CHAPTER TWO

THE RHETORIC OF ENGLISH SELF-FASHIONING

"We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians" (Rao xxxi).

The nature of the role of English literature, lifestyle, ways, education, law in the identity formation of many Indians in the pre-independence and post-independence period is quite complicated. Being a British colony, such an influence on the then middle class and upper-class Indians was inevitable. But whether it marked an ideological transition or paved the path for hybrid culture is the most pertinent question. Theorists and critics like Edward Said, Gauri Vishwanathan, Homi Bhabha, Aijaz Ahmed and Leela Gandhi have long been debating this particular aspect of English self-fashioning and identity construction. A study of Indian English self-narratives will remain incomplete without taking up this major aspect. The fact that most of these writers wrote in English and took refuge in its culture and belief system makes it necessary to do so. This chapter aims to identify and critically examine the nature and problematics of the different aspects of colonial identity construction and English self-fashioning by Indian English autobiographers.

Stephen Greenblatt first introduced the term "self-fashioning" in 1980 to depict a dominant mode of identity construction prevalent during the Renaissance. Striking parallels can, however, be drawn between the nature of identity construction during the early modern English Renaissance and the colonial British India. This owes to the fact that both these periods witnessed an overwhelming upheaval in the social, political, intellectual and psychological spheres. While Greenblatt interprets self-fashioning of the Renaissance authors through their literary texts, here an attempt shall be made to bring out the self-fashioning of select Indian English autobiographies.

According to Greenblatt, sixteenth century England had a sense of deliberate fashioning of selves or identities. As he writes, "Perhaps the simplest observation we can make is that in the sixteenth century there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process" (Greenblatt 2). Greenblatt further conceptualizes fashioning in his context to be "the achievement of a less tangible shape: a distinctive personality, a characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving" (2). A similar sense of

deliberate fashioning of the self through English language, law and literature can be invariably found in nineteenth and twentieth century colonial India. Almost all the writers tried to frame an identity as per the then English cultural standards and social codes though in different degrees. According to Greenblatt, literature functions as the expression of the self-fashioning of the author through a cultural system of meanings that creates specific identities. For Greenblatt, literary text is the central object of study in self-fashioning. Moreover, "Self-fashioning is always, though not exclusively, in language", writes Greenblatt (9). Greenblatt intermingles language and the Renaissance literary texts to come up with his concept of self-fashioning which can well be grasped when he explains:

> When in 1589 Spenser writes that the general intention and meaning that he has "fashioned" in *The Faerie Queene* is "to fashion a gentleman", or when he has his knight Calidore declare that "in each man's self. . ./It is to fashion his owne lyfes estate," or when he tells his beloved in one of the *Amoretti*, "You frame my thoughts, and fashion me within," he is drawing upon the special connotations for his period of the verb *fashion*, a word that does not occur at all in Chaucer's poetry. (2)

The English literary texts read and written by all the autobiographers considered for this thesis reveal how the writers fashioned their selves in ways very much like the sixteenth century Renaissance self-fashioning. Again, Greenblatt stresses that any achieved identity contains within itself the signs of its own subversion and loss. This chapter also aims at interpreting an inherent subversion or ambivalence in the English self-fashioning of the primary authors. Moreover, Greenblatt notes of a kind of profound mobility, mainly social or economic, in almost all the writers he analyses in his text. A parallel of this aspect can be found in most of the writers chosen for this thesis too as most of them chose to move to England for higher studies or for exploring possible ventures. Nehru, Khushwant Singh, Dom Moraes, Cornelia Sorabji, Mulk Raj Anand and Rushdie reflect this aspect. N. C. Chaudhuri dreamt of shifting to England his whole life and finally did so at a later age.

The primary texts selected for this chapter are Cornelia Sorabji's *India Calling* (1934), Jawaharlal Nehru's *An Autobiography* (1936), Mulk Raj Anand's *Apology for*

Heroism: An Autobiography of Ideas (1946) and *Conversations in Bloomsbury* (1981), N.C. Chaudhuri's *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951) and *Thy Hand, Great Anarch*! (1987), Dom Moraes' *My Son's Father* (1968) and *Never at Home* (1992), Kamala Das' *My Story* (1977), Khushwant Singh's *Truth, Love and a Little Malice* (2002) and Salman Rushdie's *Joseph Anton* (2012).

Relevant Theoretical Frame

Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) sought to establish the articulation of imperial power through British culture and literature. Through a number of arguments he even showed how the novels of Jane Austen and Thackeray spread the dominion of the empire. Said's views were, however, later critiqued for being radical and one-sided although those cannot be altogether ignored. Gauri Vishwanathan's *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (1989) makes a similar kind of study to comprehend the ideological nature of English education and literature in India. She draws heavily from Antonio Gramsci's concept of ideological state apparatuses and characterizes ideology as a form of masking. Social control and exercise of colonial power are, according to her, the main motives behind the introduction of English literature and curriculum.

Vishwanathan argues in line with Bruce McCully and David Kopf as to how the growth of Indian nationalism and Bengal Renaissance owed itself to western thought and education. She writes, "The affirmation of an ideal self and an ideal political state through a specific national literature—English literature—is in essence an affirmation of English identity" (Vishwanathan 20). She traces the origin and growth of English literature and the political motive since the Chartered Act of 1913, through the policies of Charles Grant, Warren Hastings, Lord Cornwallis, William Bentinck and such other political leaders in order to propagate religious and moral ideas. Macaulay and James Mill were totally against traditional native education which they believed was of no utility. James Mill's *The History of British India* (1817) shows a misinterpretation of Indian history, education, law, religion, arts, science, government and civilization. To quote the infamous extract from Lord Macaulay's "Minute on Education 1835":

> I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The

> intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is indeed fully admitted by those members of the committee who support the oriental plan of education. (qtd. in Edwards 112)

Said's "academic orientalism" is something Vishwanathan draws upon considerably. She attempts to give a panoramic view of the political scenario which aimed at producing anglicized professionals from upper-class and middle-class Indians through English education. Academic orientalism refers to the tendency of English social and political intellectuals towards anglicizing native education, as was professed by Macaulay and James Mill. Countering the above mentioned arguments, Homi Bhabha, however, comes up with a postmodern approach to English literature, colonial authority and its appropriation in the Third World. In the chapter "Signs Taken for Wonders" from his book *The Location of Culture*, (1994) he argues the colonial presence and authority to be ambivalent and hybrid and fetishistic—always a two-way traffic rather than being a one-way imposition. "Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal" (Bhabha 112). He thus talks of a kind of subversion and fissure that accompany colonial literature or authority. In the words of Shai Ginsberg who very lucidly explains Bhabha's concept in his article "Signs and Wonders: Fetishism and Hybridity in Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*" (2009), "Bhabha tries to discover the locations in which control over the discourse slips away from the colonizer opening up gaps and fissures in which resistance to colonial power can be produced" (Ginsberg 232). Bhabha therefore concludes an impossibility of identity by denying Said's idea of binary and contrapuntality. Homi Bhabha's theorization of "colonial mimicry" in his essay "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" from *The Location of Culture* stands very pertinent in the study of English self-fashioning and colonial identity construction in Indian English autobiographies as most of the writers at different stages try to imitate or appropriate the colonial ways. Similar to his concept of hybridity, "colonial mimicry" too accompanies shades of ambivalence, partial representation and disavowal towards the colonial authority. "The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority", (126) writes Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*.

The "colonial schizophrenia" which V.S. Naipaul conceptualizes through his works like *The Mimic Men* (1967) also deserves to be referred in the context of this chapter. For Naipaul, India was always a distant dream which he visualized through his father's short stories and his grandmother's Hindi or Sanskrit rituals. His knowledge on India owes itself to his extensive readings on Indian history and his travels to India in order to learn about the India of his grandparents. He was very much removed from mainland India and its ways since birth unlike the writers taken for this chapter. This idea does not fit in the case of most of the writers taken for this thesis. Schizophrenia refers to a disbelief in everything around and a fear of the unreal haunting, delusions. Some writers like N C Chaudhuri, Cornelia Sorabji and Dom Moraes however express the presence of colonial schizophrenia in the way they imagine their subjectivities. Naipaul mostly intended to highlight the colonial distortions but the colonial influence did have grounds of ambivalence and cultural exchange as Bhabha or Leela Gandhi argue.

Drawing on the above discussed theorizations, Leela Gandhi propounded a treatise *Affective Communities: Anti-colonial Thought and the Politics of Friendship* (2005) beholding the voice of the anti-imperialist from among the stereotyped imperialists. She attempts to present an account of the other side of both the colonizer and the colonized—the grounds of friendship and mutual collaboration. Ashis Nandy's *The Intimate Enemy* (1983) is also one of the first works to break the one-way relationship between the colonizer and the colonized that is usually taken for granted.

Aijaz Ahmed, however, offers a very Marxist interpretation of the use of English in India as a bourgeoise instrument, ignoring the consideration of the unprivileged classes. This serves as yet another different lens to view the English influence on Indian writers in English. The facilitation of class ideology, rhetoric of exile etc. are some of the pertinent insights from his seminal book *In Theory: Nations, Classes, Literatures* (1994). Indian English writers, according to him define an elite culture meant for upward mobility:

> ...for whom only the literary document produced in English is a national document. All else is regional, hence minor and forgettable, so that English emerges in this imagination not as one of the Indian languages, which it

> undoubtedly is, but as the language of literary sophistication and bourgeois civility. (Ahmed 75)

Meenakshi Mukherjee in the article "Nation, Novel, Language" (2007) from *The Perishable Empire* (2000) strives to find out instances of self-reflexivity and ambivalence of the Indian writers towards English in Indian English novels (Mukherjee 3). She chooses to deal only with the genre of Indian English novel. But a similar lens can inevitably be applied to study Indian English autobiographies too, which flourished around the same time. The extent and nature of English self-fashioning and subsequent identity formation of the Indian English autobiographers, however, vary from writer to writer and cannot be narrowed down under one fixed category. While some completely gave into Anglicism by suppressing and critiquing the Indian ways, some others shared an ambivalent relationship with the same.

Critical analysis of Anglicized identities and Hybrid identities

While talking about anglicized identities, Cornelia Sorabji is one of the personalities in the late nineteenth century who almost completely conformed to British thoughts, manner and identity to the extent that she never wanted India to attain freedom from British dominance. As Chandani Lokuge writes in her "Introduction" to *India Calling*,

> Three streams of cultural influences—the British, the Parsee and the Indian—converged to shape Cornelia's identity. The Sorabjis belonged to the westernized Indian-Parsee community of post-community Bombay. Cornelia and her siblings were 'brought up English'. (qtd. in Sorabji ix)

> Sorabji's childhood memories include listening with admiration to her mother practising two important British preoccupations in their civilizing mission for India: preaching Christianity and the merits of sanitation to the uneducated Indians. Further, both her mother and father—an Indian Parsee and Christian convert—generously contributed to British oriented religious, educational and social reforms in Bombay. Her own devotion to the code is one of the most prominent features of her autobiography. (qtd. in Sorabji xvi)

Sorabji's mother was in fact the adopted child of Lady Cornelia Ford, an Anglo-Indian. The Parsee diaspora is, however, hardly witnessed in her case probably because her

family and friend circle were too anglicized. She mentions how both her parents acquired modern thinking, education and ideals from their respective English tutors rather than the Parsee family which she considered as orthodox.

> We were therefore "brought up English"—i.e. on English nursery tales with English discipline; on the English language, used with our Father and Mother, in a home furnished like an English home. (Sorabji 15)
>
> We ate in the English manner off English plates, and with English adjuncts, and our diet included meat. (Sorabji 16)

Gauri Vishwanathan's argument that English education and thoughts always had an imperial mission of educating and civilizing colonial subjects can be found most prominent in case of Cornelia Sorabji and her worldview. Identifying herself with the British, she tried to carry out her civilizing mission by civilizing the Hindu purdahnashins whom she considered orthodox and old fashioned in every way. Her distrust in native Indian traditions and religion reflects the predominance of colonial schizophrenia in her. Sorabji perceived it as her burden to morally uplift those women. In order to establish her English self as against her complicated Parsee origin, she took after a Westernized way of life and actions. The patronizing attitude of the then missionary activity and British authority is best reflected in Sorabji. Her intentions seem similar to that of Macaulay's desire to uproot and unteach the Indian traditional learning and culture. Besides, her utter support for missionary activities as against Hindu or Muslim ways is expressed every now and then in *India Calling*. The effect of movements and acts like The Charter Act of 1813, Anglicism in 1830s and Bentinck's English Education Act in 1835 are explicitly visible in case of Cornelia Sorabji's life and actions. Sorabji's attempt to mimic the colonial rulers is thus explicitly evident from her autobiography.

The codes of social reformation of India intended by the English masters like Charles Grant, Macaulay, James Mill, were something dedicatedly followed by Sorabji. Similar to them, she was also against oriental learning and tradition. Macaulay wished to have a completely Westernized form of Indian men whose taste, opinions, education and morals would all be English. He visualized uprooting and unteaching everything Indian, be it culture or language:

> We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. (qtd. in Edwards 126)

Alexander Duff's missionary activities and the spread of Arnoldian curriculum in the 1850s aimed at directing Indians' attention towards English law, education, governance and a reformation of their own society. Those codes influenced Sorabji's identity formation and typical patronizing attitude towards the Hindus. Again, in the words of Lokuge:

> This interdependent attitude, a distinguishing facet of the contemporary westernized Indian–Parsee personality—of deliberately identifying with the British, and delineating India and Indians from a standpoint of religious and cultural superiority—dominates *India Calling*. (qtd. in Sorabji xix)
>
> As Sorabji draws the shadows of her fantasies and of theirs her identity merges totally with that of the imperialists. The unveiling of the Zenana turns into a Kiplingian 'show' for her, as much as for them. (qtd. in Sorabji xxii)

Sorabji's experience with her numerous English friends, teachers in Oxford constitutes a considerable part of her memoir. Apart from this, her fascination with the House of Commons and one of her presentations wearing a sari for Queen Victoria again reflects the presence of hybrid identity. She also recounts her overwhelming experience in her meetings with Bernard Shaw and Tennyson. Being one with the English social life and sharing the white man's burden was, according to her, the hallmark of modernity, as she relates in *India Calling*:

> Rudyard Kipling's classics of early Indian society are now superseded, I should say, in every particular. We want another Kipling now to write about modern India—especially since Progressive Indian women have begun to share the social life of the English. (Sorabji 127)

However, the fact that she returned to India in order to serve the oppressed women justifies her concern for her own country and her duty as a part of it. It is indeed interesting to note that the Indians like Cornelia Sorabji or Dom Moraes who had foreign origins in the far past always felt more comfortable in imagining and representing themselves in the English manner and identity. But, however, it was India where they ultimately came back to and settled. Sorabji's overwhelming contribution to the upliftment of the then Indian women in restricted places can never be overlooked, no matter how she attempted to fashion her identity.

The portrayal of England, English life, ways and the appropriation of colonial identity in the self-narratives of N. C. Chaudhuri have been considerably researched upon. Tamal Guha's 2010 thesis *A Postcolonial critique of N. C. Chaudhuri's Writings* is especially significant as he argues on the ambivalent, hybrid nature of Chaudhuri's non-fiction drawing on the postcolonial theories of Homi Bhabha. One of the many simple yet striking instances he mentions about Chaudhuri's ambivalence and paradoxical colonial mimicry is how the latter wore Western dresses in India and dhoti in England. To quote Shrabani Basu's comment on Chaudhuri in her essay "An Austen Afternoon" (1997), "He called himself a combination of Bengali Bhodrolok and English gentleman" (Bose 22). V. S. Naipaul again regards Chaudhuri's first autobiography a great book resulting from the Indo-English encounter. Ranajit Guha in fact regards ambivalence as the most serious problem with Chaudhuri, thereby calling him an "atypical comprador"—neither entirely anti-British nor entirely pro-British.

The decadence which N. C. Chaudhuri emphasizes time and again in his autobiographies echo the presence of what Naipaul regards as the colonial schizophrenia. Naipaul too considered India an area of darkness with a total distrust in the same. Disbelief on Indian nationalism and self governance led to Chaudhuri's apprehensions and delusions. He viewed every aspect of Indian life, spirituality, culture and morality decaying. The end of Hinduism, Brahmoism in the then Indian society was what, he viewed, heightened the extent of decadence. Feeling alienated from his own country, its ideals and countrymen, Chaudhuri ended up imitating the English life and ways. Indian culture, politics, language were all the gifts of the West according to him as evident in his autobiography. "The linguistic basis of modern Indian culture, which is made up of a combination of English, a denatured written vernacular, and a

mixed colloquial language, is the first proof of the essentially foreign character of modern Indian culture", he writes (Chaudhuri 536). He relates in his first self-narrative of how Indian stalwarts like Tagore and Gandhi gained worldwide recognition only because of the European acceptance and validation. (539) Bengali prose and poetry were also, according to him, influenced by the English writers.

In contrast to Chaudhuri and Sorabji, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mulk Raj Anand portray an ambivalent kind of colonial identity formation in their self-narratives. When it comes to Jawaharlal Nehru, his Westernized way of life is evident since his childhood, as his father Motilal Nehru had always been an admirer of English lifestyle, manners and thoughts, to the extent that "he had a feeling that his own countrymen had fallen low and almost deserved what they had got" (Nehru 5). Annie Besant, F.T. Brooks were the good Englishmen who broadened Nehru's horizons in numerous ways, be it through science or religion. The then Chief Justice of Allahabad, Sir Grimwood was an Englishman who sought for friendly relationship between the British and the Indians, as was admired by Nehru. Being yet another anti-colonial Englishman and a part of the "affective communities", the missionary C. F. Andrews' works like *Independence—the Immediate Need* (1920) greatly moved Nehru. As he writes, "It was wonderful that C.F. Andrews, a foreigner and one belonging to the dominant race in India, should echo that cry of our inmost being" (Nehru 73). Again, the British constantly had a controlling gaze towards him. In Sunil Khilnani's words:

> Less than a decade later, he had become a freedom fighter and rebel; branded a seditionist by the British, he was constantly monitored by them. Even as Nehru was completing the manuscript of his autobiography, British secret intelligence kept close tabs on him, fearing the book's contents might have incendiary effects when published in India. (Introduction xii)

The autobiography even had to go through censorship in London before it was made available in India. Nehru often felt very privileged about a slice of his persona being anglicized. Nehru, under the influence of F.T. Brooks became well versed in English literature from his childhood itself. Apart from children's literature, Dickens, Thackeray, Scott, H.G. Wells, Mark Twain, K. Jerome, Du Maurier met his love for extensive English reading. Moreover, Nehru's socialistic bent of mind owes itself to a

reading of G.B. Shaw and Bertrand Russell. As Gauri Vishwanathan significantly notes, “In 1844 Lord Hardinge, governor-general from 1844-1848 passed a resolution assuring preference in the selection for public office to Indians who had distinguished themselves in European literature” (Vishwanathan 89). Mulk Raj Anand also seems to follow a similar pattern in his drive for a government job. Being a voracious reader, Mulk Raj Anand widely read all the great works of English literature like the works of Victor Hugo, the novels of Thomas Hardy and the poetry of the romantics like Byron, Shelley, Keats, keeping in view the trend set by the British education system in the early twentieth century.

The validation Nehru got from many Englishmen made him flaunt the very fact of being a part of the civilized English society as he asserts while recounting his experience in a gaol:

> Even for Englishmen I was an individual and not merely one of the mass, and, I imagine, the fact that I had received my education in England and especially my having been to an English public school, bought me nearer to them. Because of this, they could not help considering me as more or less civilized after their own pattern... (Nehru 362)

In the gaol itself, owing to his privileged identity, Nehru was given access to all kinds of books on current topics, religion and novels. He at another place relates how he owed his identity formation to the English and England:

> Personally, I owe too much to England in my mental makeup ever to feel wholly alien to her... All my predictions (apart from the political plane) are in favour of England and the English people, and if I have become what is called an uncompromising opponent of British rule in India, it is almost inspite of myself. (Nehru 436)

He thus associates a significant part of his subjectivity with England and the English people. English education was thus successful in building a “Babu” out of him, in Tabish Khair’s coinage. Nehru acknowledges the blessings of railway, telegraphs and wireless brought in by the British rule but then again says, “...as I rushed across the Indian plains, the railway, that life-giver, has almost seemed to me like iron bands

confining and imprisoning India" (Nehru 452). In contrast to this, he considers science to be a gift of the British rule without which India could be nowhere. He completely ignores the great native Indian scientists like Chanakya, Aryabhatta, Jagadish Chandra Bose and others. Nehru therefore always carried mixed feelings towards English India as manifested in his self-narrative.

Nehru even ends up critiquing the Indians in the then ICS who blindly followed the empire and its dominance like mere puppets, leading to India's doom. He rather regards them as the petty bourgeoisie. Through that Nehru echoes Vishwanathan's theory of masks of conquest whereby English education and administration ideologically moulded many Indians for strengthening the imperial rule. Nehru thus tried to make a balance between his love for English culture, science, philosophy and his anti-colonial knack to free his country from the shackles of the dominating empire.

Unlike Nehru, although Gandhi went to England for his higher studies, he was always of the opinion that "in all Indian curricula of higher education there should be a place for Hindi, Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic, besides of course the vernacular" (Gandhi 27). Hindu ways, literature and traditions appealed to Gandhi the most. The role of *The Ramayana* and *The Bhagwat Gita* in his identity formation stand really vital. Again, at one instance Gandhi expresses his hatred for European self-fashioning and Christianity saying, "Surely, thought I, a religion that compelled one to eat beef, drink liquor, and change one's own clothes did not deserve the name" (Gandhi 42). At another instance in London, when Mr. Coates tried to convince Gandhi about the Christian idea of sin and redemption, the latter completely detested such a theory of atonement. A hybrid self- fashioning is thus clearly visible as colonial English presence was considered as ambivalent by him. Meat eating was forced upon him in England but he could not give up the vow he had made to his mother. This reflects Homi Bhabha's concept of the hybrid where the process of domination is reversed through disavowal (Bhabha 112). The English style of clothing that he had appropriated in England got subverted on his return to India when he took refuge in dhotis.

Gandhi's worldview was deeply shaped by his readings of Tolstoy's The *Kingdom of God Is Within You* (1894), Ruskin's *Unto This Last* (1860) and Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* (1879). His high regards for Hinduism grew through a reading of

Max Muller's *India—What Can It Teach Us?* (1882) and the translation of the *Upanishads* by the Theosophical Society. Some other religious books by English writers like that of Washington Irving's *Life of Mahomet and His Successors* (1850) and Carlyle's panegyric on the Prophet heightened Muhammad's position in Gandhi's eyes.

Thereafter, Gandhi's perception on vegetarianism was created in England through a reading of English writers like Henry Salt and Howard Williams. The books on vegetarianism he read changed his worldview and he began constructing his identity as a vegetarian for life. The dialogues on vegetarianism in England greatly attracted Gandhi who then took to reading some of the best testaments on dietetic studies like Howard William's *The Ethics of Diet* (1883) or Dr. Anna Kingsford's *The Perfect Way in Diet* (1881). Thereafter, he also acquainted the readers with the Vegetarian Society in England that influenced him to initiate his experiments with dietetics. This very fact needs a reference to Leela Gandhi who in *Affective Communities* analysed Gandhi's belief as to how vegetarianism would aid India politically. She argues on the English vegetarians being anti-colonial, humanitarian and socialistic, which in turn strengthened the British-Indian bond. Moreover, Mr. Saunder's help in Calcutta, the support of the Englishmen like Dr. Booth, Mr. Escombe in Boer war, as Gandhi writes, led to his friendships with many Englishmen. The chapter "European Contacts" highlights the fluid and hybrid nature of English self-fashioning in case of Gandhi.

Mulk Raj Anand in *Apology for Heroism* relates his experience in British-Indian schools where he acquired only a partial and inferior picture of Indian history and tradition that led to his dislike for all Indian indigenous manners and customs. This shows the ideological nature of the then education system which only strove to produce Westernized identities for imperial motives. In Anand's words, "Thus I did not imbibe any faith, religion or belief in my early life. The reason for this seems to me now, as I have said above, to be implicit in the muddle created by the impact of Europe" (Anand 14). He further confesses that during his childhood his only aim was to acquire a good job under the British government and fashion himself like any other Babu. The dominant British educational ideologies that led to his father's identity formation is best understood when Anand writes in *Seven Summers*:

For, like most people ever since Lord Macaulay gave to Hindustan the gift of *his*

> *Lays of Ancient Rome*, as well as the British Indian scheme of education for manufacturing Babus inured in the English tongue, my father thought of education in terms of degrees, by securing which one could secure a safe job in some government department. (Anand 64)

As a child, Anand in fact fantasized about English Sahibs, their sophisticated lives and `the Western products they used or wore. Anand later realized how he had ignored the then burning moral and political problems in India in his high quest for Western philosophies. Self criticism took over him as he writes, "Most of us were absorbing portions of Indian culture, which we wanted to use only in order to get better jobs on our return home and to secure personal preferment" (Anand 35). Despite his English self-fashioning in the earlier phase of his life, Anand in the manner of Gandhi, showed signs of disavowal on many grounds, especially when it came to Christianity:

> Gautama became the 'enlightened one' when he attained the highest state, whereas from the start Christianity seemed to condemn human beings to an abject and ignominious position. (Anand 45)

> I was deeply impressed by the Christian conception of the development of human personality through unselfish service, but this was only a confirmation of the Hindu doctrine of Bhakti, devotion through works. (Anand 46)

Anand discovered many Christian ideals as merely a repetition of the Hindu doctrine of "bhakti". This very important instance echoes Bhabha's assertion that colonial presence is always ambivalent—a split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference. His autobiography further reveals how he was against the European intellectual's exclusive inclination towards science and little towards humanity. Again, at another instance he writes, "I am conscious that much of my insistence on the role of man in this universe derives from European Hellenism" (Anand 95).

The memoir *Conversations in Bloomsbury* showcases numerous instances where Anand had to undergo embarrassment and inferiority complex in front of many English scholars, poets and authors who looked down upon Indians and Indian culture, literature. While T.S Eliot remarked, "I believe the Oriental poets still use the old metaphors of the nightingale and the rose" (Anand 37), Lawrence commented, "I hear

women do not cover their breasts in some parts of India" (Anand 40). Bonamy Dobree's patronizing statement, "Come, come, the British did give you roads and justice!" (Anand 37) also brings to light the orientalist attitude of all those personalities whom Anand had to encounter and give counter justifications. However, despite his admiration for the English writers, he took up a stand of disavowal and anti-imperialism as evident from the lines, "The humiliation for being inferior seemed like a wound in my soul which would never heal. And I decided in my mind that I would fight for the freedom of my country forever, though I may admire these English writers for their literary skills (Anand 45).

Anand in fact confesses how he considered himself as a hypocrite for detesting Britain and simultaneously availing himself of the scholarship given by University College. The chapter entitled "How Unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot" depicts Eliot's Kiplingian views about colonial India which ultimately made Anand retort, "'I am going to rewrite Kipling's Kim,' I said at last, 'from the opposite point of view'" (Anand 72). He sought verdict on his memoirs from English masters like Virginia Woolf but then he found her and Leonard Woolf criticize and exoticize Hindu gods and saints. *Conversations in Bloomsbury* bears testimony to the ceaseless efforts made by Anand to decolonize the orientalist thinking of English personalities like Eliot, Lawrence and Woolf among others. To mention of his strong will to decolonize the English language, "In fact, like Joyce I would have liked to play about with words in such a way that, where no English words could communicate our feelings, I could introduce vibrations as speech, never mind if the English didn't understand" (Anand 172). Again, some other conversations of Anand, like those with Aldous Huxley indicate a healthy colonizer- colonized friendship of which Leela Gandhi talks in her *Affective Communities*.

English self-fashioning through law, literature and "Babu" narrative

Law or the legal profession also functioned as a colonial tool of self-fashioning especially in the pre-independent period. The influence of the same is witnessed in case of some Indian English autobiographers too. Gauri Vishwanathan in the chapter "One Power, One Mind" deals at length with the use of literature and law as ideological tools by the English rulers in late nineteenth century India. As she writes, "The connection

between literature and the profession of law is an old and powerful one in Indian education" (Vishwanathan 92). She notes how James Mill, Charles Trevelyan and others wanted to induce a sense of duty and responsibility in Indians through the professional training in law. Moreover, she mentions of the Hunter Commission of 1882 which perceived the role of law as the hallmark of European self-fashioning and English identity formation by the Indians. The importance and trend of studying law established by them seems to recur in many Indian personalities like Gandhi, Sorabji, Nehru, Khushwant Singh among others. The acceptance of judicial roles also required a prior knowledge of European literature, thoughts and manners, which is why many Indians took refuge in English literature. Choosing and idealising England as the best and only place for higher studies was yet another mode of self-fashioning or imagining an English identity. As Vishwanathan writes in *Masks of Conquest*:

> Apart from the obvious contribution of literature in providing the required training in eloquence and the power of debate, it imparted a sense of "moral rectitude" and "earnestness of purpose". Law was frequently referred to as the most important subject in the Indian curriculum, the preparation of which required familiarity with the works of European authors… The alliance between literature and law brought in a great number of native judges into the civil courts who commanded the respect of Europeans and Indians alike. (92)

The discourse about going to England for higher studies is very overtly evident in case of Gandhi too. It clearly shows the overpowering influence of English education system and administration which demanded a prior knowledge of law. The trend of English self-fashioning gets highlighted from the instance when Gandhi's family friend Mavji Dave advised his father, "Think of that barrister who has just come back from England. How stylishly he lives! He could get the Diwanship for asking. I would strongly advise you to send Mohandas to England this very year" (Gandhi 44). Gandhi had to join the bar despite the fact that he initially wanted to go for the medical profession, which was disliked by his father. The wisest thing during that age was considered to become a barrister. He even understood *The Bhagwat Gita* in terms of the English law. Snell's discussion of the maxims of equity helped him decipher the teachings of the *Gita*:

> My study of English law came to my help. Snell's discussion of the maxims of Equity came to my memory. I understood more clearly in the light of the Gita

> teaching the meaning of the word 'trustee'. My regard for jurisprudence increased, I discovered in it religion. (Gandhi 245)

Same is also observed in the case of Jawaharlal Nehru. Talking about the popularity law then had as a profession in the then India Nehru writes about his father, "Naturally he looked to the law as that was the only profession then, in India, which offered any opening for talent and prizes for the successful" (Nehru 4). Following the prevalent trend of studying in England, Nehru also went to Cambridge and Harrow for his higher studies. On his return to India, he was naturally drawn towards his father's profession, that is, the Bar.

The ambitious anglicized Parsee that Cornelia Sorabji was, she was also naturally drawn towards the legal profession, which had become a hallmark for the then English identity. However, the bar was only meant for the men. But she fought against all patriarchal inhibitions and was the first woman barrister of India graduating from Bombay University. This reveals the extent to which she was influenced to embrace the British code of conduct. As she wrote, "Education owes everything to the enterprise of the Christian Church in India, as orthodox Hindus, Moslems and Parsees are never backward in acknowledging" (Sorabji 18).

True to the trend of the age, Khushwant Singh took admission in L.L.B. in London University without a second thought in 1934, as he relates in *Truth, Love and a Little Malice*. During his stay in England Singh tried to break the stereotype of Indians sticking together in England. He made more and more English friends besides staying in many English homes in order to better understand and merge with English lives. Moreover, Singh opted for the I.C.S. examination although he missed it somehow.

However, both Gandhi and Nehru, although tried to fashion themselves as the English gentleman by studying law ultimately ended up dissatisfied, leaving their profession. Similar instance is evident in case of Khushwant Singh also as he writes in his autobiography, "The most important thing that happened to me with the partition of India was that I was able to get out of the legal profession. I swore never to go back to it" (Singh 116). He even had to struggle with the L.L.M. course and had to leave it halfway. In the chapter "Lahore, Partition and Independence" he condemns the legal profession for being very cheap and amoral. Nehru joined Indian politics by being a

part of the Congress while Gandhi ended up being a social worker cum political leader. Instances of fissures, ambivalence and disavowal can thus be witnessed here. Mulk Raj Anand, however, disliked the profession of law and wanted to evade from it. His father had the earnest desire to make Anand pursue legal profession which was the order of the day. Anand chose to study in England in order to follow his passion to explore philosophy:

> Far better, I thought, even from the point of view of jobbery, to research in philosophy in England, as a degree from abroad still seemed to have a scarcity value, apart from the superior opportunities it would offer me for reading at the original sources. Besides, there was the snob value of a European excursion. (Anand 21)

England thus attained a label of being the best and only place to pursue higher studies. Anand's search for truth in life also inevitably demanded a movement to University College, London. An exposure to English Enlightenment and modern philosophy in London made him interrogate the stance of Indian philosophy. He even regrets the fact that he had little knowledge about Sanskrit which made him alien to many classical Indian philosophies. Hence the construction of his philosophical bent of mind stands in an ambivalent position—between the awareness of Western philosophies and an eagerness to learn the Indian counterpart. All these writers fantasized England as the source of Enlightenment and true knowledge and hence chose it for their education. It was as if they had to visit England in order to have a renewed discovery of their own country and its issues. English education and law became their tropes of self-fashioning.

Apart from law, the Indian English autobiographers like Dom Moraes, Kamala Das, Khushwant Singh and Salman Rushdie discovered self fulfilment in the English poetry or fiction they read or created. It was as if they found solace in whatever they produced as authors. Greenblatt in his treatise seeks to establish how little difference between literature and social life turns out to be a characteristic trait of the Renaissance writers. It was through art and literature that they constructed a significant part of their self. Literary text is central to Greenblatt's study of self-fashioning. Kamala Das' and Dom Moraes' poetry, Khushwant Singh's and Salman Rushdie's fiction seem

inevitably intertwined with their self-narratives. Literature they wrote became a means to fashion their selves. Their autobiographies are replete with constant references, instances and vindications of their works of art. They imagine themselves in terms of their novels, poetry, the characters and stories therein. The fictions and poetry offer commentaries on the author's life. The writers imagine alternatives through the characters they create. Manifestation of the behaviour, imagination of the author can be seen through the literature written by him or her.

Moraes begins the first chapter of his memoir *Never at Home* with a poem that he had written about his mother. Poetry, with which he had always been obsessed, thus slips into his self-narrative, as he couldn't distinguish between the two. He identifies himself with the narrator in his poems. As he writes about his poetry collection "John Nobody": "The John Nobody in my poem—myself—certainly dared speak, the whole poem was him speaking. The original ballad was about social inequities; mine wasn't, but it was not only about myself, it was about the world I breathed" (Moraes 61). Towards the end of this book, Moraes recounts how he re-discovered his lost writerly self and poetic identity through the life of Mrs. Indira Gandhi which inspired him to write her biography. Authoring Sunil Gavaskar's biography in 1984 also helped him perceive life from close quarters. Real lives and the English literature he wrote were indeed inseparable.

Mulk Raj Anand also talks about the inseparability of a creative writer and the society. It is the artist's responsibility to address the issues of the society and imagine an alternative reality thereby, according to him:

> I could see that in the ensuing struggle to defend culture the writer would, in common with other people, have to exercise great vigilance, both as a citizen and as an artist. It seemed to me that precisely because modern commercial society had forced the writer into isolation, it was necessary for him to link himself with the disinherited, the weak and the dispossessed, as a human being and as an artist with special talents, to help transform society. (Anand 81)
>
> Though I believe in realism, I am, as I have said, for a poetic realism. (86)
>
> I want to emphasize this revolutionary aspect of art, I mean the way in which it

> can change life. (88)

He justifies the stance of a revolutionary writer:

> The revolutionary writer can help thus not only in the development of the individual, but in conjunction with his brother artists, also take forward the history of the human race from the elementary struggles of the present to the more complex and subtle realizations which denote real cultural development. (92)

Anand's *Apology for Heroism* is to a large extent an advocacy of a creative writer or a novel writer. He opines on the role of a creative writer:

> So that whether we take the task of destroying the spurious elements of contemporary civilization or of reconstructing the future society, the creative artist occupies an important role in both spheres. (Anand 92)

> The form of creative writing, which is the novel, came to me much more naturally than any other form, because through this I could live through the experiences of other people and realize what silent passions burst in their hearts... (138-39)

On a similar note, R. K. Narayan in the sixth chapter of his memoir *My Days* mentions the extensive influence of English literature and education in the creation of his writerly self. Palgrave, Keats, Shelley, Byron and Browning seemed very real and immediate to him and stirred in him a great response, as narrated by Narayan in the memoir. He was fascinated by reading Walter Scott, Dickens, Thomas Hardy and such other writers in his school library. Apart from those, he had a keen interest in exploring the long history of English literature too. Moreover, many magazines at his father's desk made him aware of all the then updates on world literature. The *Strand* increased his acquaintance with Conan Doyle, Wodehouse among others while the *Bookman* was filled with Wells, Shaw and Hardy. Narayan also writes, "Through *Harper's*, the *Atlantic*, and *American Mercury*, we attained glimpses of the New World and its writers" (68). He mentions having regularly read *The Spectator*, *The Times Literary Supplement* and the *Manchester Guardian* to remain updated about English publishers and writers. English literature as a trope thus fashioned his creative self immensely. He acknowledges how

the reading of English literature, book reviews, etc helped him develop a critical sense and tempering for his own initial endeavours. Interestingly, Narayan adheres his repeated falling in love to his extensive reading of romantic fiction. As he writes in *My Days*, “Perhaps the great quantity of fiction I read prepared my mind to fall in love with all and sundry—all one-sided of course” (115). The trope of literary self-fashioning is thus predominant in Narayan’s memoir too.

Khushwant Singh’s autobiography is replete with portrayals of his short stories, fiction and other literature through which he imagines alternative realities. Marie, the girl he met in London became the inspiration for his writings as he asserts, “Marie became the subject of one of my short stories, ‘Black Jasmine’. It was more fantasy than fact” (Singh 70). His grandmother had a vital role to play in constructing his writerly self: “My grandmother became the subject of a profile I wrote many years later when I was posted in Ottawa and published in The Canadian Forum under the title ‘Portrait of a Lady’. It has remained my most popular story” (Singh 83).

Both the Sikh community and the Muslim community played a vital role in constructing Khushwant Singh’s identity and writerly self at large. He perceived himself as inseparable from his own community and thus took it as his responsibility to portray his community as truly as possible. This led to his undertaking of the big task of representing Sikh community as a part of the Rockefeller grant he had received. The journey of his composing the *A History of the Sikhs* (1963) was also instrumental in his self fulfilment. As Khushwant writes, “The most fulfilling thing I have done in my life was working on Sikh religion and history” (206). At another instance he further continues saying, “To write on Sikh religion and history was my life’s ambition. Having done that, I felt like one living on borrowed time, at peace with myself and the world. It did not bother me if I wrote nothing else” (214). “The publication of my books on Sikh religion had made me acceptable to the Sikh community” (267) goes on Singh. Both the Sikh community and the Muslim community played a vital role in constructing Khushwant Singh’s identity and writerly self at large. *Train to Pakistan* (1956) was his first novel which followed his non-fiction *A History of the Sikhs* (1963): “The theme I had in mind was the partition of India and the horrible massacres that accompanied it” (Singh 158).

The chapter "On Writing and Writers" in Khushwant Singh's *Truth, Love and a Little Malice* carves the graph of Singh's growth as a writer which owed greatly to his reading of English literature. The works of Aldous Huxley and Somerset Maugham overwhelmed him. "I wished I could evolve the Huxleyan turn of phrase and malicious wit with Maugham's ability to hold the reader's attention," (Singh 385) he writes. Referring to his vast reading he further says, "From a Punjabi rustic I tried to make myself a middle class English gentleman" (385). However, the hybrid nature of his self-fashioning is again witnessed when he acknowledges the Indian writers as his Muse:

> ...to be quite honest, what inspired me to write were not great authors but the second raters, mainly Indians, who had been published in England and the United States. I read Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan. I felt that I could write as well as they, and if they could be published abroad, so could be I. (Singh 385)

Singh's friendship with N. C. Chaudhuri stemmed from the former's overwhelming admiration for Chaudhuri's extraordinary charm over the English language and vocabulary. Again, Geeta Dore in an essay called "Playing Hide and Seek with Names and Selves in Rushdie's *Joseph Anton*" critically analyses the fictional title and protagonist in Rushdie's memoir. She writes:

> If monumental biographies of famous authors written by critics establish their immortal place in literary history, Rushdie's memoir, brought out at age sixty-five, is both a literary testimony and a testament, and vicariously fulfils his wish to write a novel with an eponymous title like the classics *David Copperfield*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Tom Jones*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Daniel Deronda* and *Oliver Twist*. (Dore 12)

Rushdie's memoir being a memoir with a fictive character shows the predominance of fiction in it. Moreover, self-fashioning, according to Greenblatt, always accompanies a kind of threat and loss that the authors go through, "... self-fashioning always involves some experience of threat, some effacement or undermining, some sense of loss" (9). Threat, alien authority, loss of self by the author and his characters are traits which account for literary self-fashioning. This alien power or authority which Greenblatt talks about can be traced as a hallmark of Rushdie's works. His memoir is in fact a

reaction to the claim of "fatwa" charged on him for his novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988). His fictions and the characters therein are mostly reactions to the existing socio-political order. *Midnight's Children* (1981), *Shame* (1983), *Satanic Verses*, *Grimus* (1975), *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) all express his literary self-fashioning through their frequent mention in his memoir. He mentions in *Joseph Anton* of *Midnight's Children* being "an act of reclamation of the Indian identity he had lost" (54). The contemporary historical and personal turmoil found an outlet through Saleem Sinai and his life story. Rushdie perceived Pakistan as the greatest mistake of his parents which led to his homelessness. As he writes in his memoir, "His beloved Bombay was no longer available to him; in their old age his parents had sold his childhood home without discussion and mysteriously decamped to Karachi, Pakistan" (52). Through *Shame* he aimed to portray a black comedy, the political scenario of the then Pakistan under the dictatorship of Zia ul-Haq. The fact that literature and life got merged in his personality is reflected well when he says, "Meanwhile, the success of his books had a beneficial effect on his character. He felt something relax deep within him, and became happier, sweet-natured, easier to be around" (Rushdie, 61). Rushdie's displaced, exiled, immigrated, homeless self found refuge in *The Satanic Verses* where he imagined his life and thoughts through the Archangel Gabriel:

> This unhoused, exiled Satan was perhaps the heavenly patron of all exiles, all unhoused people, all those who were torn from their place and left floating, half this, half that, denied the rooted person's comforting, defining sense of having a solid ground beneath their feet. (Rushdie 73)

He goes on to explicate how the death of his close friend in a massive plane crash by Sikh terrorists led to the scene in which Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha met with a similar crash in *The Satanic Verses*. The "clown stories" by a group of travelling players whom Rushdie came across in Kashmir also became the core of his "Kashmir novel" *Shalimar the Clown* (2005). In a similar vein, Kamala Das takes frequent refuge in poetry writing in *My Story*. Many of her chapters in her memoir begin with a poem which serves as a kind of prelude to the chapter. Prose and poetry are intertwined in her writing—one cannot do without the other. For instance, when she deals with her middle age in a chapter, she begins with this small yet beautiful poem:

The Beginning of Autumn:

She floats in her

autumn, Yellowed like

a leaf And free. (Das

171)

While in hospital during her nervous breakdown, Das began writing her first set of stories about the people she met there. These stories gave her a sense of fulfilment, as she writes, "Whenever a story appeared in a journal I ran with it to my bedroom to lie down and read it, for my heart used to thump so with excitement to see my name in print" (Das 131). She published poems in the *Illustrated Weekly* under the pseudonym of K. Das as the editor rejected women writers. Kamala thus had to dwell on an imagined identity in order to support her art. She further mentions of how she discovered an all new part of her self after being engrossed in creative writing, "The essence of the writer eludes the non-writer. All that the writer reveals to such people are her oddities of dress and her emotional excess" (Das 169). Merrily Weisbord in *The Love Queen of Malabar* (2010) relates how Kamala imagined herself as a character in Graham Greene's novel while it came to loving her husband's boss. To quote Weisbord:

> She says she imagined herself as a character in a Graham Greene novel so she wouldn't feel cheap being nice to him, and willed herself to be fond of this corpulent old man who "trembled like jelly taken out suddenly and talked like he had pebbles in his mouth". (Weisbord 32)

Das also yearned to be a heroine like Anna Karenina, Madame Bovary or Juliet—all of whom epitomize both tragic and beautiful love. As Weisbord quotes Das, "'I remember being shattered by Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina," she tells. "They are with me until death'" (Weisbord 194). Devindra Kohli notes Kamala Das' inspiration to write in free verse evolving from her wide reading of Walt Whitman whom she adored as a young girl in the library of her grand uncle, poet and scholar Nalapat Menon. (Kohli xviii)

According to Meenakshi Mukherjee, Indian English writers prefer to write in English because they have literary competence only in English (Mukherjee 169). She, however, views it as a tragic loss of mother tongue rather than a privilege. "...English is not just any language—it was the language of our colonial rulers and continues even now to be the language of power and privilege. It is not a language that permeates all social levels or is used in subaltern contexts," writes Meenakshi Mukherjee in her essay "The Anxiety of Indianness" (Mukherjee 168). The idea of alienation in *Babu Fictions* (2001) by Tabish Khair appears prevalent among the Indian autobiographies written in English as well. Khair might have probably named those as "Babu autobiographies", written by the privileged section of Indian writers in English. With a typical Marxist orientation, he conceptualized a Babu as "an urban, westernized, English-educated person" (Khair 9), whereas the Coolie as "both urban and rural, not overtly westernized and largely illiterate or semi-literate" (Khair 10). Indian English fiction, he argues, is alienated from the Coolie or subaltern classes to whom English is intelligible. However, this class comprises a good majority of heterogeneous Indian population. "And if English-medium education is recognized as central to full Babuhood, it is pertinent to stress that while 40 percent of the population of India knows Hindi, at the most 5 percent can be said to know English" (Khair 10). Khair basically raises the issue of the denial of agency and voice to the subaltern classes by the privileged Indian English writers, thereby reinforcing Gayatri Spivak's stance that the subaltern cannot speak. To refer to a relevant quote from Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1985):

> In the slightly dated language of the Indian group, the question becomes, How can we touch the consciousness of the people, even as we investigate their politics? With what voice-consciousness can the subaltern speak? Their project, after all, is to rewrite the development of the consciousness of the Indian nation. The planned discontinuity of imperialism rigorously distinguishes this project, however old-fashioned its articulation, from 'rendering visible the medical and juridical mechanisms that surrounded the story [of Pierre Riviere].' (27)

Alienation for Khair is the Marxist concept of classes re-examined in terms of caste. Analysing from a Marxist point of view it can be argued that the privileged section of self narrators consider it as their responsibility to portray the lower classes or oppressed sections of the society in their own terms. The peasants and many common men of

India whom Gandhi and Nehru addressed in their self-narratives were hardly able to decipher their English accounts. Shahid Amin's essay "Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern U.P., 1921-2" (1988) is notable in this respect as Amin here seeks to decipher the extent to which Gandhi and his preaching were intelligible to the subaltern classes, mainly the peasants who just blindly followed the mythic construct of the Mahatma. Nehru believed that English could never be the lingua franca of India. In his words, "That seems to me a fantastic conception, except in respect of a handful of upper-class intelligentsia. It has no relation to the problem of mass education and culture" (Nehru 472). Despite the fact that he perceived English to be a language of the upper class, he preferred writing his autobiography in English. Naturally, it became intelligible for many lower-class or vernacular medium classes to grasp his words of wisdom. The alienation of which Aijaz Ahmed talks of becomes evident here. The writers chosen for this thesis are all privileged to have an audience worldwide. As Nehru asserts, "English is bound to remain our chief link with the outside world" (Nehru 472). According to him, English is a modern and flexible language unlike the rigid classical languages like Sanskrit or Persian. In his stark criticism of "old fashioned" Hindi language he writes:

> I suggested that if Hindi authors paid more attention to Western thought and literature, they would derive great benefit from it; it would be desirable to have translations from the classics of the European languages as well as from books dealing with modern ideas. (Nehru 474)

The fact that Nehru considered Western education as a must for developing fervours of Indian nationalism defies the possibility of nationalism from the lower sections of the society. He only imagined Indian nationalism to be a bi-product of English education. Gauri Vishwanathan notes how works like Bruce McCully's *English Education and the Origins of Nationalism* (1940) or David Kopf's *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* (1969) valorize British education and point out that such a system gave the Indians the weapon to challenge it. Such an orientalist viewpoint, however, seems suited to some extent in case of Nehru. Appreciating Sir Syed's inclination to instill Western education among Muslims Nehru writes:

> Sir Syed's decision to concentrate on Western education for Muslims was

> undoubtedly a right one. Without that they could not have played any effective part in the building up of Indian nationalism of the new type, and they would have been doomed to play second fiddle to the Hindus with their better education and far stronger economic position. (Nehru 479)

The way Nehru overwhelmingly praises Sir Syed's orientalist views on India reflects his own support for the same. The then agrarian troubles and peasant issues of which Nehru addresses now and then in the autobiography were hardly intelligible to those peasants or working class fellows. Also remarkable is Mulk Raj Anand's *An Apology for Heroism* which makes a plea for social, economic equality and upliftment of the downtrodden class—all of which is hardly intelligible to them:

> I believe that the unity of the exploited, defrauded and deprived, and their affiliates in society, whether light or dark, is important, if collective action to achieve the new life is to be brought about. (Anand 117)

> I have tried in this sense to express my passionate love for the suffering people, inspite of the misunderstanding and the ridicule of those who are better situated in social life and call my pre-occupation with the outcastes, the disinherited peasants, and the eternally wronged women as a morbid, sentimentalist preoccupation with these 'ignorant People'. (Anand 139)

In *Seven Summers* too, Anand narrates his experiences of untouchability in his society through the sweeper Bakha who later forms an important character in his novel *Untouchable* (1935). The oppressed women to whom Cornelia Sorabji addressed her memoir were mostly illiterate or were not allowed to read. Despite this fact, she being a Christian naturally chose to write her memoirs in English as because those were meant only for the wider upper class reading public rather than the women who form an integral part of her memoirs. Reading and writing in English was a matter of privilege for the Indian women during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, considering the then nature of female education. Khair in the chapter "Gender and Class: A Well-placed Displacement" studies how Indian women writers took a privileged position while writing in English. Use of English for them often meant subverting traditional male paradigm as seen in case of Kamala Das as well. Devindra Kohli aptly writes:

> In asserting her freedom to write in English as a 'very brown' trilingual Indian and bilingual woman writer from South India, Kamala Das not only claimed her postcolonial space but also her national space in a multilingual India against a perceptible colourism that impacts women. (Kohli xx)

N.C. Chaudhuri's English autobiographies invariably fall into the class of "Babu autobiographies" as they alienate the subaltern classes from comprehending Chaudhuri's thoughts, ideas and experiences. He, however, was a bilingual writer like Kamala Das or Mahatma Gandhi. Meenakshi Mukherjee in the essay "'We Say Desh': The Other Nirad Babu" opines that English and Bangla provided Chaudhuri with different perspectives hence provoking him to assume contradictory positions. Salman Rushdie's use of English has been subject to numerous debates, interpretations, opinions and counter opinions both by himself and by his critics like Aparna Mahanta, Bishnupriya Ghosh, to just mention of two. Andrew Teverson in his critical work *Salman Rushdie* deals with this very aspect of Rushdie's fiction in the chapter "Writing in English". Keeping aside all Marxist criticisms Rushdie always explained his use of English as a tool of writing back to the West rather than the other way round. It is very pertinent to mention this quote on Indian English writers from his 2002 book *Step Across This Line*, "One important dimension of literature is that it is a means of holding a conversation with the world. These writers are ensuring that India, or rather Indian voices... will henceforth be confident, indispensable participants in that literary conversation" (Rushdie 165).

Almost all the Indian English writers in this dissertation take pride in glorifying their privileged class, genealogy, lineage, caste, birth and position. Asserting the overwhelming discourse on high birth, blood and lineage in his father's native village N. C. Chaudhuri writes in *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, "As soon as we arrived at Banagram we became aware of blood, aware not only of its power to make us feel superior to other men, but also of its immeasurable capacity to bring men together" (Chaudhuri 56). Yet again he distinguishes between the peasants and the wealthy privileged folks in his mother's village Kalikutch as he says, "From what I have written so far about Kalikutch it might be imagined that it was a village of peasants. It was not. On the contrary, it was well known as the home of gentle folk noted for their birth, education, liberal ideas and worldly position" (Chaudhuri 99). He

wanted his readers to be well equipped with his class and position from both his parents' sides. Mulk Raj Anand also draws upon his birth in a high caste Hindu family in the very beginning of his memoir *An Apology for Heroism*. He, however, constantly retorts against the caste hierarchy in Hinduism both in his memoirs and his novels. Nehru in a similar manner valorizes his ancestral lineage and high birth in a Kashmiri pandit family. To mention an instance, "My great grandfather, Laxmi Narayan Nehru, became the first Vakil of the 'Sarkar Company' at the shadow court of the Emperor of Delhi. My grandfather, Ganga Dhar Nehru, was Kotwal of Delhi for some time before the great Revolt of 1857" (Nehru 2). Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography, likewise, begins with an elaborate reference to his caste, birth, parentage and his ancestors holding good positions in administration. He writes how for three generations from his grandfather they had been Prime Ministers in several Kathiawar states (Gandhi 14). All of them therefore imagined their identity largely in terms of their privileged caste and position in his society.

Khair's concept of alienation in Indian English writing thus fits in case of autobiographies too. Mukherjee's interpretation that global market, economy and upward social mobility have been intertwined with the use of English by these privileged writers cannot therefore be ignored. She aptly comments "We shall probably encounter more and more writers who will write in English, propelled by the logic of social dynamics within the country, lured by the forces of global marketplaces and driven by the mirage of international fame" (Mukherjee 183).

The extent of being "mimic men" in the self-narratives taken for this study vary greatly from one author to another. Self-fashioning through English literature is overwhelmingly witnessed in all the writers. Cornelia Sorabji's mimicry of English life and ways mostly lacks the ambivalence and disavowal which is crucial to Bhabha's theory. Similar stance may be witnessed in case of Nirad C. Chaudhuri and Dom Moraes as well. Dom Moraes' existential crisis in India also reflects a kind of colonial schizophrenia—a constant distrust in everything Indian. Gandhi's case as evident in his autobiography, is, just the opposite of that of Sorabji. Nehru again mimicked the English life, style and education but revolted against the colonial rule. Gandhi, Nehru, Anand and Khushwant Singh display a pattern whereby they conform to colonial mimicry and colonial schizophrenia in the beginning of their education, life and law as

career but later end up countering colonial authority by having an ambivalent relationship with the same. Moreover, the use of English in all these self-narratives cannot merely be reduced to a Marxist interpretation of privileged self construction as they reflect many other postcolonial shades of subversion.

An ambivalent and hybrid creation of subjectivity renders mimicry as mere mockery by rather countering the colonizer's desire to produce all compliant subjects. A simultaneous attraction and repulsion towards colonial dominance is very much witnessed in the Indian English autobiographers which results in a disruption of colonial authority. The nature of English self-fashioning and subsequent identity formation of the Indian English autobiographers, therefore, cannot be narrowed down into one fixed category. While some completely gave into Anglicism by suppressing and critiquing the Indian ways, some others shared an ambivalent relationship with the same. The nuances analysed reveal a whole spectrum of self construction—mostly contradictory and paradoxical, in terms of English life, art, literature, language and education in the chosen self-narratives. As colonial/postcolonial identity and history run parallel in the Indian context, so the next chapter will naturally follow an exploration of the nature of historiography and historical imagination in the Indian English self-narratives.