangement of the Rules and Regulations for the government of the club and other business...the Club comprises the ranks of Captain and Subaltern, including the Civil Staff of the United Services of Army, Navy (Lieutenants), Marines, Militia and Honourable East India Company’s Troops, and all of the same ranks on Half-pay or who have sold out or retired.”²⁶⁵

The Senior United Service Club was more focused on attracting military personnel who had fought in the Peninsular Wars, and had made little to no mention of military men who had participated in the Britain’s expanding colonial conquests. It is the Junior United Service Club that makes the first mention of including East India Company’s troops as a legitimate and recognized part of the British defensive forces that should be included for membership in London’s clubland.

²⁶⁴ *The United Service Club and Its Founder, With an Appreciation and Catalogue of the Pictures and Busts in the Possession of the Club*

²⁶⁵ *The Star*, 15th June, 1816

While the club identified itself as essentially a military club catering to the needs and wants of the military personnel who had served oversea, the building that the club was housed in conformed to the architectural landscape of London. A contemporary newspaper article described the grandiosity of the Junior Service Club's exterior design as,

“...The building contains on the ground story, the Entrance Hall and Staircase, in Charles Street; a Morning and Newspaper Room fronting Regent Street, sixty-three feet by thirty feet, with a bow window, and a Member's Coffee Room, sixty-six feet by forty-one feet, next Charles Street with a bow window...The staircase is divided from the Hall by the columns of Caen stone, and the ceiling of the Staircase is supported by caryatid figures also in Caen stone...”²⁶⁶

At a time when the East India Company was becoming a formidable colonial economic entity, it authorized the establishment of Haileybury College in 1806 and it is only ten years later that the Junior United Service Club acknowledged the contribution of the Company's troops who were making their presence felt to be considered in London's club culture. Much like the traditional political clubs, a sense of bonding and camaraderie was being encouraged and fostered by such service clubs who were trying to bring men of the same profession together, focusing on the ones who had made their mark and achieved success overseas in the battlefield. The importance of a club like the Junior United was once again reiterated by Capt. Johnson, one of the founders of the club. According to him,

“...(the club) if once established it would induce many officers to return from the Continent who from their scanty means cannot now afford to live in England...Moreover, in a political and moral point of view, the expediency of such an Institution is still more strongly enforced. A long residence in a foreign land necessarily subjects the parties to influence of foreign habits than which perhaps nothing can be more exceptionable in the character of a British officer...it is presumed that the Club will have the effect of preventing young and inexperienced officers from resorting to those haunts of excess and dissipation of which so many have been the deluded victims.”²⁶⁷

The club saw itself as a space, a sanctified space where the military personnel of the various regiments of the British army could congregate with one another for intentions of sociability.

²⁶⁶ *Illustrated London News*, 27th September, 1856

²⁶⁷ RH Firth, *The Junior: A History of the Junior United Service Club from its formation in 1827-1929* (The Junior United Service Club, London, pg. 1929), pg. 5

But, it is also crucial to note that the club took on another role; that is to reorient the men who had served overseas back into refined English society. The need that the club felt to refashion Britishness in its members comes at a crucial stage in British colonial history. The period from the 1810s to about 1850s is what Harald Fischer-Tiné calls the Age of Reform in India brought about by men like Charles Grant and James Mill.²⁶⁸ Replacing sympathetic Orientalists like Sir William Jones, thinkers like Grant and Mill did not think India possessed any redeemable qualities. According to Grant, the only way to reform India would be to “...opt for radical reforms because of the vile and exceedingly depraved state of Indian society, which could only be uplifted by a thorough transformation.”²⁶⁹ The age of reform as being postulated by Grant and Mill needed the British men in India to implement it through a process of imposing taxes and rational laws. Yet, it was also important for the British government, and for the seemingly sociable spaces like the club to make sure that the minds of such British men continued to remain untarnished from the vile native influences.

While the Senior and the Junior Service Clubs catered to the needs of different ranks of British servicemen, there existed a sense of connectedness between the two clubs, that superseded other differences between the two institutions. While the members of the Senior and Junior socialized in separate spaces, there still existed a fellowship and a relationship between how the two spaces functioned together. It was a way for the servicemen of various ranks to remain bonded through exchanges of resources between the two clubs. The matter of the institutionalizing of the Junior United Service Club was laid before the Head Quarter Staff and

²⁶⁸ Harald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann ed. *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India* (Wimbledon Publishing Company, London, 2004), pg. 12-13

²⁶⁹ Charles Grant, ‘Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain particularly with Respect to Morals; And on the Means of Improving it—Written Chiefly in the Year 1792 (Ordered to be reprinted by the House of Commons , 15th June, 1813), pg. 109

the Duke of Wellington, at that time the Commander-in-Chief, who approved of the project, and became one of the first patrons of the club. As a temporary measure the Lisbon Hotel in Dover Street was acquired for club meetings and other purposes with a constituency of approximately 600 members. On June 20th 1818, the Senior United Service's club space was vacated and thereafter was bought out by the Junior Service Club for £17,442, a considerable sum to defray the cost of a new building in Pall Mall. A further addition to the existing club building was made in 1858 by the acquisition of lease of the adjoining site in at the sum of £34,000, being spent in connecting it with the older house and adapting it for the purposes of a club. The entry fee to the club was set at £40 and the subscription was set at eight guineas.²⁷⁰

The significance of the Junior United Service Club is it is one of very first times that Britain's colonial enterprises were being mentioned as a part of Britain's social, cultural and political trope. Britain's ambitions and its position as a colonial power of significance gets a further boost when the Oriental Club opens its gates in Stratford Palace in the year 1824.

The Oriental Club was set up for the returning men from India and other colonies that they still had status and a position of authority. Thereby, the Oriental Club managed to provide another sanctified spot for another form of Britishness to be displayed, celebrated, and performed for its members who had perfected the practice of this form of Britishness in Calcutta. The origin of the idea of creating and establishing the Oriental Club was discussed in the rooms of the Royal Asiatic Society situated at 14 Grafton Street in 1824. The Society had been founded in 1823 and provided military and civil men returning from India a protective space to read newspapers from around the world, to catch up on their correspondences and to spend an hour or two in conversation reminiscing with other men about their time in India. The Royal Asiatic

²⁷⁰ RH Firth, *The Junior: A History of the Junior United Service Club from its formation in 1827-1929* (The Junior united Service Club, London, pg. 1929), pg. 19, 28-29

Society functioned as a fraternal brother to the Asiatic Society of Bengal established by Sir William Jones in Calcutta in the year 1784.²⁷¹

It is therefore appropriate, that a club meant for men who were,

“...resident or employed in the public service of his Majesty, or the East India Company, in any part of the East...being officially connected with the administration of our Eastern Governments abroad or at home...”²⁷²

Elaborating further on who the potential members of the Oriental Club might have been, historian John Timbs writes,

“...the members were to be noblemen and gentlemen associated with the administration of our Eastern empire, or who have travelled or resided in Asia, at St. Helena, in Egypt, at the Cape of Good Hope, the Mauritius, or at Constantinople.”²⁷³

Among the most prominent members of the Oriental, attracted by its very selective process of selection were Governor-Generals of the Indian sub-continent who have since left an indelible mark on the history of British colonialism in the Indian sub-continent. Speaking of such illustrious members at the Oriental, club historian Stephen Wheeler notes,

“...Lord William Bentinck, an original member...it was in the coffee-room...when he was appointed to the higher office of Governor-General...Lord Auckland was elected by the committee shortly after his return from India, and a like compliment was paid to Lord Elphinstone when he left off governing Madras. John Lawrence was a district officer home on leave when, on April 12, 1841, he was proposed by John Curwen Smith, an old Bengal Civilian...Seven years later Henry Lawrence, at that time Resident at the Sikh Capital, a Lieutenant-Colonel and C.B. joined the Club.”²⁷⁴

In close proximity with such stalwarts of the British colonial state, there existed another significant group of men who contributed to the growth of Britain's economy by controlling trade and finances in the Indian sub-continent, namely, the merchant class. In describing the pivotal role the Oriental Club premises played in the success of the private merchants, club historian Denys Forrest noted,

²⁷¹ FE Pargiter, 'The Royal Asiatic Society' in *Nature: International Journal of Science* (No. 112, Pg. 60-73, 1923)

²⁷² Oriental Club Prospectus Read before a Meeting Held at the House of the Royal Asiatic Society, the 24th of February, 1824, pg. 1

²⁷³ John Timbs, *Clubs and Club Life in London- With Anecdotes of Its Famous Coffeehouses, Hostelries, and Taverns from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Time*, (Chatto and Windus, London, 1899), pg. 205

²⁷⁴ Stephen Wheeler, *Annals of the Oriental Club, 1824-1858*, (The Arden Press, London, 1925), pg. viii

“...the pace-makers were drawn from commerce—typically the No. 1s of the great merchant houses of Calcutta, Bombay, Madras...these were not essentially retired men...still vigorous on their return from the East, many of them took up directorships in banks or shipping companies...or in City firms with which they had been linked, from a distance, all their lives. They formed, in fact the ‘inner ring’ of the club and there was a belief...that the affairs of certain plantation industries—above all tea and rubber—were largely decided in comfortable corners of the Oriental’s Smoking Room.”²⁷⁵

The entrance fee was fixed at £15 and the annual subscription was fixed at £6 but within a year the committee decided that the funds were insufficient and at a general meeting of the club held the following year on 14th February, 1825 agreed on an increase of the entrance fee to £20 and the annual subscription was raised to £8. The new increase held stable for approximately 60 years. In his extensive examination of the membership patterns at the club in the initial years, club historian Stephen Wheeler concludes that in the initial years of the club’s opening, 66 of the men who joined were from the East India Company’s army, 32 were Civil Servants, 11 were merchants and 12 fell under the miscellaneous column.²⁷⁶

To want to continue the familiarity with the men that were interacting in India, the original members of the Oriental Club decided to establish the club to the north and south of Oxford Street centered near Cavendish and Hanover Squares.²⁷⁷ This area had come to be the location where East India Company’s servants typically congregated and lived. As contemporary commentators speculated, the ‘Indians’ preferred to have their club serve as an easy drop down from their residential quarter.²⁷⁸ The club served the purpose of initiating and creating an atmosphere of camaraderie between a subset of men who had made Grosvenor Square their home and the location where they conducted their business. Since this minority group of men found more in common with each other due to their economic, professional and social interests in India, it was only natural for club like the Oriental, catering to the needs of these men, to fit in

²⁷⁵ Denys Forrest, *The Oriental: Life Story of a West End Club*, (BT Batsford Ltd., London, 1968), pg. 149-150

²⁷⁶ Stephen Wheeler, *Annals of the Oriental Club, 1824-1858*, (The Arden Press, London, 1925)

²⁷⁷ THS Escott, *Club Makers and Club Members*, (T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1914), pg. 118

²⁷⁸ Peter Cunningham, *London As It Is* (John Murray, London, 1863), pg. 112-115

a very symbiotic way, in Grosvenor Square among the men's homes and professional lives. The social, public link that the Oriental Club served was part of a nexus between the private life of the merchants and officers and their business interests. The role of the Oriental as a familiar and comfortable alternative to the home when the need arose for its members has been well document by T.H.S. Escott. Escott, a prolific social historian of London's clubland observed about the Oriental that it adds a,

“...special recommendation of being a Mayfair paradise for the inhabitants of the Grosvenor Square district in the dead season. The family of the patron is out of town, the servants are on board wages, but the head of the house is obliged to postpone his departure, though the only room he finds habitable is his library. Happily for him he belongs to the Oriental. There within ten minutes' walk of his book and his domestic cigar box, he finds all he needs in the way of material consolation for his desolate dining room and closed kitchen.”²⁷⁹

By adding a heterogeneous group of men, from future Governor-Generals of India to prominent members of the merchant houses, the Oriental Club ended up serving a multitude of purposes.

For the official community at the club, it provided a space for men to meet their colleagues and friends to reminisce about their time spent in the Indian sub-continent. For the non-official men it served as a space in which to carry out and make important business decisions, protected within the safe confines of the club.

The fourth colonial club that emerged in London's clubland was a club dedicated entirely and solely to Britain's Indian colony. By the mid nineteenth century, Britain's colonial ambitions were starting to become a part of mainstream British culture, and that is best reflected in the opening of the East India Club in 1848. The East India Club emerged to fill a gap left by the Oriental. According to Denys Forrest, one of the reasons the Oriental failed to appeal to the servicemen of the Indian colony was because,

²⁷⁹ THS Escott, *Club Makers and Club Members*, (T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1914), pg. 208

“...the club was never from the start an exclusively Services club, but had a strong infusion of that dreaded word *trade*. Among its lists of early members it is easy to pick out the names of senior representatives of the great merchant firms of the East.”²⁸⁰

The East India, on the other hand, wanted to celebrate and provide a haven for men who primarily were “...East India Company Servants- Clerical, Civil, Military and Medical of all the Presidencies, including those who retired.”²⁸¹

Post-1857, once the formal colony of India was passed over to the British Empire under the aegis of Queen Victoria, the club committee was concerned about the irrelevance of the name “East India” since the monopolistic company, for which it had been named had been deemed defunct after the mutiny. While some members felt that the club should be renamed, more members felt that the name should be kept. The debate over the naming of the club covered a range of issues. For some,

“...East India was considered to attach it too closely to the coat-tails of the dying East India Company, while ‘United Service’ could exclude men connected with India who might be homogeneous...but did not happen to be servants of the Crown.”²⁸²

Further, the debate raged about whether the members would feel more at home in a club with the East India Service name attached to it or not. It was commonly understood that the older members may have wanted to continue to associate with a space that respected and honored the tradition of British colonialism that started with the East India Company establishing control over the Indian sub-continent, but more recent members might not.²⁸³

As British presence in India started to grow, as the governance of the colony started to get more formalized and structured, the networks of connection that were made in Calcutta between the employees of the company needed to be maintained back in London. The British

²⁸⁰ Denys Forrest, *The Oriental: Life Story of a West End Club*, (BT Batsford Ltd., London, 1968), pg., pg. 2

²⁸¹ *ibid*, pg.5

²⁸² *Ibid*, pp. 53

²⁸³ John Timbs, *Clubs and Club Life in London- With Anecdotes of Its Famous Coffeehouses, Hostelries, and Taverns from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Time*, (Chatto and Windus, London, 1899), pg. 226

men returning to London from the colonies had been trained in a particular form of colonial clubbability that was focused more on ritualized performances and exhibiting certain very masculine traits in a very controlled environment. This needed repetitive performance for them once they returned to London. The need for the overall experience of what the men were accustomed to in India was very different from how the culture of clubland flourished in London.

Such men of the colonies wanted to retreat to a congenial and familiar atmosphere with men who shared a similar professional background like their own. In order to allow men specifically returning from India to have a home away from home, the objective of the Oriental Club was to give to men who have been residents abroad the means of entering, on their return, into a society through a club. In their first draft prospectus released by the club founders, three specific aims were laid out that the Oriental Club was supposed to have served. In their words the Oriental Club which was one of a kind in London's clubland was to,

“...first, to give to persons who have been long resident abroad the means of entering, on their own return, into a society where they will not only associate daily with those they have before known but where they will have an opportunity of forming acquaintances and connections in their own country; secondly, to give to those who have resided or served abroad the easy means of meeting old friends, and keeping up their knowledge of the actual state of our Eastern Empire by personal intercourse and friendship with those recently returned from scenes in which they have once acted; and thirdly, -well, thirdly, we are to do a sort of schoolmaster's work, to impart knowledge regarding the past and present condition of the East and to assist in strengthening home ties with that quarter; duties which, we fear, we have very indifferently performed.”²⁸⁴

Clubs like the Oriental and the East India and to a certain extent the military clubs, through their successful presence makes a crucial point about the culture of colonialism: these clubs provided their members with a continuity, a network of connection that had been consolidated by these men in Calcutta's clubs. The legacy of clubbability that had been institutionalized in Calcutta's clubland continues uninterrupted back in London in clubs like the Orient where the member had the opportunity to mingle and socialize with men who had a similar background as his own. In

²⁸⁴ Ibid, pg. 1-2

the larger imperial historiography that foreshadows the network of connections between the metropole and the colony, such as displayed in the clubs, speaks to the interconnectedness of colonialism. According to Tony Ballantyne, this interconnectedness between the metropole and the colony,

“...develops a broader model for thinking about the relationships between place and space in how historians write about the colonial past...urging historians to think under as well as across the nations-the idea of much transnational history...that places were generated by the regulation of mobility and exchange.”²⁸⁵

The colonial clubs and the clubbability practiced within them in London is a relevant and appropriate example to reveal the closed circuit of connectedness between Calcutta and London.

The close network of connectedness formed between the lived experiences of the colonial state by the members of the colonial clubs in Britain is aptly highlighted in this one incident written about by a member of the Oriental Club, Francis Mathewson. Recounting the incident he wrote,

“In the year 1900, whilst members were at dinner, a new arrival entered the coffee room. He was welcomed by various members and, after greeting his friends, sat down to dine next to an elderly gentleman. The latter turned to him and said, ‘I gather, Sir, from what your friends said in welcome, that you have come from Calcutta?’ The new arrival admitted the fact, on which the elderly man asked if Calcutta had much altered since he had left the place. The rejoinder was ‘If you tell me, Sir, when you left India, I could answer your question?’ The elderly man replied ‘Let me see, it was May 1834, when I left Calcutta’. The elderly man turned out to be Mr. Macaulay.”²⁸⁶

While such interactions between club members was symptomatic of what the colonial clubs in London were trying to achieve, by providing the men of the colonies with a congenial atmosphere in which to feel at home, as they would have done at any of the most prestigious clubs in any of the Presidencies. The individual interaction between the members at these clubs was one part of the story was one way to make sure the legacy of colonialism in its very nuanced forms was kept alive in London, long after the men of the colonies had set sail from the shores of

²⁸⁵ Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past* (University of British Columbia Press, Toronto, 2012), pg. 23

²⁸⁶ “Oriental Club: Memoirs”

Calcutta. The grand and impressive narrative of Britain's colonial saga needed to be chronicled in everyday objects and décor in each of these clubs. Each of these clubs in their own ways celebrated Britain's overseas achievements, whether it was in the battlefields or in the policy makers who shaped the nature of colonial rule for the British. This next section is going to take a descriptive look at the symbols that each of these clubs carried within their premises, that spoke of Britishness as a worthy virtue to be celebrated constantly.

CELEBRATING BRITISHNESS IN THE CLUBS:

Much like the British elite clubs in Calcutta had rooms dedicated to paintings and statues of men who had added credibility, prestige and legitimacy to British empire building in Calcutta, similarly, the colonial clubs in London did the same. Each of the clubs carefully selected objects, created emblems, celebrated momentous military and colonial achievements, to chronicle the achievements of their members, to lend themselves the legitimacy and the seal of approval in London's clubland. One of the reasons why these displays were necessary, according to, Alexander Baillie, was because the Oriental Club offered its members,

“...the ability to live in London with that respectability and those comforts which their station in society renders so essential, that saved many ‘Indians’ from prolonging their residence in the East and thereby shortening their lives!”²⁸⁷

Other than the physical atmosphere that the clubs provided its members as an echo back to club life in the colonies, similarly the objects and artefacts at these clubs served as a constant reminder for its members the highlights of Britain's military and colonial achievements.

The Senior United Service Club secured its position as the leading club for military heroes and leaders by celebrating Great Britain's wins, especially the Peninsular ones. Among its impressive collection of statues, paintings and other memorabilia, stood a painting of Field

²⁸⁷ Denys Forrest, *The Oriental: Life Story of a West End Club*, (BT Batsford Ltd., London, 1968), pg. 22

Marshall Sir John Colborne Seaton (1778-1863) who led the 52nd battalion at Battle of Waterloo.

According to a description of the painting,

“...the first thing that strikes its viewer is the kindliness of the mouth. Look again, and you see the strength of it. Every curve, every angle of the face gives you the qualities typical of the best men of that time—benignity, calmness, courage, resolution.”²⁸⁸

The Senior United Service Club did not just make claims to house the bravest and the most prolific of British military officers within its walls. It displayed the bravery and the fortitude of its members and in the objects at the club was symbolic of the entire spirit behind it.

The symbolic significance of the objects in the club can be further understood in the various paintings and statues and, more importantly, with where they were placed. Occupying the vantage points in the club when one walked in would be balcony at the top of the grand staircase and the entrance hall. Describing the prized location and the paintings hung at these locations, a club member described it as,

“The Balcony at the top of the Grand Staircase is dignified by two pictures of outstanding interest and importance, each about sixteen feet wide: ‘Trafalgar’ by Clarkson Stanfield, R.A. and ‘Waterloo’ by George Jones, R.A. These were painted at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the artists had personal advice from some of the early, and possibly first, members of the club, who gained distinction in one battle or another...On the other two sides of the balcony are superb full lengths of Nelson and Wellington faced by portraits of their principal lieutenants Collingwood and Hill.”²⁸⁹

Such a display of powerful imagery directly linking the club members to Great Britain’s historical battlefield wins was part of a larger narrative to earn clubs such as the Senior United Service a legitimacy, as a military club, that no other pre-existing club could lay claim to. In its collection of books too, the club fostered and encourage a discussion around the issues of the military. According to club accounts, a certain member, Col. Armstrong donated over a hundred books on the subject of military science and tactics to the club.²⁹⁰ The military personnel

²⁸⁸ *The United Service Club and Its Founder, With an Appreciation and Catalogue of the Pictures and Busts in the Possession of the Club*, pg. 20

²⁸⁹ *Ibid*, pg. 27-28

²⁹⁰ Major General Sir Louis Charles Jackson, *History of the United Service Club*, (Published by the Committee of the United Service Club, May 1937), pg. 14

handpicked to be members of the club who had earned their positions and authority on the battlefield needed to be treated in a manner befitting their status in the British military. Much like the members of the club were expected to dress up formally for dinner, so should staff members of the club adopt an air of formality in their attire that would be fitting with the atmosphere at the club. The staff at the club were ordered at all times to wear a uniform that was made up of, "...a blue coat with red cuffs and yellow buttons, a red waistcoat and blue breeches. There was a full-dress and an undress livery, the former no doubt having gold lace galore...."²⁹¹

The prestige of the club was not just about selecting the right building or electing the right members for the club. The club's prestige was tied up with every part of clubbability, be it from the choice of paintings, to the dinner menu put together on special occasions, to how one was expected to dress within the club, whether they were a member or an employee. All of these different aspects of club life put together can be examined as, Benjamin Cohen put it,

"...center of social networks...ideological networks for service members, and logistical networks that provided specific amenities—most importantly, offering an alternative to bad taverns."²⁹²

The clubs, whether in London or Calcutta, formed social, ideological and logistical networks, in the hallowed interiors, the sum total of which lends each club a unique identity. The unique way that each club carried out its clubbability adds, I argue, a complexity to the identity of Britishness. While the political clubs like White's, Boodle's and Kit-Kat Club exhibited Great Britain's various political allegiances, clubs like the Army Navy Club or the Senior United Service Club displayed and celebrated Great Britain's military and naval achievements. It is with the proliferation of clubs like the Oriental and the East India Club that we see a new set of networks being formed. These new logistical and ideological networks focused on keeping the

²⁹¹ Ibid, pg. 15

²⁹² Benjamin Cohen, *In the Club: Associational Life in Colonial South Asia*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2015), pg. 7

club's connection with India thriving and prospering in London. This, in turn, brought to the forefront, Britain's ties with the growth of colonialism, thereby complicating the very identity of Britishness.

The Oriental Club came into existence to serve the needs of the British men returning from the colonies who wanted to replicate a club, formed on principles of exclusion, privacy and status, that had existed in London since the late 17th century. T.H.S. Escott writes about the conversation that led to the creation of the club. He quotes,

“Sir Thomas Pycroft...entered the East India Company's service in 1829. On one of his visits home he met, at a room provided for their conversation by their London agent, several of his past or present colleagues. No feature of the time was more prominent than that of the multiplication of clubs. The gentlemen on furlough from Hind asked each other why they should not follow the fashion and establish their own social resort in a commanding position...”²⁹³

While adhering to the principles of clubbability thus far institutionalized in London, the founders of Oriental Club certainly wanted to set up a unique social resort that would give the club a colonial feel.

The Oriental Club wore its badge of honor as a representative of Britain's imperial ambitions especially in India proudly on itself and in its correspondences. For its telegram services, the club used the motif of the 'Ganpati' since 1829, and has continued to do so ever since. One of the prized artifacts noticeably placed near the entrance of the club is a statue of Buddha gifted to the club by one of its members and a large terrestrial globe presented by Mr. Snodgrass, one of the most prominent members in the club's history. Like most other contemporary clubs, the paintings that occupied the prized locations on the walls of the club truly reflected and symbolized what the club stood for and where its loyalties lay.²⁹⁴

²⁹³ THS Escott, *Club Makers and Club Members*, (Sturgis and Walton, New York, 1914), pg. 262

²⁹⁴ Denys Forrest, *The Oriental: Life Story of a West End Club*, (BT Batsford Ltd., London, 1968), pg. 126-127

A contemporary newspaper observed the tasteful way the paintings perfectly complemented the décor and the interior of the club as wholly satisfactory. The writer notes,

“...some full length portraits, formerly in large and clumsy gilt frames, projecting nearly a foot, have been fixed to the walls, and enclosed with suitable gold panel mouldings, so that they now form as it were a part of the room, and do not obtrude by any overpowering quantity of gold.”²⁹⁵

Describing the interiors of the club, the same newspaper article described it as,

“...the architecture in style Greek-ish, if not Greek...The general design and the ornamental details are of a strictly architectural character, and the only painting in light and shade introduced is in two figures, Europe and Asia, in the niches of the drawing room. Strong colours were chosen for the walls, in order to add to the rooms a degree of comfort and richness which lighter colours could not have produced and which was more desirable...The general tone of the drawing room is red, and that of the library green...”²⁹⁶

Inside the clubhouse the layout and the architecture of it is reminiscent of a princely house with the grand coffee room, drawing room and the widely well-manicured garden, library and the dining hall. The doors and the windows are painted in imitation of wood, suiting the color arrangements in the various rooms. The grand staircase connecting the first and second floors was characteristically unique in its construction and the purpose it served. In Alexander Bailie’s observation of the staircase, he sees it,

“...as the most remarkable architectural feature of the house. It is lighted by a skylight in the roof, which is supported on lofty pillars reaching from the first floor to the top of the building and is broad, handsome and easy to surmount.”²⁹⁷

The purpose of the staircase was an imitation of the grand old palaces of the nabob’s and the London palazzi of the day where the staircases served more than just as a means to ascend or descend the floors, it served a social purpose too. While historians have observed that the staircase served the purpose of ushering in guests by the host who slowly marshalled them up the stairs in a grandiose manner in a private setting, the same and more would apply to the staircases

²⁹⁵ The Builder, (Vol. VI, No. 302, 1850) pg. 555

²⁹⁶ *ibid*, pg. 558

²⁹⁷ Alexander F Bailie, F.R.G.S., *The Oriental Club and Hanover Square* (Longmans, Green and Company, London, 1901), pg. 60-61

at the Oriental Club.²⁹⁸ The staircase was primarily used as a tool of exclusion, to keep the guests relegated to the first floor while the quintessential 19th century clubman- a spidery decrepit figure with a stick, pausing for breath at the half way landing of some vast cataract of marble and red carpet, could slowly ascend the steps of the club onto the hallowed second floor, the sanctified area reserved only for the members of the club.²⁹⁹

Over the years, the Oriental Club was presented portraits of General Stringer Lawrence and Sir Eyre Coote. From his own collection Sir Charles Forbes gifted the club portraits of Warren Hastings, Lord Clive and the Marquis of Wellesley. From the original members of the club, Sir John Malcolm and Mr. G.L. Pendergrast presented the club various books of interest on India. Among them were a number of books and pamphlets relating to Indian affairs dated before 1813. Amongst other books gifted to the club were Forrest's *'Picturesque Tour on the Ganges and Jumna'* and *'Oriental Drawings'*.³⁰⁰

The Oriental Club displayed and performed its colonial characteristics in ways more than just acquiring paintings and literature about Indian colonies in their collection. The club felt the need to earn its legitimacy as the rightful representative of Britain's colonial encounters and achievements. Celebrating and honoring the men of the empire was one way the Oriental Club played up Britain's colonial endeavors. In the year 1846, the club committee held a discussion about honoring Lord Metcalfe. The record from this meeting reads,

"At a meeting held on the 12th of January 1846 at the Oriental Club of Noblemen and Gentlemen Connected with India, with the Honorable Earl of Auckland in the Chair, the following Resolutions were unanimously adopted:

That an address be presented to Lord Metcalfe expressing the High sense entertaining by this meeting, of his Public Services, their pride in the honours by which those Services have justly been recognized by his Sovereign and his Country, their cordial sympathy, in the Affliction by which his Career of Eminent

²⁹⁸ Stephen Wheeler, *Annals of the Oriental Club, 1824-1858*, (The Arden Press, London, 1925), pg. 124

²⁹⁹ Ibid, pg. 201

³⁰⁰ "Oriental Club: Memoirs"

usefulness has been interrupted and the Affection, Respect and Administration with which they regard his Public and Private Character.”³⁰¹

The invitation for an honorary dinner was accepted by Lord Metcalfe and the it was attended by more than three hundred of its members. Organizing a dinner for celebrating the achievements of stalwarts of the British empire, publishing articles about it in newspapers at the time, a concerted effort was made by the club. The Oriental Club played a pivotal role for bringing the successes of the empire back to the metropole through representing, celebrating and exhibiting the colonized form of Britishness. A similar such dinner was organized to celebrate the achievements of Sir Robert Napier on July 27th 1868 that was attended by more than a hundred members of the club, each of them being charged thirty-five shillings to attend.³⁰²

The club did more than just celebrate the achievements of the British colonial enterprise. After spending a considerable time in India, the returning members of the club wanted a replication of what they were used to in the Indian colony. Much like the households set up in India that the members were used to, the interiors of the Oriental Club were set up in a similar way. The kitchen in the club was set up at a safe distance from the dining or the drawing room of the club, where the aroma of the food being cooked had less of a chance of permeating into the interiors of the club in case it offended the olfactory senses of the members.³⁰³ While it was an easy assumption for outsiders to make that the only dishes being cooked in the Oriental Club would be Indian-inspired, in reality the club did offer a wide array of traditional English fare like chops, steaks, game and fish, with oysters and the like as trimmings. Yet, the committee and members of the club were quick to pick up on the growing interest for Indian spices and a market for them developing in the palate of their contemporary clubmen in London as were the private

³⁰¹ Personal Correspondences of Lord Auckland. Unpublished documents from the LMA

³⁰² “Oriental Club: Memoirs”

³⁰³ *ibid*

companies who were importing specific Indian spices for the British market. As more and more men and families were returning to London with an acquired taste for Indian spices, the demand for these spices grew. Close to Hanover Square in Bayswater, the location of the Oriental Club, businesses sprung up to provide interested customers with spices and condiments from India.

To complement the newly discovered taste in Indian spices and condiment, the club decided to publish a cookbook written by the head chef, who was one of a handful of chefs familiar with Indian cooking. The cookbook, aptly titled *Indian Cookery*, published in 1861, was written by the Chef de Cuisines of the Oriental Club and sold to its members and the public for three shillings and six pence.³⁰⁴ The book was made up of traditional Indian recipes like Bengal chicken curry, mutton pulao, and fish tamarind and more fusion dishes, popularized in India by the Britons living there like periwinkle curry, calf's foot curry and mulligatawny soup.

According to the chef, Richard Terry, his intention for compiling the cookbook was to,

“...induce to many before my readers a small Manuscript of Recipes, by which I hope to gather their cordial support in this peculiar branch of the art, having these last Ten years been Chef-de-Cuisine at the Oriental Club...and gathered from Native cooks, the proper ingredients that are required in each curry or soup to give it that flavor which it should possess to make it a palatable dish.”³⁰⁵

The shift in the focus of the Oriental Club from a club meant solely to reproduce the comforts of India for its civil, military, and professional servicemen, it gradually transformed itself into an enterprising business establishment that capitalized on its employees and members knowledge on India and turned it into a profit-making enterprise. The club quickly aligned itself to business interests that were taking advantage of Britain's growing curiosity about India and selling products catered to satiate that curiosity.

It only took a little more than a decade after the formal establishment of the Oriental Club in 1824 for the word curry to appear in the committee meeting of the club on 12th August, 1839.

³⁰⁴ Richard Terry, *Indian Cookery*, (FK Gurney, London, 1861), pg, 52

³⁰⁵ *ibid*, preface

It was not unusual for the club to advertise products like Bengal Club chutney, tamarind fish and curry paste sold by the Payne's Oriental Warehouse and kitchen apparatuses like stewing stoves and rack boilers from W. Pope and Sons. In the most synchronized way possible, the club itself started to market its own oriental products for sale. The cultivated public image of the club as an assemblage of curry gourmets was strong enough for Messrs. Crosse and Blackwell to value an endorsement for Captain White's Fish and Chicken Curry and Mulligatawny Paste, exclusively made and sold at the Oriental Club³⁰⁶. The club gained a reputation as a place of business interest as well as a location of sociability. Upon purchasing one of their exclusive, club made curries, the chef of the Reform Club, G. Fidle in 1851 endorsed it by stating that, "...I have for four years exclusively used your CURRY PASTE AND POWDER [sic] and I have invariably found that they have given general satisfaction."³⁰⁷

The aim in this chapter has been to analyze exactly how each of the colonial clubs that were established in London served the needs of the returning British civil and military officers continued a tradition of Britishness and clubbability that was created mainly for the colonial project. The concept of the colonial clubbability and Britishness, through a study of the colonial clubs, shows that the networks and connections formed between the colonial state and the metropole was not just political, or economic. This kind of historical study, the transnational history of British club culture, dispenses with nations and empires as self-evident and self-contained units of analysis. My aim in this dissertation, especially in this chapter, has been to organize and analyze the transnational history of British club culture to focus rather on the circulation of ideas, peoples and institutions.

³⁰⁶ Arthur Hall, *The British Metropolis in 1851: A Classified Guide to London* (Virtue and Co., London, 1851), pg. 236

³⁰⁷ Denys Forrest, *The Oriental: Life Story of a West End Club*, (BT Batsford Ltd., London, 1968), pg. 53

CONCLUSION

The aim of this dissertation has been to complicate the Euro-centric definition of Britishness to include the role colonialism played in complicating this identity. The future imperialists of the British empire in India had to be trained in a specific form of identity that, I argue, contributes to the identity of Britishness. The training in sociability, that I have explored in this dissertation through the act of clubbability, enriches Britishness as an identity marker. My aim in this dissertation has been to trace the genesis of British elite clubbability, its unique practices set the men of the empire in an advantageous position to legitimize their rule. The continued practices of this clubbability was sustained by the practitioners of it long after they had left England for their professional tenure in India.

An important aim of my dissertation has been to complicate the networks of influence as Britishness and clubbability moved back and forth between the metropole and the colony through the examination of clubbability as it contributed to the definition of Britishness. The act of exclusive sociability learnt, rehearsed and practiced in Hartford or London found its way to colonial Calcutta, expanded and flourished it in the clubland of the city, and yet, the proliferation of the nature of colonial clubbability did not perish once its practitioners left the colonial state. It has been my intention in this dissertation to unearth the close connections between the changing social, political and cultural dynamics of Victorian Britain or colonial South Asia and how practices of clubbability are reflective of these changing dynamics.

As the nature of British imperial logic of rule over India changed from one of collaboration from the 18th century to one of creating and establishing differences from the 19th century, the manifestations of it were felt in most aspects of the imperial world. Similarly, my study of exclusive sociability through the act of clubbing started to echo and reflect the changing

nature of colonialism. A further argument I make is to argue that these changes are reflective of the changing dynamics of colonialism impacted by both the metropole and the colony. The setting up of Haileybury College to teach its students how to become effective imperialists was commensurate with the time when the East India Company was looking to modify itself from more than just a private mercantilist organization to a legitimate ruling body representing the British Crown. The need for the Company and the Crown to find ways to legitimize their rule over their Indian colony did not only start when its potentates reached the colony. Class based differences being created in England, in the way the men selected to rule the empire, is symptomatic of how colonialism was impacting the social dynamics of the society in Great Britain. Similarly, the spread of elite club culture in colonial Calcutta is reflective of formalizing the empire of difference and similarly kept up the class differences created in the metropole flourishing in the colony.

Lastly, the spread of a burgeoning colonial club culture in London once again is reflective of the culture of colonialism making its mark in the mainstream culture of the metropole. The co-existence of the old traditional English political clubs teeming with Parliamentarians, politicians and thinkers with the clubs that catered to the military personnel of the colonies as well as the ICS officers and merchants who made their mark in the colonies is representative of a very crucial facet; that each one of these men contributed to the identity of Britishness and that internal politics of Great Britain contributes as much to it as did its colonial endeavors.

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VITA

Manamee Guha

Phone: +1-773-610-2061

Email: manamee.g@gmail.com

EDUCATION:

2011-2019: PhD in Modern World and Imperial History

Department of History, University of Illinois at Chicago

Dissertation Title: Performing Britishness: British Elite Club Culture in Colonial Calcutta in the Nineteenth Century

Exam Fields: Modern South Asia, Comparative Colonialism, Culture and Colonialism

2004-2006: MA in Modern Indian History

Department of History, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

CGPA: 3.7/4

PAPERS WRITTEN:

February 2019: ‘Creating Colonial Legitimacy Through The Act of Clubbing: Britishness, Associational Life and the Performance of Imperial Rule in Colonial Calcutta’ (under review)

December 2016: Book review of Antoinette Burton’s *Trouble With Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism*. Link to the review: <http://www.masalahistory.com/essays/2016/11/30/book-review-antoinette-burtons-the-trouble-with-empire-challenges-to-modern-british-imperialism>

May 2013: ‘Calcutta As Viewed By Its Tourists’

PODCASTS:

December 2018: A study of British architectural landscape in Calcutta. Link to the podcast:

<http://www.masalahistory.com/podcast/episode-7-government-house-calcutta>

November 2018: A discussion on the life and work of the preeminent Mughal Emperor, Jahangir. Link to the podcast: <http://www.masalahistory.com/podcast/episode-6-mughal-emperor-jahangir>

August 2018: A discussion on the last imperial capital of the world. Link to the podcast:

<http://www.masalahistory.com/podcast/episode-4-lutyens-delhi-the-last-imperial-capital-of-the-world>

January 2017: A discussion on the British Great Exhibition and Its Colonial Heritage. Link to the podcast <http://www.masalahistory.com/podcast/south-asia-humanities-podcast-episode-1-india-at-the-great-exhibition-of-1851>

PAPER PRESENTATIONS:

November 2019: “Performing Clubbability: Distinction, Britishness And The Legitimacy To Rule” To be presented at the North American Council of British Studies, Vancouver, Canada

April 2019: “Creating Colonial Legitimacy Through The Act of Clubbing: Britishness, Associational Life and the Performance of Imperial Rule in Colonial Calcutta”. Presented at the British Association For South Asian Studies, University of Durham, UK

October 2017: “Performing Empire: Legitimizing Power in the Public through the Private Club.” Presented at The 46th Annual Conference on South Asia at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

September 2017: “The Private Club: Shaping the Public Man’s Image to Lead.” Presented at the Mid-Western Conference for British Studies in St. Louis, Missouri

April 2017: “The British Club: The Private Club’s Public Presence.” Presented at the Mid-Atlantic Conference for British Studies at the University of Maryland

March 2017: “The Clubbable British: Constructing Masculinity.” Presented at the HGSA Conference at Purdue University, Lafayette

January 2016: “The Business of Being British.” Presented at the at a graduate student webinar organized by Columbia University, New York

October 2015: “The Gentleman’s Club: A Private or a Public Sphere?” Presented at The 44th Annual Conference on South Asia at University of Wisconsin-Madison

ACADEMIC AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS:

2018-19: Resident Graduate Scholar, Institute for Humanities, UIC

2017-18: John B and Theta Wolf Fellowship awarded by the University of Illinois at Chicago

2017-18: Graduate Student Council Travel Award, University of Illinois at Chicago

2016-17: Marion Miller Dissertation Fellowship awarded by the University of Illinois at Chicago

2016-2017: Chancellors Graduate Research Award awarded by the University of Illinois at Chicago

2016: ‘Outstanding Thesis Award’ awarded by Centre for Social Science Studies, Kolkata, India

2015: Junior Research Fellowship awarded by the American Institute of Pakistan Studies

2014: John B and Theta Wolf Fellowship awarded by the University of Illinois at Chicago

2014: Summer Travel Grant awarded by the University of Illinois at Chicago

2011-2015: History Doctoral Award from the University of Illinois at Chicago

2004: Loreto College Medal for Excellence in Academic and Extra-Curricular Activities

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

Course Instructor, University of Illinois at Chicago

Fall 2018- ‘Ancient South Asia till 1857’

Teaching Assistant, University of Illinois at Chicago

Spring 2019- ‘Gandhi and the Idea of Non-Violence’

Spring 2016- ‘The Rise of the West’

Fall 2015- ‘The Rise of Modern Africa’

Spring 2015- ‘Modern South Asia (1857-1947)’

Fall 2014- ‘Ancient South Asia till 1857’

Summer 2014- ‘History of Colonial Africa’

Spring 2014- ‘World History since 1400’

Spring 2013- ‘Modern European History from 1914 to 1945’

Fall 2012- ‘Modern South Asia (1857-1947)’

Spring 2012- ‘History of the Ottoman Empire’

Fall 2011- ‘World History since 1400’

ACADEMIC SERVICE:

2016 To Present: Co-founder and Co-editor of an upcoming website dedicated to the study of South Asia titled ‘Masala Histories: South Asian Humanities on the Web’

2015 To Present: Co-founder and organizer for the Institute for Humanities Working Group ‘Post-Colonial Studies Group.’ This group organized the following book discussions attended by faculty and graduate students:

Historical Teleologies in the Modern World by Dipesh Chakrabarty, Sanjay Subramanyam and Henning Truper

Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times by Ann Stoler

Local Histories and Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking by Walter D. Mignolo

December 2015: Conceptualized, coordinated, and organized a roundtable discussion titled ‘Global Partition: A Global Legacy?’ that brought together faculty members from various departments within UIC

and invited speakers from outside. More details about the event can be found here:
<https://huminst.uic.edu/ifth/events/working-groups/post-colonial-working-group/2015-2016/2015/12/02/default-calendar/global-partition-a-colonial-legacy>

